Minutes of the AASHTO Standing Committee on Highways (SCOH)
Business Meeting in Bedford, Pennsylvania
Saturday, May 16, 2009

Call to Order & Opening Remarks
Grant Levi (ND) presided in lieu of the Chair & Vice Chair and called the meeting to order at 8:37 a.m. There were 27 members in attendance – lacking a quorum this is a record of the sense of SCOH rather than formal SCOH actions.

Roll Call & Minutes from October 18, 2008
Minutes of the October 18, 2008 meeting in Hartford, Connecticut were approved.
[Motion-VA / Second-MD – Approved]

Call for Agenda Amendments
IntelliDrive and Roundtable topics will be added as time permits.
Motion was made and passed to accept agenda item IV. Summary of SCOH Ballots, and items V.A. through V.E. as a Consent Agenda.
[Motion-AL / Second-MO – Passed]

Resolutions/Motions
Resolution: FHWA’s Implementation of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA)
VA: friendly amendment to add “and we look forward to our continued cooperation” was accepted.
[Motion-MD / Second-WY – Approved with friendly amendment]

AASHTO-ACEC Committee
Report of discussions at the joint committee meeting. It was noted ACEC is celebrating its 100th anniversary. John Horsley reported on progress of the states in implementing the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) & Congressman Oberstar’s oversight of ARRA; on the changed situation with reauthorization of the highway program since President Obama wants high-speed rail and Chairman Oberstar wants a $450 billion program but does not have the funding worked out; and performance management will be in the new bill; and the situation on the Highway Trust Fund. King Gee reported on FHWA appointees, Secretary LaHood’s themes, and the Inspector General’s audit of consultant overhead rates. Jim McDonnell reported that the Errors & Omissions draft guide is in revisions; and a brewing conflict of interest issue on consultant CE&I versus consultant design.

A proposed joint resolution on reauthorization principles was presented, moved and passed for consideration by the Board of Directors (BOD).
[Motion-WV / Second-WI – Passed]

Presentations
FHWA Activities - King W. Gee, FHWA
Four transportation veterans have been nominated to USDOT positions: Victor Mendez, John Porcari; Peter Rogoff, and Roy Kienitz. Secretary LaHood has stated four themes: safety; restoring the economy; economic sustainability through transportation investments; and livability. He has signaled a reauthorization theme of a more integrated and synchronized transportation system. The modal agencies are preparing for new political leadership.

On ARRA, FHWA has worked with the states and MPOs to prime the pump since November. This allowed the states to move out smartly as FHWA issued implementing guidance and apportionments immediately after enactment. There is a reporting burden and FHWA is addressing it: cooperatively with the states through a reporting framework even as OMB continues to clarify reporting requirements. There is heightened oversight by OIG, GAO, House T&I, and FHWA’s National Review Teams. The 120 day redistribution deadline is at the end of June. The competitive
discretionary program (TIGER grants) was announced yesterday in the Federal Register – grants will be made from $20 million up to $300 million to support high impact transportation projects, and applications are due by September 15, 2009.

The OIG audit report on consultant indirect rates was issued February 10th 2009. FHWA generally concurs with the OIG findings and recommendations. FHWA acknowledged AASHTO’s early collaboration, especially regarding the update of the AASHTO’s Audit Guide. Assistance was requested to collaborate on cognizant audits and on cost recovery. As part of ARRA transparency and accountability, there will be something on consultant certification. FHWA will be revising regulations to reflect and balance laws passed since the regulations were issued.

FHWA has been monitoring the Highway Trust Fund through weekly tracking since last September with triggers so that notice will be given weeks not days ahead of any shortfall. The FHWA website shows the monthly balance. FHWA expects a problem later in the summer.

Eight Highways for LIFE project selections will be announced by Secretary LaHood next week, which will bring the total to 25 projects in 22 state DOTs. There will be a second round of project solicitations this Fiscal Year shortly. A stakeholders meeting will be held on May 28 to report on program accomplishments and solicit input on the future direction of the program. A web-conference call for non-D.C. area interested parties will be held in a few weeks.

The AASHTO Policy on IHS Design Standards states that each interchange shall provide for all traffic movements. This policy was set when the focus was on building a new system. Some Interstate Highway interchanges “grandfathered” into the system were partial interchanges. FHWA approvals for partial interchanges have been relatively rare exceptions. Recently, a number of partial interchanges are being considered by the states just on cost alone; without analyzing them for severe conditions or for impacts to the system. FHWA does not want to piecemeal such a policy shift interchange by interchange. If AASHTO wants to explore a new design approach, FHWA is willing to engage. FHWA will be requesting the Design Subcommittee to consider the issue.

AASHTO was commended for publishing two recent documents: the Guide Specifications and Commentary for Vessel Collision Design of Highway Bridges (2nd edition), and the Guide Specifications for Bridges Vulnerable to Coastal Storms. FHWA also appreciates the special effort to resolve scour critical bridges and unknown foundations of bridges. FHWA will seek input on how to proceed further.

Executive Director’s Report on AASHTO Activities - John Horsley, AASHTO

John Horsley expressed appreciation to FHWA for leadership and cooperation on the ARRA; and noted that while $11 billion has been obligated already, so far the emphasis has been on speed and the Associated Press is criticizing the location of projects, especially not in economically distressed areas. There is heavy oversight from OIG, GAO, FHWA and the House T&I Committee. AASHTO will be seeking relief from the T&I Committee and recommend using FHWA reporting rather than its own. The states were congratulated for doing well on ARRA.

There are two pending critical matters: (1) the next bout of HTF insolvency is expected to hit in August; as well as what to do after September which will need a 15 to 18 month extension to give Congress and the Administration time to pass a new bill; (2) the $8.7 billion rescission on September 30, 2009.

House T&I is progressing on reauthorization language that refocuses the program, and includes performance. It is unclear about target setting – whether the states or Congress set targets. T&I Chairman Oberstar is aiming for $450 billion for the program which is very close to AASHTO’s $470 billion target. However, he does not have a way to pay for it yet. The current revenue flow would need an additional $250 billion. It is difficult to introduce a bill without the funding question answered. The Senate will move slower and the Senate may move on climate change before transportation - and may follow the House by several months.

It’s good news that Victor Mendez and John Porcari who have been nominated to USDOT positions are from the AASHTO ranks. Their assuming of the posts is needed to direct the USDOT’s reauthorization efforts.
Climate change legislation will complicate matters due to the possible impacts on the height of bridges and size of culverts because of more violent storms. There will be state by state goals and then allocations of strategies sector by sector. AASHTO will argue that emissions budgets without offsets will block all transportation projects that then blocks economic growth.

CEOs and Chief Engineers need to seek ways to approve more staff to participate in AASHTO activities. Tony Kane has worked out a way with FHWA to support participation in AASHTO activities.

Ken Kobetsky was acknowledged for 15 years of dedicated service to AASHTO.

AR: what efforts are underway to repeal the $8.5 billion rescission?
Horsley: Senate EPW and Finance Committees agree with repeal of the rescission, but they are looking for the right legislative vehicle. Congressional leadership is cognizant of the need.

GA: Wary that Congress will see ARRA as a stop gap or bridge between authorizations. Horsley: the non-leadership members of Congress may have such a perspective, but committee leadership (Boxer, Baucus and other leadership) understand, and it is rank and file members who need educating.

SCOR Update - Chris Jencks, TRB
SCOR has selected the FY 2010 NCHRP program from 146 problem statements that were considered with 22 continuations. The program comes to $28 million (19 continuations, 35 new projects; including $1.2 million for 20-7). Solicitation for panel members for new projects are due May 29, with panels to meet in July to develop statements of work. BOD approval will be sought within a couple of weeks. The FY 2011 NCHRP program solicitation will be issued in July with a mid-September due date.

Regarding the new project on long range strategic issues, five $1 million projects’ RFPs have been issued. These include long range strategies for system preservation; climate change and highway systems; and freight. $3 million was added for sustainability and for the effects of demography on travel demand.

Recent publications include the guidelines for implementation of the AASHTO highway safety strategic plan and a legal digest for PPPs. The NCHRP IDEA Program has had successes such as the development of a hybrid composite bridge beam where IL, NJ and ME have trial applications.

ME: What is the process to incorporate new things like the hybrid composite bridge beam?
VA: Appreciate NCHRP flexibility to support gusset plate research needed after the NTSB recommendations from the I-35W bridge collapse.

I-95 Real-Time Traffic Management - George Schoener, I-95 Corridor Coalition
The Coalition is focusing on better data to support measurement of system performance: travel time and speed through the use of vehicle probe technology – 1 million GPS probes in trucks and cars. The INRIX contract started in 2007 and led to a July 2008 kickoff that covered 3000 miles of freeways and 800 miles of arterials – in NC and NJ the system covers the whole state. Information is updated every minute, and evaluations are underway in five states. Using the performance measures: travel time between OD pairs and variability; the evaluation is to answer the question of what is the effect of start time on travel time. This will greatly facilitate pre-travel trip planning. The service is now extended to mobile devices.

Safety Analyst Software - Ray Krammes, FHWA
This will be a new AASHTOware product this year that identifies locations with high potential for safety improvements; evaluates the effectiveness of investments; automates and integrates all parts of the safety management process in one product. Ultimately, this will provide more effective and
efficient decision support. The product will be transferred from FHWA to AASHTO for long term management and updating.

Summary Results of Domestic Scan on Best Practices in Project Delivery Management – Jim McMinimee, UT

Ten elements were rolled into this scan that visited six states. These states were, chosen by their public dashboards on on-time and on-budget performance. Common elements and best practices included: project management structure; training; high use of consultants; accountability for performance; shared leadership; accountability with metrics used to improve performance; innovative contracting practices; community involvement & external outreach. The follow-up implementation will be through the subcommittee, LTAP, TIG, and innovative media.

Tony Kane noted that it would also be broadcast via AASHTO’s TV station.

Reports

NCHRP 20-7 - Chris Jencks, TRB

$1.2 million was allocated to the 20-7 project by SCOR in March. The 20-7 Panel reviewed 15 project requests for a total of $1.3 million and recommended nine tasks and added funding for one existing task for a total of $640,000.

[Motion-VA / Second-NV – Approved]

Special Committee on U.S. Route Numbering - Don Vaughn, AL

Eighteen requests were received from six states with various recommended approvals and conditional approvals. The revised policy on U.S. numbered bike routes (must connect two or more states or bike routes) was also recommended for approval.

[Motion-AL / Second-ME – Approved]

The bike route policy will be posted online. A web-based application process for route numbering is being developed and the prototype will be up and running in 30 days.

SHRP2 Implementation Report – Neil Hawks, TRB

A status report was given on the four focus areas: Safety, Renewal, Travel Time Reliability, and Capacity. The oversight committee has a new chair - Kirk Steudle (MI). The first six reports have been received and one published – implementation. There are six recommendations that include a $400 million budget for implementation for the first six years.

The projects list has 50 underway and 35 yet to be let. A chart was distributed that shows all projects and their expected products.

Technology Implementation Group (TIG) – Kevin Chesnik, WI

The TIG met Wednesday to review 11 projects - 7 final report; 4 ongoing with lead states. The current budget is $200,000 and the usual budget is $50,000 for each project. Nine new potential technologies were discussed and three were selected: PA: utility relocation electronic documentation; TX/MD: GIS & green infrastructure assessment; and PA: electronic grade crossing. Two others are recommended for posting: FL: emergency contact locator; and innovative methods for roadside vegetation.

The support situation for TIG was reported: there being a downturn in subscription (25 down from 35) which is causing a budget squeeze; AASHTO support staff is being spread thin; there were only nine proposals this time which is down from 30-40 in the past cycles; and there are three vacancies (regions I & III) on TIG. TIG needs to be re-evaluated.

Potential Texas Pilot Study on VMT Tax - Steve Simmons, TX

The regional mobility authority in Tyler, TX is seeking to answer how one would implement a VMT/pricing approach in a rural area. The local governments supported the study because of a “guaranteed” future funding for the area. The TX legislative budget board supported the VMT tax notion and there was a rider on TX DOT’s appropriations bill to create a pilot program.
Continuing Education Units - Tony Kane, AASHTO
AASHTO has explored professional development under SAFETEA-LU section 5204(e) where training and education can be funded with no state match in order to support State DOT staff engagement on AASHTO activities. FHWA reviewed broad eligibility in an April 9, 2009 memo to its division offices. WV has used a single project to fund such developmental activities. States were encouraged to use such funds for staff development, especially in conjunction with AASHTO committee work.

Ken Kobetsky noted that CEU’s awarded for this meeting are in the registration packets.

IntelliDrive Overview and Strategic Plan – Rick Land, CA
The IntelliDrive Strategic Plan 2009 is a transition from VII last year to focus on intelligent driving via connecting Vehicle-to-Vehicle and Vehicle-to-Roadway for improved mobility and safety. Under a 2004 partnership between USDOT, AASHTO and the automobile industry to advance VII, AASHTO developed a strategic plan last year to guide the initiative.

New Business
Solicitation – New AASHTO Engineering Fellow - Ken Kobetsky, AASHTO
The solicitation is open for the next AASHTO Engineering Fellow for 2009-2010.

Adjournment
The acting Chairman adjourned the meeting at 11:49 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
King W. Gee
SCOH Secretary
FHWA, USDOT