MONDAY, MAY 04, 2009

NOTICE TO THE MEMBERS OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON HIGHWAYS

FROM: NEIL PEDERSEN, MD, SCOH VICE-CHAIR

We are very excited about the upcoming Standing Committee on Highways Strategic Plan Workshop to be held in Bedford Falls, Pennsylvania. Time spent discussing the strategic direction of SCOH will greatly influence our future efforts.

In preparation for the workshop, you should have three important documents:

- An agenda for the two day workshop;
- An analysis of the responses from all AASHTO committee members to a survey regarding what issues they believe SCOH should address in its Strategic Plan;
- An analysis from 20 key stakeholders who were interviewed about their perspectives regarding the SCOH Strategic Plan.

These documents will provide the background for our discussions. Please review them in preparation for the workshop but we will summarize them again at the start of our meeting.

We look forward to your attendance and to start of our process of updating the SCOH Strategic Plan.
Agenda
Standing Committee on Highways Strategic Plan Workshop
May 14, 2009
Bedford Springs, Pennsylvania

8:00 Welcome and Overview
   Amadeo Saenz
   Neil Pedersen

8:15 Presentation of Survey and Interview Findings
   Gordon Proctor
   Plan Development Process
   Shobna Varma
   SWOT analysis
   Interview results
   Survey results
   Top recommended technical issues for SCOH
   Top recommended advocacy issues for SCOH

8:50 First Breakout Group Discussion
   Question for Groups – In light of calls for increased advocacy and SCOH
   participation on documenting financial need, how does SCOH update its Vision
   and Mission?

9:50 First Group Reports
   Each breakout group summarizes its discussion on how the Vision and Mission
   should be altered to reflect SCOH’s focus.
   Suggested changes to Vision and Mission recorded.

10:20 Group Exercise to Amend Vision and Mission
   Vision and Mission will be projected on screen. As a group, they will be amended
   to reflect the consensus positions expressed by the breakout group discussions.

11:20 Second Breakout Group Discussion
   Question for Groups – What elements of the existing 1998 SCOH Strategic Plan
   should be retained?

Noon Lunch

12:45 Second Group Reports
   Each group reports on how they would retain, rewrite or amend elements of the
   existing 1998 SCOH Strategic Plan.
   Suggestions recorded.

1:30 Third Breakout Group Discussion
   Question for Groups: Between 7 and 12 items of the AASHTO Strategic Plan
   that ranked high in the survey and are also aligned with the current SCOH
Strategic Plan will be discussed for if and how they should be incorporated into the new SCOH Strategic Plan.

2:30 Third Group Reports
Each group reports on their recommendations on how the discussed AASHTO goals or objectives should be included in the SCOH Strategic Plan. Recommended actions recorded.

3:15 Break

3:30 Fourth Breakout Group Discussion
Discussion of how the remaining items from the survey that are part of the AASHTO Strategic Plan should be incorporated into the SCOH Strategic Plan.

4:30 Fourth Group Reports
Each group reports on their recommendations on how the discussed survey items/AASHTO goals or objectives should be included in the SCOH Strategic Plan. Recommended actions recorded.

5:00 Adjourn

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Friday
May 15, 2009

8:00 Round Robin Group Exercise
Consultant team worked Thursday evening to consolidate the various suggested amendments to the SCOH Strategic Plan as reported by the breakout groups from the day before. The various suggestions will be passed out and projected on the screen as the first set of potential items to be considered for the plan.

Facilitators will go around the room asking each member to identify additional items they feel are important but have not yet been included. The purpose of this exercise is to ensure that all SCOH members have an opportunity to add items they believe are important and should be considered.

9:00 Group Exercise on Items to Retain from Existing Plan
Overnight the consultant team will have consolidated all proposed items to be retained from the existing SCOH Plan. A round robin group exercise will be held to review each item suggested to determine the degree of consensus as to whether it should be retained. The desired outcome will be consensus as to which items should be retained.

10:00 Break
Summary, Conclusions, Next Steps

By this point:
- The Vision and Mission will have been updated from the day before;
- The group will have discussed in breakout groups and as a committee of the whole which items should be retained from the existing plan;
- They will have discussed the new AASHTO Strategic Plan items to seek consensus on which ones should be included in the SCOH Plan;
- They will each have had an opportunity to identify additional items that should be included;

Amadeo and Neil will summarize that they will work with the consultant team to develop a First Draft of a new Strategic Plan within two weeks. This plan and the summary of the meeting will be distributed to all SCOH members.

Approximately one month after distribution of the First Draft Strategic Plan, a conference call will be scheduled for members to offer general comments. As a result of those comments, a Second Draft will be attempted.

Members will be asked to post comments on a project website regarding their thoughts on the draft plan. Hopefully, a virtual dialogue will be conducted until the fall meeting when the group can meet again.

At the fall meeting, the group will devote between one half and one day to completing language for the final SCOH Strategic Plan.
NCHRP
Standing Committee on Highways Strategic Plan Update (20-07/Task 275)

SCOH Survey Results

Transportation Research Board
NAS-NRC

Limited Use Document

This Progress Report is furnished only for review by members of the NCHRP project panel and is regarded as fully privileged. Dissemination of information included herein must be approved by the NCHRP.

April 3, 2008
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Executive Summary

The Standing Committee on Highways remains the pre-eminent body for highway engineering expertise but decreasing transportation budgets and increasing travel restrictions threaten its continued ability to function as a forum for engineering policy and standard development.

A survey of more than 350 AASHTO committee members was conducted to identify SCOH’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats as the committee prepares to update its Strategic Plan. An analysis of the survey responses reveals the following major themes:

**Strengths:** SCOH remains a highly respected committee for its engineering expertise; its role as an engineering forum, and; its unified voice for highway excellence.

**Weaknesses:** Its major reported weaknesses are that it communicates ineffectively across its subcommittees and with other standing committees; it is highway centric to the exclusion of other modes, and; that its operates too slowly.

**Opportunities:** Its greatest opportunity is to help the larger AASHTO organization communicate the value of transportation and to use new media to reach states with training and information.

**Threats:** The greatest perceived threat to SCOH is that slashed state travel budgets endanger the forum for state collaboration that has been the traditional backbone of the committee.

Figure 1: Expertise is viewed as SCOH's greatest strength.

The SWOT analysis indicates that SCOH will have to balance important but somewhat competing demands. A majority of the AASHTO respondents called for SCOH to expand its interests beyond just highway technical standards, to increase coordination of its subcommittees, and to act more strategically overall. At the same time, a significant minority of respondents warned that a dilution of SCOH’s highway focus will endanger the very forum and very focus which has led to the committee’s unparalleled expertise and its unparalleled stature as the most respected highway engineering body in the world. Also, many chief engineers noted that the SCOH is the only forum in which they regularly meet with their engineering peers to discuss and exchange engineering information. They suggest that if they lose that...
Survey Results

SCOH Strategic Plan

engineering forum, they will lose the most important feature of SCOH. SCOH’s major challenge, then, is to operate more strategically while preserving the opportunity for informal engineering exchange among members.

Governance

Governance issues surrounding SCOH seemed important to the respondents. Governance issues cited included SCOH’s direction or lack of direction to subcommittees; SCOH’s role in project development in relation to the role played by the Standing Committee on Planning and the Standing Committee on the Environment; SCOH’s overall coordination with other committees; and, SCOH’s role in highway safety. Respondents indicated that SCOH needs to clarify how it interacts with other committees regarding important cross cutting issues such as safety, project development, and the environment. In the survey, 275 respondents indicated that the issue of clarifying SCOH’s role in project development was either Moderate, High or Very High. Only 21 respondents rated the issue of clarification as Low or Very Low. In an open-ended question about governance issues surrounding SCOH, the response rate was much lower. The clear majority who did comment indicated that more coordination was needed between SCOH, its subcommittees and other committees. At the same time, many indicated that work loads and travel restrictions inhibit additional meetings.

Interview Results

In addition to the survey, the project team also conducted 20 interviews with key stakeholders including chairs of other major committees and all the SCOH subcommittees. Those results will be reported in a separate document. Overall, those interview comments tend to correlate to the survey results, except that the interview subjects tended not to expect SCOH to assume a national advocacy role for transportation funding.
Strategic Priorities

In addition to addressing strengths, weaknesses and governance issues, AASHTO members were asked to rank the items in the Draft AASHTO Strategic Plan to indicate which ones should be the highest priority in the SCOH Strategic Plan. The responses were very clear in terms of members’ perspectives. The members overwhelmingly reconfirmed what an earlier survey for the overall AASHTO Strategic Plan indicated – that the financial shortfalls in transportation dominate all other issues. The two AASHTO strategic priorities of Re-Establish Transportation as a National Priority and Secure Net, New Revenue clearly were the most important issues ranked in the SCOH survey.

What is less clear is what role the respondents expect SCOH to play regarding these two issues. AASHTO has a Re-Authorization Steering Committee and many on-going efforts to address those two critical priorities. In the survey directions, respondents were told to rank the Draft AASHTO Strategic Plan items not in terms of their overall importance to transportation in general, but in terms of the issues’ relevance to SCOH’s priorities. It is unclear as to whether respondents:

- failed to understand those directions;
- understood the direction but felt SCOH should be actively engaged in documenting financial needs;
- or if the respondents are unaware of the larger efforts to generate

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Figure 3 Fiscal issues were rated highest overall, followed by safety.
national recognition for transportation investment and felt that SCOH should promote such efforts.

Despite the ambiguity between what is an issue for AASHTO versus what should be an issue for SCOH, the members in their rankings and their comments indicated that the quality of not only the transportation system but the quality of SCOH itself is threatened by budget shortfalls. Members commented that if travel restrictions continue and if state departments of transportation continue to downsize, that it will be increasingly difficult to bring highway engineers together to meet. Respondents repeatedly emphasized that the strength of SCOH was its role as a collaborative forum of national experts to reach common agreement on standards and policies. If the members cannot meet regularly, the long-held practice which created SCOH’s strength will be threatened. There was a strong sentiment expressed that either travel money must be provided to bring members together or that new means need to be used to allow members to interact.

The Draft AASHTO Strategic Plan includes 26 items comprised of four goals and 22 objectives. All 26 were presented in the survey for members to rank in regard to their importance to SCOH. Five of those issues involved national advocacy issues which are common to AASHTO but less common to SCOH. If one assumes that those five policy items are not directly related to SCOH’s mission and are excluded, then the top five remaining priorities for SCOH would include:

- Help cut fatalities in half by 2030;
- Promote the use of emerging research, technologies, and materials;
- Expand training opportunities using the internet and other innovations;
- Help create a congestion-free America, and;
- Improve the national freight network.

SCOH will need to discern whether it has an appropriate role to play in advocating for additional national investment in transportation. Or, it will need to set aside some of the AASHTO objectives as being critically important – yet outside of SCOH’s purview – and prioritize the remaining issues which are most closely aligned with its traditional roles.

Figure 4 When policy issues are excluded, safety, new technology and training become the top-ranked issues.

- Help cut fatalities in half by 2030;
- Promote the use of emerging research, technologies, and materials;
- Expand training opportunities using the internet and other innovations;
- Help create a congestion-free America, and;
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Project Background

The Standing Committee on Highways last updated its Strategic Plan in 1998. Since then, of course, the transportation environment has changed considerably. Issues such as the deterioration in fuel tax receipts, Climate Change, and accountability have arisen. Also, AASHTO is in process of adopting a new strategic plan for the entire organization. That plan is expected to be adopted in May at the Spring Meeting and could influence SCOH’s activities.

**DRAFT AASHTO Strategic Plan**

**Goal 1. Re-establish transportation as a national priority**
1A. Secure national support for sufficient, sustainable 'net new' revenue through a diversified portfolio of funding sources
1B. Improve the national freight network to keep America competitive in the global economy
1C. Accelerate project delivery
1D. Cut fatalities in half by 2030
1E. Support national defense and improve disaster response
1F. Create a congestion-free America through improvements to the multimodal transportation system and improve system performance through advanced technology and operations
1G. Advocate transportation, energy, and climate change policies that enhance the national and state economies, improve national security and reduce greenhouse gases
1H. Promote accountability through performance-based management to enhance the national transportation system, and work with strategic partners to develop a framework of goals, standards and metrics tailored to meet individual state needs.

**Goal 2. Advocate and communicate to achieve AASHTO's goals**
2A. Create strategic partnerships
2B. Develop and communicate the AASHTO Action Agenda to policy makers, partners, stakeholders, and the public
2C. Brand AASHTO as the states’ national voice for transportation
2D. Communicate the value of transportation to citizens, community, quality of life, and the economy

**Goal 3. Provide world class technical services**
3A. Identify, communicate, and facilitate use of emerging research, technologies, materials, processes, and programs
3B. Increase use of AASHTO technical services and products
3C. Maximize participation in technical activities
3D. Expand training opportunities and the array of offerings by using “webinars”, video conferencing and other technologies
3E. Enhance the centers of excellence in environment and finance and develop centers of excellence in safety, operations, and freight
3F. Develop technical services for climate change mitigation and adaptation

**Goal 4. Assist State DOTs with leadership and performance**
4A. Provide training and assistance to advance leadership skills and performance management techniques
4B. Provide a comprehensive framework for accelerated project delivery of all transportation projects
4C. Assist states in addressing issues of workforce recruitment, retention, succession planning, core competencies and professional development in emerging areas
4D. Develop an environment for strengthening community relationships to better integrate transportation, land use, and economic development

Table 1 Draft AASHTO Strategic Plan
In preparation for the SCOH strategic planning meeting to be held in May with the AASHTO Spring Meeting, the committee contracted for a survey and series of 20 interviews to be conducted. The survey and interviews focused on three primary issues: a strength, weakness, opportunities and threat (SWOT) analysis; a series of questions regarding “governance” questions of how SCOH can best interact with its subcommittees and other standing committees, and; a ranking by respondents of which of the Goals and Objectives from the AASHTO Strategic Plan should be adopted as the top priorities for SCOH. Those priorities would then be incorporated into the SCOH Strategic Plan and pursued for implementation.

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<th>Committees /Subcommittees of Respondents</th>
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<td>Design</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>Safety Plan</td>
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<td>SCOH</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>Traffic Engineering</td>
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<td>Performance Management</td>
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<td>Other</td>
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<td>Materials</td>
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<td>Finance &amp; Adm.</td>
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<td>Maintenance</td>
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<td>Info. Systems</td>
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<td>Operations &amp; Management</td>
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<td>Construction</td>
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<td>Civil Rights</td>
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<td>ROW &amp; Utilities</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Aviation</td>
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Table 2 Respondents’ committee assignments.

As can be seen in Table 2, the respondents serve on more than 28 different committees. In all 361 persons responded, or about one third of the approximately 1,100 AASHTO committee members who were solicited by email. The survey was a web-based instrument and was open for use for approximately three weeks in February and March.
Strengths

The section about SCOH’s strengths elicited more comments than any other section of the survey. It is clear that the committee is highly respected and appreciated for the decades of contributions it has made to the transportation profession. One hundred and sixty-one respondents took the time to answer the open-ended question regarding what is SCOH’s greatest strength. Figure 5 below illustrates a rather arbitrary consolidation of the many positive comments into general categories of concepts expressed. As can be seen, the most common references used were terms such as “expertise,” “forum,” “reputation,” “diversity of experience,” “national scope,” and “stature.” Among the comments were:

“I think the greatest strength lies in the forum it creates for transportation officials across the country to collaborate, and exchange information and ideas on a wide variety of transportation issues.”

“Highly skill staff from around the states work well together so that engineering policy and procedures are flexible and applicable in all states.”

“Recognized leader in highway technical issues worldwide; sharing of best practices and forum to discuss issues of common concern.”

"Central point of communication with resources. Can quickly identify key players in almost all disciplines nationwide."

“The broad based support across the stakeholder spectrum as well as the integration of multiple disciplines that the various groups bring to the table.”

“AASHTO is recognized as a national leader. You have the respect of both federal and State partners.”

“Good technical strength and long term technical leadership.”

“The major strength of SCOH is its knowledge base and technical competencies. These strengths are invaluable to the states. Especially during this period of our country’s history where longevity and retention of skilled staff is at its lowest for state(s)…..”

“Excellent personnel resources; commitment of members to mission; quality working relationships developed from multiple interactions.”

“The lines of communications with FHWA, and other states. Many problems are solved, counsel given in the evenings and at break time, in addition to the discussions on the agenda. The knowledge sharing of how each state handles issues is invaluable.”

“Oversight from SCOH to the subcommittees seem to be working well with the current subcommittee chair format. Subcommittee and technical committee members respond better to soft oversight than strong directed control.”
The compliments far outweighed criticisms of SCOH. Among non-SCOH members, the expertise of SCOH was cited most often as its greatest strength. For SCOH members, the invaluable role it plays as a forum for highway engineering experts was repeatedly noted as its strength. Members said it is one of the few places in which they can interact with and learn from peers across the nation who are dealing with similar issues. The chief engineers from the states represent the most consolidated group of practical
highway engineering expertise in the world, they noted. Being able to converse with such peers was cited as a critical opportunity for professional development by several of the respondents.

Weaknesses

One-hundred and fifty-one open-ended comments were offered in response to questions regarding SCOH’s weaknesses. Categorizing these comments requires some arbitrary interpretation. The single largest category as interpreted in Figure 6 below is “weak communication.” However, a common theme stated in different ways regarded the committee’s biggest weakness being a lack of participation, a lack of travel allowances or a lack of time for members to participate. If those three categories are grouped together, then the biggest perceived weakness of SCOH is outside of its direct control and rather reflects the budget and staff constraints faced by its constituent members. Members frequently cited “lack of participation,” “time constraints,” or “travel restrictions” as weaknesses. If those topics are interpreted to be part of a larger issue of state time and travel restrictions, then that becomes the largest single identified weakness with 25 related comments. Overall, the issues of communication, being too highway focused, being slow and declining participation were most commonly cited as weaknesses.

“Function of the whole system relies on volunteer time from people who are the busiest in the departments they represent.”

“Participation in Subcommittee meetings and technical committees is dwindling due to out of state travel restrictions in many states. This needs to be addressed.”

“Many participants are limited in their ability to fully contribute due to restrictions on travel and involvement in AASHTO activities.”

“Participation is limited sometimes because of national and local fiscal constraints.”

“Competition from other ‘home’ duties makes full participation on various committees difficult.”

Sixteen comments, or little more than 10 percent of the total, addressed some form of a lack of communication or coordination with its subcommittees or other standing committees. Such comments included:

“SCOH has not frequently sought out the input of other committees to seek intermodal and multimodal perspectives on transportation issues.”

“Lack of communication between committees and in many cases the technical subcommittees that serve them.”

“Other than planning a yearly meeting, very little information is disseminated unless you go on their website to look for it.”

“Communication within the various subcommittees can be weak at times. Communication between subcommittees is that much weaker.”
Comments about weaknesses in SCOH most commonly addressed a lack of communication, its singular highway focus, a slow pace and declining participation caused by travel restrictions and overworked committee members.

Figure 6 Comments on SCOH’s weaknesses.
“Coordination between committees seems limited. The subcommittees don’t always know what is going on in the other subcommittees and there could be duplication of effort or conflicting priorities and goals.”

Another category of “weakness” comments were that SCOH was too “highway centric.” Admittedly, SCOH is the highway committee but what the comments appeared to indicate was a desire that SCOH reach out and engage with issues such as land use, climate change and engage with the other modes. There were 12 such comments including:

“Somewhat narrow engineering view on highways only -- could be expanded, for example, in areas of storm water mitigation as an integral part of reconstruction and or new projects rather than an after-thought.”

“Lack of knowledge in other modal areas - especially in public transportation.”

“The lack of interaction with other standing committees that have similar responsibilities such as planning and highways or environmental and highways.”

“Restructure AASHTO committees and education programs to address goals and actions based on cross functional multi-modal strategy groupings, not modal separations. AASHTO needs to support interdisciplinary transportation activities better....”

Other comments were that SCOH is slow or bureaucratic. Such comments generally regarded the pace at which subcommittees and the full committee proceed with the adoption of standards and policies.

“Amount of time it takes to identify and react to transportation issues”

“At times it looks too bureaucratic.”

“SCOH is too big.....thwarts meaningful discussion.”

“Possible slow response time when important issues move quickly”.

“Getting too big or diversified.”

“One "pipe" among several AASHTO organization "stovepipes."

“Paralysis of analysis.”

All remaining comments were widely dispersed over a large number of issues as seen in Figure 6. A recurring minority theme in the comments was that although others may want SCOH to expand its role, that dilution of its focus already is a weakness. A consistent minority of respondents emphasized that SCOH should remain focused upon its historical issues of developing standards and policies for highway engineering.

“SCOH has lost sight of its original mission of setting standards and become an industry advocacy group (lobbyist).”
Opportunities

One hundred and twenty open-ended comments were made regarding opportunities for SCOH and the leading category clearly was related to helping educate the nation about transportation’s importance.

“The U.S. is in desperate need of leadership that is engineer-based and as free as possible from political influences. Isolation from political agendas will serve to maintain AASHTO’s credibility with industry, the citizens, and the taxpayer,” wrote one respondent.

The brevity of the comments make it difficult to discern how the respondents expect SCOH to engage in a national political dialogue about transportation investment. However, the respondents appear to be looking to SCOH to help document the serious degradation in the nation’s infrastructure and to help demonstrate how transportation underpins the nation’s economy. Many of the respondents appeared to not discern a difference between SCOH and AASHTO in recommending what should be the SCOH priorities.

“Better explain the value to society and the economy. Better explain that without safe and efficient transportation network we could not maintain our place as a first rate nation.”

“SCOH has the chance to show leadership for improvements in all modes, all with the potential to improve highway operations performance.”

“State transportation officials from around the country need to unify their concerns and efforts to present a unified force in dealing with common challenges that face every state in being better able to deliver projects and secure funding for transportation.”

“Opportunity to shape the direction of the transportation in the future. We have a chance to enhance the quality of our workforces and extend their expertise. Time to put forth new ideas. Chance to bring the thoughts back to common sense approaches …..”

In all, 24 of the 121 “Opportunity” comments related to the concept of assuming a leadership position in the national transportation discussion. As noted in the Executive Summary and elaborated upon later, these comments could represent one of several sentiments. Perhaps members feel so strongly about the funding issues that they raise them at every opportunity, even if SCOH is not primarily charged with engaging in funding discussions. Another possibility is that members feel that SCOH’s technical expertise puts it in the best position to explain the consequences of infrastructure funding shortfalls. Another possibility is that survey respondents simply misunderstood the survey and commented on general transportation issues and not just issues related to SCOH’s strategic direction. However, the sentiments appear to indicate that the membership sees SCOH as being able to contribute to the nation’s understanding of transportation needs.

Another clear sentiment was that SCOH should seek new ways to engage with members for training, policy development, discussions and other needed interactions. Eight comments related to the use of the internet, “webinars,” video conferencing and other media to disseminate training. In the related interviews, members noted the such communication may help with one-way communication such as
As mentioned clearly in the earlier “Weakness” discussion and later in the “Threats” discussion, members see the inability to interact face-to-face as among the greatest challenges to SCOH.

As can be seen in Figure 7, the other sentiments for Opportunities were widely dispersed.

**Figure 7** The most commonly cited opportunities for SCOH were in the areas of promoting transportation nationally and in using new technology to increase participation by members.
Threats

Money, time and travel are viewed as the greatest threats to SCOH. Repeatedly, respondents cited the deterioration in infrastructure conditions caused by under investment as a key threat - not directly to SCOH but to the high-quality transportation system for which its advocates. Out of 119 comments, 22 cited travel restrictions as a threat to SCOH while 19 cited inadequate funding. Several individual comments were phrased differently but could be considered to be related to travel or funding. These include declining committee participation, lack of financial support for subcommittee efforts or consultants replacing state in-house expertise which are SCOH’s foundation.

“Current travel restrictions by the majority of States threatens to limit the participation and input from State DOT’s. A greatly reduced value may be realized because of low State participation.”

“Huge numbers of state employees have been or will be eliminated due to the economic conditions in all states. These reductions threaten to undermine the very foundation of AASHTO, for it IS the states' organization.”

“No money, no national strategy, horrible economy, huge competition for funds.”

“Loss of support and membership in current fiscal environment. Loss of relevance if the organization focuses on advocacy rather than national standards and best practices.”

“State budgets make it difficult to support out of state travel and expenses for AASHTO memberships and products.”

“Economic threat to local budgets impacts participation at the national level. Workload at the State level seriously curtails participation on an ongoing basis. Penny wise pound foolish.”

The next two most serious threats commonly cited were vocal interest groups who are opposed or indifferent to highway investment and the issue of Climate Change. Climate change was cited both as a physical threat to highway infrastructure but also as a political threat if AASHTO does not respond to Climate Change meaningfully.

“Small advocacy groups are given priority over the primary mission of improving safety and mobility.”

“If SCOH does not engage in important future strategic issues like global climate change, it will no longer maintain its preeminence as the leading highway organization in the world.”
Travel restrictions and other symptoms of the financial crisis facing transportation were viewed by survey respondents as the largest threats to SCOH.
Governance

Questions of SCOH governance were addressed in two formats – one a ranking in response to two questions and the second being an open-ended question. The two questions were: “Please indicate the degree to which you think the issue of Governance should be clarified by SCOH. Governance is defined as, ‘The division of roles and responsibilities for decision making.’ Focus SCOH should address to this governance issue:

- SCOH’s interaction with its subcommittees:
- SCOH’s role in project development in relation to other committees such as Planning, Environment, Traffic Safety, Performance Management.”

Figure 9 Clarity of roles and clear lines of communication are important to respondents.

As seen in Figure 9, the large majority of respondents indicated that the issue of governance was at least moderately deserving of SCOH’s attention. More than 57 percent of respondents rated the Governance issue as High or Very High in terms of deserving attention.

In the open-ended questions 42 responses were received with the largest single sentiment indicating that a greater sense of direction, strategy or coordination is needed between SCOH and its subcommittees.

“Currently SCOH doesn’t seem to set a direction and then assign activities to the appropriate subcommittees to assure that SCOH is working towards its goal. We are more of a bottom up organization, where we react to the work of the subcommittees.”

“I feel some of the other Standing Committees operate too much on their own.”

“SCOH should ensure its strategic plan is being followed and accomplished by the subcommittees and that they are complimenting each other.”
“SCOH subcommittees tend to operate independently with little coordination between them.”

“Transportation is a continuum whether talking about planning, operations or maintenance. We need to work together to know each others’ initiatives, because different subcommittees will bring a different perspective...”

“I see SCOH as the umbrella to everything in AASHTO. They must be seeking ways to connect the committees to each other. Assignments must (be) designed so that the committees will team together to tackle bigger goals that go beyond any one committee.”

“If the efforts of the committees and subcommittees are not reviewed and supported by the Standing committee then those efforts will not have the strength they are supposed to have.”

“There is not a very strong link between the committees and SCOH.”

However, a strong countervailing sentiment was expressed that the subcommittees should be left alone to focus upon the technical issues which they identify as important to their members.

“Please stay out of the technical committees’ business. We can't stand to be helped.”

“Committees should be autonomous enough to conduct business effectively, but be assured that SCOH is available as a resource to champion any critical projects/initiatives.”

“If you saddle all the "do good" with the technical, nothing will get done”.

“Get the right people on the committees, support them, and let them do the job.”

At least three comments referred to the SCOH structure as being too bureaucratic. At least two indicated that they did not know what the structure was nor did they know how the structure is intended to operate. The remaining comments were quite diverse and did not appear to indicate any additional common themes.

Figure 10
Respondents indicated that more coordination and communication between SCOH and other committees is needed.

Another sentiment was that subcommittees should be left alone
Strategic Issues

As mentioned above, AASHTO has drafted a new strategic plan. In the SCOH survey instrument, the draft Strategic Plan was displayed and a five point scale was listed beside each item. Respondents were directed:

“On the following five point scale, please rate the degree to which you believe each objective should become a focus area for SCOH’s efforts. In other words, if you think the issue should be a priority for SCOH please score it High or Very High. If you think it should be a low priority for SCOH, please rate it Low or Very Low…. This is not a ranking of the value of the AASHTO Goal or Objective but rather a ranking of the emphasis that SCOH should place upon the objective as the committee develops its agenda.”

As seen in Figure 11 there was clear consensus that AASHTO’s top two priorities should also be SCOH’s top two priorities. The goal of “Re-Establish Transportation as a National Priority” and the objective of “Secure Sustainable New, New Revenue” were the most highly ranked items. The third highest priority was Cut Fatalities in Half by 2030 followed by Identify, Communicate and Use Emerging Research, Technologies, and Materials as fourth.

The results are somewhat problematic. SCOH’s traditional role has been as a technical committee and not one which has engaged in national advocacy. The advocacy efforts generally have been reserved for the Board of Directors or the
Reauthorization Steering Committee.

A detailed reading of the open-ended comments appear to indicate that respondents want SCOH to engage in the funding issue as a technical resource to AASHTO. The comments appear to indicate that respondents believe that SCOH can provide the technical expertise to explain the consequences of continued under investment in transportation.

“Educate the common citizen on the importance of transportation and make references they can identify in their daily lives.”

“Given the state of the economy I think I would focus on the role of transportation in establishing, maintaining, and growing a sound economy. For transportation to become a national priority it has to be felt on an individual level.”

“SCOH needs to play a more active role in supplying information on the role transportation plays in ensuring a strong national economy. The standards established by the subcommittees of SCOH and approved by SCOH need to support this effort.”

These responses could be interpreted in several ways:

1. Respondents may have misunderstood the survey which twice indicated that they should rank issues in terms of their importance to SCOH, not in terms of their overall importance;
2. Members may have understood that advocacy is not SCOH’s primary role but felt that the financial issue is so important that SCOH should lend its stature to the effort;
3. Respondents may not be aware of the extensive efforts AASHTO and the Board of Directors have taken to secure new funding and they believe advocacy efforts are needed;
4. Since the large majority of respondents were not SCOH members, they may not understand SCOH’s role.

In designing the survey instrument, the project team and project panel discussed whether to strip from the survey questions any AASHTO Goals or Objectives which were not directly relevant to SCOH. It was decided not to do so but rather to list in the survey the Draft AASHTO Strategic Plan in its entirety. To date, 20 interviews with key stakeholders have taken place. Those interviews are not yet published, but in those interviews the key stakeholders have not advocated for SCOH’s greater involvement in national advocacy. Those stakeholders tend to be state CEOs and other key committee chairs who probably are well aware of the national advocacy efforts already under way.

In Figure 11 the rankings of all scores for the Goals and Objectives are shown with weighted values. The weights assigned negative values to a ranking if the issue was rated as Low or Very Low and positive values to an issue if it was rated High or Very High.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3 Scoring weights.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Low: -3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To test the sensitivity of the rankings and weights, the importance of the issues was again scored based upon a set of five open-ended questions. In the open-ended questions respondents were asked to take all of the Goals and Objectives and to identify the top five which were most important to them. In both the tabular ranking based upon the AASHTO Strategic Plan as show in Figure 11 and in the open-ended questions, the relative rank order of the Goals and Objectives varied somewhat but not dramatically. The
goal of Making Transportation a National Priority is number 1 and the objective of Securing Net New Revenue remains number 2 and Reducing Fatalities is number 3 in both the weighted and open-ended rankings. Figures 12-16 show the rankings of what issues were deemed most important to the individual respondents in terms of their first, second, third, fourth and fifth priorities.

Figure 12 Top issues.

Figure 13 Top issues.
Figure 14 Top issues

Figure 15 Top issues
The five charts in Figures 12-16 show that about 9 of the 26 AASHTO Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives consistently are ranked in the top five issues most important to the survey respondents.
Table 4 Frequency of number one rankings.

Table 4 includes the nine issues all of which were ranked as the highest five scoring items in the open-ended ranking of issues requesting SCOH action. It should be noted clearly that five of the national policy or advocacy issues were removed on the assumption that they may not be relevant to SCOH’s traditional technical mission. It should noted, that initiative 1.E. “Support national defense and improve disaster response” rated highly as an individual issue when individuals were asked the open-ended question regarding their highest priorities. It would appear that 1.E. is very important to a small number of respondents because they ranked it as their first priority. However, in the overall rankings the measure scored much lower.
A final sorting was conducted to rank issues which are more central to SCOH’s traditional role. In this sort, any AASHTO Goals and Objectives that relate to the setting of national transportation funding policy, national political advocacy or national communication efforts were deleted. Five of the 26 items were therefore removed from the rankings. What were left were the engineering, training, project development, and other issues which have traditionally been within SCOH’s mandate.

**Figure 17** This illustrates ranking of traditional SCOH focus areas.

The yellow bar represents the mean of all rankings. The green bars indicate the upper and lower limits of one standard deviation above or below the mean. As seen, only five issues were below one standard deviation from the mean ranking. This could be interpreted to indicate that nearly all of the issues are important to SCOH with the exception of the five shown below one standard deviation from the mean.
As a result of this ranking of the “technical” issues which are most important to SCOH members the following 15 are listed in rank order of importance:

1. **D.** Cut fatalities in half by 2030.

3. **A.** Identify, communicate and facilitate use of emerging research, technologies, materials, processes, and programs.

3. **D.** Expand training opportunities and the array of offerings by using “webinars,” video conferencing, and other technologies.

1. **F.** Create a congestion-free America through improvements to the multimodal transportation system and improve system performance through advanced technology and operations.

1. **B.** Improve the national freight network to keep America competitive in the global economy.

**Goal 3** Provide world class technical services.

4. **A.** Provide training and assistance to advance leadership skills and performance management techniques.

3. **C.** Maximize participation in technical activities.

2. **A.** Create strategic partnerships.

4. **B.** Provide a comprehensive framework for accelerated project delivery of all transportation projects.

4. **C.** Assist states in addressing issues of workforce recruitment, retention, succession planning, core competencies and professional development in emerging areas.

**Goal 4** Assist states with leadership and performance.

1. **H.** Promote accountability through performance-based management to enhance the national transportation system, and work with strategic partners to develop a framework of goals, standards, and metrics tailored to meet individual state needs.

3. **B.** Increase use of AASHTO technical services and products.

1. **C.** Accelerate project delivery.

As seen above, only five issues fall below one standard deviation of the mean in terms of their rankings. They are:

4. **D.** Develop an environment for strengthening community relationships to better integrate transportation, land use, and economic development.

1. **E.** Support national defense and improve disaster response.

3. **E.** Enhance the centers of excellence in environment and finance and develop centers of excellence in safety, operations, and freight.
1.G. Advocate transportation, energy, and climate change policies that enhance the national and state economies, improve national security and reduce greenhouse gases.

3.F. Develop technical services for climate change mitigation and adaptation.

As noted above in Table 4, 1.E. “Support national defense and improve disaster response” is rated low overall but rated in the top five of issues which individuals rated most important to them in the open-ended questions.

Objective 1.G. “Advocate transportation, energy and climate change policies that enhance the national and state economies, improve national security and reduce greenhouse gases” may have been viewed to be outside the scope of SCOH since it involved advocacy of environmental policies. However, the lowest ranking was for an item that appears relevant to SCOH’s mission. 3.F. is to “Develop technical services for climate change mitigation and adaptation.” It was clearly ranked the lowest overall, possibly because respondents believe that other AASHTO groups already have taken the lead on climate change. As seen in Figure 15, the two objectives relating to reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions were clearly rated lowest overall.

![Intensity of Very Low Scores](image)

**Figure 18** The average of all objectives which were ranked “Low” or “Very Low” had an average number of such low rankings of 6.

The low score for the Climate Change objectives had much higher negative rankings in the categories of being of “Low” or “Very Low” importance to the SCOH Strategic Plan.

All Scores

Table 4 below includes all scores for all of the Strategic Goals and Initiatives. A review of the “Low” and “Very Low” columns indicate a relatively small number of low votes except for the final two items related to Climate Change.
### Survey Results

#### SCOH Strategic Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal 1. Re-establish transportation as a national priority</th>
<th>1 Very Low</th>
<th>2 Low</th>
<th>3 Moderately</th>
<th>4 High</th>
<th>5 Very High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1A. Secure national support for sufficient, sustainable 'net new' revenue through a diversified portfolio of funding sources</td>
<td>1 9 43 102 14</td>
<td></td>
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<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1B. Cut fatalities in half by 2030</td>
<td>2 16 76 109 10</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2A. Identify, communicate, and facilitate use of emerging research, technologies, materials, processes, and programs</td>
<td>1 6 90 155 58</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2B. Communicate the value of transportation to citizens, community, quality of life, and the economy</td>
<td>7 14 73 111 10</td>
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<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2C. Expand training opportunities and the array of offerings by using “webinars”, video conferencing and other technologies</td>
<td>1 11 98 139 59</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3A. Develop and communicate the AASHTO Action Agenda to policy makers, partners, stakeholders, and the public</td>
<td>5 13 90 136 66</td>
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<tr>
<td>3B. Create a congestion-free America through improvements to the multimodal transportation system and improve system performance through advanced technology and operations</td>
<td>3 15 100 142 50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Goal 2. Advocate and communicate to achieve AASHTO’s goals</td>
<td>5 7 81 140 50</td>
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<tr>
<td>1B. Improve the national freight network to keep America competitive in the global economy</td>
<td>1 16 111 122 53</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Goal 3. Provide world class technical services</td>
<td>1 4 62 134 51</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2A. Provide training and assistance to advance leadership skills and performance management techniques</td>
<td>5 20 96 134 53</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2B. Create strategic partnerships</td>
<td>6 20 93 145 45</td>
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<tr>
<td>3B. Provide a comprehensive framework for accelerated project delivery of all transportation projects</td>
<td>6 25 99 128 52</td>
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<tr>
<td>4C. Assist states in addressing issues of workforce recruitment, retention,</td>
<td>7 30 88 125 60</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
succession planning, core competencies and professional development in emerging areas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Vote Count</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1A.</td>
<td>Assist State DOTs with leadership and performance</td>
<td>3 9 71 108 55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1H.</td>
<td>Promote accountability through performance-based management to enhance the national transportation system, and work with strategic partners to develop a framework of goals, standards and metrics tailored to meet individual state needs.</td>
<td>5 30 111 117 49</td>
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<tr>
<td>2C.</td>
<td>Brand AASHTO as the states’ national voice for transportation</td>
<td>8 31 95 117 57</td>
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<tr>
<td>3B.</td>
<td>Increase use of AASHTO technical services and products</td>
<td>4 21 141 111 33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1C.</td>
<td>Accelerate project delivery</td>
<td>9 29 104 119 49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4D.</td>
<td>Develop an environment for strengthening community relationships to better integrate transportation, land use, and economic development</td>
<td>11 34 110 113 41</td>
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<tr>
<td>1E.</td>
<td>Support national defense and improve disaster response</td>
<td>5 39 122 109 33</td>
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<tr>
<td>3E.</td>
<td>Enhance the centers of excellence in environment and finance and develop centers of excellence in safety, operations, and freight</td>
<td>5 36 144 96 29</td>
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<tr>
<td>1G.</td>
<td>Advocate transportation, energy, and climate change policies that enhance the national and state economies, improve national security and reduce greenhouse gases</td>
<td>22 53 109 94 34</td>
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<tr>
<td>3F.</td>
<td>Develop technical services for climate change mitigation and adaptation</td>
<td>42 60 122 58 26</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix Survey

Introduction

The Standing Committee on Highways (SCOH) intends to update its 1998 Strategic Plan to address emerging issues and to create alignment with the new draft AASHTO Strategic Plan.

The first step in updating the SCOH strategic plan is to hear from you, the members of the AASHTO community who serve on or interact with the Standing Committee on Highways. This survey intends to capture your insights into which of the many issues facing SCOH should rise to strategic importance for the committee. The committee membership wants to identify the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats that you think it will need to address. Also, the committee wants to know which of the new AASHTO strategic objectives it should focus upon most intently. Finally, the committee wants to know how it can better coordinate with the many other important AASHTO committees. The Standing Committee on Highways interacts with virtually all AASHTO committees and its members want to ensure the interaction is complementary and efficient.

We hope you take a few minutes to complete this survey. It will help SCOH focus its direction on the most important issues facing AASHTO’s transportation community.

Question Set 1 – Roles

Please identify which committees or sub-committees you serve on, or are most interested in.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your Committee or Sub-Committee Involvement</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aviation</td>
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<td>Environment</td>
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<td>Finance &amp; Adm.</td>
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<td>Civil Rights</td>
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<td>Info. Systems</td>
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<td>Audits</td>
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<td>Human Resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>Performance Management</td>
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</table>

Please identify which committees or sub-committees you serve on, or are most interested in.
Following are the new Goals and Objectives which have been identified for the AASHTO Strategic Plan. This plan has not been adopted. However, it is to be considered for adoption at the 2009 Spring Meeting.

**Question Set 2 – Alignment with AASHTO Plan**

On the following five point scale, please rate the degree to which you believe each objective should become a focus area for SCOH’s efforts. In other words, if you think the issue should be a priority for SCOH please score it High or Very High. If you think it should be a low priority for SCOH, please rate it Low or Very Low.

### Draft AASHTO Strategic Goals And Objectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal 1. Re-establish transportation as a national priority</th>
<th>Very Low</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Very High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1A. Secure national support for sufficient, sustainable ‘net new’ revenue through a diversified portfolio of funding sources</td>
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<td>1B. Improve the national freight network to keep America competitive in the global economy</td>
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<tr>
<td>1C. Accelerate project delivery</td>
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<tr>
<td>1D. Cut fatalities in half by 2030</td>
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<tr>
<td>1E. Support national defense and improve disaster response</td>
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<tr>
<td>1F. Create a congestion-free America through improvements to the multimodal transportation system and improve system performance through advanced technology and operations</td>
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<tr>
<td>1G. Advocate transportation, energy, and climate change policies that enhance the national and state economies, improve national security and reduce greenhouse gases</td>
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<tr>
<td>1H. Promote accountability through performance-based management to enhance the national transportation system, and work with strategic partners to develop a framework of goals, standards and metrics tailored to meet individual state needs.</td>
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</table>

### Goal 2. Advocate and communicate to achieve AASHTO’s goals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal 2. Advocate and communicate to achieve AASHTO’s goals</th>
<th>Very Low</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Very High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Draft AASHTO Strategic Goals And Objectives

Please indicate the emphasis you believe SCOH should place upon each draft AASHTO Goal or Objective. This is not a ranking of the value of the AASHTO Goal or Objective but rather a ranking of the emphasis that SCOH should place upon the objective as the committee develops its agenda.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Very Low</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Very High</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2A.</td>
<td>Create strategic partnerships</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☒</td>
<td>☒</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2B.</td>
<td>Develop and communicate the AASHTO Action Agenda to policy makers, partners, stakeholders, and the public</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☒</td>
<td>☒</td>
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<tr>
<td>2C.</td>
<td>Brand AASHTO as the states’ national voice for transportation</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☒</td>
<td>☒</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2D.</td>
<td>Communicate the value of transportation to citizens, community, quality of life, and the economy</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☒</td>
<td>☒</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3A.</td>
<td>Identify, communicate, and facilitate use of emerging research, technologies, materials, processes, and programs</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☒</td>
<td>☒</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>3B.</td>
<td>Increase use of AASHTO technical services and products</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☒</td>
<td>☒</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3C.</td>
<td>Maximize participation in technical activities</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☒</td>
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<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3D.</td>
<td>Expand training opportunities and the array of offerings by using “webinars”, video conferencing and other technologies</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☒</td>
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<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>3E.</td>
<td>Enhance the centers of excellence in environment and finance and develop centers of excellence in safety, operations, and freight</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☒</td>
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<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>3F.</td>
<td>Develop technical services for climate change mitigation and adaptation</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<td>☒</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4A.</td>
<td>Provide training and assistance to advance leadership skills and performance management techniques</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<td>☒</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4B.</td>
<td>Provide a comprehensive framework for accelerated project delivery of all transportation projects</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<td>☒</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>4C.</td>
<td>Assist states in addressing issues of workforce recruitment, retention, succession planning, core competencies and professional development in emerging areas</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☒</td>
<td>☒</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Draft AASHTO Strategic Goals And Objectives

Please indicate the emphasis you believe SCOH should place upon each draft AASHTO Goal or Objective. This is not a ranking of the value of the AASHTO Goal or Objective but rather a ranking of the emphasis that SCOH should place upon the objective as the committee develops its agenda.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Very Low</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
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<th>Very High</th>
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<tr>
<td>4D. Develop an environment for strengthening community relationships to better integrate transportation, land use, and economic development</td>
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Question Set 3 – Recommended SCOH Actions

Of the strategic issues you rated most highly for SCOH’s attention, please select the five which are most important to you. In the table below please briefly list the five and provide one sentence about the action you think SCOH should take for each.

For example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategic Initiative</th>
<th>Recommended SCOH Action</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3F. Climate change</td>
<td>SCOH should begin reviewing hydraulic standards to address increased storm events.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3B. Increase use of technical services</td>
<td>SCOH should provide additional guidance for design/ build projects.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3C. Maximize participation</td>
<td>SCOH should work with AASHTO staff and committees to provide technical training on-line or through &quot;webinars.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4C. Staff development</td>
<td>SCOH should partner with other committees to increase professional development for young engineers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4B. Streamlining</td>
<td>SCOH should be active in the authorization legislation to promote streamlining opportunities.</td>
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Add your comments in the grey fields

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategic Initiative</th>
<th>SCOH Action</th>
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Question Set 4 – Governance, Roles and Responsibility
AASHTO has a large number of committees which address different aspects of similar issues. SCOH leadership wants to ensure that the efforts of its committee and its sub-committees are efficient and complementary. Please indicate the degree to which you think the issue of Governance should be clarified by SCOH. Governance is defined as, “The division of roles and responsibilities for decision making.”

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<tr>
<th>Focus SCOH should address to this governance issue.</th>
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<th>Low</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
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<th>Very High</th>
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<tr>
<td>SCOH’s interaction with its sub-committees.</td>
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<tr>
<td>SCOH’s role in project development in relation to other committees such as Planning, Environment, Traffic Safety, Performance Management.</td>
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Do you care to elaborate on your response?

**Question Set 5. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats**

In this open-ended set of questions, please list what you see to be SCOH’s greatest Strength, Weakness, Opportunity and Threat.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SWOT</th>
<th>Issue</th>
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<tr>
<td>Strength</td>
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<td>Weakness</td>
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<td>Opportunity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Threat</td>
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</table>

**Question Set 6 – Final Thoughts**

What statements or recommendations would you like to add that were not addressed?
NCHRP
Standing Committee on Highways Strategic Plan Update (20-07/Task 275)

SCOH
Stakeholder Interviews

Transportation Research Board
NAS-NRC

Limited Use Document
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April 30, 2009
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Executive Summary

SCOH’s challenge is to preserve its strength as a technical resource and engineering forum while addressing its weaknesses of lacking a strategic approach and coordinating ineffectively on issues which cut across committee jurisdictions.

Those are the summary sentiments from 20 interviews with key stakeholders who are on the Standing Committee on Highways or who rely upon it. The interviews were conducted as background for the update of the SCOH Strategic Plan.

Strengths
All who were interviewed praised SCOH. Those outside of SCOH praised its strong technical reputation and its status as the world’s premiere highway standards-setting organization. Stakeholders who were members of SCOH also praised it as an irreplaceable forum for professional development and peer exchange.

Weaknesses
Some cited its greatest weaknesses as a lack of strategic direction, relying on bottom-up policy formation, infrequently interacting with other committees and not engaging on issues that cross committees. It also can be slow due to the large number of issues it tries to address and the large subcommittee structure it uses.

Opportunities
Stakeholders see many opportunities, in part because of the respect and confidence they have in SCOH. Opportunities include providing technical insight to the Board of Director’s efforts to increase revenue, to capitalize on virtual communication to reach more stakeholders and in addressing emerging issues such as accountability and energy conservation. At a time of budget deficits and aging infrastructure, SCOH as the technical leadership group has opportunities to focus upon expedited project delivery, increased safety and enhanced operations to better serve the public – and thereby increase support for transportation.

Threats
Threats to SCOH are in the nature of missed opportunities and reduced relevance. The greatest threat was consistently noted to be restrictions on travel and participation which threaten the quality of meetings which historically were used to reach consensus on standards and to exchange ideas. If members cannot afford to travel or are prohibited from participating – as increasingly occurs – the very nature of the organization will have to change. Also some said SCOH is threatened with reduced relevance by failing to innovate, by being reactive and by not changing in a rapidly changing new world which is concerned with Climate Change, sustainability and accountability.

Strategy and Coordination
The overriding sentiment expressed was that SCOH should take a greater strategic approach to critical issues and identify a “Vital Few.” They could be relevant issues such as expedited project delivery, advanced construction materials, advanced operational strategies or safety. Several suggested identifying relevant items in the AASHTO Strategic Plan as critical focus areas for SCOH. Those interviewed were not unanimous on the strategic issues they recommend. Some disagreed that SCOH should engage in funding debates while others felt strongly that it should. Some – particularly outside SCOH – want it to
engage on Climate Change Adaptation while others did not. Although unanimity on the issues was lacking, a desire for greater strategic focus was common. Once identified, the focus areas would be actively managed and coordinated through the SCOH subcommittee process for resolution.

Background

The existing SCOH Strategic Plan was adopted in 1998. The passage of time and the emerging of many new issues has prompted the Standing Committee on Highways to begin the process of updating its Strategic Plan. The update process included a survey of all AASHTO committee members, which resulted in more than 360 responses. The process also included interviews with 20 key stakeholders, including senior AASHTO staff, the SCOH chair and vice-chair, a current and past AASHTO Board President, chairs of other standing committees and chairs of the SCOH subcommittees. The survey results and interviews were summarized as a Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats analysis for the plan update. Also, the survey and interviews asked respondents to rank issues from the new AASHTO strategic Plan as to how those issues should be incorporated into the SCOH Strategic Plan update. The survey responses are included in a separate document.

Alignment is sought between the SCOH Strategic Plan and the larger AASHTO Strategic Plan but not exclusively. SCOH engages in highly technical but extremely important functions such as setting of standards and policies affecting design, construction, materials and testing. These issues are not directly addressed in the AASHTO Strategic Plan but yet are very important to SCOH’s mission.

As of May 2009, the intended schedule for the SCOH Strategic Plan Update is to conduct a two-day workshop at the AASHTO Spring Meeting. The outcome of the workshop will result in either a draft SCOH Strategic Plan or elements of the plan that will be circulated over the summer for re-consideration at the fall AASHTO Annual Meeting.
SWOT Analysis

A summary of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats derived from the 20 interviews follows. There was considerable consistency in responses among those interviewed, however, each expressed subtle nuances. The project team attempted to record the respondents’ sentiments as completely as possible. After trying to distill the comments the project team concluded that it is most accurate to rely on verbatim observations. Not all comments from every interview are included below but a representative sample for each issue was selected. The responses are presented in this format to allow stakeholders to speak in their own voice, with less filtering from the project team.

Strengths

SCOH’s technical expertise and long-standing reputation are clearly its greatest strength according to the stakeholders interviewed. They cite the diversity in membership, the practical experience of its members and the collaborative process of decision making as resulting in a highly respected technical organization.

“AASHTO standards and specifications and guidelines developed through SCOH certainly are one of AASHTO and SCOH’s greatest strengths,” said one key stakeholder who expressed a commonly reflected sentiment.

“The strength in SCOH is the people on the committee themselves and the knowledge base the members bring with them to the table. We are 50 different states and we have 50 different ways of doing things. That is part of the strength. We get to learn how other states are doing things and we do not have to reinvent the wheel.”

The Committee’s long history and its perceived status as being only second to the Board of Directors is another strength, said one long-time participant. The collaborative form of policy development is a great strength, said another who noted that the wide variety between the states requires collaboration in order to develop standards which all can accept.

“Providing that technical excellence that AASHTO is known for, that is all developed in SCOH through all the technical committees,” said a SCOH member and Chief Engineer. “One of the goals is to provide world class technical service. Working with all the subcommittee, SCOH being the oversight committee pulls it all together and gives the work its blessing.”

“One of SCOH’s strengths, is I know the Canadians and a lot of other countries look to SCOH as a cutting edge group as far as standards, specifications, initiatives and that kind of thing. The Canadians look to us very closely. Another strength is that it give us Chief Engineers a formal forum to sit down together - so states can see what other states are doing. So we don’t repeat the same mistakes,” said another long-time member.

“The strength I appreciate about SCOH is it did have the chief engineers engaged,” said another director and former SCOH member. “Those are the ones who provide the greatest consistency in the department. They came up through the ranks and knew how a DOT was run on almost all levels. Those people had great experience and had a variety of experience,” said the director. “The benefit also is providing networking. It is a strength and should continue.”
“Related to one of the greatest strengths, is AASHTO has very, very strong staff. Tony Kane, Ken Kobetsky and Jim McDonnell are among the great strengths we have.”

Weakness

“It’s greatest strength is its greatest weakness,” said the director of one DOT. “Its greatest strength is that it is narrowly focused on highways. There is so much to do in the highway mode and AASHTO has such a history with highways … that it is difficult to keep a proper perspective. Its greatest strength is that it can focus on a particular mode that is the highways.” However, it was the chair’s perspective that the highway focus has limited SCOH from engaging on operations and other critical areas beyond just building infrastructure. “I believe that SCOH should be subdivided into its two standing committees one dealing with operations and the other dealing with highways, structures, bridges etc. Those related to asset management and asset design versus the operational or technology pieces.”

“We are very stove-piped, the SCOH talks to the SCOH, which is important because we learn from these interactions but on the other hand we do not talk to the Standing Committee on planning,” said one director and former SCOH member. “How to break down these stove-pipes and have cross fertilization of ideas so you share and work more efficiently,” is important.

“There are so many things going on that we don’t talk about anything in great detail,” said one veteran SCOH member. “One of the best discussions we had was after the bridge in Minnesota collapsed. Everyone was focused on one area. Some of us thought it was the best session because it was focused. So many things are going on that you don’t have time to focus on any one thing. The strength and the weakness are almost the same thing.”

“I guess, I don’t really think there is one (weakness), said a long-time SCOH member. “The only weakness is that because we are 50 different states and we have different laws and organizations it can be hard to come up with policies or guidance that everyone can use. We should write policies and standards broad enough to be interpreted by the 50 states and they can use them within the spirit of the policy but that the policy or standard can be flexible enough for their needs. Sometimes if the policy doesn’t help me than I won’t use it. Then it goes into Green Book and I can get into conflict with a policy in my state. If there is a weakness it is that sometimes we draft policies or standards too specifically.”

“In some ways, because SCOH covers so many different technical areas and has so many subcommittees it has tended to be very stoved-piped and very much bottom up driven in issues that get covered,” said another key member. “There is not enough of a strategic approach taken in terms of identifying issues and direction. There tends to be less top-down direction of issues that subcommittees should be considering in terms of policy guidance to subcommittees and coordination of subcommittees. To me that is the greatest weakness.”

“What we are doing in this process of creating the Strategic Plan can help address this weakness,” said another member. “We need to identify some specific issues that align with what the Board of Directors and the AASHTO Strategic plan is trying to accomplish” This member said the steps to address the weakness should be to develop a Strategic Plan that has:

• Broad based support
• Is narrowly focused
• Is not constrained or driven by existing organizational structure
 Then develop an organizational structure that will support the Strategic Plan.

"The greatest strength, as is often the case, is also the greatest weakness in terms of SCOH forming the technical debate about transportation," said one director. "We need to be engaged in not just the technical aspect but we also need to communicate how important transportation infrastructure is to the health of the nation. Everything we do we need to do better to reinforce that. We are caught up in that here in (in this state) and probably across the nation. We need to clothe the discussion of transportation in the garment of job creation. We need to ask the question in every initiative of how to link infrastructure with economic health and does this initiative advance that cause?" said the director of one DOT.

"...I suspect and I think Neil would recognize, that one of the issues is not anything critical per se because it is a good technical committee, but I don’t think SCOH is as good on the policy issues. It is too big, almost,” said another director. This director believed a SCOH weakness is its large size and lack of interaction with other committees on cross-cutting issue.

“The biggest weakness of SCOH is being an all volunteer organization,” said one member. “The weakness comes through in the difficulty of getting to the positive effects of standardization. Standardization can have a very positive effect because once we standardize everybody can go in the same direction but that is a very difficult task with volunteers.”

“I am not sure that our organizational structure is able to address the kind of changes that this country will face in the next fifty years,”” said a Chief Engineer. “Our structure from SCOH is setup more for the way we have been doing things in the past and that is a weakness. Revisit the structure and maybe make some changes to be ready to act quickly and address the new challenges and if our goal is to be the technical experts of AASHTO when it comes to highways we have subcommittees that will get us there. But if you want to encompass highways as a whole then there are so many aspects of highways we need to address that we need to diversify and we are getting so big at SCOH. If you look at all the committees in AASHTO, SCOH has more subcommittees and offshoots and we diluted ourselves and our significance by having too many things on our plate. So maybe we should look at our structure, Maybe if you want an arm of AASHTO that is a SCOH Technology (committee) and another on SCOH Technical Services that looks at mechanisms of moving forward quickly with new technologies and technical services required in today’s world or have some other structure so SCOH is not so large.”

“I think we have too many subcommittees on SCOH, we have a growth issue on subcommittees,” said one Chief Engineer and SCOH member. “We create subcommittees to do a particular task and once they address the issue we do not sunset them. This sometimes leads to subcommittees overlapping on several committees and so we do not necessarily have any one committee that is responsible to take the lead role.”

Several of those interviewed expressed a strong desire for SCOH to embrace a “vital few” strategic issues and use its influence to direct innovations in those areas through the subcommittee process.

“Performance Management is strong. SCOH greatest threat is not working with those groups. They have to exert more leadership,” said one. “Say take Performance Management and Safety Goal, these guys should wrap their arms around it and say what they should we do about that. CEOs need to figure out how to reduce fatalities by half. SCOH has to be leaders and aggressively do what they can.”

“SCOH should align itself with what the Board of Directors and the AASHTO Strategic Plan is trying to accomplish. SCOH should look at identifying some specific technical issues that support the Board of
Directors and AASHTO Strategic Plan. Once SCOH decides “the What” we need to address, it should then carve out tasks. These component tasks should be assigned to various subcommittees. The subcommittees should work on the “how” and produce the product being responsible and accountable for reporting with deadlines and measures.”

Opportunities

Stakeholders see many opportunities for SCOH in the areas of supporting efforts to increase revenue, in identifying ways to expedite projects and in adopting new technologies for disseminating training. However, the enthusiasm for new initiatives is tempered by acknowledgement that people’s time, availability and travel ability are limited.

“The great opportunity is that by being able to do a Strategic Plan you can start guiding direction of the committee,” said one member. “It gives us a goal. If you don’t have a goal you don’t see what you are accomplishing. It gives us a basic footprint of what we want to accomplish in the next five years. Otherwise you don’t know how well you are doing.”

“I think, I rely on SCOH a lot on decisions that go up to the Board of Directors,” said a Director. “There is opportunity to expand the feeding into the Board of Directors. The board is even less experienced than SCOH members. I think SCOH really needs to be a little more engaged and have a stronger voice in to the Board of Director meetings, just because so much feeds up into the Board of Directors from other committees. There is an opportunity to not just have reports but to stress issues to the Board.”

“Clearly issues that were identified in the AASHTO Strategic Plan that relate to SCOH are ones we should think about how to get SCOH much more engaged,” said a SCOH member. “Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Emission is an issue that we haven’t spent much time on. We have to be much more focused upon it as a committee. I fear we run (the) risk with Global Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Emissions if we don’t recognize and push from both the Board of Directors and SCOH the inertia itself may prevent us from dealing with it as forcefully as we should.”

“Another area that has received more attention from the Board of Directors than from SCOH is the entire area of traffic safety. The AASHTO goal is to reduce the fatality rate to 1 per 100 million VMT and we as nation haven’t made adequate progress in that area. We’ve have a couple of subcommittees and presentations but it is not something SCOH has focused upon. States say it is their highest priority but you wouldn’t know that from looking at the SCOH agenda from the past couple of years. We need to figure our how to be much more focused on it than we have. Yet the highway safety manual is about to be adopted. We need to have that as an issue of presentation at SCOH.”

“We have a lot of opportunities because we have a lot of problems,” said one veteran SCOH subcommittee chair. “Obviously everyone is concentrated on the stimulus and every state is looking at their finances. What we are looking at is we can’t do what used to. FHWA thinks its 1960 and we just can’t design like we used to. They want me to add five lanes and I can’t add one. We’ve got the reauthorization coming (and could address many issues.) I don’t know if they are opportunities. They look a lot like potholes to me. “

One chief engineer said, “Beyond the technical services side of things where SCOH does an excellent job - we have been doing that for the last 50 years - now if we can adjust and set ourselves to forecast a little
better and identify and restructure to address the next 50 years of the highway and transportation system and what that is going to be, then we can play a major role.”

“There is an increasing need to be accountable and to adhere to established performance measures,” said one SCOH member. “AASHTO is setting up to address this emerging environment with recent organizational changes. More stable funding is required and this can be done through improved performance and showing people that we are delivering. This can be done by holding ourselves accountable. . . . It is good that we have a committee on performance management but again it needs to be integrated so be careful not to create another stovepipe . . . . In the context of a national agenda: SCOH has a role to communicate the . . . unmet needs and demonstrate the impact of long term restricted funding on the infrastructure.”

“The single biggest opportunity is in the leadership role,” said a subcommittee chair. “Can we move in to that leadership role where we are not just advising but actually taking on a leadership role? The challenges for SCOH is to figure out the details which is how can we provide leadership and what we have to do in order to bring all the states in a common fold.”

One chief engineer viewed SCOH’s opportunities to be in the areas of urging states to adopt advanced project-delivery strategies, to embrace accountability, to aggressively address crashes and to adopt advanced highway operations strategies. He sees the path to increased funding to lie with greater performance by the states. As states produce what the public and legislators want, greater funding will follow, he reasoned. SCOH’s greatest opportunity to help increase transportation investment is to lead the way on innovative practices. For instance, he said DOTs advocate for environmental streamlining by focusing complaints against the resource agencies. However, many transportation agencies have not eliminated their own project-delivery bottlenecks by capitalizing on expedited delivery strategies such as simplified plan development for routine projects. SCOH’s greatest opportunities lie in identifying and advancing key, core business innovations in the areas of project delivery, safety, congestion management and environmental mitigation, he said.

One stakeholder said a great opportunity lies in having SCOH direct its subcommittees strategically to focus on key issues from the AASHTO Strategic Plan. Instead of the current reactive and passive acceptance of subcommittee priorities, SCOH should interject some key strategic objectives for the subcommittees to address, he said. “Like with Climate Change, taking the highway side, the Subcommittee on Systems Operation and Management could work with SCOP and SCOE as a key issue to take leadership on. It should take leadership on those issues. Congestion/Operations is another area. Freight is another one. On congestion they could emphasize the goal of SSM and Operations playing a stronger role in budget allocations. I think it’s easy to identify the areas. Freight should be one. The subcommittee that you have on freight is solely on permitting. Truck size and weight, emerging corridors, truck lanes, etc, are all important areas. If they (SCOH) don’t get involved the issue has to go to SCOE and SCOP. . . . You could build on these as theme areas. Maybe that’s the way to implement (the AASHTO) Strategic Plan. We’ve not really done’t a good job on implementing.”

“Take preservation for instance. Pavement is a lost animal within AASHTO. You have a task force but no committee. The amounts spent on pavements are huge. With bridges you have 20 technical committees. Maybe some of that Asset Management (committee effort ) could be eliminated in favor of pavement. Pavements are worth looking at in our plan. “
Threats

Many interviewed say SCOH faces “threats” but “threat” is a relative term. No one interviewed suggested there were any fundamental threats to SCOH’s existence. Instead, threats were categorized in relative terms such as missed opportunities, reduced performance or a gradual erosion of relevance. Differences of opinion were evident. Some key stakeholders expressed confidence that current issues only serve to create new opportunities for SCOH to contribute to transportation. Others said a lack of accomplishment threatens SCOH’s relevance.

“No, I don’t see any possible threats,” said one. “It is only an opportunity. Within our state we are required to have a Strategic Plan. Our legislature gave us a cookbook thing and that was our strategic plan. (In contrast) This for us (SCOH) is a great opportunity. The Board of Directors has a Strategic Plan and we have that direction. SCOH can then take it and see how we blend in to it. SCOH is the implementing body of the Board of Director’s policy and guidelines. This just all blends together.”

Others had less optimistic comments. “The biggest problem is that no one expects SCOH to accomplish anything. If SCOH is not leading then why should anyone attend meetings and contribute,” said one member.

“To some extent, unless we become more strategic in what we focus on, unless we address new and emerging issues we will not continue to be seen as the foremost committee and technical organization in the world,” said one member. “This will manifest itself in the spring meeting and the Board of Director’s meeting, as it becomes more difficult to travel it will threaten ability of states to participate. It will really dilute the quality of participation and discussion.”

Another long-time observer said technical issues are not the primary issues dominating transportation debates today, but rather finance and management issues are. Issues of funding, accountability, transparency, Climate Change and energy reduction are critical transportation issues. If SCOH remains strictly a technical committee, it becomes less important to the national transportation debate. This focus of SCOH on strictly technical and engineering issues is at odds with the role that Chief Engineers typically play in their home agencies, he said. These management and policy issues such as accountability and Climate Change affect the Chief Engineers at home but are not addressed by SCOH, which is viewed as the Chief Engineers’ committee. “There could be a threat to lower status for SCOH if it doesn’t address these strategic, cross-cutting issues. Take the Standing Committee on Performance Management. The good news for SCOH is that its membership is the CEOs. The bad news is it’s dealing with COO (Chief Operating Officer) issues. There needs to be a (SCOH) linkage with Performance Management and there needs to be stronger cross-link.”

Another long-time observer said SCOH’s reactive stance serves to decrease its relevance to the Board of Directors, who are struggling to make progress in cross-cutting areas such as safety. “Safety hasn’t been addressed adequately. If we are going to drive down fatalities by half in two decades, we need to allocate tasks and get after it. We could be focusing on work zones, design elements, enforcement. I could see it as a top down directive. SCOH could task the chairs in May to come back in September with their plan for addressing AASHTO’s goals of reducing fatalities. That would give them time to digest over the summer meetings. The same could happen with Climate Change, Safety and Freight,” said this participant. “I call it leadership. Using the position they have. The weakness is they don’t use it. The Subcommittees could use their work plans to make this real. Make them come back with a real product.”
The primary weakness is that SCOH does not direct and coordinate the subcommittees, said another observer. Design has eleven subcommittees and they operate autonomously and have in the same fashion for decades. During an era of rapid policy change, SCOH becomes threatened with reduced relevance because it is not actively directing its subcommittees to produce policies related to these emerging strategic issues, such as safety or accountability, said this observer. Related to the passive subcommittee stance was a lack on interaction with other standing committees, he said. Addressing key issues such as accountability and climate change require coordination with the Standing Committee on Planning and the Standing Committee on the Environment, which do not often occur.

Although there were some differences of opinion regarding threats to SCOH’s relevance, there was near unanimous agreement that travel restrictions are a threat to SCOH’s robust functioning. Overwhelmingly, members said travel restrictions and increased workloads affect members’ ability to participate.

“Lack of funding for meetings/activities will lead to a decrease in communication between team members which is at the heart of SCOH and ASSHTO success,” said one member expressing a common sentiment.

“Money, money, money and the ability of people to travel probably are threats,” said one subcommittee chair. “AASHTO is all volunteers and everyone has a significant job. Each state has restrictions on travel and participation… That is a threat at the subcommittee level as well. We get good attendance and have a lot of participation. Not being able to bring the right people together is a problem. Also people just don’t have the time. The 80-20 rule applies - 20 percent of the people carry 80 percent of the load.”

“I think that getting us all of together as one voice requires money and travel and time away from work,” said a director. “With hiring freezes and getting our job done we cannot afford to do that (meet) anymore.”

“If we do not have all the members there then where is the middle ground amongst the 50 states?” asked one chief engineer. “We need to make sure that members attend so we do not become splintered. Maybe we need to make sure that at least the Directors and Chief Engineers come for the Spring and Fall meetings.”

“Currently SCOH leans awfully hard on very few individuals and getting people is getting harder than it has ever been,” said a chief engineer. “I cannot get people to participate on research panels or anything else anymore and now it is difficult because of travel restrictions. Even if it is paid for they cannot travel. We are in some very difficult times now. People are losing staff, losing money and everything will need increased effort by individuals, because now we need increased participation from all the members in order to make SCOH successful. If I were to attend all the meeting at the spring meeting that I am on committees for then I would be there a whole week. So I won’t and how does AASHTO facilitate and get more people involved while recognizing the constraints (travel and other) we are under?”

**Governance**

Closely related to the issues of Opportunities and Threats is the issue of Governance, or how SCOH interacts with its subcommittees and with other committees. Again, differences of opinion exist. Some long-time SCOH members contend that the current system works well to allow technical experts in the subcommittees to identify areas important to their work. However, others felt that SCOH should be active in providing direction to the Subcommittees and in reaching out to other standing committees, particularly on issues which cut across multiple disciplines.
Asked if the governance structure works well, one member responded, “I think so. None (needed changes) that I can think of right now. I think we’re OK. There are some things we can look at and we will as they come up.”

Asked if the governance structure should change, another long-time member said, “No I do not. I think the committee operates very well. I like the way the format and set up of the committee is structured, we are asked for input each year on what the topics ought to be and how it is put up. I like the technical discussions and way it is run in the morning before the business meeting the next day. So, No I think it is pretty efficient.”

“I think we coordinate fairly well with them (other committees and subcommittees) said another member. “I’ve been on subcommittees with others. I always think it’s a two way street. We and they need to coordinate. I don’t know what interaction or coordination of chairs of all standing committees actually takes place. I’m not sure who does that. Like climate change. Who is in charge of that? Any time there are cross cutting issues then we need to decide who is in charge of particular decisions,” he said. However, this member said the other committees likewise need to coordinate with SCOH and the burden of coordination should not lie with SCOH alone.

Other sentiments, however, expressed a need to increase coordination, particularly among cross-cutting issues.

“I think that the subcommittee chairs, vice chair and chair as a leadership group need to truly start acting as a leadership group for SCOH,” said a SCOH member. “Point two is officially we have both project delivery and operations councils although we’ve not done much work as a council. We need to decide whether we do away with them or can we effectively address what the councils are supposed to do.”

Said another long-time observer, “SCOH is reactive to the subcommittees. It should be more pro-active in presenting issues for the subcommittees to deal with. Typically the issues that SCOH has competence in directing back to subcommittees are cross cutting issues. As a standing committee as a whole the cross-cutting issues can be sent to subcommittees or to more than one subcommittee together. SCOH typically has been reactive. CSS (context sensitive design) didn’t fit so it didn’t progress. They didn’t know how to deal with it, so they didn’t deal with it. Sustainability and livability are themes that will be coming at us. We have a constellation of issues to deal with relating to national and state policy that we have to address. Energy policy, environmental policies which are coming and the SCOE, in my perspective, it is focused on process and response to NEPA instead of larger environmental issues, such as Climate Change. So from a COO (Chief Operating Officer) perspective the balance among these major policy issues will have a major impact on DOTs but there isn’t a neat place to take the lead to develop a policy positions for AASHTO to have. In some ways the CEOS need to charter a subcommittee to deal with these issues. Somebody needs to be agitating for it.”

One member cited the issue of “streamlining” as an illustrative example. He said SCOH should defer to the Standing Committee on the Environment over NEPA issues and should not duplicate that work. However, SCOH should lead on issues of how to deliver projects faster with innovative design, construction and procurement strategies. The advances in project delivery would complement the efforts to expedite NEPA reviews, he said. To contribute meaningfully in project expediting, SCOH needs to coordinate the efforts of several subcommittees such as Design, Construction and Materials, he said. Such strategic coordination does not often occur under the current governance structure, he said.
“I think the issue of governance (is) the layering,” said one CEO. “Look at the many layers and how we are governing the many subcommittees, major committees, the task groups. It is a large body and I do not know if anyone has come up with a better plan yet but maybe if you really, really restructured and looked at the fact that folks in Design need to be aligned with people in Environment, who also need to understand about the construction. May be we need to look at how it is setup because Project Delivery is about many different things not about just about the design standpoint. So how can we be effective if we do not understand what the construction side feels about the contracting approach or something we just came up with in design? I am not sure if we can easily change the culture but to me that would be a big shift if we moved in that direction but I think that is necessary.”
Critical Issues for the Strategic Plan

In addition to interviewing stakeholders about Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats, and Coordination, the project team also asked 12 questions relating to which strategic issues should be addressed by SCOH in its Strategic Plan. These issues were taken from the AASHTO Strategic Plan.

With 20 stakeholders responding to 12 different subjects, the total responses to the questions about SCOH’s Strategic Priorities were quite lengthy. However, they did not greatly differ in priority or substance from the quantified responses received from the surveys. The earlier 360 survey rankings provided considerable insight into which topic areas and Strategic Initiatives that the AASHTO committee members felt were important for SCOH to consider.

Those top five issues as seen in Figure 1 were Re-establish Transportation as a National Priority, Secure Net New Revenue, Cut Fatalities in Half by 2030, Facilitate Use of Emerging Research and Technologies, and Communicate the Value of Transportation.

The project team does not believe that a lengthy

Figure 1 The ranking AASHTO Plan issues for SCOH consideration.
A recitation of all the responses will provide significant new insight into which priorities SCOH should address. Those priorities were fairly clear from the survey results.

Instead, the narrative below focuses upon briefly what the stakeholders said SCOH should do about these priorities. Superficially, it may appear that overlap could occur if SCOH gets involved in non-traditional areas such as Securing Net, New Revenue which previously had been up to the Board of Directors. But stakeholders consistently provided nuanced answers which indicated that SCOH can play a significant support role in the larger, policy issues.

**Finances**

For instance in the area of Securing Net, New Revenue one long-time SCOH member said when asked if SCOH should engage in the revenue issue:

“I do not think SCOH, as the chief engineers, we should discuss the policy - that is for the Board of Directors. The Board of Directors should decide the makeup of funding and who gets what percentage, where it should go etc.

- SCOH should be involved in determining the preservation, rehabilitation, reconstruction, operational, capacity and other needs. SCOH should provide this information to AASHTO and the Board of Directors

- Then SCOH needs to play the role of the people that take the money provided and build the product.

- We need to push the condition of the system and what we can do with funding and the money to better the system

- Once the Board of Directors get the sustainable revenue, the SCOH should figure out how to best utilize that money in products and practices that can make the system better in the maintenance, operations and building of the infrastructure.

- We need to support the Board of Directors with the needs that are out there so that they can do the necessary communication and politicking for the money.

“There is a big impact of starting and stopping projects on the cost of the project development and delivery and SCOH members are in a very good position to clearly communicate this information to the Board of Directors,” said one SCOH member.

“Because chief engineers have to be very aware of what’s happened on the revenue side, I think we’re in a position where we can be sharing with each other about what’s happening with revenue, new sources, and the challenges with raising revenue,” said another SCOH member. “Obviously it would be a highway focus. Informally, finance dominates discussions but we never discuss it as whole. We would play a support role but can play a role.”


**Climate Change**

In the survey responses the question of assisting with Climate Change Adaptation was ranked the absolute lowest overall by the 360 committee respondents. This low ranking is clearly in conflict with the sentiments of some senior AASHTO leaders who see SCOH as playing an important role in addressing Climate Change Adaption which could take the form of new design standards to address extreme weather events, the adopting of low-energy materials or adapting to new fuel sources in vehicles.

“This is one of those issue that is not just an environmental issue but an economic issue,” said one Director. “They are not mutually exclusion. We need to take it on as a front and center policy issue. We have specific plans to deal with climate change in (his state) whether it is either mitigation or adaption. Sea rise is a big issue. The adaptation thing we need to focus on and SCOH is the appropriate place for the adaption focus area. ….. We have a responsibility. What can we do through SCOH? Those are the questions we need to focus upon. There are things transportation sectors can do.”

“It’s going to be forced on us,” said another Director. “It’s going to be a game changer for us. … We’re going to have to look at lower energy use devices on our system, we have to lower our Greenhouse Gas emissions. Our rapid acceptance of warm mix instead of hot mix is one kind of example. They are coming and we need to be prepared in advance on that.”

Yet another director disagreed. “Stay out of it. It’s not their core area.”

“It is a futuristic thing,” said one Chief Engineer. “We need to put our arms around how the subcommittees are addressing that and start to come up with initiatives and policies that we should be developing.”

“SCOH should not be deciding if we should focus on Climate Change, that is for the Board of Directors and once that they have decided we should then should provide the technical information,” said another Chief Engineer. “SCOH should determine from operational side - how do I determine and quantify my footprint from the maintenance side? From the project side and maintenance side what should be the footprint? Then determine what tools are needed and then develop those using the technical resources and research processes that they have.”

**Safety**

As with Climate Change Adaption, there were mixed sentiments about SCOH expanding its focus on safety. Some believed the issue was mainly one of enforcement while others felt there still are many promising areas for SCOH to pursue.

“There is only limited number of things we can do from an engineering standpoint,” said one stakeholder. “Amongst the Engineering, Enforcement and Education, maybe we need to say that we are trying to work to drive down fatality rate and we need to support others who are working on the enforcement and education side.”
“We have that subcommittee on highway traffic safety and it should be their focus,” said one stakeholder. “I do not think we should dilute the safety perspective and it should be in a core area and make those elements flow into the other committees. SCOH should provide guidance to the safety subcommittee.”

Others, however, were emphatic that SCOH should get much more actively involved in safety.

“There are certain things that have not been looked at for a long time. We still use the 85 percentile to set our speed limits. Does that still make sense? Are there other things that need to be considered? Being mindful of technology, they may not be emerging areas for us but it seems like there are lot of things we just do because there is a sense that that is the way it should be.”

“SCOH should adopt a goal for safety. …then looks at tools from materials and supply like cable barriers, attenuators, etc.. Once we adopt a goal then we should look at where we have our fatalities and then have a sifting of information…Is there product evaluation or a technical standard that we can adopt at SCOH to get those numbers down and then create an annual report on safety numbers and then keep driving towards our established goal.”

“I think safety as a whole needs to be a cornerstone. That’s part of our business and we should ensure everything we do we do in a safe manner. Now we are in a rebuilding mode and we have to see what safety strategies we can put in place.”

“Safety hasn’t been addressed adequately,” said another. “If we are going to drive down fatalities by half in two decades, we need to allocate tasks and get after it. We could be focusing on work zones, design elements, enforcement. I could see as a top down directive”

**Technology Transfer**

The stakeholders generally were very supportive of SCOH engaging on technology transfer issue.

“The whole area of vehicle technology and Vehicle Information Integration is an area which is a tremendous area of opportunity and SCOH has not been that engaged. It has tremendous opportunity in the safety area,” said one member.

“Support and integrate existing efforts of the TIG and the NETPEP, provide them focus and direction and support and encourage piloting and implementation of new technologies,” said one SCOH member.

“That’s got a big part of looking forward and looking at the technology advancements. When it comes to technologies we have to somehow open up the doors to private sectors to help us get there. Because they are the ones that do all the technology advances in this country not the governmental agencies. Open up the door to SCOH to private sector in the participation of new technologies and innovations and the trials of those. In worrying so much about sole sourcing and things like that and worrying so much about the regulating side of this and trying to protect ourselves, we are inhibiting innovation.”
**Context Sensitive Design**

Context Sensitive Solution comments were neatly summarized by one director who said, “It is not that people do not understand CSS. It is a matter of training people to be comfortable about how to apply it. … So training is important here.”

“I do not think it needs to be a separate focus area. It needs to be part of and at the back of the minds of all the committees. Integrate into the day-day to working of the committees.”

“CSS is a philosophy that has to be left to each state to own. It is a thing of the past and is like asking people to use computers. SCOH and AAASHTO have done enough with CSS. It is time to move on to other more pressing issues” said one Chief Engineer

**Accountability**

“Performance Measures are coming we heard from all the senators. FHWA has told us it is coming and since we are the ones and are going to do the work who are going to be imposed upon, it is an absolute necessity that SCOH be involved in that,” said one member. “I think we should establish a dialogue with FHWA immediately as to what they think these performance measures may look like because they also probably do not know what it is yet. We should proactively work with them on the front end like we did on the work zones regulations before they go into rule making because once they go into rulemaking they cannot talk to us. We need to discuss what we think the performance measures should look like. There may be different levels of measures. There may be some that are national others that are state oriented. I vehemently oppose one size fits all. What works for New York City with 300,000 vehicles a day will not work in Wyoming on what we call a high volume road with 2000 vehicles per day. “

“That is a CEO issue,” said one director who was not particularly supportive of SCOH involvement. “Any role that SCOH plays is a support role to the CEOs.”

However, another director saw SCOH as being important to the details of setting measures. “I do see an interplay. The biggest challenge we face is in the benchmarking area and having the support of SCOH in creating meaningful performance measures is important.”

“There could be an extreme position in Congress that says. ‘lets set targets and tie funding to it.’ Then SCOH needs to figure out how to make that work and not end up being the big losers. If we have to set a level of service, the chief engineers are the most appropriate to do that.”

“Yes, SCOH should definitely play a role and I feel strongly that in terms of performance standards versus performance measures we need to differentiate between the two. I’m a believer that we should have uniform performance measures when measuring the most important things but I am far less of a believer that you should have a uniform performance standard. A lot will depend upon the goals of the state, the age of the state’s system.”

“One size does not fit all. We need to have a palette of measures from which each state can select measures that are appropriate and applicable to them, “ said another chief engineer.
Staff Development

“I think as many state DOTs are starting to face really significant challenges as people of my generation are starting to retire. What are the mechanisms available to do succession planning and plan for the next generation of leaders and technical experts? This is an area where SCOH needs to be at the table, in figuring out how that can take place.”

Streamlining

“SCOE will be focusing on streamlining of the environmental process,” said one Chief Engineer. “SCOH should look at streamlining the project delivery process. We should look at ways to get projects from planning to finished construction faster than we have ever done before with less impact to the public. SCOH should not be involved in environmental streamlining.”

“Streamlining is all about having the knowledge and understanding of the system, the process and addressing them early on. There is no such thing as Environmental streamlining - you have to follow the same rules, policies and laws and everything and it is just a matter of understanding it and being able to work your way through it. It’s got to be integrated into each of the subcommittees and it should not be a separate focus item.”

Technical Services

“The sense I have is in the terms of use of the products of SCOH, the spec books, standards, guidelines it seems like we have a good corner on the market. Our challenge is how do we help people use the standards most effectively? As case in point, one example in CSS is design engineers are not taking full advantage of the flexibility in the Green Book. Training in that flexibility has not happened. That is one glaring example but not the only one of many examples of spec books that have not been the focus of sessions on how to use the specs. What’s in them? How to best use them. This is an opportunity for webinars.”
Draft AASHTO Strategic Plan

Goal 1. Re-establish transportation as a national priority
   1A. Secure national support for sufficient, sustainable ‘net new’ revenue through a diversified portfolio of funding sources
   1B. Improve the national freight network to keep America competitive in the global economy
   1C. Accelerate project delivery
   1D. Cut fatalities in half by 2030
   1E. Support national defense and improve disaster response
   1F. Create a congestion-free America through improvements to the multimodal transportation system and improve system performance through advanced technology and operations
   1G. Advocate transportation, energy, and climate change policies that enhance the national and state economies, improve national security and reduce greenhouse gases
   1H. Promote accountability through performance-based management to enhance the national transportation system, and work with strategic partners to develop a framework of goals, standards and metrics tailored to meet individual state needs.

Goal 2. Advocate and communicate to achieve AASHTO’s goals
   2A. Create strategic partnerships
   2B. Develop and communicate the AASHTO Action Agenda to policy makers, partners, stakeholders, and the public
   2C. Brand AASHTO as the states’ national voice for transportation
   2D. Communicate the value of transportation to citizens, community, quality of life, and the economy

Goal 3. Provide world class technical services
   3A. Identify, communicate, and facilitate use of emerging research, technologies, materials, processes, and programs
   3B. Increase use of AASHTO technical services and products
   3C. Maximize participation in technical activities
   3D. Expand training opportunities and the array of offerings by using “webinars”, video conferencing and other technologies
   3E. Enhance the centers of excellence in environment and finance and develop centers of excellence in safety, operations, and freight
   3F. Develop technical services for climate change mitigation and adaptation

Goal 4. Assist State DOTs with leadership and performance
   4A. Provide training and assistance to advance leadership skills and performance management techniques
   4B. Provide a comprehensive framework for accelerated project delivery of all transportation projects
   4C. Assist states in addressing issues of workforce recruitment, retention, succession planning, core competencies and professional development in emerging areas
   4D. Develop an environment for strengthening community relationships to better integrate transportation, land use, and economic development