

## Census Data for Transportation Planning Changing Times

On behalf of the transportation planning community, the Transportation Research Board's (TRB) Urban Data and Information Systems Committee seeks financial support for a major conference to be held in May 2005. The conference would bring together 80 to 100 of the nation's top professionals working on census and transportation planning activities. Its purposes will be to review the journey-to-work products, share analytical and technical practices, assess the existing American Community Survey (ACS) research and developments, document the conference activities, and develop an action agenda for federal, state and regional agencies. The action agenda would include recommendations regarding ACS as well as critical areas for additional research and analysis.

### Why a Conference?

Within the context of the transportation data community two major events are unfolding. First, a special transportation tabulation of the 2000 decennial census, the Census Transportation Planning Package (CTPP), will be released in 2003. Although a CTPP like product has been produced since the 1970 census, this is the first time where literally every MPO and most states are planning on using it. In fact, 95 percent of all the MPOs and states participated in the process of defining their own zone system for the special tabulation.

Second, since 1999, the Census Bureau has been testing a replacement to the long form, the ACS, and plans full implementation to begin in July 2004. Working with the test data, the transportation community has initiated several research projects to investigate different aspects of the ACS. One that is just about to be put under contract is a \$300K effort funded through the National Cooperative Highway Research Program (NCHRP).

Under the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21), \$217 billion was authorized for FY 1998 through FY 2003. Of that, approximately 79 percent was authorized for the Federal-Aid Highway program, and programmed by and through the states and local agencies. For the states and local agencies to program these funds, they have to satisfy specific laws and regulations. One of the key components is the requirement for a certified planning and programming process (23 U.S.C. 134 and 135). A major component of the planning process is its technical and analytical capability. This capability is built upon sound data for small areas. The Journey-to-Work (JTW) and mobility questions from the Census long form/ACS provide these critical building blocks.

*USDOT Statement to OMB on the  
importance of Census Data--March 2001*

### So Why a Conference?

Ever since the 1970 Census, the transportation community has assembled to review its use of the preceding census while planning for the next one. Through these assemblies a great deal of information has been produced on the uses of census data to support the transportation planning process. In addition to the body of knowledge that has come out of these conferences, there have

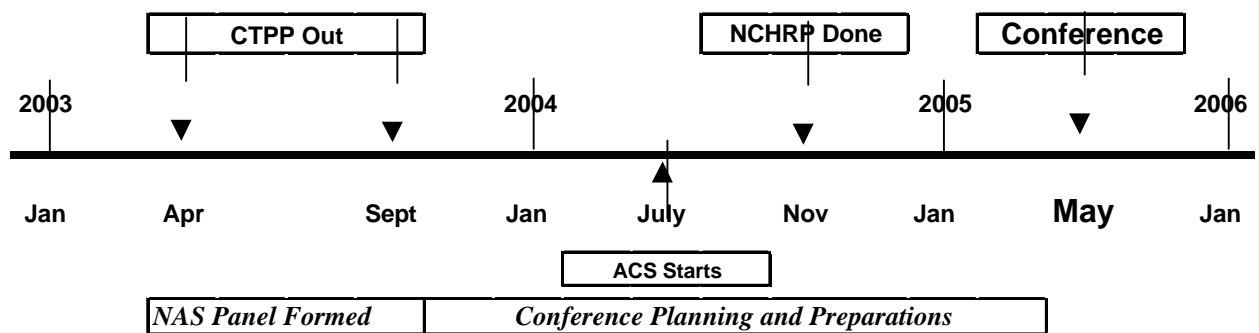
The Census Transportation Planning Package (CTPP) is a special tabulation of the Census Long Form data design by transportation planners for transportation planners. The cost for CTPP 2000 was \$3Million, which was paid for by the states and MPOs.

been several recommendations and improvements made to the data collected. Finally, as a result of these conferences, the transportation community has been able to better position itself as a critical (and valued) player in the census data development.

### Why Now?

While a conference to kibitz over uses of the latest census data could realistically take place anytime, having it in 2005 is timed to play a pivotal role in the development and implementation of the ACS and the 2010 Census. Although the full ACS is to begin in July of 2004, the “real” future of the effort, including Congressional funding, is still under debate. Consequently, the transportation community must position itself to participate in these debates. Added to this, the Census Bureau has indicated that after a period of full implementation they would entertain input and give consideration to content changes. From the standpoint of the ACS timeline, a May of 2005 conference would barely allow enough time for recommendations to be produced and fed into potential changes to ACS that might occur in 2008-2009. Should the ACS not come to fruition, the transportation community must be in a position to provide comments and support for yet another long form. Given the convergence of these issues it is imperative for the transportation community to come together at the earliest opportunity, which is May of 2005.

Coupled to this, holding the conference in May 2005 will allow attendees to discuss the legislative and data implications of the new transportation reauthorization bill due out at



the end of 2003. In effect, the transportation community would be able to discuss future recommendations to ACS, or possibly the long form, in light of any new requirements that the transportation legislation may bring.

### Conference Governance

The TRB Urban Data Committee is seeking \$150K to \$200K to plan, hold and publish the recommendations and findings for a May 2005 conference. The conference would be setup and guided by a National Research Council (NRC) committee and hosted at a National Academy site, most likely the Beckman Center in Irvine California. By putting the conference under the administration of NRC/TRB will allow the contributors to sponsor the conference, while assuring that they do not have any direct or coercive influence over the findings and recommendations resulting from the conference.

## Background and History

Since the journey to work questions were first asked as part of the decennial census in 1960, the transportation planning community has been coming together to discuss and plan for its data needs. The transportation community has continued to be very active, concerned and involved in the use, content and direction of the census data programs. Four specific conferences have been held.

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|---------------|-------------------------|---|--|
| August 1973   | Albuquerque, New Mexico | Census Data and Urban Transportation Planning   | TRB Special Report 145 (1974)                      |
| December 1984 | Orlando, Florida        | Proceedings of the National Conference on Decennial Census Data for Transportation Planning | TRB Special Report 206 (1985)                      |
| March 1994    | Irvine, California      | Decennial Census Data for Transportation Planning   | TRB Conference Proceedings 4 (1995)                |
| April 1996    | Irvine, California      | Decennial Census Data for Transportation Planning: Case Studies and Strategies for 2000     | TRB Conference Proceedings 13: Vols 1 and 2 (1997) |

These conferences have been held to review the journey to work products, share analytical and technical practices and focus on improvements for the next cycle. During the 1990s two conferences were held not only because ISTEA changed the planning and analytical questions facing the transportation community, but also there was a real threat that the long form was to be eliminated.

For additional background and history on the Census Transportation Planning Package refer to "The CTPP--Historical Perspective" at <http://www.TRBcensus.com/articles/ctpphistory.pdf>

## Financing

Noted above, \$150K to \$200K is needed for the conference. The budget that has already been reviewed by the TRB Executive Committee, called for \$150K to plan, execute and publish the recommendations of the conference. It is anticipated that a portion of \$150K will be applied to conferees costs to assure that the transportation community is fully represented. The NRC Committee responsible for the planning and oversight of conference will make specific decisions at this level of detail. Any funds that can be secured over the \$150K baseline will be applied to invited papers.

Under the current funding status, there is a commitment of \$50K from FHWA (HEP Planning Office) and another \$25K from FTA. AASHTO's Standing Committee on Planning has been approached for \$40K and their support will be considered in a May 2003 meeting. BTS, the original sole sponsor of the conference, is reconsidering its participation.

## Supportive Entities

TRB Committee on Urban Data and Information Systems (A1D08), Chair: Ed Christopher (798-283-3534)

AASHTO Standing Committee on Planning Data Task Force, Chair: Jonette Kreideweis (651-215-1854)

TRB Committee on National Transportation Data Requirements and Programs (A5016), Chair: Alan Pisarski (703-941-4257)

TRB Committee Statewide Transportation Data and Information Systems (A1D09), Chair: Anita Vandervalk (850-219-6388 x204)

TRB Committee on Travel Survey Methods (A1D10), Chair: Johanna Zmud (512-306-9065 x2225)

AMPO Travel Modeling Subcommittee: Chair: Ron Milone (202-962-3283)

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