



14 December 2005

Abridged

Subject: Update on Austroads Asset Task Force Activities – Mark Owen

Purpose

To provide an overview of my recent two-day meeting in Melbourne (Dec 2005), where the Asset Task Force (ATF) met to discuss research activities and the Austroads Asset Publication Series.

Overview

The ATF performs two main functions:

- (i) Delivery of strategic research projects under the “Asset” theme outlined in the Austroads Strategic Plan 2004-07.
- (ii) Development of the Austroads Asset Publication Series – a comprehensive set of Guidelines relating to road asset management.

Generally each State/Territorial Road Authority (SRA) is represented, along with representatives from NTC, DOTARS, ARRB and Austroads National Office. Typically, ARRB conduct most of the research projects and are responsible for developing/managing/updating the publication series. They also have a dedicated fund to conduct technical research and thereby maintain a core skill set of road researchers.

Notable Outcomes

The following is a summarised list of items worthy of note, or consideration:

- Currently eight strategic research projects are underway within the three broad research themes identified under the Austroads Strategy, for “Minimising Whole of Life Costs for Road Assets”.

- The Publication Series is divided into six themes, the first is an overview or “Peak” document covering the broad principles of asset management and introduces the five themes to follow. This Peak document has been endorsed by Transit – subject to severe technical editing and layout improvements.
- As Guidelines are developed and adopted under the Publication Series, there is a view they will be formally adopted by each SRA. This requires Transit to be fully conversant and satisfied with the contents of each Guide. Therefore, we must carefully review the draft Guides as they are developed. A further challenge is engaging NZ RCAs and incorporating their local road perspective.
- Attached is a schedule outlining the research projects and Guidelines with nominated Transit representatives (corresponding or full working group members) for each project. Mark Owen is currently project managing the project “Intervention Criteria and Allocating Budgets” (AT1042) in conjunction with Chris Parkman, and we have just received the final draft report.
- One key project is “Communicating Strategic Decisions to Stakeholders”. ARRB are to send out a questionnaire to each Austroads Council member. It is suggested they should also send it to the CEO, Land Transport NZ.
- The last Council meeting agreed a 30-day turnaround to review/sign-off final reports. We will need to ensure that as they are received, Douceline is in the loop and they are tracked as Key Correspondence.
- The ATF occasionally have to adjudicate on asset decisions. This meeting agreed that:
 - (i) All Roughness values to be reported as **IRI**, replacing the previous NAASRA values.
 - (ii) That IRI should be reported using the “quarter-car” methodology, (internationally accepted and current Transit reporting method), being individual wheel-path measurements, as opposed to the “half-car” which averages both wheel-paths.

This decision was necessary, as the new Roughness Guidelines are about to be finalised for publication and it ensures consistency when reporting Austroads National Indicators.

- The National Transport Commission (NTC) who manage the freight task in Australia, are anticipating a doubling of freight over the next 20 years (2000-2020). Early indications are that these predictions are coming to fruition, currently increases showing 3.9% growth by weight/annum. They also indicated that freight growth is typically 1% above GDP.

- Queensland MainRoads are experiencing significant population growth rates with 75,000 moving to the state/annum. This has resulted in a doubling of their road budget and they intend to recruit 2500 additional staff over the next 5 years.
- Austroads has an affiliation with Transport Association of Canada (TAC) and we are hoping to conduct a joint research project covering strategic asset management issues.
- The next ARRB technical conference is in Canberra 29 October - 2 November. Abstracts closed a month ago, but due to limited number in the "Asset" area (and in general, from Transit) three more have been submitted for consideration:
 - Technical Review of Road Assets - *theory into reality* – Jack Hansby
 - Developing an Approach to Optimising Service Level – Gordon Hart
 - Road Asset Management – *the current challenges* – Mark Owen

Typically, this is a well-attended conference by Transit Engineers, for both professional development, and to improve Transit's profile with papers on leading edge activities to be presented.

- There is some confusion over the Standards Australia working group representation/participation. There are a large number of committees, most with SR representatives, but limited communication. The ATF felt at risk, with several Standards that have had a significant impact on business, yet limited SRA consultation. Austroads to distribute a guideline for induction of new committee representatives.
- Queensland MainRoads have produced a bulletin called "SMA – the facts" following their detailed and highly political investigations into SMA surfacing issues, following multi-fatalities on a section of highway. While the main casual factor was road geometry – it is worth reviewing what they have learnt, as we do not have a standard specification for SMA in New Zealand.
- The ATF is very keen to understand more about the work we are conducting with the RCA forum on high-level performance measures. They have asked Mark update them with our progress at our next meeting in May 2006.
- John Statton (SA) has requested a workshop for pavement performance modellers to discuss progress to date, share ideas and to rationalise lessons learnt. He is very keen for New Zealand to present how we have achieved one national system and one Transit model. Their workshop is planned for 2006 and Chris Parkman will coordinate who should attend.

- Austroads representatives within Transit need to ensure outcomes are disseminated effectively, particularly within Transit. I propose we meet every three to four months to share information. Douceline currently organises international forums for Austroads/PIARC feedback but I suggest we need to meet internally to discuss/debate the key technical issues impacting upon our business practices.