

Future of TWG Workshop

November 6, 2019, Austin Texas

Breakout Session Summary and Recommendations

Introduction – As part of the TWG quarterly meeting held in Austin on November 6, a workshop was held to discuss future directions for the TWG, which included a breakout session to gather feedback from TWG members on improving the TWG functioning, to discuss ways to increase participation, and to meet changing needs in the transportation and air quality arena. Following some remarks to set the stage and provide historical perspective on the TWG, the meeting attendees were broken into three groups focusing on different TWG issues and needs. The questionnaire used for each breakout group is included in Appendix A, and a detailed summary of each breakout sessions provided in Appendix B.

Recommendations for Implementation – Based on discussions at the breakout sessions, and other input received from TWG stakeholders, the following are recommendations for implementation.

- 1) **Establish Standard Expectations/Procedures**– While the TWG does not meet the criteria of being a formal organization requiring by-laws for operation, it is recommended to build on existing documentation of the TWG’s purpose to develop a set of expectations/procedures to communicate the role of TWG, its operations, and its membership. These will be simple, high-level “standard operating procedures” for the TWG, drafted by TTI and TxDOT and shared with the TWG members for review and approval.
- 2) **Revisit TWG Advisory Committee Structure, Membership and Role**– It is recommended that the TWG Advisory Committee’s membership and role be revisited, to ensure that it serves as a body that provides leadership for the functioning of the TWG. In terms of membership, it is recommended that the committee comprise of one primary representative each from FHWA, TCEQ, EPA, TxDOT, and the MPOs conducting transportation conformity. Other agencies interested in participating may also nominate a representative. If a TWG advisory committee member is unavailable, they can be represented by a colleague in relevant meetings and discussions. If an agency requires more than one staff member participating in the Advisory Committee on a regular basis, they must still assign one primary representative for their agency. The meeting frequency is

recommended to be reduced to alternate months, and to also skip the months where a full TWG/TWG quarterly meeting is being held. The Advisory Committee meetings will therefore be scheduled for the month prior to the full TWG meetings, to discuss agenda setting and other relevant topics. On months where there is no meeting, an e-mail will be sent out to the TWG group summarizing the updates received from the members. It is also recommended that the Advisory Committee play an active role in identifying and prioritizing:

- a. Training topics for the TWG
- b. Presentation topics for TWG meetings, and
- c. Research topics and priorities for the TWG to discuss

It is recommended that a survey be sent out on a regular basis to solicit items in the above categories from TWG members.

- 3) **Continue Current TWG Quarterly Meetings (Full TWG Meetings)** - Retain the current frequency of the meetings (maximum of four times a year), with a start time at 10:00 am. It is recommended that the practice of bringing lunch in continues, to maximize the time available for discussions and subcommittee/workgroup meetings. The recommended location is Austin, with the TxDOT District Office being a potential location (with improved AV capabilities). Table 1 provides a potential schedule of meeting dates for the TWG quarterly and advisory committee meetings for the remainder of FY2020, which can be finalized and published following TxDOT/TWG approval.

Table 1. Potential Dates for the TWG Advisory and Quarterly Meetings for Remainder of FY2020

Meeting Dates	Meeting Type	Location
Thursday, January 02, 2020	Email Updates sent instead of meeting	
Thursday, February 06, 2020*	Advisory	Conference Call
Thursday, March 05, 2020	Quarterly	Austin
Thursday, April 02, 2020	Email Updates sent instead of meeting	
Thursday, May 07, 2020*	Advisory	Conference Call
Thursday, June 04, 2020	Quarterly	Austin
Thursday, July 02, 2020	Email Updates sent instead of meeting	

* These meetings may also be replaced by an email update by Advisory Committee consensus if there are no agenda items requiring discussion.

- 4) **Review and Re-Establish TWG Subcommittees as Workgroups** – While it is recommended to retain the existing subcommittee structure for topic-specific tasks or coordination within the TWG, it is proposed that existing subcommittees be reviewed and re-established, along with any others as the need arises. Key changes recommended include:
- Rename subcommittees as workgroups moving forward. Provide clear instructions/mandate for the workgroups, including roles and responsibilities. Workgroups require their members to actively participate and contribute to the topic at hand.
 - Workgroups will serve two types of functions: “Executive” groups are designed to reach an official consensus (e.g., MOSERS sign off) while “Technical” groups focus on brainstorming/problem solving are instead designed to encourage collaborative ways of solving problems and as a forum to discuss specific technical issues. These technical groups would periodically report to and discuss progress with the broader TWG group.
 - It is recommended that relevant MPO staff or TWG stakeholders play a leadership role in the workgroups as Chair and Vice-Chair, making sure the workgroups serve their intended purpose. TTI representatives will serve as secretary to the workgroups to assist in coordination and gathering information from all stakeholders.
 - TWG workgroups are not standing committees and should disband once it reaches a conclusion and reports final activities to the TWG.
 - It is recommended that TxDOT revisits the current /active subcommittees, and ideas for new workgroups to identify and establish TWG workgroups on important and relevant topics.
- 5) **Establish Formal Selection Process for Presentation Topics** – In the breakout discussions, stakeholders recommended various topics of interest, such as new technologies, data science, and transportation related environmental issues. Presentations at technical conferences such as TRB, STAQS, etc. and other venues can provide ideas for recruiting presentations/presenters for these topics, as well as identifying new topics. It is also recommended that the Advisory Committee plays a role in recommending presentations for the TWG meetings, with a mechanism such as a survey or email solicitation to gather input from other TWG

members. *Note – this recommendation is linked to actions described in the item #2 Revisit TWG Advisory Committee Structure, Membership and Role.*

- 6) **Identify and Prioritize Training Needs-** Various training needs were identified in the group discussions- these include MOVES, MOSERS, SIP, etc. Delivering training in conjunction with the quarterly meetings continues to be a good strategy to increase participation and benefit TWG members, and it is recommended to do so at least on an annual basis. TTI staff will send out a survey with the training recommendations from the breakout session to prioritize the training needs of the TWG community. *Note – this recommendation is linked to actions described in the item #2 Revisit TWG Advisory Committee Structure, Membership and Role.*
- 7) **Implement Processes to Increase Participation Levels in the TWG Meeting -** Many recommendations were provided to increase active participation in TWG meetings, several of which are addressed in the recommendations above. These include: 1. announcing presenters and posting presentations ahead of the meeting, 2. holding the meetings in Austin, 3. scheduling meetings well in advance (such as for the year), 4. improving quality of audio and visual capabilities in meeting rooms, 5. combining with training sessions/workshops.
- 8) **Support Remote Participation and Enhance the Experience for Remote Participants** – It is recommended to retain the WebEx option for the meetings and to better include people who cannot make the meeting physically. It is also recommended to encourage their active participation via messaging or pausing the meeting to direct questions or gather input from WebEx participants during the meeting.
- 9) **Serve as a Forum to Identify and Prioritize Research Needs** – It is recommended that the TWG group play an active role in identifying research needs, going beyond conventional academic and consultant research projects to cover needs related to training, public relations or marketing of air quality schemes, and legal and regulatory studies. It is recommended that research needs continue to be a formal topic on the agenda of the TWG meetings and advisory committee meetings. *Note – this recommendation is linked to actions described in the item #2 Revisit TWG Advisory Committee Structure, Membership and Role.*

Appendix – A

Overview of Breakout Session

The main goal of the breakout session is to gather feedback from TWG members to improve the TWG functioning, to discuss ways to increase participation, and to meet changing needs in the transportation and air quality arena.

- Attendees will be divided into 3 smaller groups. Each group will identify a facilitator reporter, and a note-taker (note-taker will be from TTI)
- Each group will discuss a different set of questions/issues (as listed below).
- The note-taker will summarize the notes and provide them to the facilitator.
- Reporters will present the summary back to the group

- Group 1 Discussion Topics:
 - **TWG's mandate** - Discuss the Texas Administrative Code mandate that resulted in the formation of the TWG group and the roles and responsibilities of the TWG.
 - **TWG meeting structure** - Discuss the current structure of the TWG and TWG Advisory Committee meetings, and the roles and responsibilities of the Advisory Committee.
 - **Frequency of the TWG and Advisory Committee meetings** - Discuss whether the current frequency of meetings meets current needs or whether they need to be changed.
 - **Meeting location** - Discuss meeting locations that are suitable/ideal for the TWG meetings to ensure high participation levels.

- Group 2 Discussion Topics:
 - **Topics to cover in the TWG meeting** - Recommend potential technical topics that are suitable for discussion in the meetings. For example - changing technologies, GHG emissions, transportation performance measures, etc.
 - **Selection of presenters and presentations** - Identify a mechanism for selection/identification of presenters and discuss how each TWG member can play an active role in taking presentation responsibilities to showcase their regional projects/programs.
 - **Recommended training** - Identify topics for training that would be beneficial. Also discuss training implementation, whether to combine trainings with quarterly meetings or conducting customized, in-person training sessions.

- **Increase active participation/attendance of the stakeholders** - Identify methods by which active participation in the TWG meetings can be increased. For example – scheduling a meeting in conjunction with other meetings, providing food, etc.

- Group 3 Discussion Topics:
 - **Format of the quarterly meetings** - Identify any changes in the structure of the meetings that would enhance participation levels.
 - **TWG's role in identifying research needs** - Discuss the role that TWG plays in recommending research needs through TxDOT RTI, NCHRP, etc.
 - **Workgroup/Taskforce meetings (role of workgroups)** - Discuss the purpose of the individual workgroups and identify the ideal format, roles, and responsibilities. Review current workgroups and recommend additions/removal of groups.
 - **Call-in/WebEx option for the TWG meetings** - Discuss the pros and cons of the WebEx option. Recommend whether to continue providing the WebEx option for the TWG meeting or discontinue?

Appendix – B

Breakout Sessions Summary

Breakout Session – Group 1

Participants – Janie Temple (TxDOT), Mimi Horn (TxDOT), Raymond Sanchez (TxDOT), Matt Southard (TCEQ), Marty Boardman (TTI)

Facilitators – Madhusudhan Venugopal (TTI)

Reporters – Jose Campos (FHWA)

1) TWG’s Mandate – This discussion was focusing on the mandate that led to the formation of the TWG group in Texas. TWG started as a small group of technical staff (TxDOT – TPP having overall management responsibility) to work out problems or strategies for modeling on-road mobile source emission inventories. As per conversation with prior TWG facilitators, there was no formal by-law and/or mission statement, the reason may be that TWG was never an enforcement body with rulemaking capabilities. The TWG group always reverted to the Texas Administrative Code and 40 CFR 93.105(b) rules.

The Texas Administrative Code 114.260 does not make reference to the formation of the TWG. However, there is a requirement for the Interagency Consultation Process as described in both the Texas Administrative Code and 40 CFR 93.105(b). In 40 CFR 93.105(b), there is a statement that the consultative process is needed for the development of the implementation plan, the transportation plan, the TIP and associated conformity determinations.

In addition, the TWG was the medium for promoting information sharing and problem solving to accomplish transportation/air quality goals. To achieve that end, the TWG utilized various resources, including technical policy exchange, staff training, and outreach.

Recommendations – On the issue of TWG mandate and bylaws that was raised, it became evident that the TWG group was not actually mandated, but formed voluntarily, and did not have bylaws. However, it may be useful to revisit and develop a set of expectations/procedures.

2) TWG Meeting Structure – The TWG structure is divided into three main functional elements:

- 1) TWG advisory Meetings.
- 2) Quarterly Meetings.
- 3) Sub-Committee Meetings.

TWG Advisory Meetings. The current TWG Advisory Committee (formerly known as the TWG Steering Committee) currently meets monthly to:

- Determine goals and objectives for the TWG, i.e., ad hoc focus groups and/or subcommittees, in addition to reviewing proposed (quarterly) TWG meeting agendas.
- Discuss the SIP updates, EPA impending rules and requirements, the timing and its effects on conformities.

Recommendations – *The following are the recommendations that came out of the breakout session with respect to TWG advisory meeting:*

- Advisory meetings will be used to discuss the TWG quarterly agenda and primary discussion and presentations in greater length and details.
- The committee will be comprised of one staff member from FHWA, TCEQ, EPA, TxDOT, MPO's conducting transportation conformity.
- Meeting frequency is recommended once every two months, and to skip the meeting if it coincides with a Quarterly meeting. Also, if needed any member advisory group can call for an additional meeting.
- In lieu of the monthly quarterly meeting, a monthly e-mail will be sent out to the TWG group summarizing the updates from EPA, FHWA, TCEQ, TxDOT, and advisory members.

A. Quarterly Meetings - The current TWG quarterly meeting convenes four times in a year. Some of the recommendations that came out of breakout session on the TWG quarterly meeting are:

- The frequency of the meeting is to be kept at four times a year.
- Start of the meeting at 10:00 a.m. works fine for most of the MPOs travelling into Austin for the meeting.
- There needs to be extra time allotted for the breakout meeting.
- Covering lunch is critical for these meetings to make best use of the time.

B. Subcommittees – All subcommittees were established for individual tasks. Each subcommittee had a chair and sub-chair assigned to it with specific deliverables.

Each subcommittee had a specific purpose and completion date as well. Chairs were charged with timely completion of each project with a set of members assigned to it, and members could be replaced or added if the work falls behind. Supervisors and division directors were asked to support their staff involvement in these subcommittees based on the needs for requested outputs.

Recommendations – The following are the recommendations that came out of breakout session on the subcommittees:

- Keep the subcommittee structure as it was intended. Staff members need better clarity on setting up the committee with its roles and responsibilities.
- Make MPO staff or the member that requested creation of the subcommittee, i.e., one vested in it, take a major role in it to ensure the subcommittee purpose is satisfactorily met.
- Have clear roles, responsibilities, requirements for each member with a well-defined schedule and deliverables.
- Chairs / Vice Chairs are required for each subcommittee, and will define roles, responsibilities of subcommittee, and recruit the number of people needed in their group to fulfill the requirements.
- Encourage staff to participate in the subcommittee as it helps in their technical growth and ensures active participation.
- All findings from the subcommittee will be presented to the TWG group by Chair or Vice-chair.

3) Meeting Location – The members in the breakout session unequivocally recommended Austin as a meeting location and possibly looking into the TEMPO meeting location in Georgetown as a viable option, in addition to the TxDOT District office.

Breakout Session – Group 2

*Participants – Jackie Ploch (TxDOT), Jeffery English (TxDOT), Claudia Valles (ELMPO),
Darcie Schipull (TxDOT), Chaoyi Gu (TTI)*

Facilitators – Joe Zietsman (TTI)

Reporters – Jamie Zech (TCEQ)

1) **Topics to Cover in the TWG meeting** – The discussion focused on the potential technical topics for discussion in the TWG quarterly meeting. The topics suggested by participants included:

- ***New Technology***
 - AV/CV technology.
 - Connected signals.
 - Vehicle electrification and vehicle-to-grid (V2G).
 - Apps that provides transportation related information.
 - Other new stuff.
- ***Data Science Related***
 - Role of big data.
 - Modeling vehicle electrification (difficulties in buying American vehicles- Buy America Requirement).
- ***Environmental Issues in Transportation***
 - GHG emissions, climate change, resiliency and sustainability.
 - Performance measures.
 - CMAQ.
 - Health and environmental justice.
- ***Other Topics***
 - Policy and policy changes.
 - Continue successful practices.
 - Task force coordination.

2) **Selection of Presenters and Presentations** – The discussion focused on the mechanism for selection and identification of presenters, and how each TWG member can play an active role in taking presentation responsibilities to showcase their regional projects and/or programs.

- Forming a program committee that would consist of members from all TWG participating agencies, including EPA, TCEQ, TxDOT, TTI, and MPOs. The goal

of this committee is to select the presentations that cover all the interests from the participants.

- Have a summary of presentations about the new and interesting topics covered in the following meetings each year:
 - TRB annual meeting.
 - TRB committee meeting (summer meeting).
 - CRC meeting.
 - Southern Transportation and Air Quality Summit (STAQS).
 - Others as recommended by the committee.
- The presentations covering the following topics were highly recommended:
 - Agency briefing/Risk.
 - Disruptive technologies (Directors from agencies are recommended as presenters).
 - CMAQ.
 - VW project update.
 - International transport.
 - NAAQS.

3) Recommended Training – The discussion focused on identifying training needs that would be beneficial for the TWG group, and how these trainings need to be implemented.

- Following training was recommended for the TWG group:
 - Travel Demand Modeling (TDM) training, including its strengths and weaknesses.
 - Traffic data and forecasting.
 - CMAQ.
 - General conformity concepts.
 - MOVES and MOSERS.
 - SIP overview.
 - Hot-spot analysis.
 - EPA standards -NAAQS.
 - Critical pollutants, including PM, NO₂, CO, Ozone, etc.
- The training was recommended to be delivered as general training combined with TWG quarterly meetings so that TWG participants can make the best use of their travel to the meetings.

- 4) **Increase Active Participation/Attendance of the Stakeholders** – The discussion focused on identifying methods by which active participation in the TWG meetings can be increased. The following actions were highly recommended:
- Plan presentations out with a clear overview of the topics that will be covered during each TWG meeting.
 - Set Austin, Texas as the default place for each TWG meeting for the convenience of transportation and accommodation of all participants across the state.
 - Notify attendees in advance with a clear date. Schedule them for best attendance (around other large meetings, conference, etc.). Plan as early as possible.
 - Improve the quality of audio/video devices during the meeting.
 - For training sessions, streaming live training and recording it for future use.
 - Hosting the meeting with other meetings such as Texas Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (TEMPO) -Georgetown facility.

Breakout Session – Group 3

*Participants – Laura Norton (TxDOT), Phillip Tindall (TxDOT), Chris Klaus (NCTCOG),
Christiane Alepuz (CAPCOG), Barbara Maley (FHWA), Charles Airiohuodion (TxDOT)*

Facilitators – Andrew Birt (TTI)

Reporters – Aaron Slevin (TCEQ)

1) Format of the quarterly meetings - Identify any changes in the structure of the meetings that would enhance participation levels.

- The group unanimously agreed that Austin was the best location for the meetings. The suggestion was that meeting locations could rotate around agency meeting rooms in Austin (although a counter suggestion was that having a central location would help the TWG setup some good audio-visual facilities for WebEx). Lack of time was the reason suggested for the Austin location. Austin was considered easily reachable by plane (El Paso) or car for travelers, and very convenient for TCEQ and TxDOT staff.
- The group discussed how to increase participation at the meetings. They called for a broader (more interesting) agenda. They felt there was a need to report back the results of research, but also to cover topics such as legal/regulatory issues. Another suggestion was to encourage MPOs to present their problems/solutions to the group. Also design an agenda with more active participation (training, breakouts).
- The group decided that the regular agency information session is a bit dry and boring. They suggested it could be improved by collating a written list of notes from each contributor and using the meeting time to discuss points if necessary.
- There was a discussion about who was invited and the length of planning time between the invitation and the meeting. It was noted that the invitation list may not be up to date, or that emails are being spammed. Participants appreciated the personal call from TTI organizers asking if they were planning to attend.
- It was noted that AV facilities could be improved to make WebEx a viable meeting option.

2) TWG's role in identifying research needs - Discuss the role that TWG plays in recommending research needs through TxDOT RTI, NCHRP, etc.

- The TWG meeting and its participants had a role in identifying research needs. MPOs especially should be encouraged to report research needs, but currently there is no formal mechanism to do this.
- One idea that surfaced was to use the TWG to discuss future conferences, identify who was going, and then task them to report information back to the TWG.
- There was a need to understand past research so that new research could be developed in an appropriate context. The AQ Portal was considered a potentially useful tool in this regard.
- The TWG should maintain a list of potential and ongoing research projects.
- The concept of research should be broadened out (from academic type research concepts) to things like training, public relations or marketing of AQ schemes, Legal/Regulatory studies, in addition to conventional TTI/Consultancy type research.

3) Workgroup/Taskforce meetings (role of workgroups)

- Workgroups should have a structure:
 - Identify and clarify a problem.
 - Set out a clear structure for how to solve the problem / improve the situation.
 - Use strong facilitators to remind participants of the structure and to mediate discussions (but not to reach conclusions).
 - Periodically report progress and discussions back to the broader TWG group.
 - The workgroup should disband once it reaches a conclusion and report final activities to the TWG.
- The participants discussed the need for two types of 'workgroups':
 - "Official" groups designed to reach an official consensus (e.g., MOSERS sign off).
 - Brainstorming / problem solving groups that may not require a consensus but are instead designed to encourage collaborative ways of solving problems.

4) Call-in/WebEx option for the TWG meetings

- WebEx is required and represents an easier option or back up plan for people who cannot make the meeting physically.
- One idea was that instead of providing a reason not to attend, the WebEX actually provides a useful, gentle entry into the TWG – in other words might encourage people to attend in person in the long run.
- The problem with WebEx is the lack of active participation. Can we design activities to help WebEx'ers participate? For example:

- Something on the screen (messaging) when a remote participant wants to talk?
- Design breakout groups to include WebEx?
- Need breaks in the agenda to open questions to WebEx participants.
- Develop strong AV facilities.