

AT020: VIRTUAL MID-YEAR MEETING
Minutes of the Meeting held on
Wednesday, July 10th, 2024 from 2:00 – 3:00pm ET

Note: This meeting was held virtually via Teams. There were 43 attendees at peak attendance, and the session was not recorded. These minutes are the record.

Attendees: Chris Bachmann (University of Waterloo), Scott Babcock (TRB), Daniel Hackett (Hackett Associates), Isabel Victoria-Jaramillo (Cambridge Systematics, Inc.), Irina Benedyk (SUNY at Buffalo), Daniel Covarrubias, Johnny Arellano (Moffatt & Nichol), Loretta Brown (Planner, Freight Trade and Connectivity Section, TxDOT, Austin, TX), Maximilian Bauernfeind (EU Agency for the Space Programme (EUSPA), Bethany Stich (University of New Orleans Transportation Institute), Rhonda Levinowsky (TRB), Juan Carlos Espinosa (TTI), Douglas N Hales (Univ. of Rhode Island), Jerry Scott (Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), Juan Carlos Villa (Texas A&M Transportation Institute), Timoteo Juarez (Stanley Consultants), Charles Jones (Shasta Consulting and UT-Knoxville), Mitch Kostoulakos (Ad Hoc Logistics LLC), Steven Beningo (retired from BTS), Matt Versdahl (Washington State DOT), Nephi Awugelenu (Lagos Nigeria. CCECC Nigeria), Kara Kockelman (Univ of Texas in Austin), Don Kang (Texas A&M Transportation Institute), Mohammad Askariyeh (Texas A&M Transportation Institute), Jon Gold (National Retail Federation), Daniel Petrenko (Transportation Committee in Mount Vernon), Steven Polunsky (Washington State Department of Commerce), Lefteris Sdoukopoulos (Hellenic Institute of Transport), Mary Brooks (Dalhousie University), Paul Bingham, Joshua O’Shea, Andaleeb Qayyum, Charles Jones, Anthony Loui, Andrea Febles, Derek Cutler, Eduardo R. Calvo, Emily Hashimoto, Joel Trejo, Julie Lane, Roger Cohen, Paul Truban (FHWA), Benjamin Zietlow.

I. INTRODUCTIONS AND TRB ANNOUNCEMENTS

Daniel Hackett (Committee Chair) welcomed Scott Babcock to provide announcements from TRB.

The 103rd Annual Meeting (January 2024) drew a record attendance of 13,980. Registration for the forthcoming 104th Annual Meeting (January 2025) opens in September. Scott provided some remarks about the paper submission and review process, which were more comprehensively covered by Isabel Victoria-Jaramillo in her paper review update (see below). Scott also mentioned two freight-related workshops: one focusing on artificial intelligence (Sunday afternoon), and a second focusing on supply chain disruptions (Sunday morning).

Daniel Hackett welcomed meeting attendees and highlighted some important items that will be discussed at this meeting: a TRB call for papers; the option of a number of committees putting together a joint call; and the option of a joint call for posters, which would require volunteers from this committee to help organize and review submitted posters.

II. COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Aided by PowerPoint slides, Daniel Hackett facilitated the discussion of committee business:

Secretary Update: Chris Bachmann

Chris asked that the link to the December 2023 meeting minutes be updated as it currently provides the meeting agenda.

Action Item: update link to the December 2023 meeting minutes

Updated Committee Mission Statement: Daniel Hackett

Daniel asked for input on the draft Committee Mission Statement. The current draft statement is as follows:

The AT020 Committee is dedicated to addressing policy issues at regional, national, and international levels that pertain to international trade and transportation. This includes the examination of inter-country movements and their domestic links, trends and market forces in trade and international transportation, and the exploration of technological, economic, financial, institutional, or logistical innovations. We also focus on identifying and overcoming barriers to international trade in transportation goods and services.

Recognizing the potential for significant shifts in global trade and transportation practices over the next decade, the AT020 Committee is committed to gaining a deeper understanding of both immediate and long-term issues. These include:

- Identifying emerging technologies with the potential to transform international trade and transportation.
- Exploring the use of advanced technologies and logistics solutions in international trade and especially at borders to enhance efficiency.
- Addressing the issue of consumer overconsumption in transportation.
- Developing strategies to integrate international trade and transportation into a comprehensive national freight plan.
- Examining the implications of nearshoring and US cross-border trade.
- Investigating the impact of dwindling water resources on international trade, with a focus on key waterways such as the Panama Canal.
- Assessing the consequences of geopolitical dynamics for international trade.

The AT020 Committee is committed to advancing research and knowledge sharing on international trade and transportation issues, developing Research Need Statements to help guide future research, maintaining robust participation in committee activities by members and friends, and recruiting new, highly motivated individuals to help achieve our goals.

Our first goal is to foster and contribute to research and public policy discussions on the global trade environment and its impact on international and domestic freight transportation trends. To achieve this, we aim to identify critical, cross-cutting issues that affect international trade and transportation. We encourage, develop, review, and present research on these topics. We also seek to identify mechanisms to foster international collaboration in this research. Furthermore, we work closely with other TRB committees in the Freight Systems Group and the Marine Transportation Group, as well as other TRB committees, to identify common goals and pursue mutual research objectives.

Our second goal is to educate transportation system stakeholders on the value and application of research on international trade and transportation issues through presentations and sessions held at TRB meetings and other events or conferences hosted by TRB committees or other organizations.

Scott Babcock suggested waiting for TRB to complete its review of the Triennial Plan process to be released before the Committee begins an update of its own Triennial Strategic Plan.

2024 Paper Review Update: Isabel Victoria-Jaramillo

Isabel presented this year's paper review timelines, which follow the same schedule as in previous years. Contrary to some earlier notices (reviewed below), a full research paper will still be required for presentations (as in previous years)

Isabel noted that the paper review period is approximately four weeks, making it a tight timeline for the committee. For this reason, she asked invited reviewers to please accept or decline a review invitation within three to five days. TRB requires two reviewers, but she prefers to have three for a robust review.

Isabel then reviewed challenges TRB is facing with the review process: the number of papers submitted in last 15 years has doubled; approximately 20,000 reviews were required within 6 weeks for 2024; the quality of reviews varies widely; some submitted papers are withdrawn after the reviews are provided to the authors and then submitted for publication elsewhere; only 5% of all submissions provide a full paper for the online compendium.

These challenges led TRB to reconsider the paper process. On February 28th, 2024, TRB informed committees that submissions would be limited to presentations only and would take the form of short-form research summaries. It was noted that full papers could still be submitted to TRR at any time. On March 30th, 2025, after receiving feedback, TRB informed committees they would instead adopt a "pause and pilot" program. The "pause" indicates that full length papers are still required for the 2025 Annual Meeting (as in previous years), whereas the "pilot" indicates that short-form research summaries will be required for submissions not sharing the full paper online. The research summary must be submitted before December 1st; if a research summary is not provided, the accepted full paper will be posted online. These papers will not be indexed in TRID or published in a proceeding, as the earlier preparation of conference proceedings later created problems for some authors publishing their papers in other outlets.

Irina Benedyk asked if there an expectation to have more submission this year due to AI. Isabel responded that TRB requires AI to be acknowledged if used in the paper, but it is not clear if this will have an impact.

Communications Update: Irina Benedyk

Due to technical difficulties with Irina's microphone, Daniel Hackett provided a brief communications update:

Irina is updating the website (work in progress). She is looking for volunteers to curate committee members news, industry news (do we ne need it?), and photos (everything on trade and transport as well as our committee's previous gatherings).

Research Update: Daniel Covarrubias

Daniel presented provided an overview of the six future research needs/directions the committee has identified. He noted that the main change since last time in these research needs/directions is that a couple of topics were added to align with the call for papers. Daniel reminded committee members that our committee can develop research needs statements (RNS). He will be writing a RNS on exponential technologies and their impact on international trade. He is looking for volunteers interested in helping to draft RNS on the other topics. A survey will be forthcoming from the committee to seek volunteers.

In the chat, Juan Villa suggested another topic: the impact of US elections on international trade and transportation.

III. COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

Aided by PowerPoint slides, Daniel Hackett facilitated the discussion of the committee activities:

Session suggestions for 2025 TRB Annual Meeting: Daniel Hackett

Daniel informed attendees that the committee has two sessions at the 2025 annual meeting. Last year, we only had three papers, so having two lecture sessions is probably preferred this year: one for a series of paper presenters, and a second for a panel session on a topic of interest.

The panel session could focus on one of three areas of interest to the committee: environment and fuel use, have we become sufficiently resilient, or impacts of nearshoring on trade and transportation.

Another option is to host a poster session (no paper required), typically targeting young members or research in progress. We could even have a joint call for posters. This would require volunteers from our committee to organize, review posters, etc. It would likely require at least 4 reviewers for posters.

E-Circular and/or Webinar Development: Daniel Hackett

Daniel introduced the concept of “e-circulars”, which are short overviews of current trends or topics related to a committee’s work. These require TRB’s approval and are expected to have a shelf life of 2-3 years.

Another potential committee output is a webinar. These also require TRB’s approval and there are 3 submission deadlines per year.

IV. PRESENTATION

Former AT020 committee chair Juan Carlos Villa from the Texas A&M Transportation Institute presented, *“Nearshoring Implications to US/Mexico Cross-Border Trade”*. The presentation provided an overview of research in progress examining the growth in US-Mexico trade, growth in foreign direct investment in Mexico (and its relationship with trade and transportation growth), and resulting transportation impacts (particularly cross border trucking).

Afterwards, Daniel Hackett asked at what point things will effectively grind to a halt at the border. Juan foresees it would be a year or two before anything catastrophic would result, although wait times are just getting longer and longer at the border. He noted that Customs and Border Protection (CBP) simply does not have enough officials to process the freight (i.e., even if infrastructure was expanded tomorrow, the personnel is the limiting factor).

Eduardo R. Calvo reiterated that existing border crossings have empty booths (again because CBP does not have enough agents) and this requires federal funding. He also noted that wait times southbound (into Mexico) are also increasing due to poor management on the Mexican side; Juan said this has historically not been an issue.

Juan closed by noting that other costs (e.g., environmental) and other modes (e.g., rail) also need to be considered.

IV. OPEN FORUM

Douglas Hales mentioned there will be a conference focused on applying digital twins to solve some of the mentioned problems happening on Aug 23rd, from 8:30am to 3:30pm, on the main campus of University of Rhode Island.

Maximilian Bauernfeind suggested not limiting our focus on new technologies to cross-border transportation, and that he is available to give a presentation on space-based data for various transportation analyses.

Daniel Hackett reminded attendees that a volunteer survey will be forthcoming, soliciting interest in various work (paper reviews, organizing poster sessions, research needs statements etc.).

Kara Kockelman dropped an announcement in the chat: *"are you ware of the TRB-co-sponsored, totally free (\$0!) & carbon-free conference on Aug 7 & 8? It's called BTR: Bridging Transportation Researchers, and you can register here: <https://bridgingtransport.org/> & see program here: <https://bridgingtransport.org/conference-program-2024/> (both western & eastern time zones/hemispheres, with amazing keynoters each day in both). We'd love to see a LOT more representation from Africa (& Latin America) + trade & international travel papers from all of you in the Spring! Please spread the word, & get your name on the Registration list, so we can keep you up to date in the future."*

Action Item: Daniel Hackett to send survey to determine interest in various committee work (paper reviews, organizing poster sessions, research needs statements etc.).

IV. ADJOURNMENT

Minutes will be posted in the AT020 Committee web site (<https://www.trbtradetransportation.org>).

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