

Frequently Asked Questions
Proposed Transportation Libraries Pooled Fund Study
Lead Agency: Wisconsin Department of Transportation
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1. Why is there a need to invest in libraries?

Libraries play a vital role in providing accurate, timely and relevant information in a user-friendly format. The knowledge generated from this information is key to maintaining a competitive national transportation system in today's global economy. Library and information systems are part of a technology transfer process that helps transportation officials make the difficult decisions required for building and operating a safe and efficient multi-modal transportation system.

Transportation lags far behind other industries, such as agriculture and medicine, in funding library and information services programs. In 2001 the transportation sector in the U.S. accounted for \$306.7 billion of the Gross Domestic Product; yet only \$1.8 million, less than 0.001%, was invested in the National Transportation Library.

Transportation librarians and research managers recognize this disparity and are collaborating to develop a strategic approach to transportation information management, detailed in NCHRP Report 20-7/142, "Scoping Study for a National Strategic Plan for Transportation Information Management."

The July 2003 Scoping Study calls for increased funding and outlines a long-term strategic plan to facilitate access to the ever-increasing pool of transportation information. Developing a comprehensive transportation information management system requires a nationally coordinated effort with stable and sustained funding. Investing in libraries is essential in fulfilling this goal and will ensure the continued vitality of the U.S. transportation sector well into the 21st century.

2. If my state doesn't have a DOT library, why should it participate in the pooled fund? What are the benefits?

States with no libraries or few transportation-related resources stand to benefit the most. There is strength in numbers and you will become part of the library connectivity process. By networking, participating states will be able to share their resources, however limited, and have access to a much wider array of resources and services. Even a state without a formal library will have access to online reference systems and be able to borrow items from others through interlibrary loan.

3. What start-up activities will be supported through the pooled fund for states that currently don't have libraries?

A technical library staff person will help participating states survey and organize existing items into a library collection. The collection will then be formally cataloged into the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) for access through the Transportation Libraries Catalog (TL Cat).

4. If my state already has a library with cataloged holdings, what are the benefits of joining the library pooled fund study?

Your state will have access to more than 340,000 items through TL Cat and also be able to make its unique transportation holdings immediately accessible to others. This multiplies the value of each state's research investment and moves toward Phase I Library Connectivity that is recommended in the NCHRP Scoping Study.

5. How can we be assured that there won't be duplication of services between the existing system and what the pooled fund will do?

The principle behind an online interlibrary system inherently avoids duplication. Rather than independently investing in the same item or service, participating states can share resources, which reduces cost and maximizes value. The library pooled fund study offers participants an opportunity to refine core collections, enhance existing services, and begin to specialize in certain areas. In an economy where government officials and transportation practitioners are doing more with less, a linked library network means combined resources at a shared cost while increasing access to vital information.

6. Would my library have to start over in its cataloguing?

No, most cataloguing is convertible to the OCLC system that is compatible with TL Cat. Depending upon your state's system, some alteration of existing records might be necessary but in most circumstances a complete overhaul won't be necessary.

7. How does TL Cat differ from TRIS?

TRIS is an *index and abstract* of published and on-going transportation research. TRIS has more than 600,000 records generally containing a bibliographic citation, summary or abstract of the research, and controlled indexing. TRIS materials include journal articles, conference proceedings, technical and university research reports plus government and electronic publications. With the advent of TRIS Online through the National Transportation Library, a number TRIS records now contain links to full text documents. However, many publications in TRIS are difficult to obtain. A TRIS record can tell you that a document exists but not necessarily where it is located.

TL Cat is a *catalog or list* of publications and documents held by various libraries. TL Cat includes reports, books, videos, maps, CD-ROMs, and other electronic information with bibliographic citation to help users identify where a document is located and how to arrange for an interlibrary loan. TL Cat not only tells you where a document is located but also how to retrieve it.

LIBRARY INFORMATION ORGANIZATION
Abstracting – the process of describing the contents of an item (such as a book, research report or journal article) in a short narrative paragraph form.
Cataloging – the process of describing an item (book, journal article, research report, CD-ROM, videotape) in various fields applied from universal library science rules.
Indexing – the process of creating a comprehensive but concise list of “access” points with specialized terms that make the information (documents, publications, Web pages, etc.) more easily accessible.
Bibliographic information – any information about the physical and contextual characteristics of an item (a book, CD-ROM, video, report); meta data.

8. My state is already part of the Midwest Transportation Knowledge Network. Why should my state participate and what are the benefits?

As an existing MTKN member, you can take pride in being a national leader. MTKN initiatives have set the stage for a national model of library connectivity and information management that will assist the transportation industry by supporting an informed workforce. Pooled fund participation will facilitate continued growth of the MTKN through marketing initiatives, ongoing technical assistance and travel opportunities for peer-to-peer exchanges, conferences and other forums.

In addition, MTKN pooled fund participants can utilize technical assistance through the pooled fund to further develop Phase I Library Connectivity, increasing TL Cat holdings and providing access to additional information contained on the ‘deeper’ or ‘invisible’ Web, such as academic reports not currently in TRIS, TL Cat or even WorldCat.

9. Can MTKN members participate in the pooled fund at a reduced rate since they have already completed much of the up-front work?

We are hoping to craft a plan that permits reduced rates for current MTKN members related to technical assistance and cataloguing services. OCLC annual membership would still be covered through the pooled fund. MTKN members would enjoy all the other benefits of participation in the pooled fund study, including:

- a. Increased collaboration with more states for the distribution of both regional and national transportation-related information.
- b. Higher visibility for the state’s research and library programs with marketing and communications services implemented throughout the study.
- c. Electronic delivery of interlibrary loan documents.
- d. Peer support to librarians.
- e. Continued leadership in a national movement to implement a strategic transportation information management system

10. How was the annual pooled fund contribution amount determined and what is the cost breakdown of the \$20,000 investment?

Cost is based on NCHRP Scoping Study recommendations and projections from the collective experience of MTKN members. Depending on participants' current OCLC costs, online compatibility, and collection size, pooled fund study costs could range from \$15,000 to \$20,000..

ANNUAL LIBRARY POOLED FUND STUDY COST STRUCTURE	
Technical library assistance, cataloguing services, OCLC annual membership	\$ 5,000 to 10,000
Travel expense for at least two library pooled fund study meetings per year	2,000
Administrative costs for overseeing the pooled fund study	3,000
Marketing services to develop communication and promotional materials	5,000
ANNUAL TOTAL	\$15,000 - \$20K

11. What are the lessons learned/best practices of the MTKN experience that can be modeled by other states?

MTKN has shown that a regional network of library and information services actually works. Since its inception in 2001, MTKN has implemented cost saving measures while expanding library and information services on a regional level. In an economy of downsizing and fiscal cuts, this regional model is a wise investment and demonstrates the need for continued support of a national library network.

MTKN's best practices also include improved access to new technology, pooling of indexed materials and more online research methods and tools. In uniting officials from state transportation libraries and universities, MTKN provides a forum to discuss common problems, exchange information and share resources. Through this cooperative effort, participating states avoid duplication of effort while reducing costs and optimizing library and information services. This regional model can help maintain an informed workforce among state DOTs.

12. What are MTKN's main accomplishments in the last four years?

- a. Implementation of TL Cat – an online catalog system – providing access to more than 340,000 documents not previously available through the Internet.
- b. Aiding in the technology transfer process by providing technical assistance and peer exchange information on how to build strong transportation collections.
- c. Marketing the need for enhanced transportation information access on both a regional and national level.
- d. Assisting in the development of technical training, such as "Working Smarter: Using the World Wide Web for Transportation Related Research." This two-hour

tutorial sharpens online research skills and teaches how to evaluate and interpret information found on the Web.

- e. Providing a forum to increase dialogue within the transportation community about the role librarians play in compiling and distributing vital information.

MTKN accomplishments include:
Developed network of librarians
Expert advice and peer review services
Technical support to less experienced members
Feedback to the NTL on its projects and services
More visibility for libraries and the value of information
Faster access to a broader range of materials through TL Cat