



**Pooled  
Fund  
Study**

# Transportation Libraries Make the Connection

PUTTING RESEARCH TO WORK  
**BRIEF**

## The Opportunity

Transportation libraries play a vital role in the agencies they serve by ensuring that information about new technologies and other advancements in the field makes it into the hands of practitioners.

During the late 1990s and early 2000s, transportation librarians at the state and national levels recognized the need for an organized, collaborative approach to managing the significant volumes of information generated by the transportation industry, and they took action.

Beginning in 1998 with the creation of the National Transportation Library and continuing in 2001 with NTL financial support of the first regional transportation knowledge network, librarians made significant progress to improve information services throughout the transportation sector.

In 2001, WisDOT was on the leading edge of this wave of initiatives as one of the founding members of the [Midwest Transportation Knowledge Network](#), a network of state DOT and academic transportation libraries in the Midwest whose members share resources, expertise and best practices. In 2005, WisDOT continued its leadership role with a proposal to expand the reach of the MTKN through a national pooled fund study to bring together transportation information professionals from federal, state, academic and private sector libraries.

## The Objective

The objective of this pooled fund project was to make transportation information more readily available through better communication and coordination among transportation libraries. The project further aimed to institutionalize the best practices of individual transportation libraries and regional TKNs.

## What Researchers Did

With WisDOT as the lead agency, 11 members in nine states launched the five-year Transpor-

tation Library Connectivity pooled fund study in March 2005. When the project concluded in October 2010, the study's 25 members (22 state DOTs, two university transportation centers and a metropolitan transportation authority) in 22 states had established mechanisms for sharing library resources, identified best practices and articulated needs for the future.

The study used a consortium model, working with national partners such as the NTL, Transportation Research Board committees, the AASHTO Research Advisory Committee and the Special Libraries Association. Study members worked in concert with a consultant firm that provided technical assistance to member libraries along with marketing and information services. Member libraries directed consultant work via an annual work plan.

A significant result of the study is the template it provided for a national infrastructure for transportation libraries—an institutional solution that continues to await federal support and funding. Other study accomplishments include the development of an extensive website, other marketing tools and outreach programs to enhance awareness of the existence and value of transportation libraries. Study members also undertook several special projects, including:

## Pooled Fund Study Summary

[Study Web Page](#)

[Transportation Library Connectivity Website and Reports](#)

**Participating States:** AZ, CA, CT, IA, ID, IL, KS, LA, MI, MN, MO, MS, MT, NJ, NM, NY, OH, OR, PA, TN, WA, WI, Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority, University of Minnesota Center for Transportation Studies, Wisconsin Transportation Center (UW-Madison)

**Project End Date:** October 2010

**WisDOT Contribution:** \$100,000

**Total Project Cost:** \$1,320,000

WisDOT Technical Representative



*"The products of this collaboration include best practices and better access to a wide range of hard-to-find transportation information resources."*

—John Cherney  
WisDOT Library and  
iCommons Learning  
Center  
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## Investigator



*"This study demonstrated how important library services are to state DOT practitioners and managers. It also became a blueprint for building next-generation information services in every region of the country."*

—Patrick Casey  
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Participation in the study helped WisDOT develop its new Library and iCommons Learning Center in 2007. The renovated library, sited in a prominent location on the central office's first floor, expands staff access to internal and external information in a collaborative work space.

- **Transportation Librarian's Toolkit.** First published in 2007 and updated in 2009, the **Toolkit** reflects the best practices of study members, providing a range of guidance suitable for both the newly minted transportation librarian and the highly experienced professional.
- **Resource sharing.** Study members expanded the reach of their collections beyond their library doors and gave their users timely access to the ever-widening world of transportation resources with pilot projects that provided funding for:
  - Member library participation in Online Computer Library Center's WorldCat Resource Sharing, a formalized network for borrowing and lending of materials by libraries from around the world.
  - Members' FedEx shipping costs to encourage wider, informal sharing of resources among TKN members. Leveraging the Results

## Leveraging the Results

Expanding the networking opportunities and professional development of members was a key goal of the study. WisDOT reaped the benefits of this focus on networking through its use of study funding for participation in national meetings of the SLA and the TRB.

Face-to-face interactions with fellow transportation information professionals provided immeasurable benefits to WisDOT Library staff by encouraging more sharing of resources among members—even after the study's resource sharing pilot projects concluded.

With the increased networking opportunities came a heightened national profile for WisDOT. John Cherney, WisDOT Library's head librarian, serves in a leadership role on SLA committees and participates on the TRB Committee on Library and Information Science for Transportation and the AASHTO Research Advisory Committee Transportation Knowledge Networks Task Force.

## What's Next

In May 2011, Missouri DOT took the reins of a follow-up pooled fund study, **TPF-5(237)**, that continues the important work begun in the WisDOT-led project. Objectives of the new study mirror those of the initial project: continuing the focus on promoting library and information services, supporting the development of a true national transportation library and providing resources that help members meet the needs of both practitioner and decision-maker.

*This brief summarizes Pooled Fund Study TPF-5(105), "Transportation Library Connectivity." Details of this study can be found at <http://www.pooledfund.org>. More information about the pooled fund can be found in the final report for the project, available at [http://libraryconnectivity.org/archive/downloads/TPF-5\(105\)-Final-Report.pdf](http://libraryconnectivity.org/archive/downloads/TPF-5(105)-Final-Report.pdf), and at the project website, <http://libraryconnectivity.org/archive/index.html>.*

*Daniel Yeh, WisDOT Research and Communication Services*