

# **Charter**

## **Southeast Transportation Consortium**

### **A Transportation Pooled Fund Study**

#### **Introduction/Background**

The RAC Region II has initiated a collaborative research program consortium through the Transportation Pooled Fund (TPF) Program. The research program is called the Southeast Transportation Consortium (STC) and is intended to encourage coordination among member states and provide resources and management of collaborative studies. The consortium intends to address high priority transportation research topics of common interest to the southeastern and adjoining states.

The states' transportation research programs collectively offer a broad range of talent and expertise. This project seeks to foster growth in knowledge, skills, and abilities amongst transportation professionals and academic partners to produce superior research and technology transfer.

STC's purpose is to pool financial, professional, and academic resources to coordinate research and develop improved methods of addressing common problems in the planning, design, construction, maintenance, management, and operation of transportation systems in participating states. The program is intended to supplement ongoing state, federal, and university research activities and other national programs such as the National Cooperative Highway Research Program. It is also intended to reduce duplication of research and provide means for better communication of on-going research activities in the state research programs. The cooperative and collaborative objectives of the STC program are to develop synergy and provide for a more efficient use of resources than a series of independent initiatives.

In order to guide deliberations of consortium participants, agreement is required on the management structure and operating rules. This charter provides a basis for this requirement.

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#### **1.0 Purpose**

This document formalizes administrative functions, financial responsibilities, reporting requirements, the conduct of business, and the development of organizational procedures to implement the program. It further defines roles and responsibilities for member organizations to carry out the goals and mission of the STC.

#### **1.1 Membership**

Membership is defined by participation in the STC pooled fund through the FHWA administered pooled fund program. Each member of the pooled fund will have one vote. The membership will develop the Pooled Study's budget, oversee the work program, and preside over related matters of policy. The membership is responsible for establishing operating rules and conducting business with a quorum of members. Membership may include a representative from FHWA as an ex-officio member. The membership will be responsible for identifying priorities and goals, maintaining the charter, implementing fiscal procedures, selecting contractors, and reviewing and approving deliverables and products. The membership will meet a minimum of once per year. The lead agency representative will serve as chair of the membership.

Membership responsibilities will include the following:

- Execute Federal transfer of funds
- Maintain consortium charter
- Generate research problem statements
- Develop annual work program
- Review and approve budget
- Approve vendor contracts
- Review project progress reports
- Develop an outreach work plan
- Develop an implementation work plan

## ***1.2 Policies and Procedures***

The membership will adopt such program policies and procedures as deemed appropriate.

## ***1.3 Funding***

Project funds will be utilized to develop and implement strategic directions and action plans of STC, as defined and approved by the STC membership. The minimum member commitment will be \$5,000 per year for the duration of 36 months. Additional commitments will be dependent on individual research project development. Tasks to be supported by these project funds will include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Plan and conduct meetings to establish research priorities, share research findings, exchange information, and define direction of the organization. Each member may utilize funds for one representative from each organization to participate
- Discuss and screen potential research projects and seek partners from the public, academic, and private sectors to collaborate on these projects and utilize available resources to ensure research is not duplicative
- Conduct research studies
- Communicate and disseminate research results and innovations through the use of communication products such as development and maintenance of a Web site, periodic electronic newsletter, and fact sheets
- Put research results into practice through technology transfer events
- Communicate impacts of the organization's activities to national leaders in transportation
- Cover administrative costs of the consortium

## ***1.4 Appointments***

The membership is responsible for creating and terminating various committees or other organizational units as required to facilitate program requirements.

## ***1.5 Review Products/Recommend Alternatives***

Committees will be responsible for establishing a degree of expertise in their given areas of research. This expertise will facilitate in-depth analyses and detailed presentations before membership. Committees will review products of their respective consultant teams and make recommendations to the membership.

## ***1.6 Product Acceptance***

The membership is responsible for acceptance of deliverables and products from contractors.

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## ***2.0 Program Administration***

The lead agency (administrator) will provide the program administration for STC. The administrator will coordinate activities of the membership.

### ***2.1 Contract Administration***

The administrator is responsible for distributing RFPs, preparing contract documents, and performing other functions related to contracts administration and management. The administrator will assure that contracts, schedules, work plans, and project descriptions are followed. The administrator will be responsible for quality control and evaluation, recommendations regarding preparation of contract documents, change order requests, and authorization of progress payments.

Administrator responsibilities will include the following, subject to available funds:

- Review Financial Commitment forms from each individual state for each specific year
- Organize, coordinate, and manage STC membership and committee meetings
- Initiate overall contracts and scope of services for this project
- Review and submit vouchers through the FHWA local division office to FHWA Headquarters for payment
- Report project progress and budget expenditures to the membership

### ***2.2 Budget and Work Program***

The administrator will submit a budget and a work program to the membership for approval.

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## ***3.0 Project Selection***

In general, STC projects and activities are considered on an annual basis. This supports development of an annual work plan with a consistent schedule. However, if a member identifies a project or activity that offers significant immediate benefits or takes advantage of short-term opportunities, the member may suggest it to the group for early consideration. The group can then choose to accept such a project for fast-tracked initiation, reject it, or delay a decision until the start of the normal work plan development process.

### ***3.1 Selection process***

Research problem statements and project outlines are submitted by members to the administrator. The administrator shall distribute these statements/outlines to the membership to determine activities for the coming fiscal year. STC shall convene a meeting, if necessary, to discuss and select projects. Telephone or e-mail polling is also an option. These projects and activities form the initial basis of the annual work plan. Projects still under consideration are elaborated into more detailed scope of services. Based on these detailed scope of services, the membership selects those projects that, based on funding and other considerations, are undertaken by STC.

Following project selection, scope of services and project deliverables are refined based on previous discussions and are prepared for a final vote and approval. Once this has been achieved, scope of

services are included in the annual work plan and submitted to FHWA as an indication of STC's plans for the coming year.

### ***3.2 Approval of RFPs***

If external resources require utilizing consortium funds, the membership may create technical committees to generate RFPs to assure their consistency with the work program and budget. Committees will recommend the selection of contractors.

For projects in the annual work plan, RFPs and other contract documents are developed and distributed to prospective contractors. The administrator reviews proposals and determines compliance. All compliant proposals are distributed to appropriate members. Evaluation criteria are used by members to facilitate the proposal selection process. The evaluation criteria have been developed to match each study and are included in the appropriate RFP. Members use rankings based on these criteria to identify a short list of preferred proposals. The membership will make final selections.

### ***3.3 Procurement Process***

Since STC's legal authority to solicit proposals and award contracts lies with the lead state, the lead state's procurement process takes precedence over STC's Charter when soliciting and awarding contracts.

### ***3.4 Additional Pooled Fund Projects***

The membership may recommend alternate funding opportunities for projects; whereas, additional pooled funded projects are initiated separate from the STC budget. Individual member states will be responsible for performing lead state activities. The STC membership may approve support activities, which may include distributing results and marketing implementation benefits.

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## ***4.0 Amendments***

This Charter may be amended by a 2/3 vote of the membership.

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