

**Western Transportation Research Consortium (WTRC)  
Pooled Fund Study #TPF-5(526)**

**Charter and Operating Procedures**

**Approved November 20, 2024**

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**1. Introduction and Background**

American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) Research Advisory Committee (RAC) Region IV initiated a collaborative research program consortium through the Transportation Pooled Fund (TPF) Program. The research program is called the Western Transportation Research Consortium (WTRC) and is intended to encourage coordination among member states and provide resources and management of collaborative studies and initiatives. The consortium intends to address high priority transportation research topics of common interest to the western 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.

WTRC’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 (NCHRP) Program. It is also intended to reduce duplication of research and provide means for better communication of ongoing research activities in state research programs. The cooperative and collaborative objectives of WTRC are to

develop synergy and provide for a more efficient use of resources than a series of independent initiatives.

Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT) is the lead state of this pooled fund. All current state department of transportation (DOT) partners are listed on the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Transportation Pooled Fund [study web page](#). The latest information on research projects, events and other activities will become available on the WTRC website, to be established at the web address [westerntrc.org](http://westerntrc.org) in the near future.

## **2. Purpose of this Document**

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

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 WTRC.

## **3. Composition of WTRC**

### **3.1. Membership**

WTRC membership is defined by participation in the pooled fund study through the FHWA-administered pooled fund program. A state DOT in AASHTO Region IV must make a minimum annual commitment to WTRC of \$15,000 (USD) to maintain WTRC membership. In-kind commitments are not accepted for membership in WTRC.

Membership will also include the TPF study's FHWA Technical Liaison as an ex-officio member.

The membership will meet a minimum of once per year.

#### **3.1.1. Advisory Committee**

Each member agency of WTRC will designate one individual to serve as a voting member of the Advisory Committee and represent that agency's interests.

Organizations may make annual contributions in excess of \$15,000 to support the research goals and activities of WTRC. Organizations that do so may also designate additional nonvoting Advisory Committee members. The suggested minimum annual contribution is \$10,000 per year per additional nonvoting Advisory Committee member.

The lead state representative will serve as chair of the Advisory Committee.

### **3.1.2. Subcommittees and Working Groups**

WTRC or the WTRC chair may empanel subcommittees and working groups as needed to review and advise on matters related to meeting planning, research, and other WTRC activities.

### **3.1.3. Membership Benefits and Responsibilities**

The membership identifies WTRC priorities and goals, oversees the work program, presides over related matters of policy, establishes operating rules, and conducts business with a quorum of members.

WTRC provides funding for travel for all Advisory Committee members, both voting and nonvoting, to attend in-person meetings and peer exchanges.

Advisory Committee membership responsibilities include the following:

- Execute federal transfer of funds
- Maintain the consortium charter and operating procedures
- Generate research problem statements
- Develop annual work program
- Review and approve budget
- Approve vendor contracts
- Review project progress reports and activity milestones
- Provide guidance to tech transfer and outreach activities
- Provide guidance to an implementation work plan
- Participate in Advisory Committee meetings, both virtual and in-person
- Vote on WTRC matters involving special activities, ad hoc funding requests and operating procedures

### **3.1.4. Other Participants**

The Advisory Committee may invite other participants to attend WTRC in-person meetings and peer exchanges or to participate in teleconferences. These participants will not be allowed to vote on WTRC business but may attend the meetings or teleconferences and receive documents. Examples of these other participants include potential new member agencies, additional member state representatives, and other invited guests. Travel reimbursement rules for other participants are noted in Travel Expenses.

## **4. Policies and Procedures**

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

### **4.1. Funding**

Project funds will be utilized to develop and implement strategic directions and action plans of WTRC, as defined and approved by the Advisory Committee. The initial minimum member commitment will be \$15,000 per year for the duration of the first 36 months of this study. Additional commitments will be

dependent on individual research project development or time extension of the pooled fund study. 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 the direction of the organization. WTRC funds may be used to pay for travel expenses for voting and nonvoting Advisory Committee members to attend in-person meetings.
- 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 or manage the conduct of research studies.
- Communicate and disseminate research results and innovations through the use of communication products such as development and maintenance of a website, 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.

## **4.2. Appointments**

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

## **4.3. Review Products and 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 the Advisory Committee.

Committees will review products of their respective consultant teams and make recommendations to the Advisory Committee.

## **4.4. Product Acceptance**

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

## **4.5. Voting Procedures**

Each Advisory Committee representative from the member agencies will have voting privileges on WTRC matters involving activity selection, ad hoc funding or operating procedures. Each member agency may have no more than one voting representative. Formal votes are not necessary on all issues.

The Advisory Committee may establish an accepted consensus through meeting discussions, phone calls, e-mail exchanges and other electronic means.

For project selection and other matters requiring a more formal approach, votes may be cast by voice, a show of hands, or a written proxy. Any voting member may request a roll call vote if desired. To ensure that the diversity of the member agencies is being represented, consensus decisions require majority

agreement (strictly greater than 50 percent) of at least two-thirds of the members. Without a quorum of two-thirds of the members, members who are absent from the meeting will be polled. Decisions will be delayed until all members have had sufficient opportunity to respond.

As an exception to the guidelines above, the initial adoption of these operating procedures will require approval by two thirds of the Advisory Committee with no dissenting votes from any Advisory Committee members.

Future revisions to these operating procedures will require a majority vote of a two-thirds quorum of Advisory Committee members.

## **5. Projects**

WTRC research efforts may include quick-turnaround research. This includes — but is not limited to — syntheses, preliminary investigations, peer exchanges, training, and technology transfer activities. In general, WTRC projects and activities are considered on an annual basis, with the possibility of interim projects as deemed necessary. 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.

### **5.1. Selection Process**

Research problem statements and project outlines are submitted by members or committees to the lead state 45 days in advance of Advisory Committee voting. WTRC will develop a standard submission form for use by WTRC members. The lead state shall distribute these statements/outlines to the Advisory Committee to determine activities for the coming fiscal year. WTRC 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 Advisory Committee selects those projects that, based on funding and other considerations, are undertaken by WTRC. Following project selection, scope of services and project deliverables are refined based on previous discussions and are prepared for a final vote and with two-thirds Advisory Committee approval.

### **5.2. Procurement of Contracts**

Since WTRC's legal authority to solicit proposals and award contracts lies with the lead state, the lead state's procurement process will be used for soliciting and awarding contracts and for assuring compliance.

The Advisory Committee may create technical committees to generate RFPs/RFPs to assure their consistency with the work program and budget. Committees will be involved in evaluating proposals and recommending the selection of contractors.

### **5.3. Additional Pooled Fund Projects**

The Advisory Committee may recommend alternate funding opportunities for projects where additional pooled funded projects are initiated separate from the WTRC budget. Individual member states will be responsible for performing lead state activities as appropriate in these non-WTRC projects. However, the Advisory Committee may approve support activities, which may include distributing results and marketing implementation benefits.

## **6. In-Person Meetings and Peer Exchanges**

WTRC will hold one in-person meeting annually to conduct WTRC business and planning activities and to conduct a peer exchange. This peer exchange will serve to satisfy the federal SP&R program requirements for a “...periodic review of a state DOT’s [research, development, and technology transfer] program, or portion thereof, by representatives of other State DOTs, for the purpose of exchange of information or best practices...” as provided in 23 CFR, Section 420.207(b).

### **6.1. Host State Selection**

States that would like to receive credit for a peer exchange will be considered by the consortium using these criteria:

- Need to meet FHWA requirements
- Need to gain insight on a particular theme
- Willingness to host the annual in-person WTRC meeting

If more than one state is interested in hosting the in-person WTRC meeting, all interested states will be considered and selected by the majority of consortium members.

The state that is hosting the WTRC meeting will receive credit for a peer exchange, unless it chooses instead only to participate.

### **6.2. Additional States**

Up to three WTRC states may claim credit for a peer exchange, including the host state and up to two co-hosts.

Each of the states claiming credit for a peer exchange should communicate their intent and justification to their respective FHWA Division Office for approval.

The host state and two possible co-host states claiming credit for a peer exchange should put significant effort into planning the peer exchange together and sharing information on their programs during the peer exchange.

All agencies claiming credit are welcome to invite their FHWA state division representatives to join the peer exchange virtually or in-person.

The remaining WTRC members in attendance will serve as the “other state DOTs” described in 23 CFR, Section 420.207(b) above.

### 6.3. Theme Selection

The peer exchange theme or themes should be relevant to at least half of the consortium states. The identification and selection of two or three themes is typical.

The business of the consortium should be considered one peer exchange theme, and the remainder of the consortium meeting could focus on additional peer exchange themes.

The host state may be given priority on selecting one of the peer exchange themes.

## 7. Program Administration

The lead state will provide the program administration for WTRC. The lead state will coordinate activities of the WTRC and may utilize an Administrative Coordinator consultant to assist them using consortium funding.

### 7.1. Contract Administration

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

Lead state 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 WTRC membership and committee meetings
- Initiate overall contracts and scope of services for this project
- Review and process invoices
- Report project progress and budget expenditures to the membership

### 7.2. Budget and Work Program

The lead state will periodically update the Advisory Committee on the WTRC budget and work program contracts.

## 8. Administrative Coordination

The WTRC lead state will contract with an Administrative Coordinator to support the efforts of the lead state and Advisory Committee, and the activities conducted through the pooled fund. The Administrative Coordinator's specific tasks and required deliverables are defined in a contract with the lead state. At the time of the adoption of these operating procedures, these include five activity areas:

1. **Coordinate SME Activities.** Coordinate activities to stimulate research among the WTRC member state DOTs' subject matter expert groups.

2. **Manage Research Projects.** Manage the procedural and administrative requirements of research projects.
3. **Advisory/Technical Committees.** Provide all services necessary to manage the administrative and functional activities of UDOT, the WTRC Advisory Committee and the research technical committees.
4. **Technology Transfer.** Provide assistance with all technology transfer and communication activities.
5. **Contract Administration.** Conduct administrative work, such as budgeting and overall program planning.

As of October 2024, Brian Hirt with CTC & Associates LLC is the Administrative Coordinator for this pooled fund. For more information, contact Brian Hirt at [brian.hirt@ctcandassociates.com](mailto:brian.hirt@ctcandassociates.com), 402-770-9067, or Kirsten Seeber at [kirsten.seeber@ctcandassociates.com](mailto:kirsten.seeber@ctcandassociates.com), 608-620-5820.

## 9. Travel Expenses

### 9.1. Advisory Committee Members

Travel expenses for all Advisory Committee members (both voting and nonvoting) related to participation in WTRC activities will be paid out of the pooled fund project's funds unless stated otherwise for the individual project. Such expenses include airfare, mileage, meals and lodging.

The majority of travel expenses will relate to WTRC Advisory Committee meeting participation. However, at the Advisory Committee's discretion, travel expenses associated with attending related meetings or activities will also be reimbursed. The lead state and Administrative Coordinator are responsible for coordinating events that minimize travel costs.

When appropriate and possible, the Administrative Coordinator will directly pay for Advisory Committee member expenses at the time they are incurred on behalf of the Advisory Committee member and then submit an invoice for reimbursement to the lead state. When this is not possible, Advisory Committee members must submit a request for reimbursement to the lead state, following their guidelines for reimbursement. The Administrative Coordinator will reimburse the Advisory Committee member and invoice the lead state for the expenses.

#### 9.1.1. FHWA Representatives

Group meal expenses incurred by FHWA representatives while participating in a WTRC event, such as a group lunch, dinner, or break, will be covered by WTRC. Travel, lodging and other meal expenses will not be covered.

### 9.2. Other Participants

#### 9.2.1. Additional Member State Representatives

Group meal expenses incurred by additional WTRC state representatives (i.e., beyond the voting and nonvoting Advisory Committee members) while participating in a WTRC event, such as a group lunch,



dinner, or break, will be covered by WTRC. Travel, lodging and other meal expenses will not be covered. All attendance and reimbursement must be approved by the Advisory Committee prior to the event.

### **9.2.2. Invited Guests**

Travel expenses for all invited guests related to participation in WTRC activities, such as peer exchange guest agencies and subject matter experts, will be paid out of the pooled fund project's funds. Such expenses include airfare, mileage, meals and lodging. All guest attendance and reimbursement must be approved by the Advisory Committee prior to the event.

### **9.3. Administrative Coordinator**

Travel expenses for the pooled fund Administrative Coordinator's team to the annual Advisory Committee meeting and peer exchange will be reimbursed by the pooled fund. As of 2024, this consists of two people: the Administrative Coordinator and the Project and Business Manager. Any individuals or meetings in excess will require Advisory Committee approval.