

**Meeting and Peer Exchange**

November 19-20, 2024 | Radisson Hotel Salt Lake City Downtown | Salt Lake City, Utah

**WTRC Meeting Notes — November 19, 2024**

**Attendees:**

Carlos Braceras, Utah DOT

Steve Cohn, Colorado DOT

Cristina DeMattio, Alaska DOT&PF

Mark Fischer, Nebraska DOT

Ed Halbig, New Mexico DOT

Brian Hirt, CTC & Associates

Gary Hook, Oklahoma DOT

Winston Inoway, Utah DOT

Joe Horton, Caltrans

Cameron Kergaye, Utah DOT

Lucy Koury, Nevada DOT

Amanda Laib, Idaho TD

Sang Le, Caltrans

TJ Murphy, North Dakota DOT

Kevin Nichol, Utah DOT

April Nitsos, Caltrans

Kevin Pete, Texas DOT

Jon Peterson, Washington State DOT

Zane Pulver, FHWA

Rebecca Ridenour, Montana DOT

Tyson Rupnow, LTRC

Kirsten Seeber, CTC & Associates

David Stevens, Utah DOT

Enid White, Wyoming DOT

**Utah DOT Executive Director Welcome**, Carlos Braceras, Utah DOT

* Executive Director Braceras welcomed the group to Utah and spoke of the importance of integrity, care and respect in our actions.

**PEER EXCHANGE THEME 1: REGIONAL RESEARCH COORDINATION AND COLLABORATION**

**Call to Order**, Cameron Kergaye, UDOT

**Lead State Welcome,** Cameron Kergaye and David Stevens, UDOT

**Meeting Goals,** Brian Hirt, CTC & Associates

**Introductions, All**

**2022 Region 4 Peer Exchange Findings** — Joe Horton, 15 minutes

* A RAC Region 4 Peer Exchange was held in California in 2022. Twelve of the 18 Region 4 members attended.
* Peer Exchange Themes
  + How RAC4 could help with regional engagement needs
  + Share joint items
  + Identify issues the group should be discussing as a region
* Regional impact issues
  + Climate change
  + Traffic/pedestrian fatalities
  + Workforce management
  + Service delivery
  + Funding available for research and development
  + DEI
  + Aging infrastructure
* Issues to discuss as a region
  + Improvement of research implementation
  + Adopt new innovations and share best practices
  + Coordination with UTCs
  + Brainstorming in-kind support
  + RAC Region 4 exclusive surveys instead of national surveys
  + State transportation legislation
  + Preliminary Investigations support for proposed pooled fund projects.
* The WTRC pool fund was established to support regional activities. Fourteen of the 18 Region 4 members joined the pooled fund. Oregon and Arizona may also join.

**UDOT and CTC Roles**

* Utah is the lead state and CTC & Associates are the administrative coordinators.
* Lead state role – Contracting and procurement
* CTC – Brian Hirt and Kirsten Seeber
  + Brian is the Program Manager and the first point of contact. Kirsten is the Business Manager.

**Transportation Pooled Fund (TPF) Management**

* Budget Review — David Stevens, Utah DOT; Kirsten Seeber, CTC & Associates
  + CTC acts as a passthrough for meeting costs.
  + The CTC contract is 18 months and will be modified to account for future meetings and other activities. The contract can be amended for up to five years total.
  + There will be approximately $300,000 for research efforts through 2026.
  + Some states have indicated they can contribute additional funds. Getting the funds prior to the final year allows for time to spend the funds before the end of the pooled fund.
  + The pooled fund is currently set for three years and can be extended for two additional years.

**Southeast Transportation Consortium (STC) — Best Practices and Guidance**, Tyson Rupnow, Louisiana DOTD

* The STC Annual Meeting serves as a mini-peer exchange, which led to the exploration of using the STC for multi-state peer exchanges.
* Tyson’s recommendations for WTRC:
  + Fund syntheses versus full research projects because it is easier to achieve consensus on the topics and syntheses are more implementable.
  + Hold multi-state peer exchanges with multiple hosts.
  + Identify the host state early so members can get their travel approval. A ninety day lead time is ideal.
  + Host states should consider at least one non-Region 4 member, local FHWA staff and a topic expert to vary the attendees.
  + Publish the peer exchange final report within four weeks, if possible. It should be no longer than 10 pages, with a group photo and all presentations. Members can copy and paste parts of the report to make their own presentations.
  + Add WTRC business as an agenda item to the quarterly RAC Region 4 meetings so the group doesn’t have to schedule separate WTRC meetings.

**Charter and Operating Procedures**

* The group reviewed and discussed several areas of the charter and operating procedures.
* Changes include:
  + The Chair can empanel a working group as needed to advise on matters as needed.
  + Provide guidance to tech transfer and outreach activities.
  + Majority vote is strictly greater than 50%.
  + Further defined what WTRC research efforts may include.
  + Interim projects will be undertaken as deemed necessary.
  + Problem statements will be submitted 45 days in advance. A submission form will be developed.
  + Consortium business is one section of the in-person with up to three additional peer exchange themes.
* Steve Cohn made a motion to vote on accepting the charter and operating procedures. Lucy Koury seconded the motion. The motion passed.
* **Action:** Brian to post the completed charter to the WTRC website.
* At some point, the charter will be amended to include details on the contracting process for research efforts. If Utah’s contracting rules change, the charter should reflect those changes as they affect WTRC.

**AASHTO RAC Region 4 Meeting**, Kevin Pete, Texas DOT

**Research Identification — Year 1**

Brainstorming WTRC Research Topics during the November 2024 Meeting

The group expanded on the initial 2022 list that Joe presented earlier. **NOTE**: For the purposes of these meeting minutes, the items captured onscreen during the brainstorming sessions are reproduced here without further organization or editing. These will be refined as the group moves into active idea development and solicitation in 2025.

* Extreme Weather and Resilience
  + Long-term shift (sea level rise, erosion)
  + Disaster planning and response (flooding, wildfires, tornadoes)
  + Hazard preparedness and protocols
  + Evacuation planning, including route identification (may be hazard dependent)
  + Prediction of flash flooding
  + Relationship with asset management
  + Bridge scour from extreme rainfall
  + Carbon capture; low-carbon transportation materials — how to use grant funds for procurement and testing
  + Heat management and deflection
  + Long-term (decades time frame) impact of climate change on infrastructure
  + Quick contracting and emergency mandates; requirements for FEMA funding
  + The role of DOT as a disaster recovery/incident command/emergency management agency; communicating with other agencies
  + Funding mechanisms and new funding sources
  + Interstate communication and coordination for disasters and extreme events (road closures and reopening, trucker notification, etc.)
  + Recovery and resilience
  + Snowpack reduction > wildfire > mudslides cascade
  + Alternatives for avalanche control and mitigation
  + Snowflake characterization—and related technologies—for densities, snow quantification and improved meteorology
* Freight
  + Truck platooning: first/last mile; legislative requirements to enact; other connected vehicle issues
  + Freight parking as a carbon reduction strategy
  + Freight and electrification; shore power vs. idling
* Big Data
  + Data-intensive research (and later, data-intensive applications) — storage cost issues and alternatives (examples include truck parking, UAVs, digital twins)
* EV
  + Charging infrastructure
  + Lithium-ion battery fire response –what is the DOTs role, if any?
* Environmental
  + UAV wetland mapping; invasive/noxious vegetation
  + Wildlife barriers and wildlife crossings — what works, what doesn’t, matrix of considerations
* Human Factors
  + E.g., Safety decisions, transit use
  + Which states are doing what? What success are they having?
* Traffic/Pedestrian
  + Fatalities — Identify and share state best practices
  + Complete Streets, mobility and equity
* Cybersecurity and vulnerability
  + Personal information at EV charging stations
  + Electronic logging devices
* Pavements
  + Where can pavement research by WTRC states be helpful among one another?
* Workforce Management
  + 2CFR200 and SP&R2, Section 508, Copyright and Patent, Fair Use. Reconciling rulings and guidance from FHWA, OMB, states.
* Service delivery
* Funding available for research and development
* Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
* Aging infrastructure

**Research Coordination — Year 2 and Forward**

* Year 2 activities will be discussed at the spring 2025 in person meeting.

**WTRC Website**

* The following will be posted on the website:
  + Research in progress or deliverables.
  + Member information
  + Announcements
  + Meeting information
* CTC owns the domain name and pays for the server space. Once the CTC contract ends, CTC will sell the domain to whomever takes on the website.
* **Action:** Utah DOT and CTC will write into CTC’s next contract amendment a provision for the transfer of the WTRC website data and URL to Utah or another WTRC member upon completion of CTC’s involvement with this pooled fund.
* **Action:** Brian will gather and post member photos to the website in a Member Listing section.
* **Action:** Brian will set up an application, Microsoft-based if possible, for members to share information. Some members have issues logging into a password protected section of a website.

**Additional WTRC Activities**

* Liaison with other state, regional and national committees. Inviting experts talk to the members at in person meeting is an option.
* SMEs meetings/network
  + Virtual meetings to discuss topics of regional importance, which CTC would schedule and facilitate. These would begin in year two. The meetings don’t have to focus on the WTRC research topics.
  + **Action:** CTC will assist with developing a WTRC research problem statement process development and form.
  + **Action:** CTC will send a survey to the members with five to ten topics. Members will send SME names and email addresses for topics of interest. The topics with the most SMEs listed will determine the meetings
* NCHRP voting and coordination
  + NCHRP’s call for problem statements is in May with applications due November 1. NCHRP sends problem statements to the states for voting in January.
    - Current Region 4 process asks members to share their list of problem statements that they gave a score of 5 on their NCHRP ballot. A combined list is compiled and sent back to members. It is used by Region 4’s members on the AASHTO R&I Committee during final prioritization for NCHRP.CTC can take over this process with WTRC member oversight.
    - **Action:** Cameron and Brian will discuss adding a level of analysis that Region 3 does to the process.
  + Joe Horton would like to leverage WTRC’s money by using NCHRP funding when possible. The members would identify the problem statements that would be better served by the NCHRP synthesis program and those best served via WTRC research projects. The members might also use WTRC synthesis work as a jumping-off point full NCHRP research projects.
    - Non-WTRC member states from Region 4 will be included in the NCHRP problem statement process.
    - Joe would like to have NCHRP problem statements with multiple state sponsors and a synthesis with each problem statement.
  + Joe would like WTRC to agree on research efforts, and how to pursue them, at the spring 2025 meeting.
    - Options include:
      * WTRC projects/syntheses using the RFP process
      * Syntheses using CTC
      * Modifying research suggestions into an NCHRP synthesis or problem statement request
    - **Action:** David Stevens will write up Utah’s RFP, RFQ and other contracting processes.
    - CTC syntheses cost $25,000 to $30,000. CTC is open to whatever works for the group.

**Future Planning**

* **Action:** Brian will coordinate with WTRC schedule the next WTRC meeting (virtual) for late January or early February 2025 to plan the spring in person meeting.
* The quarterly meeting schedule will be established after the next in person meeting.
* Texas will host the next in person meeting in spring 2025 in Austin. Texas, Nebraska and possibly Wyoming will co-host the peer exchange.
  + **Action:** Brian will begin working with Texas, the peer exchange co-hosts, and all WTRC members to identify the date of the spring meeting.

**Action Item Summary**

* Website – Utah DOT and CTC will write into CTC’s next contract amendment a provision for the eventual transfer of the WTRC website data and URL to Utah or another WTRC member upon completion of CTC’s involvement with this pooled fund.
* Website – Brian will gather and post member photos to the WTRC website in a Member Listing section.
* Website – Brian will set up an application, Microsoft-based if possible, for members to share information.
* Charter and Operating Procedures – Brian will post the completed charter to the WTRC website.
* Research development – CTC will assist with developing a WTRC research problem statement development process and form.
* SMEs meetings – CTC will send a survey to the members with five to ten topics. Members will send SME names and email addresses for topics of interest. The topics with the most SMEs listed will determine the SMEs meetings
* NCHRP voting and coordination – Cameron and Brian will discuss adding a level of analysis to Region 4’s current process that Region 3 does.
* WTRC research efforts – David Stevens will write up Utah’s RFP, RFQ and other contracting processes.
* Meetings – Brian will coordinate with WTRC to schedule the next WTRC meeting (virtual) for late January or early February 2025 to plan the spring in person meeting.
* Meetings – Brian will begin working with Texas, the peer exchange co-hosts, and all WTRC members to identify the date of the spring meeting.