

FUNCTIONS OF NCHRP PANELS

GENERAL

The Transportation Research Board is an agency of the National Research Council (NRC) and, through its Division D, administers the National Cooperative Highway Research Program (NCHRP), which is sponsored by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration. In all NCHRP activities, the Board adheres to the Council's principle of using panels or committees in dealing with scientific issues.

Accordingly, all projects of the NCHRP are assigned to one of eight broad research fields under which panels are organized to deal with research in specific problem areas (see Figure 1). For example, in the broad research field of Design, each project in the more specific problem area of Bridges is assigned a panel comprised of outstanding individuals highly knowledgeable in the specifics of the particular project. These panels are looked to for guidance and counsel in developing the details of research, monitoring research in progress, and, finally, evaluating the results of completed research. Projects that do not fit conveniently under one of the first seven broad fields are assigned to the eighth--Special Projects.

COMPOSITION

As each year's problems are received, they are assigned on the basis of their subject matter to the specific areas within the broad fields, and the panels are constituted. Each group numbers about eight persons and operates under the guidance of a permanent chairman. There is liaison representation from the Federal Highway Administration and from the Board's technical staff. The primary functions of the liaison representatives are to provide lines of communication with the organizations from which they are drawn and to provide information concerning ongoing or completed research so that NCHRP research will be appropriately directed and not duplicate other efforts. The chairman is assisted at all times by an NCHRP staff member who acts as the secretariat for meetings and prepares meeting notes that are circulated for approval. With exception of staff and the liaison representatives, all members have voting privileges.

PURPOSES

The duties and responsibilities of the panels include:

1. Developing the plans necessary to achieve the goal(s) expressed in the sponsor's research problem statements, including estimates of required total cost and time.
2. Drafting specific statement of objectives for projects that can be carried out within the funds allotted.
3. Reviewing research proposals and making recommendations regarding selection of research agencies.
4. Reviewing research progress.

5. Providing counsel and advice regarding technical aspects of the research.
6. Reviewing and evaluating project reports so as to ascertain the accomplishment of objectives and suitability for publication.
7. Making recommendations as to whether or not research under prior fiscal year programs should be continued.

MEETING

In carrying out these duties and responsibilities, the panels hold two meetings of two days each. The first, normally in August, is to develop project statements by which research proposals are obtained. The second, normally in October, is to select research agencies to conduct the research. Other meetings may be dictated by project circumstances, such as the need to meet relative to review and approval of a final report; however, they are few and usually widely spaced. In the period between the two initial meetings, the project statements are advertised, and the responding proposals are distributed to the panels for review according to standard procedures. The reviews are carried out in a period of about five weeks.

CONTRACT ADMINISTRATION

Once agencies have been selected, a report of the choices is prepared by staff for approval action by the AASHTO Standing Committee on Research (SCOR). Following approval, negotiations with the agencies are completed with a view toward initiating research soon after the beginning of each fiscal year.

NCHRP staff engineers, operating under the Director, Cooperative Research Programs, are responsible for administrative and technical surveillance of the contracts. Through quarterly progress reports and other pertinent communications, they keep the panels abreast of research progress and consult with them as required concerning research plan changes, agency staffing changes, etc.

EXPENSES

Travel and subsistence expenses of panel members (exclusive of certain federal employees) are covered by the Program. The basis for reimbursement is described more fully in a "handout" you will receive with our acknowledgement of your acceptance. Travel Expense Vouchers, available at each meeting, further define the allowances and limitations.

INSURANCE

All persons traveling on Academy business are automatically covered by travel insurance (\$100,000 death; \$5,000 accident) at no cost to the individual. Details are provided at the first meeting.

Figure 1. NCHRP CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

PROBLEM AREAS	
RESEARCH FIELD A ADMINISTRATION	RESEARCH FIELD B TRANSPORTATION PLANNING
2 Economics 11 Law 19 Finance	8 Forecasting 25 Impact Analysis (SEEE*) * Social, Environmental, Economic, Energy
RESEARCH FIELD C DESIGN	RESEARCH FIELD D MATERIALS AND CONSTRUCTION
1 Pavements 12 Bridges 15 General Design 16 Roadside Development 22 Vehicle Barrier Systems	4 General Materials 9 Bituminous Materials 10 Specs, Procedures, and Practices 18 Concrete Materials
RESEARCH FIELD E SOILS AND GEOLOGY	RESEARCH FIELD F MAINTENANCE
21 Testing and Instrumentation 23 Properties 24 Mechanics and Foundations	6 Snow and Ice Control 13 Equipment 14 Maintenance of Way and Structures
RESEARCH FIELD G TRAFFIC	SPECIAL PROJECTS
3 Operations and Control 5 Illumination and Visibility 7 Traffic Planning 17 Safety	20 Encompasses all projects not readily identified with other problem areas