

Press Release

TRB Session 391

Setting an Agenda for Transportation Noise Management
Policies and Noise Research in the United States

Contact Person:
Lawrence Finegold
(937) 371-4833

The Transportation Research Board annual meeting provides a tremendous amount of useful information on issues critical to the development of transportation mechanisms of the future. Many exciting concepts and wonderful technologies are presented and discussed that will improve worker productivity and the quality of life in the United States. However, one of the ubiquitous byproducts of transportation systems is always environmental, community, and residential noise. While none of us likes transportation noise in their neighborhoods and homes, controlling this environmental problem has proven to be a quite challenging problem to solve.

With the advent of modern aircraft, highway, and rail systems a half century ago, the United States began an ambitious research program on the effects of noise. At the same time, a parallel effort was initiated to develop the appropriate and required national-level noise management policies. For many decades, the United States was the world's leader in both of these areas. However, there has been a steady decline in both of these activities for quite some time now. Although there are quite a few specific instances where noise from transportation sources has been decreased, overall noise exposure continues to increase in our environment. Recent noise effects research indicates that there will be a continued increase in human problems related to noise exposure. Many of the other developed countries around the world, particularly

in Europe, have made significant commitments to addressing this problem. The recent European Commission Noise Directives and parallel advances in noise policies in Asia are excellent examples of what is needed to reduce community and environmental noise exposure, and the human problems associated with this problem such as annoyance, sleep disturbance, hearing loss, non-auditory health effects such as cardiovascular diseases, and learning difficulties in children's classrooms.

Rather than pay the ever-increasing costs associated with transportation noise exposure, and minimize many of the benefits associated with the introduction of advanced transportation systems, the United States needs a new generation of community and environmental noise control policies. This session brings together an impressive group of national and international leaders from professional organizations and government agencies that address noise issues. The information to be provided to the audience during this session can serve as a foundation for the development of an agenda for the United States over the next decade on noise research and noise policy issues. Particularly noteworthy will be the presentations from three leading European speakers representing the European Union and the World Health Organization. They will discuss the new European Commission Noise Directives and the new World Health Organization guidelines document on Community Noise.

News reporters are welcome at this session and the session Chair can be available for interviews concerning this important topic.