

Origins and Early Development
of the
Midwest Transportation Knowledge Network

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A little more than a decade ago, transportation librarians in the Midwest, with the assistance of the National Transportation Library and their parent organizations, founded a group now known as the Midwest Transportation Knowledge Network (MTKN). The network is now the longest lasting and most successful effort to establish formal cooperative relationships between the nation's transportation libraries. Since the founding of MTKN most of the leaders who formed the network have retired or moved on to new positions. Only a few individuals present at its beginnings are still active in the group. Some of the current participants have asked for a review of the network's history. As someone involved not only in the group's first meetings, but also in discussions that led to those meetings, I am writing this paper to provide that review.

EARLY VISIONS

To understand the early development of MTKN, one needs some knowledge of previous attempts to develop transportation library networks. When I began researching this topic I was surprised to learn the first recommendations to network transportation libraries were developed even earlier than I thought. In fact, they date to the formation of the U.S. Department of Transportation. The U.S. DOT was created in 1966 by Pub.L. 89-387 and began formal operations in April, 1967.¹ Nearly simultaneous with the creation of the department, the first recommendations regarding transportation library networks appeared in a U.S. Dept. Commerce report published in March, 1967.²

The report looked at two alternative approaches to meet the information needs of the new department and the nation's transportation community. The first, labeled "bibliographic self-sufficiency," implied the development of a "National Library of Transportation." The second, preferred, alternative was to develop a resource sharing network that "would imply establishing service agreements and communication linkages among major transportation collections to evolve into a national transportation information system." Among the benefits seen of the preferred alternative was taking advantage of "existing libraries with experienced library staff." The report also recommended developing the network by "Starting on a modest basis and building modularly," and "Establishing and encouraging a

¹ The United States Department of Transportation: A Brief History, U.S. Department of Transportation, <http://www.dot.gov/about.html> accessed on September 3, 2012.

² Proposed library and documentation program for transportation, CONSAD Research Corporation, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, March, 1967, NTIS PB175847

dialog between the relevant transportation libraries and information centers in both the government and public sectors.”

While the report envisioned linking transportation libraries as the base for a program that would evolve into a national transportation information system, a later report shows that this concept, in only a few years, had fallen by the way. A 1972 report,³ based on a survey of transportation libraries, suggested a more limited role for transportation libraries. Its preface stated the survey was conducted, in part, to determine “viewpoints on needs for a library network within a national transportation information system.” The report envisioned development of regional transportation libraries perhaps based on the existing major collections. It also foresaw that in such a system the “U.S. Department of Transportation Library would be expected to carry important leadership and coordinating responsibilities.” This question of whether transportation libraries would form the base of a transportation information network or play only a minor role in a larger, multi-purpose network would prove to be one of the sticking points during the early development of MTKN and remains an issue in attempting to develop a national transportation information infrastructure.

THE TRISNET ERA

In 1972, the Highway Research Board created the Committee on Transportation Research Information Systems. It was established “to advise on needs, ways and means for bringing about more effective acquisition and utilization of technical information by transportation technologists and transportation R&D managers in the United States.”⁴ The report of the Committee stated, “the technical information needs of the research community can be met effectively and served best by a Transportation Research Information System that is an evolving network of services and users, and whose overall scope and capabilities are coordinated at the national level.”

A second committee of the same name was appointed in 1973. The first report⁵ of this second committee provided recommendations for an action plan to develop such a network. Named TRISNET, the network was envisioned to have a complex governing structure within the National Research Council consisting of “an advisory committee, a manager’s council and a secretariat.” Its financial support was recommended to come from “all appropriate units of the Department of Transportation and related agencies of the federal government” as well as “state and local governments, from industries associations and other organizations within the public sector.”

³ Survey of transportation libraries in the United States and Canada, by Benjamin Jacobson and Mary Roy, prepared for Panel on Transportation Library Roles in National Transportation Information Systems Planning, Special Libraries Association, Transportation Division, Boston, June 6, 1972

⁴ Report of the Committee on Transportation Research Information Systems, Highway Research Board, Division of Engineering, National Research Council, National Academy of Sciences, November, 1972

⁵ Action plan for a national network of transportation research information services (TRISNET), Highway Research Board, Committee on Transportation Research Information Systems, December, 1973

Nearly three years later, a third TRIS committee report was issued.⁶ This report and other publications relating to the program reflect continuing struggles to define TRISNET and identify potential elements. According to the report, “The basic concept for TRISNET is that a relatively small number of the nation’s information centers can be identified as network elements, and that their capabilities can be organized and augmented to provide information services that are truly responsive to a large fraction of the user community needs.” However, an undated U.S. DOT document⁷ issued around the same time provides a matrix displaying 31 organizations as “components of evolving TRISNET” and lists 26 “services now available” that includes libraries, professional associations and commercial organizations ranging from the Maritime Research Information System to Engineering Index, Inc., in the U.S., Canada and even Europe.

Although efforts to develop TRISNET continued throughout the seventies, from my perspective, the only truly functioning elements were two coordinators, one within the U.S. DOT that focused on potential network participants and one within TRB that focused on development of the TRIS database. Throughout this period transportation librarians attempted to influence development of the network. This was done primarily through SLA Transportation Division’s Coordinating Committee for TRISNET, formed at the suggestion of U.S. DOT’s TRISNET coordinator. The committee’s purpose was “to provide a means for the Division to participate in planning and implementing the national transportation research information system to define the role of transportation libraries in the system... [and]...provide a liaison point with the Transportation Board’s TRIS Overview Committee... .”⁸ Permanent members of the committee were directors of the nation’s then largest transportation libraries, U.S DOT, Transportation Systems Center, U.C. Berkeley, Northwestern and the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey. Additional members were recruited based on a number of criteria including “library size.”

While this committee consisted entirely of librarians it played no official role in the governance of TRISNET. In fact, one of the problems throughout the existence of TRISNET, again from my perspective, was determining exactly who was in charge of which functions for the developing network. Based on articles in one of the issues of “TRISNET News,”⁹ the full structure for TRISNET governance recommended in the action plan had been developed. However, those same articles list a number of activities for each of the elements that seem to have little relation to the responsibilities laid out for them in the action plan. In another issue of “TRISNET News,” reference is made to members of the “1975-1976 TRISNET Committee”¹⁰ listing 14 individuals from various government, academic, and corporate

⁶ Design concepts for a national network of transportation research information services, Transportation Research Board, National Academy of Sciences, July, 1975

⁷ TRISNET: a guide to TRISNET services and activities, U. S. Department of Transportation

⁸ Coordinating Committee for TRISNET history and accomplishments, October 8, 1980

⁹ TRISNET News, v.2:1, October 31, 1975, p6-7.

¹⁰ TRISNET Committee News, TRISNET News, v.2:2, February 27, 1976, p.5

organizations. Interestingly, only one of the members was employed by a library, the National Agricultural Library.

No doubt the lack of librarians' involvement in the official structure of TRISNET led to a limited view of the role libraries could play in the emerging network. Although the action plan paid considerable attention to the need for a document delivery component and the role of libraries in providing these services, the first issue of "TRISNET News" stated:

There are two general categories of TRISNET members. One consists of organizations that specialize in organizing information. They index information and provide references or pointers to such original materials as reports, numerical data bases, computerized analyses and decision models and the like. The other category consists of depositories of such original materials. We all know them as libraries and specialized documentation centers.¹¹

This statement is only one of many differing descriptions of TRISNET provided in various publications issued by the TRISNET program between its origins in 1972 and its demise in 1982. Transportation librarians, realizing the lack of focus within the program issued a statement, in 1977.¹² Among the observations in the statement were:

Librarians believe the crucial issue for TRISNET, overriding all other considerations, is the status of the data base. There will not be a national TRIS if there is not a comprehensive, timely and accurate transportation data base; all other considerations – document delivery, directories, publications and coordinating mechanisms – are ancillary to this critical component.

This information system is fragmented; it does not present a unified comprehensive transportation information base for internal or external needs, despite the fact that the DOT library contains the foremost transportation collection in the world. In particular, TRISNET is a product of piecemeal development and funding.

These observations were prompted, in part, by TRISNET management finally paying attention to the document delivery services that played such a large role in the action plan. In 1976 TRISNET issued a request for proposal for document delivery services.¹³ Librarians understood the futility of attempting document delivery services while lacking any means of identifying holdings of the participating libraries. Also, both the action plan and the eventual document delivery program took a hierarchical, rather than networked, view of document delivery. The request for proposal was sent only to "selected university libraries." Subsequently, contracts were awarded to the transportation libraries at U.C. Berkeley and Northwestern University to provide the services.¹⁴ Rather than seeing document delivery

¹¹ TRISNET – An Experiment in Cooperation, TRISNET News, v1:1, March 21, 1974, p.1

¹² Comments on R&D information transfer in the U.S. Department of Transportation, Coordinating Committee for TRISNET, Transportation Division, Special Libraries Association, June 1977.

¹³ DOT requests TRISNET document delivery services, TRISNET News, v.2:2, February 27, 1976, p.2

¹⁴ Document delivery service contracts awarded, TRISNET New, v.2:3, June 30, 1976, p.2

as a two-way street, with all transportation libraries as equal participants, local transportation libraries were seen only as customers of the larger academic libraries.

FIRST EFFORTS TO ORGANIZE STATE DOT LIBRARIES

After several years of observing attempts to develop TRISNET using a hierarchical approach, relying on national level organizations for advice and direction and with the involvement of only the nation's largest transportation libraries as participants, a small number of librarians serving in state DOTs held an informal meeting at SLA's annual meeting in Denver in 1976. The group was concerned about their lack of opportunities for input on national issues and lack of involvement in development of TRISNET. Members of the group believed the unique resources held in their collections and their understanding, due to daily interactions with end users, of users' information needs would be essential to any truly national transportation information network.

Following that meeting the group decided to petition SLA's Transportation Division to form the Committee on Transportation Libraries and Information Services in State Government. Formed in 1977, one of the first tasks the group set for itself was to conduct the first comprehensive survey of state highway and transportation departments regarding their library services. Results of the survey were presented to the division at its annual meeting in 1978.¹⁵ The survey showed that although almost all state DOTs claimed to have a library, no more than a dozen had anything approaching even minimal library services. The most important finding of the survey was that there was a general lack of knowledge within most state DOTs about what constituted library services.

Attempting to address this issue, the committee proposed a pilot project to demonstrate the value of organized, professionally staffed library collections within state DOTs. The 1979-80 annual report of the committee states that Barbara Russo, librarian for Washington State DOT, on behalf of the committee, submitted a proposal to FHWA's Office of Research and Development to fund a demonstration project to place OCLC terminals in state DOT libraries and train DOT librarians in OCLC cataloging procedures.¹⁶ The project received preliminary approval and an Office of R&D staff member conducted site visits of OCLC and state DOT libraries interested in participating in the project. At the 1980 SLA Annual Meeting, I reported that FHWA had committed to providing \$150,000 in support of an 18-month demonstration project.¹⁷ Unfortunately, before the project could get off the ground, there was a change in national administration, and the committed funds were rescinded.¹⁸

¹⁵ Transportation Libraries And Information Services Of State Governments: A Survey, Jerry Baldwin, <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/library/sla1978.pdf> accessed on September 3, 2012

¹⁶ Annual report – 1979-1980, Committee on Transportation Libraries and Information Services in State Government

¹⁷ Annual business meeting, Special Libraries Association, Transportation Division, June 9, 1980

¹⁸ Annual business meeting, Special Libraries Association, Transportation Division, June 13, 1981

Although the OCLC demonstration project never got off the ground, another initiative of the committee, also reported on in the 1979-1980 Annual Report, survives in a somewhat altered form to this day. The committee, in an attempt to increase attendance of state DOT librarians at SLA's annual meetings, put together a workshop in cooperation with TRB and the U.S. DOT Library. The workshop focused on issues of interest to state DOTs, and letters went out to each DOT librarian encouraging their attendance at the 1980 SLA Annual Meeting in Washington DC. The workshop became an annual event and, with the exception of a hiatus following the dissolution of the committee in 1983,¹⁹ continues, with a broader scope and audience, as the annual GTRIC meeting.

This period also saw the first proposals to create a national transportation library. In early 1980 a memo from Dion Johnson, an official within U.S. DOT's Research and Special Programs Administration (RSPA), was sent to several SLA Transportation Division members asking for their comments on a draft paper regarding "the role of the DOT library in the national transportation system."²⁰ The paper called for "a strong central library" to act as "a necessary element in establishing a responsive national transportation information service." Following discussions at the Transportation Division's TRISNET Coordinating Committee in June, 1980, Janice Bain, librarian for TRB, wrote a memo to Dion Johnson, proposing the creation of a function that, if it were proposed today, would be labeled as a virtual library.²¹ The memo called for "a network of transportation libraries, data centers, and activities, with perhaps the DOTL [U.S. DOT Library] functioning as a centralized administrative, planning and oversight body, but without the usual concept of "place' that usually comes to mind[.]"

Another memo, dated October 9, 1980,²² shows that either the memos noted above or other initiatives had resulted in the formation of a DOT Library Survey Committee. The memo included three attachments, a report of a survey of DOT staff regarding services of the U.S. DOT Library, a report by an RSPA committee prepared at the request of the Acting Assistant Secretary for Administration, and a "Request for Guidance for a Transportation Library." The RSPA report shows that Secretary of Transportation Neil Goldschmidt had expressed "an interest in seeing the DOT Library serve as The Transportation Library in the Country" (emphasis in the original). The report envisioned involving all types of transportation libraries including those in state DOTs and "Creating a national transportation library data base through the merger of the computer-based cataloging records of other transportation libraries with the DOT library records." Unfortunately, just three months after the memo was written, Ronald Reagan was sworn in, Goldschmidt resigned and it would be nearly a quarter of a century until that national transportation library data base would finally appear.

¹⁹ Annual business meeting, Special Libraries Association, Transportation Division, June 6, 1983

²⁰ Memo, Dion Johnson to Dian Gillmar, et al., March 5, 1980

²¹ A national transportation library, memorandum, Janice W. Bain to Dion Johnson, June 9, 1980

²² Memo, INFORMATION: DOT Library Studies, Robert Cucinelli to Dr. Robert L. Fairman, Acting Assistant Secretary for Administration, October 9, 1980

AFTER TRISNET

In spite of the many meetings and many reports issued over nearly a decade attempting to define and organize a functional transportation information network, and the best efforts of transportation librarians, nothing lasting, with the possible exception of an expanded TRIS database, emerged from the TRISNET program. Even though the FHWA/state DOT/OCLC project, announced as being cancelled in 1981,²³ had a tentative revival as part of FHWA's new technology transfer program,²⁴ it, and TRISNET, came to an end in 1982 due to the withdrawal of federal funding.

Government cutbacks, due to the energy crisis of the late seventies, the economic recessions of the eighties and policies of the new federal administration relating to outside contracting for federal services brought an end to the TRISNET experiment and, for a time, took the wind out of the sails of transportation library networking efforts. Nevertheless, transportation librarians, especially those involved in SLA's Transportation Division, continued working on cooperative efforts. In 1984, encouraged by the Division's TRISNET Committee (renamed the Transportation Networking Committee that same year²⁵), TRB provided funding needed to convert data tapes of periodical indexes created by U.C. Berkeley and Northwestern University, known as the TLIB File, in order to include the indexes in the TRIS database.²⁶ Also, in 1989, SLA's Transportation Division published a union list of 1,262 periodicals held in 52 transportation libraries.²⁷ By the mid-nineties enough transportation libraries were participating in OCLC to form a "resource sharing group." The group was formed primarily as an attempt to update the union list of periodicals. Though little used, the Transportation Access Group still exists and currently has twenty members.²⁸

As mentioned earlier, FHWA initiated a technology transfer program in 1982. The program, named the Rural Technical Assistance Program (RTAP), began as a pilot program with 10 Technology Transfer (T²) Centers.²⁹ Each center was charged with providing the same six functions. One of these required the provision of "Technology transfer through distribution of technical publications, videos, CD-ROMs, and software..."³⁰ Understanding the role libraries can play in technology transfer, especially in relation to organizing and distributing information resources, transportation librarians, much as they did

²³ Annual business meeting, Special Libraries Association, Transportation Division, June 13, 1981

²⁴ Annual report 1981/1982, Committee on Transportation Libraries and Information Centers in State Government

²⁵ Annual report 1985-1985, Special Libraries Association, Transportation Division

²⁶ Board meeting, Special Libraries Association, Transportation Division, June 11, 1984

²⁷ Union list of periodicals, compiled by Renée McHenry, Special Libraries Association, Transportation Division, June, 1989

²⁸ Resource Sharing Groups, OCLC, Inc. <http://www.oclc.org/resourcesharing/groups/> accessed on September 3, 2012

²⁹ The Local Technical Assistance Program: key areas of accomplishment, Patsy Pratt Anderson, *Public Road*, v.59:1, Summer, 1995, <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/publicroads/95summer/p95su8.cfm>, accessed on September 3, 2012

³⁰ ISTEAs Tribal Technical Assistance Program legacy, Nelda Bravo, v.61:6, May/June, 1998, <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/publicroads/98may/tribal.cfm>, accessed on September 3, 2012

with TRISNET, attempted to provide advice and assistance in developing the RTAP program. However, as the program developed from the original 10 centers to the current 57, the details regarding staffing and service delivery were left to the discretion of the individual centers. For the most part, the centers have been staffed primarily by engineers, journalists and training personnel. With a few notable exceptions such as the centers in California, Iowa, Kentucky and Minnesota, librarians have played, at best, a minor role in the delivery of T² services and almost no role in the development of the overall program at the federal level.

This lack of involvement of librarians in the T² program came in spite of the best efforts of some of the participants in the program, most notably, Nelda Bravo. Beginning with FHWA in 1992, Nelda used her influence in a series of positions to promote the skills of librarians and the value of library services. At the same time, Barbara Post, who had become head of the TRB Library in 1991, began working to improve the visibility of librarians and library services within that organization. These two worked together to develop the first formal conference involving transportation librarians from around the U.S., Canada and Europe. The International Transportation Information Exchange Workshop was held at the offices of the National Academy of Sciences in Washington D.C., in 1995.³¹ During this same period, Nelda and Barbara worked with TRB's Conduct of Research Committee. At the request of the committee, FHWA conducted a project to determine the value of information and identify strategies for promoting information programs. A report on the project was published in 1999.³²

THE PUSH FOR A NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION LIBRARY

When the International Transportation Information Exchange Workshop was held the internet was just emerging as a means of sharing information. Shortly after the meeting, and nearly simultaneously, two websites appeared each labeling themselves "National Transportation Library." One was posted by the Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS) and the other by a group concerned with preserving the contents of the recently closed Interstate Commerce Commission's (ICC) library. BTS was a new agency within the U.S. DOT created in 1991 with the enactment of ISTEA, the six-year transportation reauthorization bill.³³ The bureau was created to "compile, analyze, and make accessible information about the nation's transportation systems."³⁴ The ICC was abolished in 1995. Almost immediately,

³¹ International transportation information exchange workshop: final report, draft, Federal Highway Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation, 1995

³² Value of Information and Information Services, Volpe National Transportation Systems Center, U.S. Department of Transportation, October 1998, Publication No. FHWA-SA-99-038 <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/reports/viis.pdf> accessed on September 3, 2012

³³ Intermodal surface transportation efficiency act, United States, 1991, <http://ntl.bts.gov/DOCS/istea.html>, accessed on September 3, 2012

³⁴ Transportation statistics beyond ISTEA: critical gaps and strategic responses, Bureau of Transportation Statistics, U.S. Department of Transportation, 1998 http://www.bts.gov/publications/transportation_statistics_beyond_istea/entire.pdf accessed on September 3, 2012

Nelda, Barb and other concerned transportation librarians began contacting those responsible for developing the sites to explain the implications of the phrase “national transportation library” and the potential misperceptions that were sure to arise from either of them claiming the title.

These discussions eventually led to an informal meeting of several transportation professionals and transportation librarians at the 1998 Annual Meeting of TRB to discuss the need for an actual national transportation library and strategies for creating one. That meeting led to language being inserted into the TEA-21 bill³⁵ that was, at the time, being drafted in Congress. The language required BTS to develop a National Transportation Library (NTL) and outlined its basic responsibilities. It charged the library “with the goal of improving the ability of the transportation community to share information” and to “work with other transportation libraries and other transportation information providers, both public and private.”

The creation of the NTL addressed, in part, an issue that had concerned transportation librarians for many years. A consensus had formed that in order to have any hope of advancing the cause of transportation libraries we needed to have bases of influence within each of the three organizations having the most influence on transportation policy – U.S. DOT, TRB and AASHTO. Another part fell into place when, in 1999, again thanks mostly to the work of Barb and Nelda, TRB created the Library and Information Science for Transportation (LIST) Committee.³⁶ LIST held its first meeting at the 1999 annual meeting of SLA in Minneapolis.³⁷ This was the first committee within TRB dealing directly with transportation library issues.

Announcements in various transportation related publications and at meetings of the newly created NTL and LIST led to unprecedented attention being paid to transportation library issues. Nelda, Barb and other transportation librarians took advantage of this attention by using it to further promote the value of library and information services in transportation. The emerging concept of knowledge management was beginning to make its way into transportation management circles and at the 2000 TRB annual meeting, a session was arranged that demonstrated librarians’ involvement in knowledge management programs in several transportation agencies. In July, 2001, a follow-up to the 1995 International Transportation Information Exchange Workshop was held in conjunction with the International Symposium on Transportation Technology Transfer.³⁸ At the final session of the symposium Roberto

³⁵ Transportation equity act for the 21st century, United States, 1998 <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/tea21/pl105178.pdf> accessed on September 3, 2012

³⁶ Strategic Plan for Transportation Research Board Committee A5017 Library and Information Science in Transportation (LIST), January 2000 https://726bca76-a-62cb3a1a-sites.googlegroups.com/site/trblistarchive/about/final_strategic_plan.pdf accessed on September 3, 2012

³⁷ Annual Report, Committee For Library And Information Science In Transportation (A5017), Transportation Research Board, December 15, 2000

³⁸ Proceedings: Conference on Accessing Transportation Information Resources Worldwide, U.S. Federal Highway Administration, Office of International Programs, St. Petersburg, FL, July 29-August 2, 2001 <http://international.fhwa.dot.gov/accessconf/proceedings.htm> accessed on September 3, 2012

Sarmiento delivered a stirring “Call to Action”³⁹ that spelled out what librarians and their managers needed to do to work toward improved transportation information services.

ORIGINS OF MTKN

While all the attention was welcome and appreciated, as Roberto’s talk pointed out, what was really needed to advance transportation library development was management advocacy and funding for library programs. Unfortunately, the legislation that created the NTL did not provide any funding dedicated to the library to carry out its charges. This meant any library funding would come from general BTS funds at the discretion of the director of BTS. That there may have been a lack of enthusiasm regarding development of the NTL on the part of BTS leadership was evident in the time it took the bureau to begin recruiting a library director. Interviews for the position did not begin until about a year and a half after TEA-21 had been signed into law. The opening was announced in April 2000 and I was among four applicants for the position interviewed by BTS. Subsequently none of those interviewed was offered the position. It was eventually filled when Nelda Bravo was appointed director beginning November 6, 2000.⁴⁰

After returning home following my interview, I mentioned to Mn/DOT’s research director, Bob Benke, to whom I reported, that BTS management’s lack of enthusiasm was probably not the biggest roadblock to developing a fully functional NTL. I told him that based on my interview, BTS management seemed to have no understanding of libraries in general and a limited concept of what was needed to improve nationwide access to transportation information. Further, BTS management had no knowledge of the role transportation libraries were already playing and showed little interest in using NTL to expand their capabilities. This was in spite of several BTS staff members and contractors having been involved in discussions on the issue since the appearance of BTS’s “national transportation library” website. The primary concern of the director of BTS seemed to be to ensure the NTL contain no copyrighted material for fear of becoming ensnared in infringement litigation.

Bob Benke was a long time user of, and advocate for Mn/DOT’s library. However, at the time, he did not know much about national transportation library issues. Following our discussion of my reservations about BTS leading the charge in developing transportation library services, he and his assistant director, Dave Johnson, asked me to write up something about problems and issues in the field of transportation libraries. They believed the shortcomings I had discussed were a topic that could be addressed by one or more national research committees they belonged to.

³⁹ A Call to Action, Roberto A Sarmiento, Accessing Transportation Information Resources Worldwide, St. Petersburg, Florida, August 1, 2001 <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/library/call-to-action.pdf> accessed on September 3, 2012

⁴⁰ Nelda Bravo to head the National Transportation Library, Transportation Division Bulletin, v.17:1, Fall/Winter, 2000 http://units.sla.org/transportation/bulletins/winter2000_17_1.pdf accessed on September 3, 2012

Sometime later I sent him and Dave a two-page listing of issues and concerns. The next day Dave sent the list back to me in an e-mail with my random statements organized into several categories.⁴¹ He suggested I write up a white paper on the topic organized on his categories. He also suggested I include my thoughts about possible solutions the noted problems. In that same e-mail, he suggested the creation within AASHTO's Region III of "a regional consortium of transportation libraries that will explore, pilot, and model initiatives for more effectively sharing resources, for establishing standards, and for developing an organization and relationships that can address common issues and problems." That statement was the first suggestion that a group such as MTKN be formed.

With Dave's approval, I took the list of issues to SLA's GTRIC meeting, distributed it to other transportation librarians in attendance and asked for their feedback. I also sounded out other Midwest librarians about Dave's concept of a regional consortium. On returning from the conference, I put the paper in final form.⁴² Bob and Dave then took the paper to the summer meeting of AASHTO's Research Advisory Committee (RAC). After a discussion of the paper by RAC members, Barbara Post, Nelda Bravo and others drafted a resolution calling for "a scoping study that would lead to a national strategic plan for managing information in the field of transportation...".⁴³ The resolution was passed by RAC and forwarded to the Standing Committee on Highways (SCOH). Subsequently, SCOH included the scoping study in the following year's NCHRP program.⁴⁴

Shortly after the GTRIC and RAC meetings, the LIST Committee held its second midyear meeting in September, in Woods Hole, MA in conjunction with two other TRB committees.⁴⁵ Immediately following the conclusion of formal meetings, Nelda Bravo, Barbara Post, Jeanne Thomas of Michigan DOT's library and I met to discuss creation of the consortium suggested by Dave Johnson.⁴⁶

It was less than two months after that meeting that Nelda accepted the position as director of NTL. She soon learned that in spite of the increasing attention being paid to the issue of transportation libraries within the transportation research community, there was practically no support within U.S. DOT management for a broadly scoped NTL. She also suspected that in all likelihood the department would not seek reauthorization for the library in the next reauthorization bill which was already being

⁴¹ Re: National Library Stuff, e-mail, Dave Johnson, June 8, 2000, attachment to "Origins of MTKN," Jerry Baldwin, December 1, 2005 <http://lists.umn.edu/cgi-bin/wa?A0=MTKN-L> (password required) accessed on June 29, 2012

⁴² Access to U.S. Transportation Information Resources, Jerry Baldwin, July, 2000 <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/library/infoakss.pdf> accessed on September 3, 2012

⁴³ RAC Resolution 2000-1, Research Advisory Committee, Standing Committee on Highways, AASHTO, July, 2000

⁴⁴ Scoping Study for a National Strategic Plan for Managing Transportation Information, <http://144.171.11.40/cmsfeed/TRBNetProjectDisplay.asp?ProjectID=1484> accessed on September 3, 2012

⁴⁵ LIST Committee Mid-Year Meeting, Transportation Division Bulletin, v.17:1, Fall/Winter, 2000 http://units.sla.org/transportation/bulletins/winter2000_17_1.pdf accessed on September 3, 2012

⁴⁶ Agenda for MTRN mtg. at Woods Hole, e-mail, Nelda Bravo to Barbara Post, Jeanne Thomas and Jerry Baldwin, August 24, 2000

discussed early in 2001. Nelda decided she needed to develop something that could be done relatively quickly and easily that would demonstrate the value of NTL taking the lead in improving cooperation between transportation libraries. Nelda believed that a union catalog of transportation libraries could be that something.

Since many of the libraries in AASHTO Region III, the focus of the consortium, were already OCLC participants she thought it might be possible to use the union catalog project as an impetus for forming the group. In April, 2001, we contacted OCLC representatives and learned that they were just gearing up to do a demonstration project involving the use of OCLC records to create group catalogs for library consortia.⁴⁷ They were also looking for groups who were willing to be beta testers for the concept. By June, OCLC had drafted a proposal for a “Midwest Group Transportation Library” involving the state DOTs in IL, IN, IA, KS, MN and OH as well as the Northwestern Transportation Center and University of Michigan Transportation Research Institute.⁴⁸ As soon as the proposal was received from OCLC, Nelda set aside NTL discretionary funds to provide for travel and other costs to support a meeting of Midwest transportation librarians and OCLC representatives.

On October 25, Nelda sent an e-mail to a number of Midwest transportation librarians inviting them to a meeting, at NTL’s expense, to be held in Minneapolis, MN on December 5-6.⁴⁹ The purpose of the meeting was to scope “the pilot project for the Midwest [and] to talk about establishing a union catalog based on transportation library records already in OCLC.” The note also stated that NTL would “sponsor up to a 3-year membership for State DOT libraries that are not participating in OCLC” in order to provide them access to ILL, First Search and other OCLC products whether or not the library was already cataloging into OCLC.

The University of Minnesota’s Center for Transportation Studies (CTS) hosted the meeting in Minneapolis.⁵⁰ Attendees included the director of CTS and its librarian, representatives of OCLC and the NTL, librarians from state DOTs in IA, IL, MI, MN, MO, NE, SD, WI, University of Michigan’s Transportation Research Institute (UMTRI) and Northwestern University’s Transportation Library (NUTL).⁵¹ Nelda Bravo opened the meeting by noting one of the reasons the meeting was being held in Minneapolis was the Minnesota Transportation Libraries program.⁵² In earlier discussions about what

⁴⁷ Re: OCLC pilot test, e-mail, Gary Houk to Jerry Baldwin, April 19, 2001

⁴⁸ Midwest Group Transportation Library Demo Project Proposal – Draft, June 7, 2001

⁴⁹ Midwestern Transportation Research Network. e-mail, Nelda Bravo to Don Roberts, Hank Zaletel, et al., October 25, 2001

⁵⁰ Midwestern Transportation Library Consortium and Union Catalog Project, Tentative Agenda, December 5-6, 2001, Minneapolis, Minnesota, <http://colab.cim3.net/file/work/TKN/MTKN/archives/MTLC-agenda-1st.pdf> (password required) accessed on September 3, 2012

⁵¹ Midwestern Transportation Library Consortium and Union Catalog Project, December 5-6, 2001, Minneapolis, Minnesota <http://www.mtkn.org/archives/MTLCminutes1201.pdf> (password required) accessed on September 3, 2012

⁵² Minnesota Transportation Libraries, <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/library/mtl.html>, accessed on September 3, 2012

needed to be done to create transportation library networks, the program was often referred to as the “Minnesota model.” Nelda suggested the model could be replicated throughout the nation.

Extensive notes from that meeting reflect wide-ranging and free-flowing discussions. Some attendees focused on the impact joining OCLC and creating a union catalog would have on work flows in their libraries. Others focused more on the strategic and PR implications of creating a consortium. Some focused on developing a regional effort while others pondered how the effort could be expanded nationwide. On the second and last day of the meeting, a number of individuals volunteered to work on various tasks that would be essential to moving forward with the project. These included reviewing and commenting on OCLC’s group catalog proposal, drafting criteria for participation in the group, and drafting an interlibrary lending agreement for the group. In addition, Nelda agreed to find someone to work on day-to-day management of the group to keep the momentum going between meetings.

Following the first meeting of the group, additional impetus toward forming a Midwest library group was provided by two events in 2002, both initiated by Wisconsin DOT’s recently appointed research director, Nina McLawhorn. Her interest in transportation library services had been piqued by attending the session on knowledge management at the 2000 TRB annual meeting. The first event was a peer exchange focused on “building effective information services.”⁵³ The idea for the exchange came from the many recent developments relating to transportation information services including the value of information services study, the NCHRP scoping study and the plans for a regional network. The second event was the Midwest Conference on Library & Information Services for Transportation.⁵⁴ The conference was held in conjunction with the mid-year meeting of TRB’s LIST committee and brought together 54 representatives of state DOTs, LTAP centers and FHWA to discuss “critical issues facing transportation information services including decreasing support for library resources and services... explore issues relative to user and provider needs, and... discuss opportunities to strengthen information networks.”

A little more than four months after the meeting in Minneapolis, Nelda announced that Roberto Sarmiento, director of NUTL would take on a one-year assignment with NTL to act as consortium manager.⁵⁵ In the note announcing the appointment Nelda also said that one of Roberto’s assignments would be to visit each of the libraries that had expressed an interest in participating in the consortium and that once these visits had been completed, plans would be made for a second meeting of the group.

⁵³ Research management peer exchange hosted by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, Research Coordination Section, April 9-11, 2002, <http://web.archive.org/web/20100122123403/http://on.dot.wi.gov/wisdotresearch/database/exchanges/2002rcsreport.pdf> accessed on September 3, 2012

⁵⁴ Midwest Conference on Library and Information Resources for Transportation, August 14-16, 2002, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, WI <http://web.archive.org/web/20060221111312/http://www.mrutc.org/outreach/libraryinfo/index.htm> accessed on September 3, 2012

⁵⁵ Midwestern Transportation Research Network, e-mail, Nelda Bravo to Don Robert, Hank Zaletel, et al., April 21, 2002

Roberto prepared for each of his visits by asking the head of each library to complete, prior to his visit, a form⁵⁶ containing more than 140 questions providing background information on virtually every aspect of the library's functions, services and management. On each visit he attempted to meet with the person in charge of the library as well as that individual's supervisor to get a better understanding of reporting relationships and concerns of managers.

After completing his site visits, Roberto sent a note to all consortium participants on October 23, 2002, announcing the second meeting of the group, again in Minneapolis, in December.⁵⁷ State DOTs represented were the same as at the first meeting, with the exception of Nebraska, and with the addition of Ohio, Kansas and a representative from Purdue University's Engineering Library. In her introductory remarks, Nelda Bravo mentioned that at a recent presentation she provided to an AASHTO group attendees were impressed that every DOT in AASHTO's Region III was participating in consortium discussions.⁵⁸

Once again the group managed to cover an impressive amount of ground in less than two full days of discussions. The first day's presentations and discussions included:

Findings from Roberto's site visits

A review of the goals established at the 2001 meeting and progress toward achieving them

Discussion of proposed principles for consortium participation

Discussion of proposed consortium ILL guidelines

The second day began with Nelda announcing that NTL had established a \$144,000 deposit account with OCLC to support cataloging in participants' libraries. She also addressed how the funds would be divvied up among participants and led a discussion of guidelines for use of the funds. That was followed by a presentation from an OCLC representative on their progress toward developing a commercial group catalog product, what OCLC needed from the group in order to produce our group catalog and when it was expected to be available. The representative also mentioned that she enjoyed working with the group since it had managed "to get organized and pull itself together" faster than any group she had previously worked with.

⁵⁶ Midwestern transportation library consortium library visit form, <http://www.mtkn.org/archives/VisitForm-mtlc.pdf>, (password required) accessed on September 3, 2012

⁵⁷ Midwestern Transportation Library Consortium, Annual Meeting, Draft Agenda, Minneapolis, Minnesota, December 4-5, 2002

⁵⁸ Notes from the Second Annual Meeting of the Midwestern Transportation Library Consortium, Minneapolis, MN, December 4-5, 2002 <http://www.mtkn.org/archives/MTLCminutes1202.pdf>, accessed on September 3, 2012

The remainder of the second day's discussions focused on further development of the group. Roberto suggested the group form four committees, Executive, Bibliographic Instruction, OCLC Liaison and Communications, the latter to focus on "on public relations, a website, a logo, and an electronic discussion list." His recommendation was adopted by the group, attendees volunteered to serve on the various committees and a chair was named for each. This was followed by a recap of the meeting and an outline of next steps for the group. Next steps included meetings for each committee to begin work on their individual assignments, to agree on a name and a logo for the group, and to develop bylaws.

At the end of the meeting participants were asked for final comments. During this discussion it became evident members of the group were not in agreement as to how the Midwest effort should serve as a model for a national network. Librarians and others outside the Midwest who had heard about the effort were interested in taking part in the project and especially interested in participating in the group catalog. The question arose as to whether or not a library needed to be a member of the consortium in order to be added to the catalog. Also, it was unclear whether the Midwest group would expand to become a national network or if it would be better to remain a regional network and provide a model for additional regional networks that would collaborate to form a national network.

MTKN BEGINS TO TAKE SHAPE

Shortly after the second annual meeting, participants began referring to the group as the Midwest Transportation Knowledge Network rather than Midwest Transportation Library Consortium. The new name grew out of discussions at the Midwest Conference on Library & Information Services for Transportation and was originally proposed by Nina McLawhorn. The consensus of the group was that the phrase "library consortium" was too academic to appeal to the engineers, technicians and other transportation professionals who would be the ultimate customers of our services. Also, CEOs of many transportation organizations were, at the time, becoming interested in the concept of knowledge management. The name was also chosen to reduce confusion with the Midwest Transportation Consortium.⁵⁹

Even though MTKN was not yet a formal organization, an incident in 2003 demonstrated to many participants the value of working and acting as a group. Jeanne Thomas, manager of Michigan DOT Library for nearly 25 years, retired in the summer of 2001. Shortly thereafter a fire in the DOT building⁶⁰ housing the library resulted in some damage to the collection and the library's contents were boxed up and placed in storage. The collection remained in storage and the future of the library was in limbo for more than a year. Although Michigan DOT made no formal announcement of their plans, in

⁵⁹ Midwest Transportation Consortium, Iowa State University, Center for Transportation Research and Education <http://web.archive.org/web/20100504135657/http://www.intrans.iastate.edu/mtc/index.htm> accessed on September 3, 2012

⁶⁰ History of the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) Library, MDOT Library News, Summer, 2008 https://mi.gov/documents/mdot/2008_Summer_Newsletter_245438_7.pdf accessed on September 3, 2012

the process of preparing an article to appear in *Public Roads*, group members learned that the department had decided not to reopen the library and was actively seeking a Michigan library to absorb the collection. On April 11, 2003, an e-mail⁶¹ from MTKN was sent to the members of the management chain responsible for the library. The note introduced them to MTKN, Michigan DOT Library's role in it and asking that the decision be reconsidered. Just five days later, on April 16, Trish Aper, an administrative employee of Michigan DOT, wrote an e-mail⁶² stating that library funding had been restored and plans were in place to restaff and reopen the library.

In spite of this early success, the future of MTKN was as uncertain as had been the future of Michigan's library. The two year period following the second annual meeting was perhaps the most touch and go era in the development of MTKN. NTL had covered all of the travel costs and handled most of the arrangements for the first two annual meetings. It had also committed to cover costs of participating in OCLC for most MTKN participants through 2003. Unfortunately, there was no guarantee that NTL would continue to exist after September 30, 2003,⁶³ the end date of the TEA-21 authorization. Making matters worse, most state DOTs were facing cutbacks due to the first economic recession in nearly a decade. In light of this, members of the consortium redoubled their efforts promoting the value of library networking and the need to reauthorize NTL.

Immediately following the second annual meeting Arlene Mathison at CTS set up an MTKN e-mail list service.⁶⁴ Early in 2003, the group issued a press release announcing the formation of MTKN⁶⁵ and staff at Wisconsin DOT developed a logo and promotional brochure giving the illusion if not the reality of a functioning organization. The formation of MTKN was noted in the Jan. 29, 2003 issue of *Transport Communications*, the Jan. 2003 issue of *CTS Report*,⁶⁶ and the September/October issue of *Public Roads*.⁶⁷ In April, Nina McLawhorn announced that AASHTO's Standing Committee on

⁶¹ Michigan DOT Library, MTKN-L Archives, April 2003, <http://lists.umn.edu/cgi-bin/wa?A0=MTKN-L>, accessed on May, 30, 2010 (password required)

⁶² Email, Trish Aper to Jerry Baldwin, April 16, 2003

⁶³ NTL - Good News and Bad News, February 12, 2003, TranLib Digests Archive (1154-1304) July 27, 2002 - April 11, 2003 <http://www.its.berkeley.edu/library/tranlib/tranlib1.html> accessed on May 20, 2010

⁶⁴ Test – please ignore, MTKN-L Archives, December 2002, <http://lists.umn.edu/cgi-bin/wa?A0=MTKN-L> (password required) accessed on June 1, 2010

⁶⁵ Midwest Transportation Knowledge Network Formed <http://www.mtkn.org/archives/pressRelease12-02.pdf> (password required) accessed on September 3, 2012

⁶⁶ MTKN Communications Committee status report, October 2003

⁶⁷ Transportation libraries help keep DOTs up to date, Julie Bolding, *Public Roads*, v.67:2, September/October, 2003 <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/publicroads/03sep/iwatch.cfm> accessed on September 3, 2012

Research included support for the NTL in its reauthorization report.⁶⁸ That summer Bob Sweet of UMTRI provided a presentation on MTKN to a Midwest transportation research conference.⁶⁹

In July, 2003, the final report of the NCHRP scoping study⁷⁰ was released. As hoped for, the report called for conducting a policy study to develop a “national strategic plan for creating a coordinated system of transportation information management.” But, perhaps the most important accomplishment during this period was the passage by the AASHTO Board of Directors at their 2003 annual meeting of a resolution in support of reauthorization of the NTL.⁷¹

Throughout this period the group received an enormous amount of support from the state DOT research directors. That support was critical to the group’s ability to hold its third annual meeting in Bettendorf, Iowa in October, 2003. Since the NTL could no longer finance travel and other expenses for the meeting it was up to the states to provide the funding or, in several cases, for individuals to cover their own expenses to attend. Because of this, fewer states were represented. Attending were representatives of state DOTs in IA, KS MN, MO, OH and WI, and three universities, Northwestern, UofMI and UofMN.

At the meeting, introductions and reports from the individual organizations were followed by updates from committees and about various projects the group had undertaken. One of the projects was the development of a bibliographic instruction session to be presented as an online National Highway Institute course. The idea for the course was originally proposed by Roger Garren, reference librarian at NTL in an e-mail to the MTKN list service.⁷² The implications of the recommendations in the NCHRP scoping study and the follow-up policy study⁷³ that had recently been approved were also discussed at length.

The first general topic of discussion was the status of MTKN. The status of the group was, to some, difficult to define. By that time, the TEA-21 legislation that created the NTL had expired and it

⁶⁸ Got NTL support? - AASHTO Does! MTKN-L Archives, April 2003, <http://lists.umn.edu/cgi-bin/wa?A0=MTKN-L> accessed on May, 30, 2010 (password required)

⁶⁹ Information is our seed corn: an overview of the Midwest Transportation Knowledge Network, Robert Sweet, Mid-Continent Transportation Research Symposium, August 21-23, 2003 <http://www.ctre.iastate.edu/pubs/midcon2003/SweetInformation.pdf> accessed on September 3, 2012

⁷⁰ Scoping study for a national strategic plan for transportation information management, Barbara T. Harder, Sandra L. Tucker, July, 2003 [http://onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/archive/NotesDocs/20-07\(142\)FR.pdf](http://onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/archive/NotesDocs/20-07(142)FR.pdf) accessed on September 3, 2012

⁷¹ Policy resolution PR-11-03, Continuation of National Transportation Library mandates and funding, approved by the Board of Directors on September 7, 2003 <http://downloads.transportation.org/PR-Full.pdf> accessed on September 3, 2012

⁷² Coordinating an Online Bibliographic Instruction Course, MTKN-L Archives, June 2003, <http://lists.umn.edu/cgi-bin/wa?A0=MTKN-L> (password required) accessed on May, 30, 2010

⁷³ Strategic Plan for Transportation Information Management, Project 20-66, National Cooperative Highway Research Program <http://web.archive.org/web/20030823011124/http://www4.trb.org/trb/crp.nsf/All+Projects/NCHRP+20-66> accessed on September 3, 2012

continued to exist due only to an extension of TEA-21 passed by Congress. Its future status remained uncertain. Many felt MTKN could no longer exist if NTL was not reauthorized. Others believed if NTL ceased to exist, defining and developing MTKN as a group would become even more critical.

The nebulous nature of MTKN had made arranging the third meeting unusually difficult. With no formal structure and no official status as a unit of a larger organization, there was no way to pool registration fees or prepay for meeting rooms. Instead, each attendee had agreed to divvy up all meeting expenses at the end of the meeting on a per capita basis,⁷⁴ pay them out-of-pocket, and seek reimbursement from their parent organization. A checking account for the organization would have greatly simplified arrangements. But opening a checking account required creating a formal organization. To be recognized officially as an organization required, at a minimum, adoption of bylaws for the group.

In preparation for the meeting, three documents had been drafted and were presented to the group in an attempt to provide a formal structure. The documents were Bylaws, Guiding Principles, and an ILL Agreement.⁷⁵ The agenda for the meeting⁷⁶ shows the plan for the first day was to review and approve all three documents. However, the minutes of the meeting⁷⁷ show only the first article of the bylaws, stating the name of the organization, was adopted by the group. The remainder of the day was taken up with a lengthy and spirited discussion revolving around the second article that defined the purpose of the group. Questions arose regarding whether MTKN was to be an organization of libraries or be more loosely defined to involve others involved in the creation and dissemination of information including technical writers, public information officers, trainers, technology transfer specialists, etc. Also, was it to be only libraries geographically within AASHTO Region III or should it be defined to include any U.S. transportation library? The day ended with no further actions to formalize MTKN's organization.

The second day of the meeting began with a review of the goals from the first meeting in 2001 but the minutes show that the discussion soon reverted to continuing the discussion about just what sort of an organization MTKN was or should become. It was obvious there was no consensus and the discussion had to be curtailed in order to deal with other business on the agenda, including the status of the union catalog. The third annual meeting ended with no progress made on clarifying the structure and organization of MTKN.

⁷⁴ MTKN III Meeting Costs, MTKN-L Archives, October, 2003, <http://lists.umn.edu/cgi-bin/wa?A0=MTKN-L> (password required) accessed on May, 30, 2010

⁷⁵ MTKN III Documents, October 22, 2003

⁷⁶ Agenda, Midwest Transportation Knowledge Network, Third Annual Meeting, Bettendorf, Iowa, October 22-23, 2003 <http://www.mtkn.org/archives/MTKN-agenda-3rd.pdf> (password required) accessed on September 3, 2012

⁷⁷ Meeting minutes, MTKN III – Third Annual Meeting, Bettendorf, Iowa, October 22 -23, 2003 NOTE: meeting minutes posted at <http://www.mtkn.org/archives/MTKNminutes1003.pdf> are incomplete (password required) accessed on September 3, 2012

During the summer of 2003 most of the participating libraries had begun cataloging materials using the NTL/OCLC deposit account funds announced at the second annual meeting. The funds did not become available for use by the participants until May 2003 when the contract with OCLC was finally awarded.⁷⁸ Many of the participants had included comments on how they were using the funds in their introductory comments. However, a glitch had occurred when OCLC learned that Ohio's DOT library did not have its own OCLC code. Instead, the collection was cataloged as a part of the Ohio State Library and could be identified only by a unique shelvest symbol. Fortunately, the shift of the OCLC database from a flat-file, proprietary system to a relational database running on Oracle⁷⁹ made extracting those items and assigning them a separate code a relatively simple matter. In addition, NTL had decided to add libraries outside of MTKN including UC Berkeley's Institute of Transportation Studies, Los Angeles Metropolitan Transit Authority and Virginia DOT, to the group catalog. MTKN members decided they wanted to keep the MTKN resources uniquely identifiable in catalog searches.

Following the meeting MTKN participants focused on three issues, developing the NHI BI course, planning the launch of the online union catalog scheduled for the following March and NTL reauthorization. The BI course, titled "Working Smarter: Using the World Wide Web for Transportation-Related Research was developed by MTKN's Bibliographic Instruction Committee"⁸⁰ Following a well-received pilot test in January, 2004,⁸¹ the course was presented several times throughout the year as a part of NHI's web-based seminars series and resulted in additional favorable publicity for MTKN.⁸²

The reauthorization effort received a major boost when, on October 22, 2003, a letter in support of reauthorization, signed by the CEOs of AASHTO, American Public Transportation Association, American Road and Transportation Builders Association, and Council of University Transportation Centers was sent to members of the Senate and the House most responsible for drafting of SAFETEA-LU.⁸³ By early November, both the Senate⁸⁴ and House⁸⁵ had introduced draft reauthorization bills.

⁷⁸ OCLC Update, MTKN-L Archives, May 2003, <http://lists.umn.edu/cgi-bin/wa?A0=MTKN-L> accessed on May, 30, 2010 (password required)

⁷⁹ WorldCat now running on Oracle platform, <http://www.oclc.org/news/publications/newsletters/oclc/2004/264/downloads/updates.pdf> accessed on September 4, 2012

⁸⁰ Working smarter training, Midwest Transportation Knowledge Network <http://web.archive.org/web/20040611100833/http://www.mtkn.org/smarter.htm> accessed on September 4, 2012

⁸¹ Librarian Helps Develop Research Tool, Transcript, Ohio Department of Transportation, February, 2004 <http://www.dot.state.oh.us/Divisions/Communications/transcript/Transcript%20Archive/feb04.pdf> accessed on September 4, 2012

⁸² Training Update: Researching Smarter through the Web, Public Roads, v.68:1, July/August, 2004 <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/publicroads/04jul/nhi.cfm> accessed on September 4, 2012

⁸³ Support for the NTL, MTKN-L Archives, November, 2003, <http://lists.umn.edu/cgi-bin/wa?A0=MTKN-L> (password required) accessed on May, 30, 2010

⁸⁴ Reauthorization, MTKN-L Archives, November, 2003, <http://lists.umn.edu/cgi-bin/wa?A0=MTKN-L> (password required) accessed on May, 31, 2010

Each contained language reauthorizing the NTL. Bob Johns of the UofMN's CTS and Nina McLawhorn, research director for Wisconsin DOT were especially effective in this effort working closely with the various professional groups. Bob had very good connections with the U.S. House transportation committee's minority leader and Nina with the committee's majority leader.

No doubt the most anticipated event in the development of MTKN came on March 1, 2004 when the online union catalog became available on the web.⁸⁶ For display purposes OCLC required that the catalog have both a "full name" and a "short name." A discussion of possible names resulted in the most protracted discussion on the new MTKN e-mail list. Nearly two dozen names were proposed.⁸⁷ When it went live the names displayed were "Transportation Libraries Catalog" and "TransCat." No sooner had the catalog become available online than a group of Canadian librarians objected.⁸⁸ It seems Transport Canada had already adopted "TransCat" for its catalog and subsequently extended it to "Transcat Plus" for a union catalog of Canadian transportation libraries.⁸⁹ This, of course, necessitated a search for a new name. And, since the union catalog now included libraries outside MTKN, the discussion was expanded to the TRANLIB e-mail list.⁹⁰ That discussion led to the decision to stick with "Transportation Libraries Catalog" as the long name and "TL Cat," first proposed by Amy Tursky of the FAA Library," as the short.⁹¹ Timed to coincide with the availability of TL Cat, MTKN's website also went live in March, 2004.^{92, 93}

MTKN participants spread word of the new resource as widely as possible. It received considerable attention in transportation and library news sources with notices appearing in Urban Transportation Monitor, Inside ITS, CTS Report, Library Journal,⁹⁴ Corporate Library Update⁹⁵ and other outlets. The

⁸⁵ One step forward, MTKN-L Archives, November, 2003, <http://lists.umn.edu/cgi-bin/wa?A0=MTKN-L> (password required) accessed on May, 31, 2010

⁸⁶ Re: TransCat live?, MTKN-L Archives, March 2004, <http://lists.umn.edu/cgi-bin/wa?A0=MTKN-L> (password required) accessed on June 2, 2010

⁸⁷ Catalog names, MTKN-L Archives, March, 2004, <http://lists.umn.edu/cgi-bin/wa?A0=MTKN-L> (password required) accessed on June 2, 2010

⁸⁸ Canadians ask who researched TransCat, MTKN-L Archives, November, 2003, <http://lists.umn.edu/cgi-bin/wa?A0=MTKN-L> (password required) accessed on June 2, 2010

⁸⁹ TransCat Plus libraries, Transport Canada, http://web.archive.org/web/20070208213217/www.tc.gc.ca/library/transcatplus/cat2_e.htm accessed on September 4, 2012

⁹⁰ Union Catalog of Transportation Libraries, TranLib Digests Archive (1505-1704) March 18, 2004 - February 2, 2005, <http://www.its.berkeley.edu/library/tranlib/tranlib3.html> accessed on June 2, 2010

⁹¹ RE: Union Catalog of Transportation Libraries, TranLib Digests Archive (1505-1704) March 18, 2004 - February 2, 2005, <http://www.its.berkeley.edu/library/tranlib/tranlib3.html> accessed on June 2, 2010

⁹² MTKN Web site is up - feedback requested, MTKN-L Archives, March, 2004, <http://lists.umn.edu/cgi-bin/wa?A0=MTKN-L> (password required) accessed on June 2, 2010

⁹³ Midwest Transportation Knowledge Network, <http://web.archive.org/web/20040609132558/www.mtkn.org/index.htm> accessed on September 4, 2012

⁹⁴ News and more information, Midwest Transportation Knowledge Network, <http://web.archive.org/web/20050206081340/www.mtkn.org/news.htm> accessed on September 4, 2012

first statistics regarding use of TL Cat became available from OCLC early in April, 2004 and showed an estimate of approximately 10,000 searches in its first month.⁹⁶ Shortly after TL Cat went live Nelda Bravo announced the addition to the catalog of two new state DOT libraries, Washington and Connecticut, supported by NTL funds freed up when Nebraska DOT decided not to participate.⁹⁷ Although the online catalog had been launched, the future of MTKN itself remained unclear since Congress had not yet passed a reauthorization bill and the status of NTL still hung in the balance.

Midwest transportation libraries took another blow in June, 2004, when Gisela Motzkus, long-time Illinois DOT librarian announced she was retiring and that the department had no immediate plans to replace her.⁹⁸

FORMALIZING MTKN'S STRUCTURE

As the time for MTKN's fourth annual meeting approached, the group could already boast of multiple successes including the well received NHI course, garnering support for NTL reauthorization from major transportation related organizations, the successful launch of TL Cat, greater visibility for transportation libraries and librarians and succeeding in getting NCHRP funding for a scoping study and a policy study dealing with transportation library issues. Nevertheless, MTKN was still an amorphous organization with no official status.

The scoping and policy studies and their implications for the future of MTKN and other transportation library networking efforts provided the primary focus for Transportation Division sessions at the June, 2004, Annual Meeting of SLA in Nashville.⁹⁹ Librarians hoped the policy study would recommend funding the NTL sufficiently to provide for coordination and support of networks but any recommendations or funding were obviously years in the future. Informal discussions at the meeting focused on developing ideas to provide financing to support development of MTKN and possibly other regional TKNs at least until the question of NTL's reauthorization was settled. Immediately following the meeting, Nina McLawhorn posted a note¹⁰⁰ to the MTKN list service proposing the group draft a

⁹⁵ Transportation Libraries Catalog in "Corporate Library Update," TranLib Digests Archive (1505-1704) March 18, 2004 - February 2, 2005 <http://www.its.berkeley.edu/library/tranlib/tranlib3.html> accessed on June 2, 2010

⁹⁶ Transportation Libraries Catalog, MTKN-L Archives, April, 2004, <http://lists.umn.edu/cgi-bin/wa?A0=MTKN-L> (password required) accessed on June 2, 2010

⁹⁷ New libraries coming on, MTKN-L Archives, March, 2004, <http://lists.umn.edu/cgi-bin/wa?A0=MTKN-L> (password required) accessed on June 2, 2010

⁹⁸ IDOT Library, TranLib Digests Archive (1505-1704) March 18, 2004 - February 2, 2005 <http://www.its.berkeley.edu/library/tranlib/tranlib3.html> accessed on June 7, 2010

⁹⁹ Transportation Division Program, 95th Annual Meeting, Special Libraries Association, Nashville, TN, June 5-10, 2004 <http://units.sla.org/division/dtrn/nashville.html> accessed on September 4, 2012

¹⁰⁰ SLA Followup, MTKN-L Archives, June, 2004, <http://lists.umn.edu/cgi-bin/wa?A0=MTKN-L> (password required) accessed on June 6, 2010

pooled fund proposal “to help other regions model the MTKN.” The pooled fund program, coordinated by USDOT, allows multiple organizations to jointly fund projects to solve transportation related problems.¹⁰¹

The fourth annual meeting of MTKN was held at the office of UMTRI in Ann Arbor, MI. Just as at the third annual meeting, participants or their employer were responsible for expenses and attendance was once again limited with only six DOTs – IA, KS, MN, MO, OH, WI, and two universities – UofMI and UofMN, represented. After introductions and updates from attendees, the formal business of the meeting picked up where business at the previous year’s left off – attempting to establish bylaws, guiding principles, and an ILL agreement. Draft documents had been sent to all members before the meeting.¹⁰² All of the documents had been modified based on discussions at the third annual meeting.

The bylaws, with an amended structure of the Executive Committee, were approved, as was the ILL agreement. The structure of the Executive Committee was changed from one based on representation by library type to representation from each of the other MTKN committees. But the most important decision regarding the bylaws was to adopt the language that defined MTKN membership as “Any library whose primary purpose is to collect, organize and provide access to transportation-related information resources may become a member upon a vote of the membership.” That change put to rest the discussion regarding the makeup of MTKN that had consumed so much time at the meeting the previous year.

Although the adoption of the bylaws settled the question of whether MTKN was to be a network of libraries or include others involved in transportation information processes, it did not address the question of confining membership to libraries within AASHTO Region III or expanding the group geographically. The minutes show that most of the group understood the value of remaining a regional network and many comments revolved around how to encourage the formation of similar networks in the other AASHTO regions. The adoption of bylaws also provided the paperwork needed to formally register MTKN as a non-profit corporation. The group voted to do so and to add the registration fees to the cost of the meeting.

After these business issues had been dealt with, I gave a review of the beginnings of the policy study on transportation information issues approved by NCHRP and conducted by a National Academy of Science (NAS) panel. Whereas the scoping study was essentially an internal report to the Transportation Research Board, the report of the policy study, as an NAS document, could make recommendations to the federal government regarding potential solutions to the problems identified in the scoping study. As the policy study panel was being formed, I had begun a survey of state DOT libraries intended to provide information to help in organizing MTKN and other regional networks. The policy study

¹⁰¹ About the transportation pooled fund program, 2011, <http://www.pooledfund.org/Home/About> accessed on September 4, 2012

¹⁰² MTKN documents, MTKN-L Archives, October, 2004, <http://lists.umn.edu/cgi-bin/wa?A0=MTKN-L> (password required) accessed on June 7, 2010

director heard about the survey before it was conducted and asked if some questions of interest to the study committee could be included in the survey. I noted that for the study committee members one of the more interesting findings of the survey was that at least 22 state DOTs had libraries headed by an MLS librarian.¹⁰³ This number was an increase from 17 identified in a similar survey in 1990 and 10 in 1978.¹⁰⁴ The study panel, I reported, saw this as an increasing interest in information services by state DOTs.

The fourth annual meeting ended with a discussion of the new committee structure and each of their duties – a Communications Committee to focus on promoting TL Cat, develop a brochure and look at MTKN’s presence on the web – a Membership Committee to seek additional members and focus on mentoring and partner hip issues – an External Network Committee to encourage the development of additional regional networks and develop the pooled fund study. The External Network Committee focused on regional network development by assigning an individual to act as liaison to librarians in each of the other AASHTO regions.¹⁰⁵

Almost immediately following the meeting, on November 4, 2004, Nina McLawhorn announced FHWA had approved the Transportation Library Connectivity pooled fund project¹⁰⁶ with five states participating, KS, MN, MT, OH, and WI. Also, on January 5, 2005, came the birth of MTKN as an official non-profit corporation when Midwest Transportation Knowledge Network was registered with the Office of the Secretary of State in Minnesota.¹⁰⁷

THE POOLED FUND ERA

March, 2005 saw a number of additional positive developments relating to MTKN. The minutes from the MTKN conference call that month show that MTKN had gained its first participant from the public sector, Hanson Professional Services, Inc. of Springfield, IL. OCLC began using TL Cat as a “success story” and produced a one-pager for marketing its Group Services products.¹⁰⁸ On March 1st, a meeting

¹⁰³ Survey of libraries serving state departments of transportation, Jerry Baldwin, September, 2004
<http://www.dot.state.mn.us/library/survey-state-dots.pdf> accessed on September 4, 2012

¹⁰⁴ Transportation libraries and information services of state governments: a survey, Jerry Baldwin, June 1978
<http://www.dot.state.mn.us/library/sla1978.pdf> accessed on September 4, 2012

¹⁰⁵ Midwest Transportation Knowledge Network: on the move, Bob Sweet, attachment to “Tran Div newsletter article—URGENT” February 15, 2005 <http://lists.umn.edu/cgi-bin/wa?A0=MTKN-L> (password required) accessed on June 15, 2012

¹⁰⁶ TPF studies, detailed view, transportation library connectivity, posted November 3, 2005
<http://web.archive.org/web/20050218234733/http://www.pooledfund.org/projectdetails.asp?id=910&status=1> accessed on June 25, 2012

¹⁰⁷ Midwest Transportation Knowledge Network
<http://mbportal.sos.state.mn.us/Business/SearchDetails?filingGuid=c5c119d3-8ad4-e011-a886-001ec94ffe7f> accessed on September 4, 2012

of the Committee for a Future Strategy for Transportation Information Management, as the policy study committee was now called, heard presentations from staff of the national libraries of medicine and agriculture about the importance to their respective programs of regional networks. And, most importantly, on the 18th, the eight state DOTs, – those listed above plus LA, OR, and WA, – that had so far committed to participate, held the first conference call formally initiating the Transportation Library Connectivity Pooled Fund Study.¹⁰⁹

As noted earlier, the pooled fund study had been set up to provide funding for transportation library networking efforts at least until the future status of the National Transportation Library was settled in the pending reauthorization bill. No sooner had the pooled fund study got off the ground than Congress finally passed the SAFETEA-LU act. The President signed it into law on August 10, 2005.¹¹⁰ The law, as hoped for, reauthorized the National Transportation Library within the Bureau of Transportation Statistics. Unfortunately, the bill reduced the funds allocated to the bureau by 30%¹¹¹ and placed it within the Research and Innovative Technology Administration (RITA), an administration of USDOT newly created by the same legislation. Although reauthorization all but guaranteed the continued existence of NTL for the next six years, the lack of funding and unsettled reporting structures within USDOT as RITA was being formed prevented NTL from providing the levels of support and leadership in developing transportation library networks that had been hoped for.

With no prospects of additional funding from NTL, the pooled fund would, over the next few years, become the most important source of leadership in expanding participation in TL Cat. It also came to play a major role in maintaining the work of MTKN and encouraging the development of additional regional transportation library networks. Up to this point, one of the difficulties in all of this work was that it had been carried out on a volunteer basis by the librarians participating in MTKN. There was no one for whom any of this work was a primary focus. This was about to change. Just as we were learning of the situation with NTL, Wisconsin DOT, as the lead agency in the pooled fund study, posted a job opening for a “consulting librarian for interstate consortium.”¹¹² And, on August 24, Arlene Mathison announced the fifth annual meeting of MTKN would be held jointly with a meeting of the

¹⁰⁸ The first group catalog for transportation professionals, OCLC Online Computer Library Center, Inc., 2004 <http://web.archive.org/web/20051025092106/http://www.oclc.org/services/brochures/11595DTranspFinal.pdf> accessed on September 4, 2012

¹⁰⁹ Minutes of conference call Thursday, March 24, Janet Bix, March 28, 2005 <http://lists.umn.edu/cgi-bin/wa?A0=MTKN-L> (password required) accessed on June 18, 2012

¹¹⁰ Safe, accountable, flexible, efficient transportation equity act: a legacy for users, Public Law 109-59, 109th Congress, August 10, 2005 <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-109publ59/html/PLAW-109publ59.htm> accessed on September 4, 2012

¹¹¹ BTS and NTL, Jerry Baldwin, August 16, 2005 <http://lists.umn.edu/cgi-bin/wa?A0=MTKN-L> (password required) accessed on June 20, 2012

¹¹² Wis DOT Pool Fund Position Job Ad, Roberto Sarmiento, August 24, 2005 <http://lists.umn.edu/cgi-bin/wa?A0=MTKN-L> (password required) accessed on June 20, 2012

pooled fund Transportation Library Connectivity technical advisory committee, jointly billed as the “Knowledge & Library Connectivity Conference.” She also announced registration fees for the meeting for pooled fund participants would be paid by the pooled fund.¹¹³

Due to the first meeting of the pooled fund participants directly preceding the fifth annual MTKN meeting, the meeting was structured differently than previous annual meetings. The pooled fund study by this time had attracted 10 participants, only four of which were also members of MTKN. State DOTs represented in the pooled fund from outside MTKN included LA, MT, OR, PA, TN, and WA.¹¹⁴ In order to promote the development of additional regional networks, pooled fund participants from these non-MTKN states were invited to sit in and observe MTKN’s annual meeting. The meeting began with Arlene Mathison reviewing the status of MTKN noting that, in the past year, among other accomplishments, the group had incorporated and opened a checking account.¹¹⁵ The remainder of the day was filled with presentations from MTKN participants and others regarding benefits of networking and other topics affecting both MTKN and pooled fund participants.

Whereas in previous annual meetings much of the discussions revolved around the relationship of MTKN to TL Cat and distinguishing between the two, the second day of the fifth annual meeting began with similar discussions relating to MTKN and the pooled fund group. Some participants had difficulty distinguishing between the purposes of the two groups and questioned whether MTKN could or even needed to exist since the pooled fund seemed to have similar goals and, unlike MTKN, received funding from its participants. However, other participants pointed out that the pooled fund study had an imposed time limit of two years. On the other hand, MTKN had already been at work for four years and it and other potential networks would continue to be needed to work toward developing a national network.

The last business of the meeting was to determine committees for the coming year and elect incoming officers. The committees consisted of Performance Measures, to determine and communicate the benefits of MTKN, Funding to seek ways for MTKN to become self-supporting, and Partnerships to continue work to develop other regional networks and also to investigate alliances with additional groups such as AASHTO and LTAP. Before the meeting ended it was noted that pooled fund participants from eastern and western states had said they would work to develop networks in their respective regions.

During the fifth annual meeting, the difficulties of working on an all-volunteer basis became apparent. At the fourth annual meeting, bylaws for the organization were approved, and two additional documents,

¹¹³ Knowledge & Library Connectivity Conference, Oct. 19-21, Arlene Mathison, August 24, 2005 <http://lists.umn.edu/cgi-bin/wa?A0=MTKN-L> (password required) accessed on June 21, 2012

¹¹⁴ TPF studies, detailed view, study number TPF-5(105), captured on Sept. 8, 2005, <http://web.archive.org/web/20050908223416/http://www.pooledfund.org/projectdetails.asp?id=337&status=4> accessed on September 4, 2012

¹¹⁵ Official Minutes, MTKN Fifth Annual Meeting, October 20-21, 2005, Kansas City, Missouri, <http://www.mtkn.org/archives/MTKNminutes1005.pdf> accessed on September 4, 2012

Guiding Principles and ILL guidelines, were discussed but not approved. Approval of the documents, including changes to each agreed to at the fourth annual meeting, was on the agenda for the fifth annual meeting and copies of the documents were distributed to the attendees. Unfortunately, it was soon discovered that the copies distributed at the meeting did not include the agreed to changes.¹¹⁶ As a result, discussion and approval of them became an agenda item for the first conference call following the annual meeting. It's interesting to note that this conference call that involved putting the finishing touches on MTKN's three organizing documents – Bylaws, Guiding Principles and ILL Guidelines – is also the first meeting where a concern for the need to document its history appears in meeting notes or minutes.¹¹⁷

During the same call, the members of the Partnership Committee announced that they were working with the research directors in MN and OH DOTs to involve MTKN in the annual meeting of AASHTO's Research Advisory Committee to be held in July, 2006 in Columbus, OH. The event would be hosted by the states in AASHTO's Region III. MTKN's efforts to get on the agenda of that meeting were greatly enhanced when, at the annual meeting of TRB, the report of the policy study "Future Strategy for Transportation Information Management" was released.¹¹⁸ At approximately the same time, another report appeared noting deficiencies in the information support for transportation's technology transfer programs.¹¹⁹

Both involvement in the RAC meeting and the follow up to the policy study report were discussed in the MTKN conference call of February 9, 2006.¹²⁰ Arlene Mathison announced that a committee was being formed to gather support for both Special Report 284 and NCHRP Problem Statement SP-17. The purpose of the problem statement was to request \$200,000 from NCHRP to begin implementation of the policy study's recommendations as soon as possible. Shortly after her announcement, AASHTO's Standing Committee on Research had adopted the project proposed in the problem statement as NCHRP Project 20-75 for its FY2007 program.¹²¹

¹¹⁶ MTKN official documents, Bob Sweet, November 15, 2005, <http://lists.umn.edu/cgi-bin/wa?A0=MTKN-L> (password required) accessed on June 24, 2012

¹¹⁷ MTKN conference call, December 1, 2005, attachment to "revised notes from MTKN conf call 12/1/05," Marie Manthe, December 9, 2005 <http://lists.umn.edu/cgi-bin/wa?A0=MTKN-L> (password required) accessed on June 25, 2012

¹¹⁸ Future strategy for management of transportation information: findings and recommendations of TRB policy study and steps for implementation, TRB 85th Annual Meeting, Session 702, January 25, 2006 https://sites.google.com/site/trblist/programs/transp_info_mgmt accessed on September 4, 2012

¹¹⁹ Old news, Jerry Baldwin, March 28, 2006 <http://lists.umn.edu/cgi-bin/wa?A0=MTKN-L> (password required) accessed on June 30, 2012

¹²⁰ MTKN conference call, February 9, 2006, attachment to "Notes from Feb. 9 conference call," Marie Manthe, March 16, 2006 <http://lists.umn.edu/cgi-bin/wa?A0=MTKN-L> (password required) accessed on June 30, 2012

¹²¹ National Cooperative Highway Research Program NCHRP FY 2007 <http://highways.transportation.org/Documents/1.2007FundedProjects.pdf> accessed on September 4, 2012

Unfortunately, just as the years of effort attempting to make inroads for transportation library networks within TRB and AASHTO were beginning to bear fruit, we learned that the movement was losing two of its most effective advocates. Nina McLawhorn had recently begun a medical leave of indeterminate length from Wisconsin DOT from which she did not return, and Nelda Bravo left the National Transportation Library to take a position within FHWA.¹²² In spite of the loss of our most effective advocates, MTKN and its members continued seeking opportunities to promote the development of TKNs. As mentioned above, one of these opportunities was the 2006 AASHTO RAC Annual Meeting where MTKN's Partnerships Committee organized a session titled "Transportation Information Revolution: The World at Your Doorstep."¹²³ For some of the state DOT research directors in attendance the program was their first introduction to the role librarians could play in supporting research programs. As a result of the session and other discussions at the meeting, one of the key issues included in a plan of action for RAC in the ensuing years was "Support the National Transportation Library and the continuing development and refinement of transportation library networks."¹²⁴ During the ensuing MTKN conference call, Janet Bix, MTKN Chair, reported that also as a result of the session NC DOT would investigate joining a network.¹²⁵

Shortly thereafter, the continuing need to advocate for transportation libraries and networks was made evident when RITA published a draft of the "Strategic Research, Development and Technology Plan of the Department of Transportation."¹²⁶ In spite of the document's many references to the importance of information in research and development nowhere did it make reference to the NTL, other transportation libraries or the recent NCHRP reports addressing these same issues. RITA requested that interested parties comment on the document and MTKN and individual libraries submitted comments making note of the oversight and urging RITA to support TKNs through the National Transportation Library to support improved access to research results.^{127,128} Additional ammunition in support of transportation

¹²² Nelda Bravo, Thursday, April 27, 2006, (1905-2062) January 25, 2006 - September 22, 2006 <http://www.its.berkeley.edu/library/tranlib/tranlib5.html> accessed on August 14, 2012

¹²³ 2006 AASHTO RAC Annual Meeting, July 10-13, 2006, Columbus, Ohio, Program, <http://research.transportation.org/Documents/2006AASHTORACAnnualMeetingProgram.pdf> accessed on August 24, 2012

¹²⁴ Template for Close Out Session Report AASHTO-RAC July 10-13, 2006 Meeting <http://research.transportation.org/Documents/RACNationalMeetingJuly2006.pdf> accessed on August 24, 2012

¹²⁵ MTKN Conference Call, July 20, 2006 attachment to notes from MTKN conf call 7/20/06, Marie Manthe, August 29, 2006 <http://lists.umn.edu/cgi-bin/wa?A0=MTKN-L> (password required) accessed on August 25, 2012

¹²⁶ FW: USDOT RD&T Strategic Plan Avail for Public Comment, Tuesday, July 11, 2006, (1905-2062) January 25, 2006 - September 22, 2006 <http://www.its.berkeley.edu/library/tranlib/tranlib5.html> accessed on August 20, 2012

¹²⁷ Reply to RITA's strategic plan from MTKN, Janet Bix, August 9, 2006 <http://lists.umn.edu/cgi-bin/wa?A0=MTKN-L> (password required) accessed on August 20, 2012

¹²⁸ RITA's Strategic Plan, Jerry Baldwin, July 24, 2006 <http://lists.umn.edu/cgi-bin/wa?A0=MTKN-L> (password required) accessed on August 20, 2012

library networking was provided at the GTRIC session during SLA's 2006 Annual Meeting. It included a number of presentations detailing the progress of MTKN, the pooled fund study and other transportation library related efforts.¹²⁹ The success of the earlier noted AASHTO RAC session also prompted the pooled fund study to organize a session under the same title, "Transportation Information Revolution: The World at Your Doorstep" for the 2007 annual meeting of TRB.¹³⁰

The sixth annual meeting of MTKN was held at Northwestern University in Evanston, IL, and hosted by the Transportation Library. The minutes from the meeting reflect both the problems presented by leadership vacancies in organizations related to MTKN and continuing successes due at least in part to the group's advocacy efforts.¹³¹ At the time of the meeting RITA, BTS, and NTL were all being headed by acting directors while searches were in progress for permanent appointees. Due to Nina McLawhorn's continuing medical leave MTKN's committee on performance measures had made no progress since its creation at the previous annual meeting. In spite of these impediments to progress on MTKN's issues, member libraries reported a number of individual successes. WisDOT's library had been transformed into an information commons with expanded and more visible space. Iowa DOT Library had received a Transportation Enhancement Grant to digitize and preserve some of the department's audio-visual materials. Kansas reported significant progress in cataloging its collections, other libraries mentioned were involved in successful reorganizations and it was reported that Illinois DOT was finally moving toward hiring a librarian to replace Gisela Motzkus.

Another major topic of discussion at the meeting was various advocacy efforts of the individual libraries and the need for increased emphasis on the importance of establishing additional TKNs. The group believed this would provide increased visibility and credibility in advocating for the NTL, TKNs and transportation libraries in the next transportation reauthorization legislation. Toward that end, it was suggested there was a need for MTKN to prepare an article or paper on the topic of developing a TKN since MTKN was being held up as the model by other groups and individuals working to create additional TKNs. Although this doesn't appear in the minutes, I recall that several newer members suggested such a paper would also be of use to them since, due to staff turnover, they were new to the group and it would help them understand the origins and goals of the organization. Those statements, the fact that I was one of the few then current members involved at the beginning of MTKN and that I was about to retire were what prompted me to volunteer to write the requested paper.

Although the expressed need to document the process of developing a TKN was the source of this paper, as I began gathering the information needed to prepare it, two additional TKNs were formed using

¹²⁹ Transportation Division Program, 97th Annual Meeting, Special Libraries Association, Baltimore, MD. June 11-14, 2006 <http://web.archive.org/web/20061114001905/http://www.library.northwestern.edu/transportation/slatran/baltimore.html> accessed on August 25, 2012

¹³⁰ TRB 86th Annual Meeting, Monday, January 22, 2007, Session 236: "Transportation Information Revolution: The World at Your Doorstep" <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/library/trb86.html> accessed on September 3, 2012

¹³¹ MTKN Sixth Annual Meeting, October 12-13, 2006, Evanston, Illinois, Official Minutes, <http://www.mtkn.org/archives/MTKNminutes1006.pdf> (password required) accessed on August 26, 2012

MTKN as their model. The Eastern Transportation Knowledge Network, formed to coordinate transportation libraries in AASHTO regions I and II, and the Western Transportation Knowledge Network consisting of those in AASHTO region IV were both founded in 2007.¹³² The formation of these two networks fulfilled the original vision of the founders of MTKN. It provided regional networks that could coordinate transportation libraries throughout the country to work with the NTL toward improving transportation library services in all fifty states and to represent them in informing NTL about needed programs and services.

CONCLUSION

With three regional networks in place and the language included in the recently passed MAP-21¹³³ providing the mandate for NTL envisioned by those who lobbied for its creation, the main elements of the needed infrastructure are finally in place to create a fully functioning national network of transportation libraries first envisioned nearly fifty years ago. It's now up to the current and next generation of transportation librarians to continue advocating for the funds and administrative support to make it happen. I hope this paper can serve to provide information and background documentation on the early efforts and accomplishments working toward a national network of transportation libraries and serve as inspiration for those who will continue the work.

As with any document of this sort many of the comments, statement, selected resources, etc. reflect the personal experiences, observations, beliefs and prejudices of its author. Nevertheless, I have tried to give an accurate representation of the history behind MTKN. Others involved in these events should feel free to amend or append to this paper as needed to correct any errors or omissions.

¹³² Knowledge Management in the Transportation Sector, CTC & Associates LLC, April 9, 2010
<http://wisdotresearch.wi.gov/wp-content/uploads/tsrknowledgemanagement1.pdf> accessed on September 3, 2012

¹³³ Sec. 6304. National Transportation Library, House Report 112-557 - MAP-21 CONFERENCE REPORT TO ACCOMPANY H.R. 4348, http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/cpquery/?&dbname=cp112&sid=cp112HECEp&refer=&r_n=hr557.112&item=&&sel=TOC_1642578& accessed on September 3, 2012