

Transportation Research Milestones

- 1893 Office of Road Inquiry, Dept of Agriculture began research
- 1920 National Advisory Board on Highway Research formed (precursor of TRB)
- 1921 Federal Highway Act of 1921 authorized research funding for states
- 1925 National Advisory Board evolves into Highway Research Board
- 1930 The Highway Research Information Service (HRIS) was formed in to broaden the exchange of research findings.
- 1934 Hayden Cartwright Act 1934 authorized 1.5% of federal highway funds could be used for this purpose. (Precursor to SP&R)
- 1944 Federal Aid Act of 1944 contained the word research for the first time.
- 1945 The HRB instituted the Highway Research Correlation Service. This service functioned much like the scanning tours of today.
- 1950 The American Association of State Highway Officials (AASHO) Road Test, a \$27 million cooperative research project was carried out under an agreement among the National Research Council, AASHO and the Bureau of Public Roads. The federal government, states and the private sector funded the program; it was managed by the Highway Research Board (predecessor of the Transportation Research Board).
- The program included research on both bituminous and Portland cement concrete pavements, and on a group of single-span steel bridges of composite and noncomposite designs.
 - Planning for the Road Test Program began in 1950
 - Research tests began in October 1958 and completed in late 1960
 - Results led to the development of improved, empirically based pavement designs that were widely adopted throughout the world.
 - A key result was the development of a measure of pavement smoothness and rideability - the serviceability rating used to compare different pavements.
- 1951 Washington State Council for Highway Research was authorized by the State Legislature

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) mandated all states to conduct research to promote state-of-the-art methods and products in transportation construction, maintenance and operations.

- 1951 Excerpt of law for funding for Washington State Council for Highway Research:
- “In addition to all other fees prescribed by law, there shall be paid for each motor vehicle.... (10 cents/yr. For motor vehicles under 4000 lbs., and 25 cents to \$2.00/yr for those over 4000 lbs.) Such feed shall be... used by the Joint Fact-Finding Committee for Highways, Streets and Bridges and the State Highway Commission to help defray the costs of special highway use and with studies and tests upon highways as provided for in this Act and for other necessary expenses of such committee.”
- 1958 Willa Mylroie appointed as the Research and Special Programs Engineer at the Washington Department of Highways.
- 1961 Research and development became a program within the Bureau of Public Roads.
- 1962 National Cooperative Highway Research Program Established
- 1962 Federal Aid Act of 1962 restricted the used of the planning and research funds to those activities. If funds were not used for these activities during their availability period, they would lapse. An additional ½% was added for states planning and research to encourage states to increase this work. This additional half-percent was optional.
- 1963 The Federal Highway Amendments Act of 1963 expanded the law to include development activities. Also, a multi-disciplinary task force reviewed a wide range of problems and opportunities. This resulted in the 1965 document *A National Program of Research and Development for Highway Transportation*. The focus of this document was coordination, concentration on urgent problems, and flexibility. Their three priorities were highway safety, urban transportation, and reduction in costs of construction and maintenance.
- 1970 The Volpe Center was established to provide analytical, scientific, and engineering support to the newly established U.S. Department of Transportation.
- 1970 FHWA launched the Federally Coordinated Program of Research and Development in Highway Transportation (FCP).
- 1972 The first Washington State Highway Department Research Program Report (WARD Report) was published on *Aerotriangulation Analysis & Control Point Error Detection*.
- 1974 Highway Research Board becomes Transportation Research Board
- 1980s TRB begins performing studies of national transportation policy issues
- 1981 Will Mylroie retired
- 1983 Washington State Transportation Center (TRAC) established

- 1987 Strategic Highway Research Program established
Ten University Transportation Centers (UTC) authorized
- 1988 TransNow established as one of the UTCs
- 1991 Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 passed. Established the 25%
minimum for research of the 2% for planning and research.
- 1992 Transit Cooperative Research Program Established
- 1998 Transportation Equity Act of the 21st Century passed
Called for Future Strategic Highway Research Program
- 2005 Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users
passed.
Established several research programs including:
Surface Transportation-Environmental Cooperative Research Program
National Cooperative Freight Transportation Research Program
Future Strategic Highway Research Program
Exploratory Advanced Research Program

WSDOT Research Directors

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| 1958-1981 | Willa Mylroie | Research and Special Projects Engineer |
| 1981-1984 | John Strada | |
| 1984-1987 | Scott Rutherford | |
| 1987-1989 | John Doyle | |
| 1989-2002 | Marty Pietz | Director of Transportation Research |
| 2003- | Leni Oman | Director of Research and Library Services |

Historical information provided by Richard Weingroff, Historian, and John McCracken, Director, Office of Research and Technology Services, FHWA, and *America's Highways 1776/1976* U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration.