

Draft Review Notes: FHWA Technology Transfer Ad Hoc Group Spring 2010

Overview

At the end of 2009, FHWA convened a small group of people from LTAP/TTAP at the California LTAP Center to consider the future of technology transfer efforts throughout the program. The goal of the meeting was to focus on the future of this role from the Center perspective, with specific emphasis on what can Centers do and how can they take ownership of technology transfer.

Background

To adequately assess the future of technology transfer for the program, the group held a number of interactive discussions with LTAP Centers and FHWA leaders to gain their perspectives on technology transfer. From Centers, the group was primarily concerned with what Centers believe their current responsibilities are to promote and effect T2 to their local agency customers, and how that fit into Center contract specifications, staff capabilities and ongoing work efforts. From FHWA, the group learned the overarching leadership view of the agency establishing T2 as a priority directly from Amy Lucero, current OTS Director. The group also heard from FHWA Program Office and Resource Center staff to learn how they fit in to an LTAP/TTAP-specific technology transfer strategy, including what materials or programs are available now, which of those if any are LTAP/TTAP ready, and how we may better connect LTAP/TTAP to these initiatives going forward.

Discussion

After reviewing the technology transfer environment in which LTAP/TTAP exists, the group spent considerable time investigating the possibilities for how the program can better connect to T2 and how that focus can be added to Center operations and work planning. In the main, the group identified three ways LTAP/TTAP could work to enhance T2 relationships with key partners and local agencies to better leverage what other people are doing. Furthermore, participants identified the positives and negatives of each approach in an attempt to identify a possible way forward for the program. They were:

Draft Review Notes: FHWA Technology Transfer Ad Hoc Group Spring 2010

Three Options for LTAP/TTAP T2 Initiatives

- Bringing New Technology into the LTAP/TTAP Community – LTAP/TTAP as advocates for local-appropriate T2 to locals
 - Pros:
 - Improves partnerships with others, could bring future benefits/resources
 - Puts LTAP/TTAP at the table nationally, gives us a voice that influences future technologies and efforts
 - Not forgotten in reauthorization/authorization
 - Get benefit from other offices and resources for LTAP
 - Effects change for program, would be the right thing to do
 - Ensures LTAP customers benefit from T2, and thus makes LTAP more valuable to customers (virtuous circle)
 - Usually well tested and peer reviewed technologies
 - Cons:
 - Few acceptable technologies to promote from a larger “national” batch; many will not fit our needs
 - Tend to be more complex, costly technologies
 - Risk of losing credibility if not done correctly
 - Materials often need significant modification for local use
 - Harder to sell “bigger” technologies
 - Effort needed to connect w/ partners early in the process = more effort

- Accelerate the Spread and Adoption of Best Practice Technology Already Within the LTAP/TTAP Community – LTAP/TTAP as advocates for technologies to move local organizations
 - Pros:
 - By locals, for locals means easier buy-in
 - Typically lower cost, simpler, lower tech solutions than those developed at national level
 - Less effort to modify materials for our audience
 - Easier to communicate ideas and values
 - Cons:
 - Technologies remain in “local” community vs “national” community
 - Solutions are “stove-piped” for particular usage only
 - Lack of scalability causes lost partnering opportunities
 - Less rigor in testing, standards
 - Greater risk for failure
 - Invest to test further – money, time, safety issues
 - If we pick the priorities, we will have to develop marketing and promote/advocate for them – stretches our limited resources

Draft Review Notes: FHWA Technology Transfer Ad Hoc Group Spring 2010

Three Options for LTAP/TTAP T2 Initiatives [continued]

- Leadership for Technology, Programmatic Trends – ***proactive*** awareness of changing environment and new trends for the future [climate change, green tech, LPA][“not what we want to hear but need to hear”]
 - Pros:
 - Helps prepare locals for the future, serve as “early warning” system
 - Proactive leadership makes LTAP/TTAP more valuable to FHWA
 - More aligned with agency values
 - Customers aren’t blindsided, increases our value to locals
 - Translates T2 efforts to local perspective
 - Could identify future LTAP opportunities, partnerships
 - Program becomes leader on an important issue throughout community
 - Cons:
 - New role for Centers – another effort/activity added to the list, but not detailed enough to create a clear work plan
 - May take resources that could respond to current customer needs
 - May violate customer belief system, might not be what the customer wants to hear; much tact would be required in presentation

Conclusions

After completing their review and discussions on the general state of current T2 efforts and the T2 possibilities going forward for LTAP/TTAP, the group attempted to define the possibilities in technology transfer for LTAP. The group unanimously agreed that while T2 is a mission-critical part of the LTAP/TTAP, Centers have mobilized over time to primarily engage in training and technical assistance. Furthermore, past national efforts intended to push T2 through the Center community have struggled, often because they lacked focus and accountability and they were not truly national in scope and participation. Therefore, the recommendation to FHWA at the end of the meeting was to engage in a new national T2 effort across LTAP/TTAP in a proactive way focusing on the three general components above as a basic framework.

The LTAP/TTAP community should select technologies for national LTAP/TTAP focus, and manage and implement nationwide T2 activities. The group agreed to continue to its work as a subordinate effort to the FHWA Strategic Planning Committee; it will be sponsored by FHWA, using the Berkeley meeting participants as the members. The Technology Transfer Group will continue to work to implement a T2 program across LTAP/TTAP, and will also help to evaluate whatever activities are undertaken for efficiency and effectiveness.

Finally, to help communicate the results of the meeting to the Center community, the group created the following outline to help define and explain the focus of this effort, what will be asked of Centers, and what outcomes are intended:

Draft Review Notes: FHWA Technology Transfer Ad Hoc Group Spring 2010

Overview of a New LTAP/TTAP T2 Focus

- Why Are We Engaging in a New T2 Initiative?
 - Innovation and new technology are playing an increasing role in advancing transportation issues
 - LTAP/TTAP should have a leadership role to provide awareness and support implementation of new technology and innovation solutions
 - Fundamental tenet of the legislation creating LTAP – it's in our DNA
 - Focus has been on training and technical assistance within LTAP [this is good] but a larger and more unified role is needed for more effective technology transfer
 - Federal government is moving towards a more performance-based environment
 - Looking for tangible results for program investments [ROI]
 - Emphasizing technology as a key driver to accelerate system performance
 - We want to raise the importance of technology transfer in our operations to respond to / align with these realities
 - Take a unified approach for clarity and focus of T2 efforts where appropriate
 - Use our limited resources to give Centers the tools and/or information to help locals implement priority technologies
 - Give Centers a presence [input, review, solutions] in the technology transfer dialogue and wider community

- What Is FHWA via the Group Doing to Help [e.g. the program team, the technology transfer group etc]
 - Provide a mechanism through the T2 work group to focus on T2 needs and initiatives
 - Convene a small, ad-hoc group of LTAPers to engage us in this effort
 - Help us toward a “seat at the table” for T2, use the self-directed NLTAPA Safety work group as model
 - Provide a forum to get Center-identified technology solutions out to locals / Centers
 - Select and identify appropriate technologies for promotion
 - Provide leadership and connectivity to FHWA T2 efforts
 - Provide a mechanism for the LTAP/TTAP community to provide input about local needs in national conversations on technology transfer
 - Connect the locals needs to other national emerging technology efforts
 - Make T2 info more easily accessible and shareable [make use of our resources – Clearinghouse, NLTAPA, seminar rooms etc]
 - Communicate, communicate, communicate
 - Share, share, share

Overview of a New LTAP/TTAP T2 Focus [continued]

Draft Review Notes: FHWA Technology Transfer Ad Hoc Group Spring 2010

- What Are We Asking of Centers?
 - Advocate and promote materials to local customers where appropriate
 - Participate in a national T2 discussion
 - Provide T2 feedback at national and regional meetings, conference calls, seminar room sessions etc
 - Engage your local customers in a conversation re: local T2 needs
 - Share with the national T2 effort
 - Be an advocate for T2 solutions
 - Provide your top-most innovative solutions for sharing with others
 - Perform outreach to your local community to find new, innovative and proven technology transfer applications
 - Universities / departments of engineering
 - DOTs / research offices
 - Contractors / private sector

- What Are The Intended Results for the National Program?
 - LTAP focus to promote, advocate and support specific, high-value T2 through a coordinated nationwide effort for the Program
 - More local agencies implementing innovative technologies
 - Sooner than if we hadn't done this
 - Increase awareness of LTAP as partner in national T2 deployment
 - Providing voice for locals in T2, Adding value to LTAP as an organization
 - Seat at the technology transfer table [FHWA, associations, partners etc.]
 - Represent local needs and delivery, appropriate products based on LTAP input
 - Increased awareness of the technology transfer role in Center operations
 - Evolve national program and Center capabilities
 - Fulfill and enhance role envisioned by legislation and the Strategic Plan
 - Better connected to T2 across local and Center communities
 - Strengthen communications and sharing
 - Enhance relationships with T2 stakeholders