

NCHRP Project 08-128, “Snapshots of Planning Practices”

**Implementation Plan
Supplemental to NCHRP Research Report 1158: Developing
Snapshots for Transportation Planning**

**Prepared for
National Cooperative Highway Research Program
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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	1
AUDIENCE	2
DISTRIBUTION AND COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES.....	3
Leveraging Industry Networks	3
Engaging Non-Traditional Partners	3
Communications Strategy	3
IMPEDIMENTS TO SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION	5
FUTURE ACTIVITIES NEEDED FOR SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION	6
CRITERIA FOR JUDGING PROGRESS OR CONSEQUENCE OF IMPLEMENTATION	7
Tracking Metrics and Online Engagement	7
Document Use and Impact.....	7
Sustaining the Snapshot Series	7
CONCLUSION	8

Introduction

NCHRP 08-128 developed brief Snapshots of Planning Practice on four topics:

- Complete Streets
- Data Sharing for Performance Management
- Collaboration on Local Freight Delivery
- Economic Analysis to Support Decision-making

This implementation plan identifies potential strategies for the release and distribution of these Planning Snapshots to enhance awareness of these products and ensure their ongoing relevance. It also provides recommendations for the maintenance and updating of this set of Snapshots as well as the production of additional Snapshots on additional topics over time.

The initial set of Snapshots developed through NCHRP 08-36 (120), relied on traditional distribution channels and an independent website hosted by the contractor. However, the previous model may not be conducive to broad distribution and access. Limitations in the previous series included limited communication and follow up with research participants to inform them of the project process and final Snapshots products.

Through state of the practice interviews, webinars, Panel meetings, and American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials committee discussions, the research team and Panel gathered insights and documented strategies for information gathering, dissemination, sustained usage, and sharing to broaden the impact of the Snapshots and enhance the long-term value of these products.

Audience

The Snapshots were developed to ensure that the content and design would remain visible and valuable to a broad audience including state departments of transportation, metropolitan and regional planning organizations and local governments. These Snapshots offer a range of options so that any agency—regardless of urban or rural context, agency resources and capacity, or other factors—can engage with and apply the findings.

The potential audience for the Snapshots includes:

- Practitioners across the country who are involved in statewide, regional, or local planning that are looking to develop and/or advance their programs on these topics and/or looking to make the case to decision-makers for advancing their programs;
- Decision-makers that need a state of the practice on these transportation topics;
- Academic institutions and planning schools;
- Industry organizations and associations such as the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (AMPO), the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO), National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO); and
- Non-traditional stakeholders including economic development groups, industry stakeholders, and others.

Distribution and Communication Strategies

This section outlines a comprehensive, multi-faceted approach to distributing and communicating the Snapshot products. The goal is to increase awareness and access to the products by effectively conveying the project findings and engaging with key stakeholders throughout the distribution process.

The Snapshot products could be hosted on the NCHRP website with direct links from the AASHTO website (for example, the Transportation Management Hub). Once the products are available online, industry organizations and non-traditional partners should be engaged for product dissemination. Additionally, online and offline communications strategies should be implemented to enhance the visibility of the Snapshot products further.

Leveraging Industry Networks

It is essential to engage the agencies and organizations featured in the Snapshots and encourage them to share the materials across their networks. NCHRP should contact other key organizations—such as AMPO, NACTO, AASHTO, TRB, NADO, and FHWA—to distribute the Snapshots to their membership. When reaching out to these groups, it is recommended to identify topic-specific committees within the organizations for distribution. Additionally, organizations, such as American Planning Association (APA) and the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE), should be engaged in extending outreach efforts to the local and community levels. Finally, the NCHRP Panel should be actively involved in helping disseminate the products to their networks and refining the communications strategy over time.

Engaging Non-Traditional Partners

Identifying and engaging non-traditional partners is crucial for expanding access and reaching a broader audience. Topic-specific stakeholders should be engaged, such as the Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals (APBP) for Complete Streets and the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) for Economic measures. Additionally, partners that work across topics, such as the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group and private developers, can help to reach various audiences across multiple sectors. Academic institutions and planning schools can help to reach emerging planners.

Communications Strategy

To reach a broad audience online and offline, the communications strategy should include social media outreach, a webinar series, and attendance and/or presentations at industry events:

- **Social Media Strategy:** The primary focus of the social media strategy should be to leverage professional platforms, such as LinkedIn, to connect with practitioners and industry professionals. A media kit could be developed and include materials such as highlights and visuals from the Snapshots to attract viewers and encourage them to view the full product. Once developed, these materials could be easily adapted and shared by each stakeholder disseminating the Snapshot products.
- **Webinar Series:** To effectively communicate project findings, a webinar series could be developed in partnership with the agencies and organizations featured in the Snapshot series. Each webinar could focus on one of the four topics, highlighting the key practices, examples, and resources outlined in the Snapshot. Webinar attendees could include agency practitioners looking to enhance and advance their programs, and non-traditional stakeholders looking to learn more about the state of the practice on each

topic. It is recommended that these webinars are concise and recorded to allow those who cannot attend to access the content at their convenience. Each webinar should include opportunities for questions and discussions, and the series could serve as an opportunity to connect practitioners with representatives from the agencies highlighted in the Snapshots.

- **Industry Events:** To increase awareness and access to the Snapshots, it is recommended that the project findings be disseminated at existing industry conferences and events over the next year. Conference materials should be developed to facilitate presentations and dissemination to key stakeholders. Below is a list of identified conferences and events where attendance could be prioritized:
 - **NACTO Designing Cities Conference:** The conference is in Washington, D.C. from May 28 through May 31, 2025.
 - **TRB National Conference on Tools of the Trade:** The conference is in Albuquerque, NM, from June 23 through 25, 2025.
 - **AMPO Annual Conference:** The conference is in Providence, RI from September 16 through September 19, 2025.
 - **AASHTO Annual Meeting and Expo:** The conference is in Salt Lake City, UT during the week of November 17, 2025.

Impediments to Successful Implementation

To identify challenges to successful implementation, the research team gathered insights from practitioners, panel members, and other stakeholders through state of the practice interviews, webinars, panel meetings, and discussions at the AASHTO conference. Several key barriers were identified that could impact the Snapshots' long-term relevance and effectiveness:

- **Technical and Hosting Challenges:** Initially, the draft Snapshots included hyperlinks to external sources to provide practitioners with easy access to additional information on the highlighted examples and resources. However, since products on the NCHRP website are intended to remain relevant in the long-term, hyperlinks can be challenging due to broken links or changes in external sources. For this reason, the hyperlinks were removed from the Snapshots, and any external links available in the product will need ongoing maintenance to ensure relevance. However, NCHRP is exploring other organizations, such as AASHTO, to help maintain these resources over time.
- **Resource Constraints and Budget Limitations:** The existing project budgets for NCHRP Snapshots can be limiting to in-depth topic exploration. For future Snapshots, the research should explore additional funding mechanisms, or there should be a more targeted approach to topic selection prior to the project initiation. This will ensure that topics better align with the available budget, and that the research scope better aligns with financial constraints.
- **Timeline and Relevance Maintenance:** Due to the typical length of NCHRP's project scoping and procurement process, it can be challenging to develop Snapshots that are current and relevant on emerging or rapidly evolving planning practices. Establishing a more efficient development process and a process for incorporating periodic updates will be crucial to maintaining the relevance of the Snapshots over time.
- **Long-Term Support Needs:** The existing Snapshot series would require periodic updates to reflect new practices and changes in agency information. For this reason, long-term support mechanisms should be established to facilitate ongoing updates and ensure the Snapshots remain valuable. While NCHRP could explore in-house solutions, partnering with other organization or stakeholders to share the responsibility for maintaining could be a more viable approach to sustaining these resources.

Future Activities Needed for Successful Implementation

During project engagement, the research team found that there is broad support for continuing the Snapshot series. For successful implementation long-term, several strategic activities and processes should be established.

To promote consistency and ongoing relevance, the Snapshots format should be institutionalized with a standardized approach to future projects. This will also help practitioners understand and utilize the Snapshots more effectively moving forward.

In addition, a feedback mechanism should be developed that enables agencies to submit updates, report changes, and advancements in their programs. Agencies not originally featured, could also request consideration for inclusion in the Snapshot. A regular review process should be implemented to periodically assess key practices and resources to maintain accuracy over time.

Given the need for ongoing updates, NCHRP should explore partnerships with organizations or institutions that can support these efforts. The Panel recommends exploring opportunities for other institutions such as AASHTO or AMPO to host and/or help maintain the Snapshot products. These partnerships could include hosting arrangements that improve online visibility and broaden access and support the maintenance of content such as URLs in the PDFs to maintain accuracy and relevance over time. Developing a wiki-like resource could provide an opportunity for ongoing updates, new content, and a place to promote exemplary examples over time.

Integrating digital tools and strategies to optimize the Snapshots search results will help maintain a dynamic online presence, reflecting the most current practices in transportation planning.

As the Snapshots series continues, there should be a more structured approach to topic development. Two approaches to topic development have been identified: (1) focus on one Snapshot topic at a time to allow for more targeted, focused development and more timely delivery or (2) develop multiple topics simultaneously to find intersections and areas of convergence between the topics. Criteria for new topics should emphasize selecting topics that will stay relevant over time while also addressing emerging trends and pressing issues in the planning industry. Furthermore, future updates should consider connections to other NCHRP projects to create a cohesive knowledge base and to not duplicate efforts. Additionally, as most NCHRP projects begin with a review of the current practice, this Snapshot format could serve as a standard template for most if not all NCHRP projects.

There is broad stakeholder interest in continuing this process. The panel and the AASHTO Committee on Planning could explore submitting a request to continue the Snapshot program as a full NCHRP project or through NCHRP funding for research implementation (20-44) or AASHTO Committee support (20-123).

Criteria for Judging Progress or Consequence of Implementation

This implementation relies on the ability to monitor key indicators and outcomes of the project to measure successful implementation. The criteria outlined below will allow for better evaluation of progress and understanding of the impacts of implementation while guiding continuous improvement efforts. The criteria include tracking metrics related to product downloads and online engagement, documenting the use of Snapshots by agencies and transportation professionals, and ensuring ongoing engagement with project stakeholders and featured agencies.

Tracking Metrics and Online Engagement

Implementation efforts should regularly monitor the number of product downloads and views on the NCHRP website. To increase downloads and views, the implementation should ensure that all project stakeholders and featured agencies are sharing the Snapshots on their platforms and pushing viewers to the NCHRP website. Implementation should track mentions and references to the Snapshots on partner websites and in other communication channels. An increase in downloads and NCHRP would ensure that partner agencies were sharing the documents and indicate a growing interest and relevance in the transportation industry.

Document Use and Impact

Tracking the number of agencies and organizations using the Snapshots to guide program development or policy initiatives is critical for gauging the effectiveness and relevancy of the Snapshots. Implementation should periodically follow up with featured agencies to document specific applications of the Snapshots and gather insights about their experiences. Success stories from agencies that have used the products can provide valuable evidence of the Snapshots effectiveness. Ongoing support from featured agencies should also be documented, including their willingness to share the products within their networks.

Sustaining the Snapshot Series

The continuation and expansion of the Snapshot series should also serve as a key indicator of success. A feedback mechanism should be established to understand the implications and lessons learned and ensure the series evolves in response to community needs. Periodic follow up with agencies should also help identify future research opportunities and potential collaborations. The team can foster long-term support and encourage agencies to maintain the Snapshots by actively engaging project stakeholders and features agencies over time.

Conclusion

This plan provides a roadmap for increasing the visibility and sustainability of the Snapshots series. Key strategies include engaging with industry and non-traditional partners, developing a robust communication strategy, and addressing impediments such as technical and hosting challenges, resource constraints, and the need for ongoing updates. Future steps will focus on leveraging industry networks and digital tools to improve search visibility and standardizing the Snapshots format for consistency. The immediate next steps could include:

1. Establishing online hosting and maintenance plans.
2. Engaging key stakeholders and identifying any additional organizations necessary to support dissemination.
3. Executing a targeted communications rollout that includes social media outreach, webinars, and presentations at industry events.
4. Establishing methods for future updates and venues for product hosting.
5. Identifying the next round of Snapshot topics.

Implementing these strategies allows the Snapshot series to maintain a dynamic presence and provide valuable, up-to-date resources for transportation planning practitioners and stakeholders.