

Bureau of Transportation Statistics

Performance Report

2001-2005

**Bureau of Transportation Statistics
Research and Innovative Technology Administration
U. S. Department of Transportation**

June 2006

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Bureau of Transportation Statistics Performance Report 2001-2005

The Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS), a statistical agency within the Research and Innovative Technology Administration (RITA), U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), compiles, analyzes, and publishes data and information needed for transportation decisionmaking, and generally coordinates DOT statistical programs. BTS also manages the National Transportation Library and the Office of Airline Information, and leads the federal effort in developing transportation geo-data to fulfill the vision of the National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI).

BTS has a broad responsibility derived from legislation (see *BTS Strategic Plan 2003-2008*, Appendix A), through which Congress created the agency and established the scope of what we do. BTS supports the highest priorities of the Department of Transportation – to enhance *safety, mobility, global connectivity, environmental stewardship, and security* (the five strategic goals of the Department of Transportation).

BTS measures its success in terms of *outcomes* in six key areas that frame the strategic goals. These six dimensions and focus areas were developed by the statistical agencies and statistical units represented on the Interagency Council on Statistical Policy (ICSP):

- **Relevance**— the degree to which products and services are useful and responsive to the needs of our customers and stakeholders.
- **Accuracy**—the correctness, validity, and reliability of data and information products.
- **Timeliness**—the timing of information releases.
- **Cost**—the dollar amount used to produce data products and services.
- **Dissemination**—the availability, accessibility, and distribution of products and services.
- **Mission Achievement**— the effectiveness of RITA/BTS information programs in satisfying our customers and stakeholders.

Performance standards for federal statistical agencies were established through efforts of the Interagency Council on Statistical Policy under the Government Performance and Results Act for use in completing the Administration’s Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART). These standards are used to establish product quality and program performance goals for federal statistical agencies.

The BTS Strategic Plan addresses six interrelated goals covering product quality and program performance.

Product Quality: Product quality encompasses many attributes, including (but not limited to) *relevance, accuracy, and timeliness*. The basic measures in this group relate to the quality of specific products, thereby providing actionable information to managers. These are “outcome-oriented” measures and are key to the usability of information products. In some sense, relevance relates to “doing the right things,” while accuracy and timeliness relate to “doing things right.”

Program Performance: Program performance encompasses balancing the dimensions of cost, dissemination, and mission accomplishment for the agency as a whole; operating efficiently and effectively; ensuring that customers receive the information they need; and serving the information needs of the Nation. Costs of products or programs may be used to develop efficiency measures. Dissemination involves making sure customers receive the information they need via the most appropriate mechanisms. Mission achievement means that the information the program produces makes a difference. Hence, three key dimensions are being used to indicate program performance: *cost* (input), *dissemination* (output), and *mission achievement* (outcome).

Performance evaluation indicators measure BTS’ performance toward each of six strategic goals. Below we briefly describe the six strategic goals, map them to OMB’s performance standards for federal statistical agencies, and describe the indicators for each. This is the first report of an annual series that will be updated each year.

Relevance

OMB Standard – Relevance is the degree to which products and services are useful and responsive to users’ needs. Relevance of data products and analytic reports may be monitored through a professional review process and ongoing contacts with data users. Product relevance may be indicated by customer satisfaction with product content, information from customers about product use, demonstration of product improvements, comparability with other data series, agency responses to customer suggestions for improvement, new or customized products/services, frequency of use, or responses to data requests from users (including policy makers). Through a variety of professional review activities, agencies maintain the relevance, accuracy, and validity of their products, and encourage data users and other stakeholders to contribute to the agency’s data collection and dissemination programs. Striving for relevance requires monitoring to ensure that information systems anticipate change and evolve to appropriately measure our dynamic society and economy. Qualitative or quantitative indicators may measure relevance.

BTS Goal - To anticipate the needs of decision makers and stakeholders by providing the information that is most useful and responsive to them through a thorough understanding of major transportation issues and trends.

BTS Performance Indicators - BTS has developed indicators for tracking information requests, product dissemination, and customer satisfaction with the BTS website. Relevance is evaluated through the following measures:

- Increase the number of congressional and government agency contacts regarding BTS information (increasing awareness in Congress and other government agencies of what we can provide).
- Increase the number of average daily unique visitors to the TranStats data warehouse site (increasing our customer base for our transportation data warehouse).

Accuracy

OMB Standard – Accuracy measures the important features of correctness, validity, and reliability of data and information products measured as degree of closeness to target values. For statistical data, accuracy may be defined as the degree of closeness to the target value and measured as sampling error and various aspects of nonsampling error (e.g., response rates, size of revisions, coverage, and edit performance). For analysis products, accuracy may be the quality of the reasoning, reasonableness of assumptions, and clarity of the exposition, typically measured and monitored through review processes. In addition, accuracy is assessed and improved by internal reviews, comparisons of data among different surveys, linkages of survey data to administrative records, redesigns of surveys, or expansions of sample sizes. Qualitative or quantitative indicators may measure accuracy.

BTS Goal - To provide high quality data, analysis, and information for transportation decisionmaking that is correct, valid, and reliable.

BTS Performance Indicators - BTS evaluates the accuracy of information products through the following measures:

- Maintain a minimum 80 percent response rate on the Commodity Flow Survey (CFS) (to reduce potential non-response bias).
- Increase the response rate on the Omnibus Household Survey (OHS) (to reduce potential non-response bias).

Timeliness

OMB Standard – Timeliness is the timing of information releases. Timeliness may be measured as time from the close of the reference period to the release of information, or customer satisfaction with timeliness. Timeliness may also be measured as how well agencies meet scheduled and publicized release dates, expressed as a percent of release dates met. Qualitative or quantitative indicators may measure timeliness.

BTS Goal - Reduce the lag time in data reporting so that decision makers have a nearly “real-time” view of the transportation system and factors affecting it.

BTS Performance Indicators - BTS has developed indicators for its major programs. Timeliness is evaluated through the following measures:

- Improve average response time for general data and information requests from customers both government and private sector (to improve customer responsiveness).
- Increase the percentage of periodic data releases (airline traffic and financial data, Air Travel Price Index, and Transportation Services Index) that occurred by the schedule date (enable our stakeholders and customers predictable delivery of our datasets).
- Ensure that the annual release of National Transportation Atlas Database (NTAD) CD is available prior to the start of the annual ESRI (Environmental Systems Research Institute) International User Conference on GIS and mapping software (to provide timely support for research, analysis, and decision-making across all modes of transportation).
- Reduce response time for map requests by the DOT Crisis Management Center (CMC) and in support of the Continuity of Operations (COOP) plans (to improve emergency response by providing current and timely information).

Cost

OMB Standard – Cost is the dollar amount used to produce data products or services. The development and use of financial performance measures within the Federal Government is an established goal, and the intent of such measures is to determine the “true costs” of various programs or alternative modes of operation at the Federal level. Examples of cost data include full costs of products or programs, return on investment, dollar value of efficiencies, and ratios of cost to products distributed. Quantitative indicators may measure cost.

BTS Goal - Reduce the cost of recurring programs in order to provide data and analysis in a cost-effective manner.

BTS Performance Indicators – The BTS cost measures are:

- Improve cost efficiencies in the production of BTS’ major data reference reports (Transportation Statistics Annual Report, National Transportation Statistics, and the Pocket Guide to Transportation Statistics).
- Improve cost efficiencies in acquiring international freight data (Transborder data).

Dissemination

OMB Standard – Dissemination is the availability, accessibility, and distribution of information products and services. Typical measures include: on-demand requests fulfilled, product downloads, degree of accessibility, customer satisfaction with ease of use, number of participants at user conferences, citations of agency data in the media, number of Internet user sessions, number of formats in which data are available, amount of technical support provided to data users, exhibits to inform the public about information products, issuance of newsletters describing products, usability testing of web sites, and assessing compliance with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, which requires Federal agencies to make their electronic and information

technology accessible to people with disabilities. Qualitative or quantitative indicators may measure dissemination.

BTS Goal - To provide data and analysis products that are readily available, easily accessible, and widely distributed.

BTS Performance Indicators – The BTS measures for dissemination are:

- Increase the number of National Atlas Transportation Database (NTAD) CD-ROMs distributed (to broaden the customer base for this product).
- Increase the number of datasets downloaded from TranStats (to broaden customer usage for this product).

Mission Achievement

OMB Standard – Mission achievement is the effect of or satisfaction with the statistical programs. For government statistical programs, this dimension responds to the question—have we achieved our objectives and met the expectations of our stakeholders? Under this dimension, statistical programs document their contributions to the goals and missions of parent departments and other agencies, the Administration, Congress, and information users in the private sector and the general public. For statistical programs, this broad dimension involves meeting recognized societal information needs and also addresses the linkage between statistical outputs and programmatic outcomes.

However, identifying this linkage is far from straightforward. It is frequently difficult to trace the effects of information products on the public good. Such products often are necessary intermediate inputs in the creation of high visibility information whose societal benefit is clearly recognized. The statistics produced by statistical agencies are used to track the performance of programs managed by their parent or other organizations related to topics such as crime, education, energy, the environment, health, science, and transportation.

Moreover, beyond the direct and focused uses of statistical products and programs, the statistical agencies and their products serve a diverse and dispersed set of data users working on a broad range of applications. Users include government policy makers at the federal, state, and local levels, business leaders, households, academic researchers, analysts at public policy institutes and trade groups, marketers and planners in the private sector, and many others. Information produced by statistical agencies often is combined with other information for use in the decisionmaking process. Thus, the relationship between program outputs and their beneficial uses and outcomes is often complex and difficult to track. Consequently, agencies use both qualitative and quantitative indicators to make this linkage as explicit as feasible.

Quantitative measures may be used to reflect mission achievement. For example, customer satisfaction with the statistical agency or unit indicates if the agency or unit has met the expectations of its stakeholders. In the absence of preferred quantitative indicators, qualitative

narratives can indicate how statistical agency products contribute to and evaluate progress toward important goals established for government.

BTS Goal – Provide (dissemination) high-quality data (accuracy) that fill transportation data gaps and advance their effective (relevancy and timeliness) use for transportation decisionmaking.

BTS Performance Indicators - BTS evaluates mission achievement through the following measures:

- Improve coverage of legislative mandates in the Transportation Statistics Annual Report (TSAR) (degree to which we support our legislative mandate).
- Track and increase the number of BTS products that contribute to the accomplishment of important, established government goals (meeting the agency mission).

Following is a report of how well BTS has met its performance goals.

Relevance (long-term, outcome)

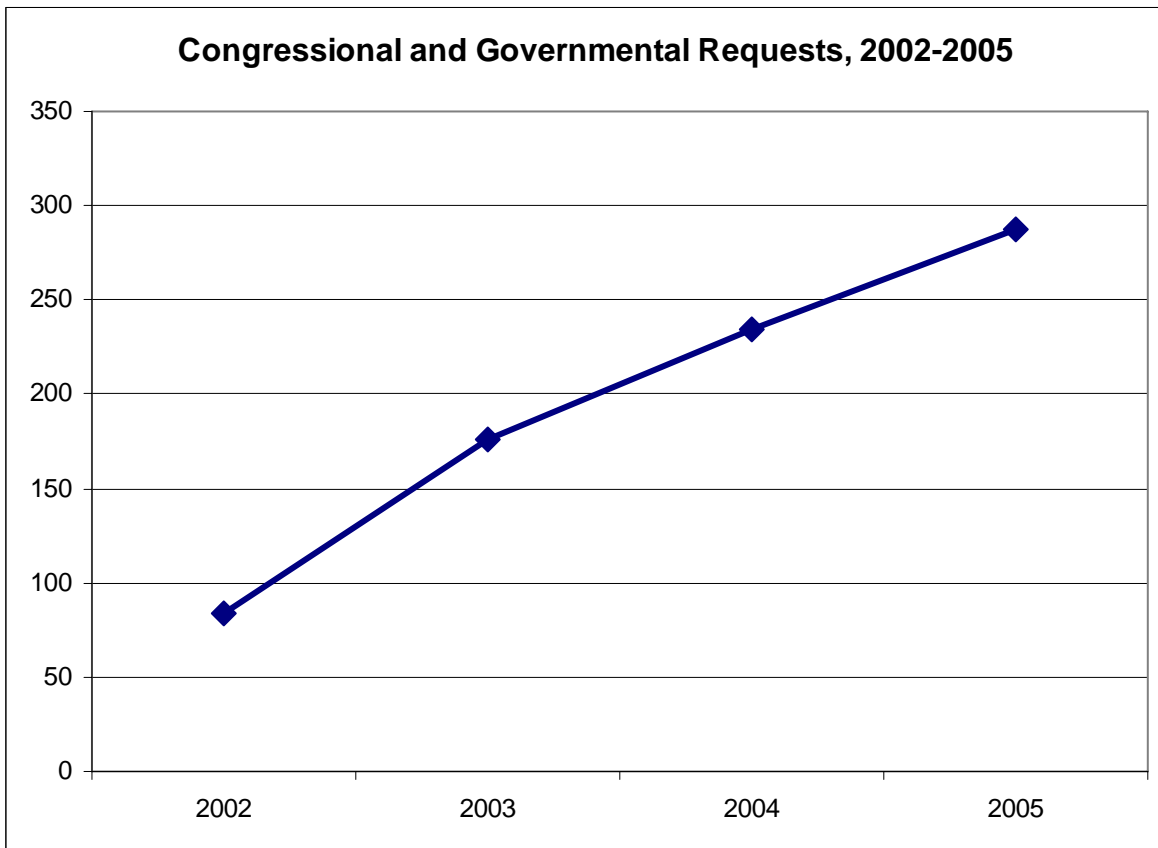
Increase the number of Congressional and Government Agency requests for BTS information (increase awareness in Congress and other Government Agencies of what we can provide).

Long-Term Goal: 325 in 2007, 350 in 2008

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Target		Baseline	150	225	275	300
Actual		84	176	234	287	

Total Congressional and Governmental Contacts for Information, 2002-2005	
2002	84
2003	176
2004	234
2005	287

BTS is a major resource for transportation information for Congress and other government agencies. Through definitive and timely responses to information requests, BTS continues to build its reputation and place among Federal statistical agencies.



Relevance (long-term, outcome)

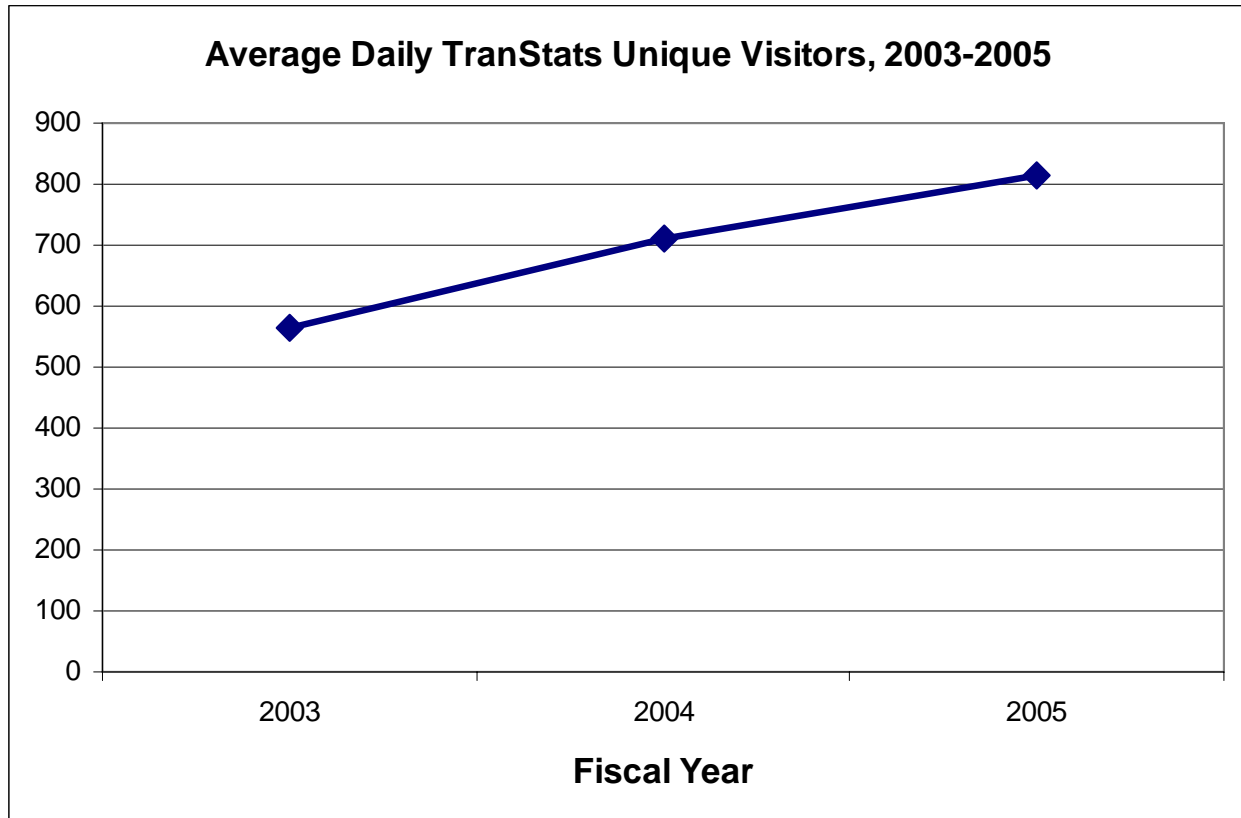
Increase the number of average daily unique visitors to the TranStats data warehouse site (increasing our customer base for our transportation data warehouse).

Long-Term Goal: 900 in 2007, 950 in 2008

			2003	2004	2005	2006
Target			Baseline	700	800	850
Actual			565	711	813	

Average Unique Daily Visitors, TranStats Data Warehouse Site, FY 2003 - FY 2005	
2003	565
2004	711
2005	813

The TranStats data warehouse provides access to information on all modes of transportation. The utility of this warehouse is demonstrated through the growing increase in the use of this resource by the transportation community.



Accuracy (long-term, outcome)

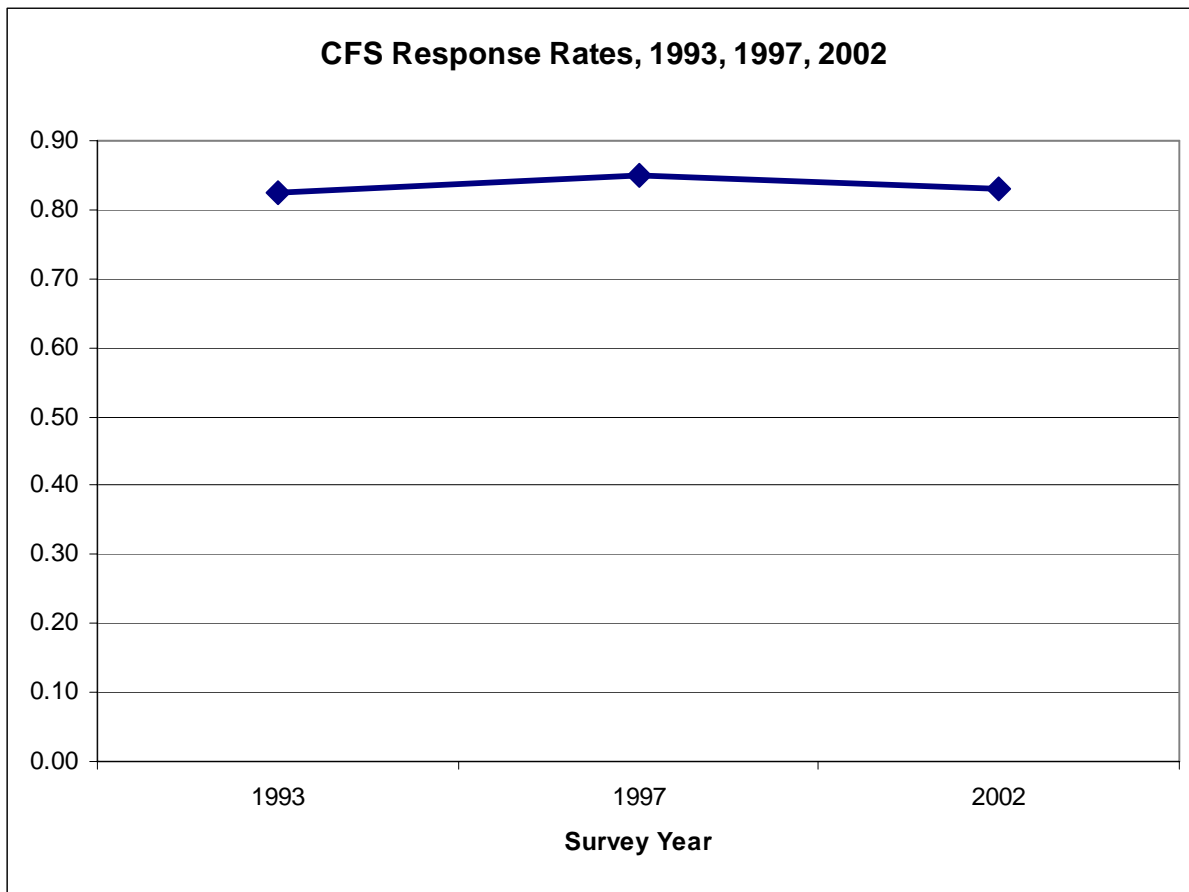
Maintain a minimum 80% response rate on the Commodity Flow Survey (CFS) (reduce non-response bias).

Long-Term Goal: 80.0% in 2007

			1993	1997	2002	2007
Target			Baseline	80.0%	80.0%	80.0%
Actual			82.6%	85.0%	83.0%	

Survey Year	Response Rate
1993	82.6%
1997	85.0%
2002	83.0%

The OMB standard for response rate is 80 percent, BTS has been able to maintain a response rate in excess of that since 1993. BTS expects to maintain this response rate for the 2007 survey.



Accuracy (long-term, outcome)

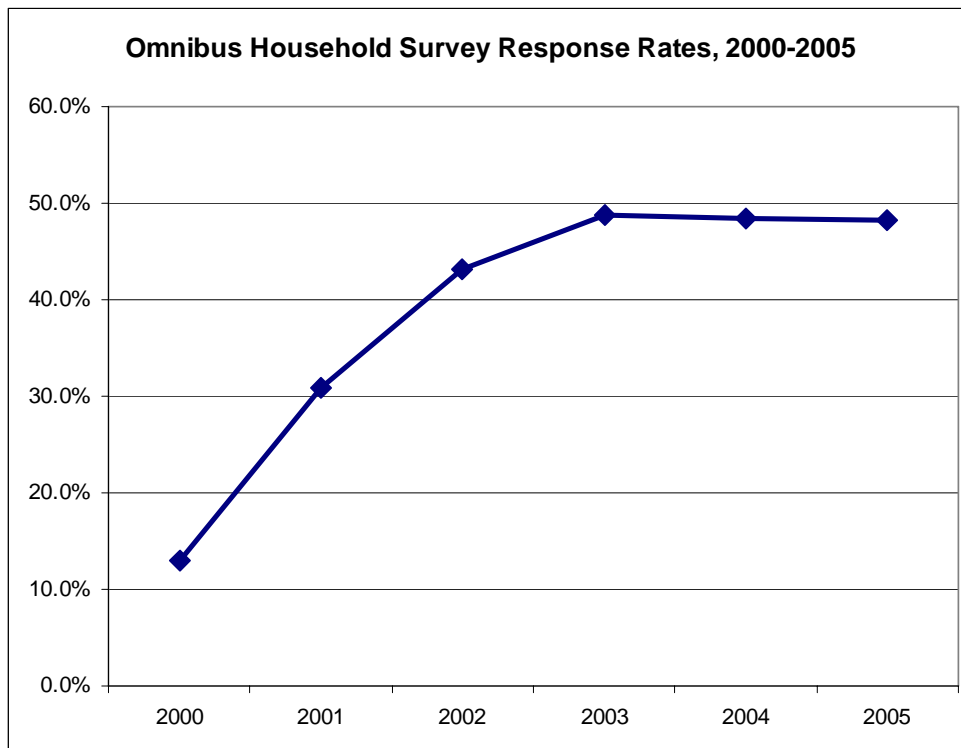
Increase the response rate on the Omnibus Household Survey (OHS) (reduce non-response bias).

Long-Term Goal: 50.0% in 2007, 50.0% in 2008

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Target	Baseline	50.0%	50.0%	50.0%	50.0%	50.0%	50.0%
Actual	13.1%	30.9%	43.2%	48.7%	48.5%	48.2%	

Omnibus Household Survey Response Rates, 2001 - 2004	
2000	13.1%
2001	30.9%
2002	43.2%
2003	48.7%
2004	48.5%
2005	48.2%

The nature of the Omnibus Household Survey limits the response rate. This is a telephone survey conducted over a month to providing rapid data at a reasonable cost. This allows no time for follow-up. The current contract requires a 50% response rate in 2006. Since this survey is now conducted over fewer months each year, a greater focus on increasing the response rate will be possible.



Timeliness (annual, output)

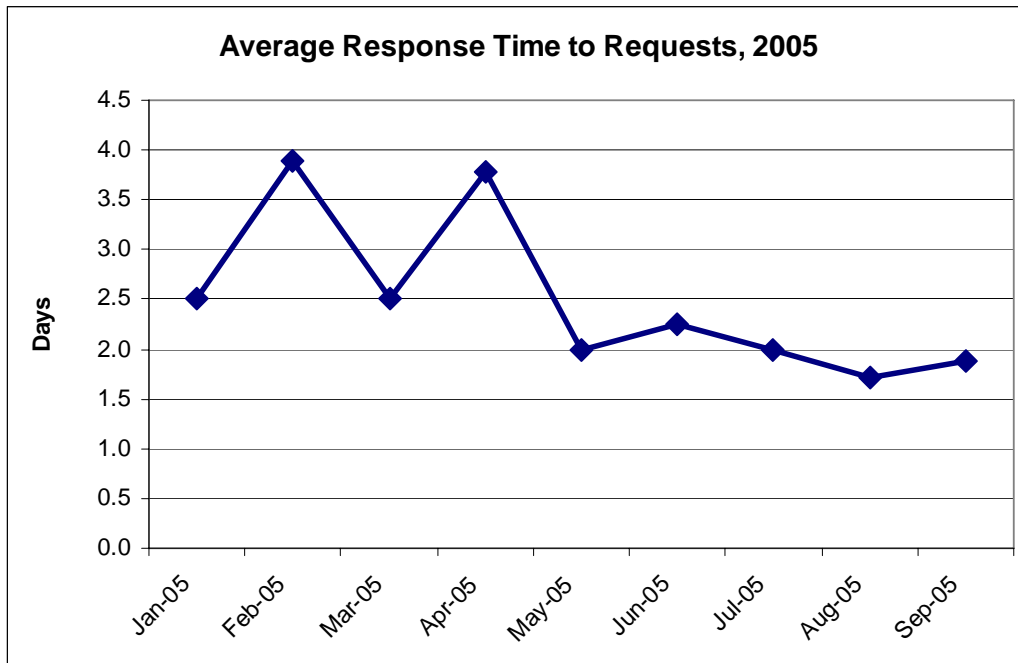
Improve average response time for general data and information requests from customers both government and private sector (to improve customer responsiveness).

Long-Term Goal: 1.50 days in 2007, 1.00 days in 2008

(Days)					2005	2006
Target					Baseline	2.00
Actual					2.5	

	Average Response Time (Days)	Requests
Jan-05	2.5	6
Feb-05	3.9	9
Mar-05	2.5	8
Apr-05	3.8	9
May-05	2.0	8
Jun-05	2.3	8
Jul-05	2.0	3
Aug-05	1.7	14
Sep-05	1.9	9

Most of our customers need information as soon as possible. This is a new measure of customer responsiveness that was maintained for the first time in 2005. BTS expects to make further improvements in 2006.



Timeliness (annual, output)

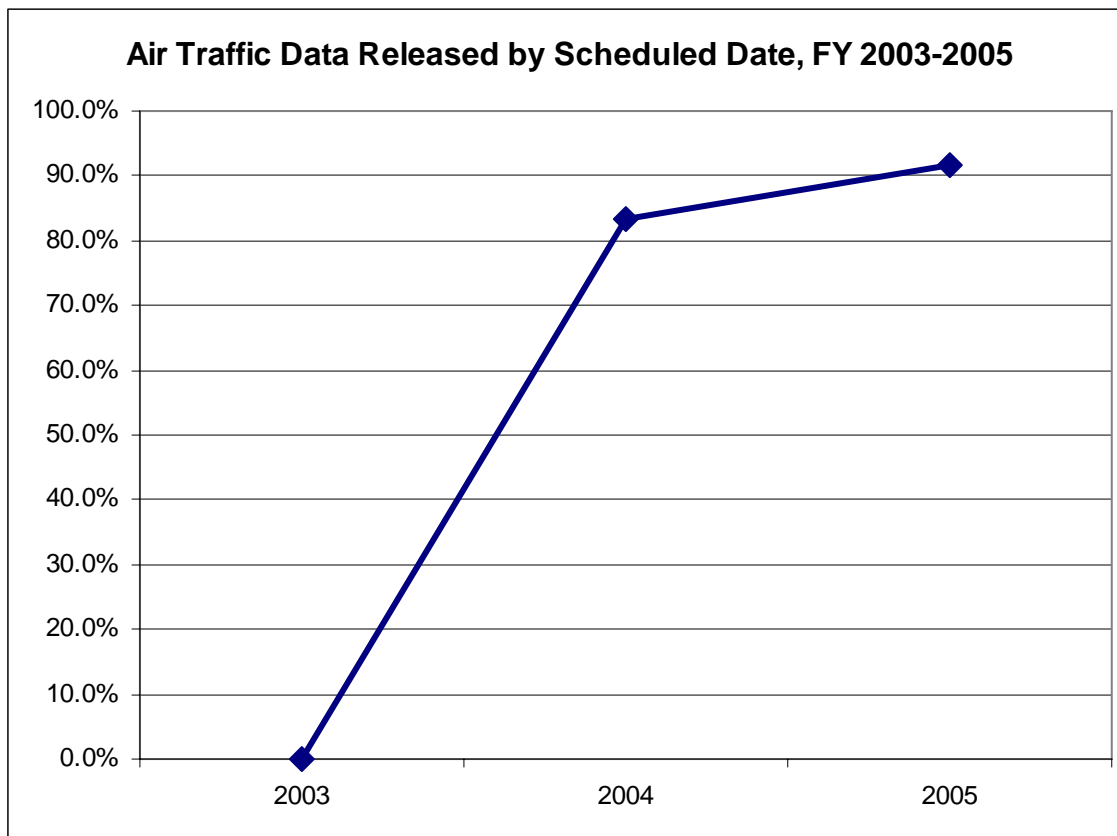
Increase the percentage of periodic airline traffic data releases that occurred on schedule (enable our stakeholders and customers predictable delivery of our datasets).

Long-Term Goal: 95% in 2007, 100% in 2008

	2003	2004	2005	2006
Target	Baseline	75.0%	85.0%	90.0%
Actual	0.0%	83.3%	91.7%	

Products Released by Scheduled Date , FY 2003-2005		
FY	Air Traffic	
2003	0.0%	Jun.-Sept. only
2004	83.3%	
2005	91.7%	

Like all other federal statistical agencies, BTS expects to deliver all major releases on time in accordance with our published schedules. Our customers are relying on us to meet our schedules. We intend to meet our targets through better contingency planning.



Timeliness (annual, output)

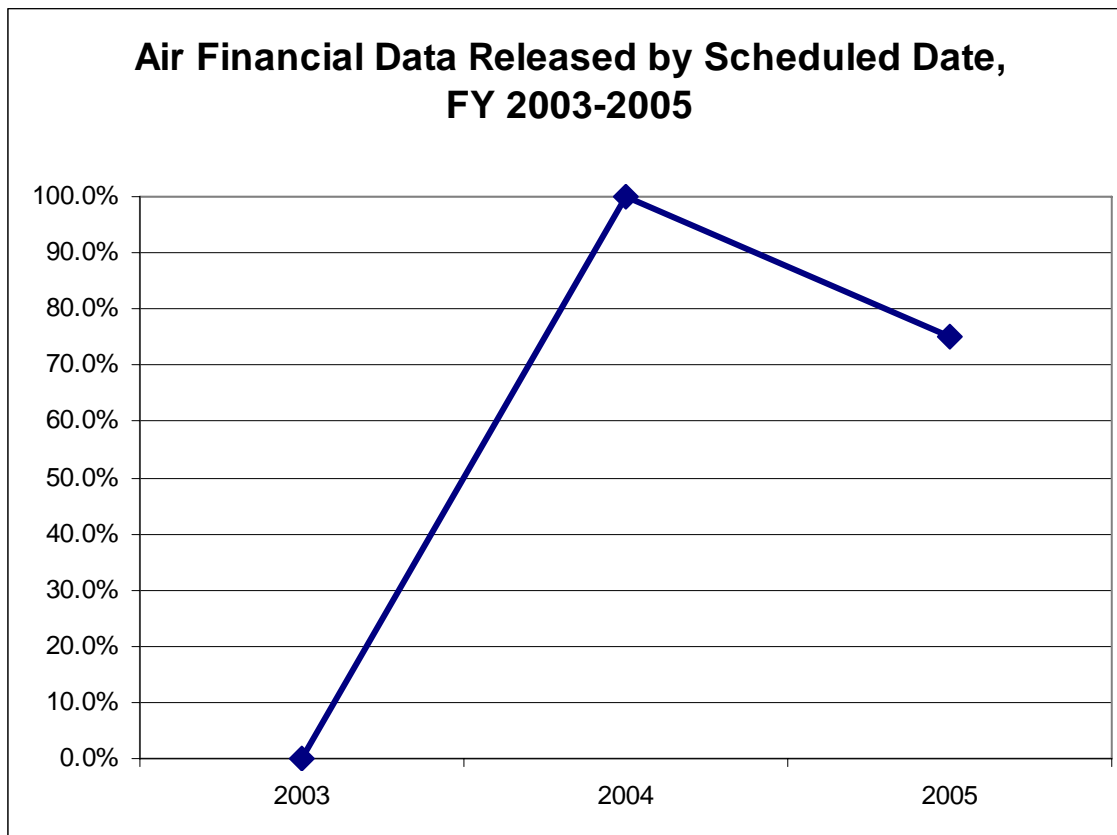
Increase the percentage of periodic airline financial data releases that occurred on schedule (enable our stakeholders and customers predictable delivery of our datasets).

Long-Term Goal: 95% in 2007, 100% in 2008

	2003	2004	2005	2006
Target	Baseline	75.0%	85.0%	90.0%
Actual	0.0%	83.3%	91.7%	

Products Released by Scheduled Date , FY 2003-2005		
FY	Airline Financial	
2003	0.0%	Jun.-Sept. only
2004	100.0%	
2005	75.0%	

Like all other federal statistical agencies, BTS expects to deliver all major releases on time in accordance with our published schedules. Our customers are relying on us to meet our schedules. We intend to meet our targets through better contingency planning.



Timeliness (annual, output)

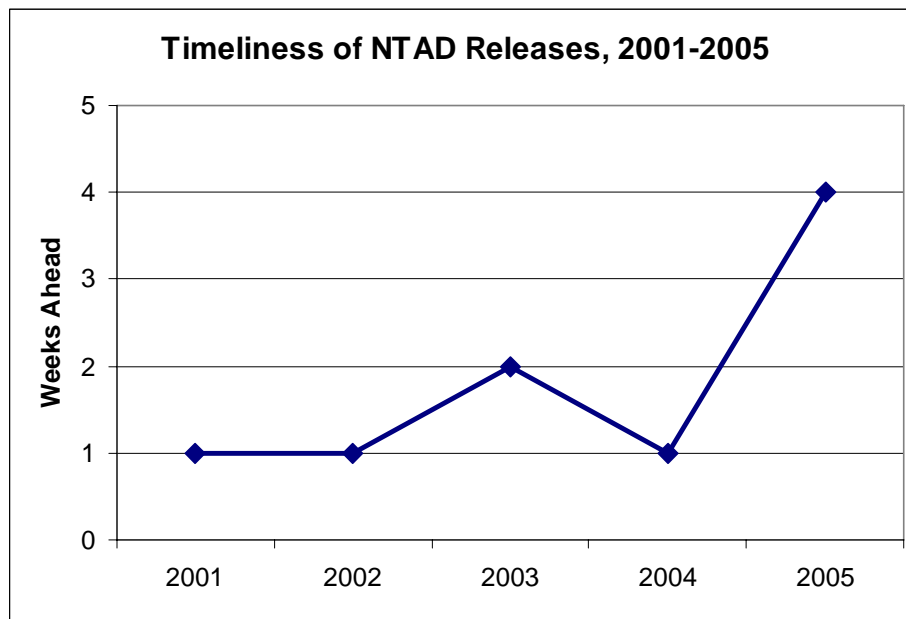
Ensure that the annual release of National Transportation Atlas Database (NTAD) CD is available prior to the start of the annual ESRI (Environmental Systems Research Institute) International User Conference on GIS and mapping software (to provide timely support for research, analysis, and decision-making across all modes of transportation).

Long-Term Goal: July 15 each year

Weeks Ahead of Target Date	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Target	Baseline	1	1	1	1	1
Actual	1	1	2	1	4	

NTAD	Required	Actual	Weeks Ahead
2001	7/9/2001	7/2/2001	1
2002	7/8/2002	6/28/2002	1
2003	7/7/2003	6/20/2003	2
2004	8/9/2004	8/5/2004	1
2005	7/25/2005	6/24/2005	4
2006	8/7/2006		

The NTAD CD ROM is a much anticipated product each year. The ESRI International User Conference is a major meeting of the GIS community. BTS is committed to ensuring that its latest edition GIS product is available for distribution at this conference. Updated data is critical to the Geographic Information Systems (GIS) applications. Starting in 2007, the target date will not be tied to the ESRI Conference date, but rather will be July 15.



Timeliness (long-term, outcome)

Reduce response time for map requests by the DOT Crisis Management Center (CMC) and in support of the Continuity of Operations (COOP) plans (improve emergency response by providing current and timely information).

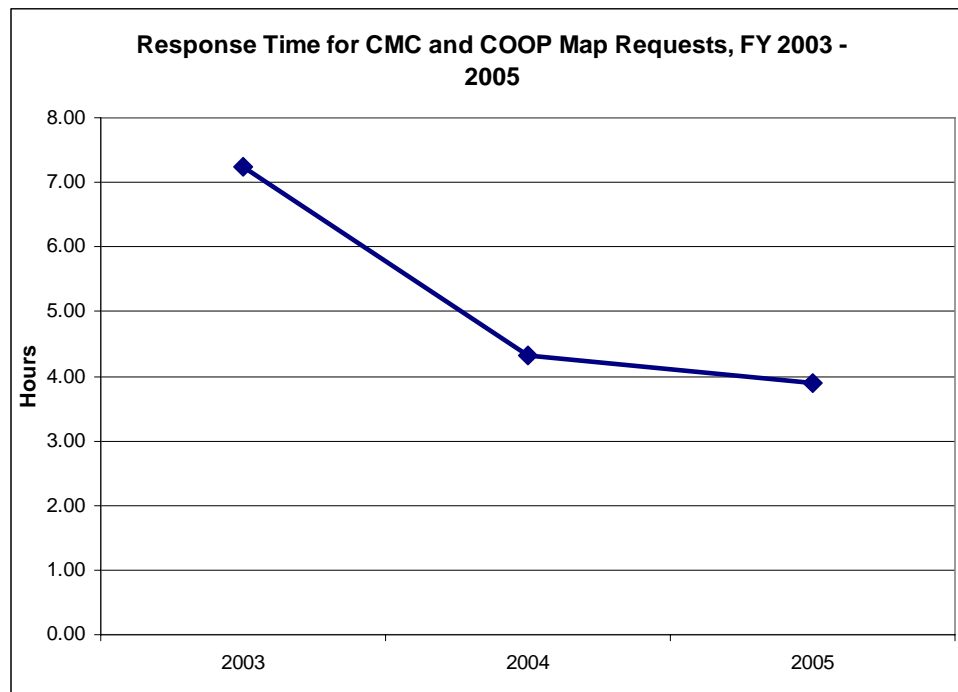
Long-Term Goal: 3.00 hour product creation time in 2007 and 2008

			2003	2004	2005	2006
Target			Baseline	6.00	4.00	3.00
Actual			7.25	4.32	3.89	

Response Time for CMC and COOP Map Requests			
FY	Response Time	Hours	Requests
2003	7.25	87.00	12
2004	4.32	198.83	46
2005*	3.89	112.85	29

*Excludes Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Over a two week period, BTS produced 23 distinct map products including some showing current road conditions that were updated frequently. No hours were recorded for these requests

Rapid response to CMC and COOP map requests is critical in emergency situations. BTS is working to reduce the required product creation time even for the most complex requests.



Cost (annual, efficiency)

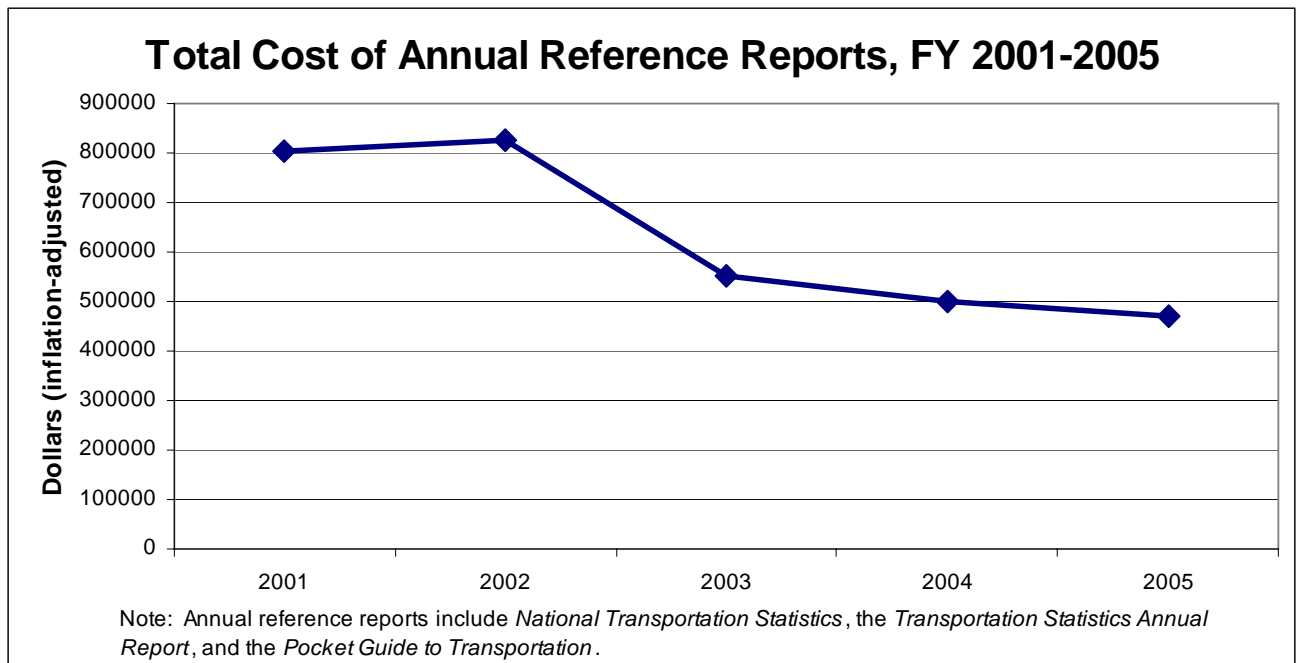
Improve cost efficiencies in the production of BTS' major published reference products (Transportation Statistics Annual Report, National Transportation Statistics, and the Pocket Guide to Transportation Statistics).

Long-Term Goal: \$475,000 (inflation adjusted) in 2007 and 2008

Inflation adjusted dollars (Base 2001)	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Target (Inflation Adjusted Dollars)	Baseline	\$750,000	\$650,000	\$550,000	\$500,000	\$475,000
Actual (Inflation Adjusted Dollars)	\$802,500	\$827,670	\$552,011	\$499,959	\$470,010	

Total Costs of BTS Annual Reference Reports						
	Fiscal Year					% Change
	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	01-05
Actual Costs (Unadjusted)	\$802,500	\$852,500	\$585,629	\$546,319	\$529,000	-34.1
Inflation Adjusted Costs (2001 Base Year)	\$802,500	\$827,670	\$552,011	\$499,959	\$470,010	-41.4

As BTS gains experience in the production of its major reference products, it has been able to increase cost efficiencies over time.



Cost (annual, efficiency)

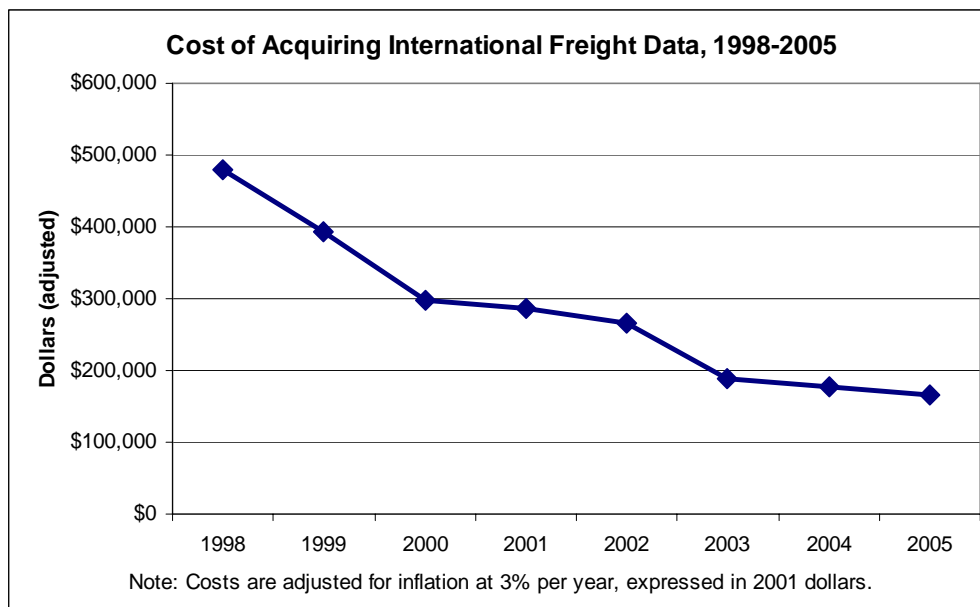
Improve cost efficiencies in acquiring international freight data (Transborder data).

Long-Term Goal: \$165,000 (inflation adjusted) in 2007, \$160,000 (inflation adjusted) in 2008

Inflation adjusted dollars (Base 2001)	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Target (Inflation Adjusted Dollars)	Baseline	\$250,000	\$225,000	\$200,000	\$175,000	\$170,000
Actual (Inflation Adjusted Dollars)	\$287,232	\$265,525	\$189,080	\$176,373	\$166,323	

Cost of Acquiring International Freight Data, 1998-2005			
International Freight Data Acquisition Costs		International Freight Data Acquisition Costs (inflation-adjusted 2001 Base Year)	
Year	Census Cost	Year	Census Cost
1998	\$439,600	1998	\$480,363
1999	\$371,174	1999	\$393,778
2000	\$288,330	2000	\$296,980
2001	\$287,232	2001	\$287,232
2002	\$273,491	2002	\$265,525
2003	\$200,595	2003	\$189,080
2004	\$192,728	2004	\$176,373
2005	\$187,198	2005	\$166,323

As BTS gains experience in the production of its international freight data, it has been able to increase cost efficiencies over time.



Dissemination (annual, output)

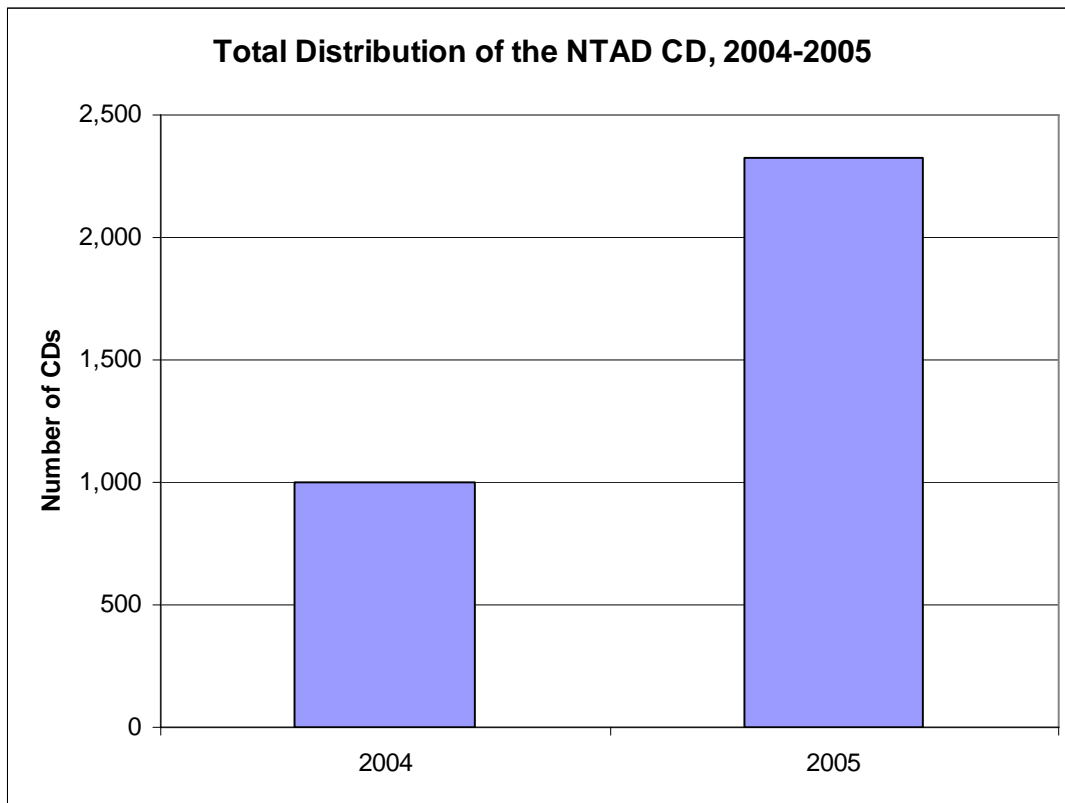
Increase the number of National Atlas Transportation Database (NTAD) CD-ROMs distributed (to broaden the customer base for this product).

Long-Term Goal: long term: 2,700 in 2007, 2,900 in 2008

			2003	2004	2005	2006
Target				Baseline	2,000	2,500
Actual				997	2,326	

<i>Year</i>	<i>Total distributed by all means</i>	<i>Ordered Total</i>	
2003		580	<i>June-Sept only</i>
2004	997	907	
2005	2,326	1,360	<i>Total includes direct conference distribution</i>

BTS is actively working to increase the user base for NTAD CD-ROM. The public may order this product directly through BTS. In addition, BTS distributes its newly updated product directly to the GIS community at the annual ESRI (Environmental Systems Research Institute) International User Conference on GIS and mapping software.



Dissemination (long-term, outcome)

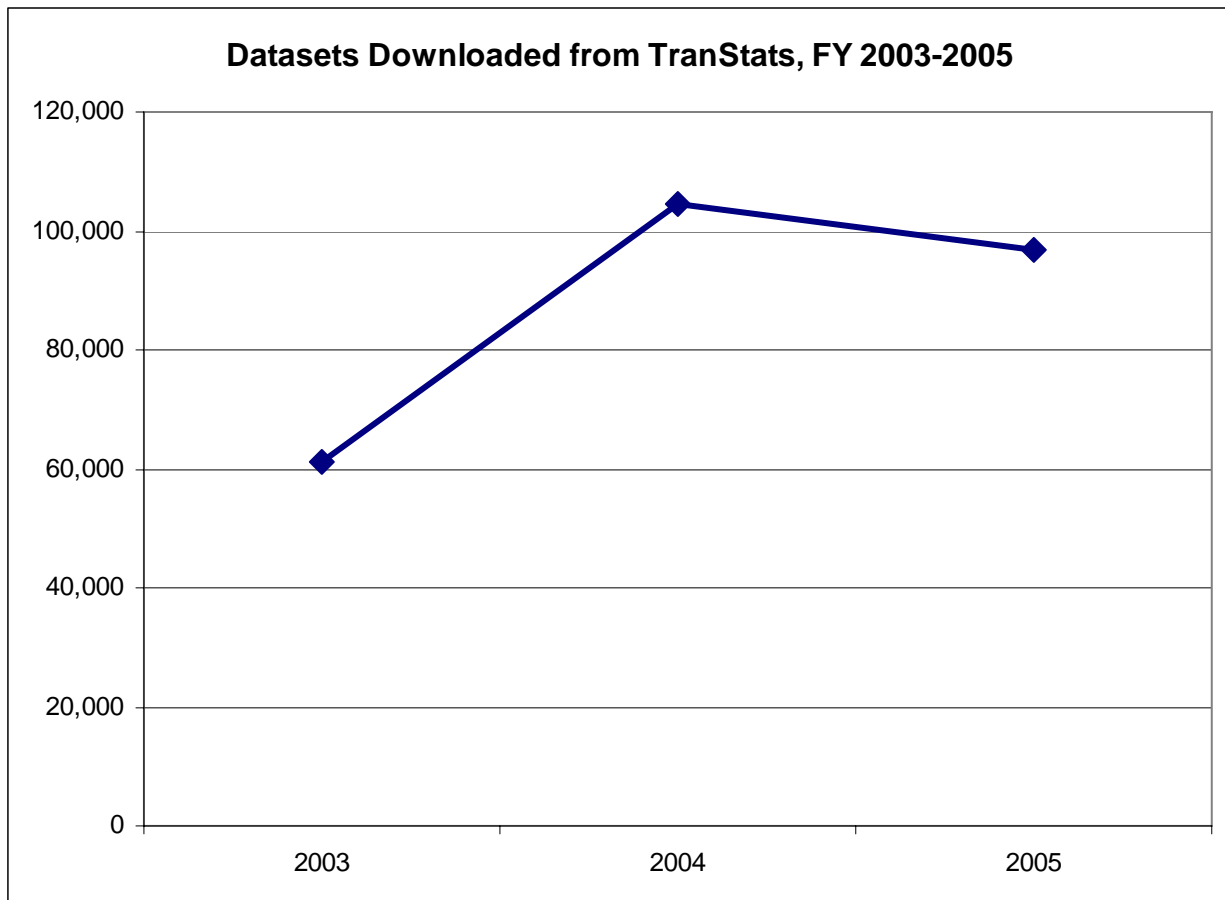
Increase the number of datasets downloaded from TranStats (broaden customer usage for this product).

Long-Term Goal: long term: 120,000 in 2007, 125,000 in 2008

			2003	2004	2005	2006
Target			Baseline	80,000	100,000	110,000
Actual			61,058	104,536	96,840	

User downloads from the TranStats database are a major indication of utility in the transportation community.

Total Downloads from TranStats, FY 2003--FY 2005	
FY	Downloads
2003	61,058
2004	104,536
2005	96,840



Mission Achievement (annual, outcome)

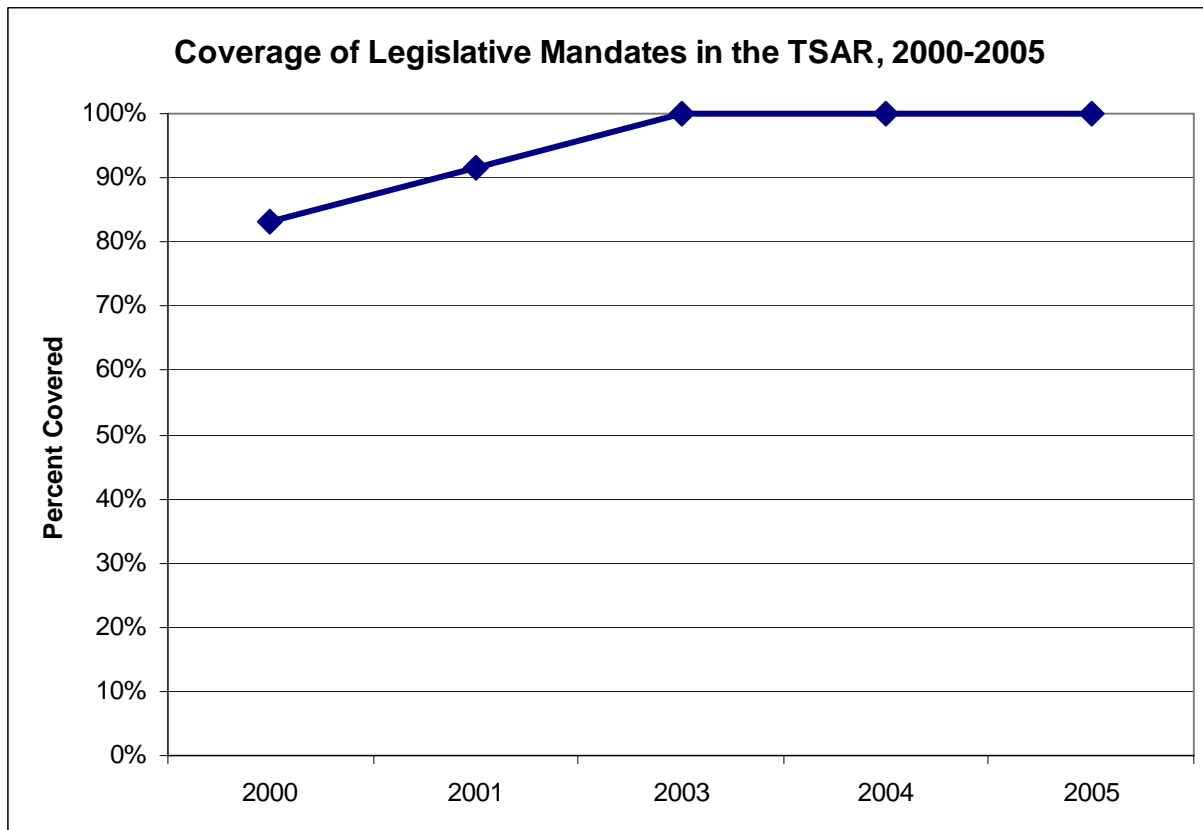
Improve coverage of legislative mandates in the annual Transportation Statistics Annual Report (TSAR) (degree to which we support our legislative mandate).

Long-Term Goal: 100.0%

	2000	2001	2003	2004	2005	2006
Target	Baseline	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Actual	83.0%	92.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

TSAR edition	Legislative Mandates addressed	Pct. Legislative Mandates addressed
2000	10	83%
2001	11	92%
October 2003	12	100%
September 2004	12	100%
November 2005	12	100%

The BTS legislation mandates coverage of 12 areas in the TSAR. BTS now covers all 12 of these areas.



Mission Achievement (long-term, outcome)

Track and increase the number of BTS products that contribute to the accomplishment of important, established government goals (meeting the agency mission).

BTS continuously works with all elements of the Department of Transportation to accomplish DOT goals and meet government mandates. Examples follow.

Evidentiary Support for DOT Aviation Rulings

Case No. 04-1436, Federal Express Corporation, petitioner v. Department of Transportation and Norman Y. Mineta, Secretary, United States Department of Transportation, Respondents.

After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Congress enacted the Air Transportation Safety and System Stabilization Act which authorized compensation to the air carriers of up to five billion dollars for “direct losses” caused by orders halting air traffic and for “incremental losses” directly caused by the terrorist attacks and incurred between September 11 and December 31, 2001. A cost savings rule promulgated by DOT established that the carriers could not be compensated for losses that they recovered through other cost savings. Although the Federal Express Corporation challenged this rule, the evidentiary support work by BTS through the airline information systems enabled the Justice Department to successfully defend this DOT ruling. The savings to the U. S. taxpayers totaled over \$30 million.

Alaska Mail Rate Setting

As mandated by the Rural Service Improvement Act, Alaska bush carriers report their traffic data to the Bureau of Transportation (BTS) Office of Airline Information (OAI) via the T-100 Reporting System, which is comprised of two types of records: (1) Nonstop Segment Records and (2) On-Flight Market Records. BTS processes the data for the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) which uses the market (MKT) and segment (SEG) files to determine the “qualified” air carriers for the tender of non-priority bypass mail in the Intra-Alaska Bypass Mail System. These data are also used by the Office of the Secretary of Transportation (Aviation) to establish payment rates to the bush carriers for carrying mail.

Expansion of Modal Coverage in Data Collection

Freight in America: A New National Picture (January 2006)

The largest single data source for estimating U. S. freight activity is the Commodity Flow Survey (CFS). Although, this survey covers a large proportion of the nation's domestic and export freight movements associated with manufacturing, mining, and wholesale trade; it does not capture all of the freight that moves on the U.S. freight system because many economic activities are not covered. The composite estimates presented in this new report are the result of a joint effort by RITA, BTS, and the FHWA Office of Freight Management and Operations to develop a more complete picture of the nation's commercial freight shipments. This fuller composite picture draws on the CFS data and non-CFS freight data from several sources for economic sectors not covered in the CFS, such as retail, services, construction, and household goods movements—that traditionally are not perceived as freight “producers,” but that do handle freight in their daily operations. It also includes shipments of agricultural products from farms to processing plants, logs and rough wood, fisher products, crude petroleum, and municipal solid waste.

Broader Application of BTS Data

Border State Apportionment Calculations

The border-state apportionment calculations are is part of a coordinated border infrastructure program designed to improve the safe movement of motor vehicles at or across the border between the United States and Canada and the border between the United States and Mexico. BTS had the foresight to make this data available to the transportation community. Consequently, Congress mandated the use of this data in the border-state apportionment calculations as a provision of SAFETEA-LU, Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users which authorizes the Federal surface transportation programs for highways, highway safety, and transit for the 5-year period 2005-2009.

Federal Subsidies to Passenger Transportation

In 2004, the DOT Deputy Secretary received a report on bus subsidies prepared by a private consulting firm working for the bus industry. The Deputy Secretary requested that BTS, as an independent statistical agency, conduct an analysis of Federal subsidies to passenger transportation to be used to validate the bus subsidies report. Using data from its biennial Government Transportation Financial Statistics series, BTS analyzed federal transportation revenues, expenditures, and net subsidies by mode of transportation, and prepared a report for the Deputy Secretary for use in policy decision making. The report outlined definitions of subsidies, alternative bases for normalizing subsidies (per passenger, per passenger mile, etc.) and metrics for directly comparing levels of subsidy across modes of transportation rather than on a single mode basis. The analysis was also posted on the BTS website, resulting in the information from the analysis being quoted in the Wall Street Journal in early 2005.

Homeland Security Infrastructure Program

The U.S. Department of Defense's National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA) spearheaded an effort to compile geospatial data on the nation's critical infrastructure for use by agencies at all levels of government in security and disaster response planning. The effort is called the Homeland Security Infrastructure Program (HSIP), and involves a number of Federal agencies, including the DOD, DOT, and the Department of Energy. One of the key "industry" sectors in the HSIP is transportation. BTS' Congressionally mandated National Transportation Atlas Database (NTAD) provides the core data layers for the transportation portion of the HSIP, which was released in 2005.

BTS Support in Rule-Making

Reporting Airline Delays and Cancellations

In 1987, close to 40 percent of all flights were either late or cancelled. Imposition of on-time performance reporting created a market-based incentive for carriers to improve their service and scheduling. However, by 2000, airline delays increased exponentially with the increase with airline operations. The Aviation Investment and Reform Act for the 21st Century (AIR 21) (April 5, 2000) called upon the Secretary to disclose to the public the nature and source of delays and cancellation. The Air Transport Association (ATA) petitioned for a rulemaking to report causes of delays and cancellations.

In August 2000, a committee was established to make recommendations of causal reporting. In January 2001, American, Delta, Southwest, United, the FAA, OST and BTS participated in a pilot program for causal reporting during which all parties worked together to develop procedures to have the carriers report the causes of flight delays and cancellations. The plan incorporated air carrier inputs and resulted in a successful system that a negotiated rulemaking would have taken many more years to accomplish. BTS began collecting details on the causes of flight delays in June 2003. Summary statistics and raw data are made available to the public through posting on the BTS website at the time the Air Travel Consumer Report is released.

