

BTS Budget Request Reflects Sharpened Focus

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The fiscal year 2004 President's Budget includes \$35.5 million for the Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS). The budget request proposes to sharpen the agency's focus around five core data program and two crosscutting research programs.

The core data programs will collect timely and reliable freight, travel, economics, airline, and geospatial data. The research programs will develop and publish key indicators of national transportation system performance and improve statistical methods and standards to address transportation-specific problems.

BTS' activities are aimed at informing transportation policymakers, planners, and researchers—the people who solve transportation problems. Activities planned for 2004 include:

- **Freight Statistics**—replace infrequent, incomplete freight flow survey with continuous data collection program that fills critical gaps.

- **Travel Statistics**—enhance the current National Household Travel Survey by making it more frequent and capturing better data on underrepresented populations.
- **Transportation Economics**—explain how transportation activity, investment, and disruption impact the larger economy.
- **Airline statistics**—deliver timely data and analysis on airline activity, performance, and financial condition.
- **Geospatial Information**—map transportation and related data for planning, policy, and security.
- **Transportation System Performance**—develop reliable indicators of transportation system performance.
- **Methods and Standards**—ensure that BTS data meet the highest standards of accuracy, reliability, and confidentiality.

The budget requires approval by Congress.

NHTS Answers How Americans Travel

For the first time in five years, BTS has new data characterizing how Americans travel. The *National Household Travel Survey (NHTS)*, a joint project of BTS and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), will be released in its entirety later this year. Early release of one portion of the study already tells the story of a nation generating more miles than ever.

According to the Passenger Travel data portion (excluding long distance) of the *NHTS*, per-household growth in the number of both vehicles and drivers is increasing, despite the fact that American households are getting smaller.

“These figures, when compared to previous surveys, will help us assess changes in American travel habits, such as how sprawl and congestion are affecting our daily commutes,” said Joy Sharp, statistician in the Office of Survey Programs. The *NHTS* is the latest in a series of surveys that

assesses and measures the details of the travel habits of Americans. The Department of Transportation conducted previous surveys on daily travel, in 1969, 1977, 1983, 1990, and most recently in 1995.

A major finding from this portion of the *NHTS* shows that the average American driver is spending more than 81 minutes a day behind

see *Travel Survey*, page 2

Some preliminary NHTS findings:

- Travel by private vehicles accounts for 86% of all trips in 2001
- People aged 35–44 travel the most
- Americans are keeping their cars longer—the average vehicle on the street is nearly 9 years old

Acting Director Outlines Improved Freight Data Program

Bureau of Transportation Statistics Acting Director Rick Kowalewski told an audience at the Transportation Research Board annual meeting in January that BTS has major plans underway to increase the amount of freight data available to the transportation community.

He said BTS is currently working on the 2002 Commodity Flow Survey (CFS) to track freight movements. This survey, which has not been conducted since 1997, provides basic information on freight movements throughout the United States.

“We hope to release the final CFS data product in December 2004,” Kowalewski said. “The 2002 CFS covers 50,000 establishments and 2.5 million shipments using basically the same sample design as in 1997.”

The BTS Acting Director also told the session on “Major Developments in Transportation Data” that the agency has a new freight data program in

place that is working to provide more timely and complete information.

The new American Freight Data Program would include an expanded shipper survey, conducted annually, with an expanded sample that would allow for estimates of freight flows in smaller geographical areas. The survey would cover several types of shippers currently omitted, including construction, agricultural, retail, and services shippers.

The new program would also include supplemental data collection programs to provide data on imports, vehicle movements, vehicle and driver characteristics, and terminal capacity and throughput.

Kowalewski said the new BTS freight data program would help complete the picture of freight data movements in the United States. It will:

- cover the nearly one-third of ton-miles that are missed by current surveys,

- add geographic details needed by planners,
- provide timeliness with annual surveys, and
- provide important safety exposure data on driver and vehicle characteristics.

“We also need better data on the performance of the freight system – on costs, on delivery times, and on reliability. And we need a better understanding of intermodal connections and how well they work,” he said.

“It is obvious to us that no one method or one survey is going to fill every gap. We have sponsored a TRB blue ribbon panel to help us focus on what we need to include in the new freight data program,” Kowalewski added. He said BTS will seek feedback from users on what they see as the most pressing questions after the panel offers its plan.

Travel Survey

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the wheel. In 1995, the average time was 73 minutes. “More and more we are becoming a society on the go trying to get from here to there,” said Sharp.

The survey included more than 26,000 households nationwide and was conducted from April 2001 to June 2002. Participants in the survey provided details of their personal travel by completing travel diaries for an assigned travel day. Details included trip purposes, method of travel, time of day, and trip length. The households also provided demographic information, such as the age, sex, working status, and driver-status of the individuals and details of the cars available for their use.

The current survey data and technical reports are available at <http://nhts.ornl.gov>. Look for the BTS release of the overall survey later this year.

TranStats Wins Excellence.gov Award



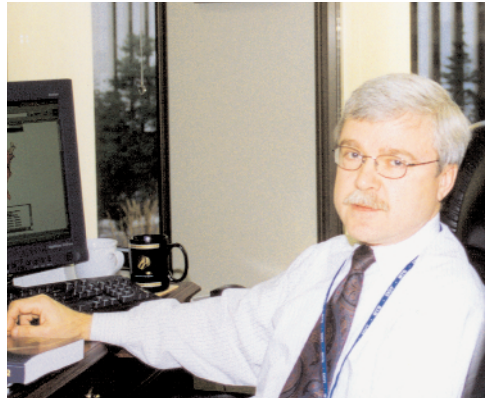
BTS' Jeff Butler (*right*) accepts the Excellence.gov award from John Marshall of the Federal Chief Information Office Council. BTS' TranStats website was honored February 12th with the 2003 Excellence.gov award recognizing the best practices in federal electronic government applications. The award is jointly sponsored by the Industry Advisory Council's e-Gov Shared Interest Group and the Federal CIO Council.

Kowalewski Named Acting Director

In November 2002, BTS Deputy Director Rick Kowalewski was named acting director of BTS. Kowalewski has served as the bureau's deputy director for three years. His experience in federal government and transportation data spans 28 years.

A career officer in the Coast Guard, he worked mostly in the maritime safety programs. For two years, he helped manage the Army Corps of Engineers' navigation program. He developed information systems for collecting data, and led strategic planning and analysis for major operating programs.

Kowalewski's work on a Business Plan for Marine Safety grew into one of



Acting Director, Rick Kowalewski

the early pilot projects under the Government Performance and Results Act—selected by OMB as one of 10 exemplars and cited by GAO to illustrate “best practices” in performance measurement. His 1996 paper “Using Outcome

Information to Redirect Programs: A Case Study of the Coast Guard Pilot Project Under the Government Performance and Results Act” has since been used as the basis for a Harvard case study developed by the Kennedy School of Government.

After retiring from the Coast Guard, Kowalewski joined the U.S. Department of Transportation Office of the Secretary as Deputy Budget Director. He joined BTS in October 1999.

National Transportation Statistics 2002 Released

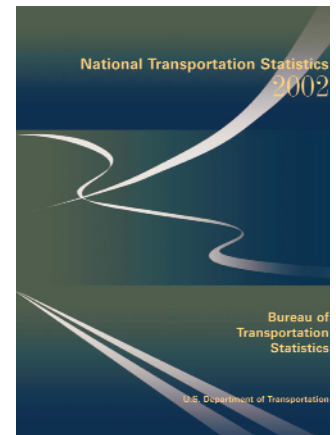
The Bureau of Transportation Statistics has released *National Transportation Statistics 2002*—the latest edition of the most comprehensive resource on U.S. transportation data. The *NTS* provides the transportation community with detailed national-level, time-series data covering all modes of our nation's transportation system. Included in *NTS 2002* are information on the extent, condition, use, and performance of the system, as well as statistics on safety, environment, energy, and the economy aspects.

Among more than 240 data tables, *NTS 2002* offers users extensive information on a range of transportation topics. Chapter 1 covers the physical and mobility facets of the transportation system. It first presents data, such as mileage of roads and pipelines, numbers of airports and transit stations, and counts of vehicle and vessel fleets by mode. The chapter ends with data on people and freight movements and performance measures by mode.

Chapter 2 of *NTS 2002* covers data on safety, on both a multimodal and single-mode basis. Data are also broken down into modal components (e.g., by passenger cars, motorcycles, trucks, and buses within the highway mode). Throughout, both fatality and injury data are presented.

Transportation and the economy are covered in chapter 3. Included are transportation's contribution to Gross Domestic Product, consumer expenditures on transportation, transportation industry revenues and employment, and government sector finances. *NTS 2002* concludes with a chapter on energy and the environment. Energy consumption and intensity and fuel economy data are presented along with data on air pollution standards and emissions, petroleum spills in U.S. waters, and other environmental data relating to transportation's impacts.

An electronic version of *NTS 2002* with *continuously updated* information will be available by mid-March on the BTS web site at www.bts.gov.



BTS Posts Annual On-Time Data on Website

The Bureau of Transportation Statistics released tables in February providing an indepth look at flight delays in 2002.

All 32 of the nation's major airports had better on-time performance for arriving flights in 2002 than in 2001. Denver International Airport had the lowest percentage of late arriving flights and Atlanta Hartsfield Airport had the highest percentage of late arriving flights during 2002.

A ranking of all months since 1995 showed that January 1996 was the worst month for flight delays and September 2002 was the best.

For more information, check http://www.bts.gov/oai/on_time_2002/.

Beginning in June, the major air carriers that file monthly on-time reports with BTS will be required to collect and report the causes of airline delays and cancellations.

The rule creates four broad categories for reporting the causes of cancellations:

- Air Carrier—due to circumstances that were within the control of the air carrier, such as lack of flight crew or maintenance.
- Extreme Weather.
- National Aviation System (NAS)—cancellations caused by a broad set of conditions such as nonextreme weather, airport operations, heavy traffic volume, or air traffic control.
- Security—cancellations resulting from malfunctioning screening or other security equipment or a breach of security that causes the evacuation of the airport or individual concourses, or the need to rescreen passengers.

The rule creates the same four broad categories for the causes of delays, along with an additional category. They are:

- Air carrier
- Extreme weather
- NAS
- Security
- Late-arriving aircraft—a late incoming aircraft from the previous flight.

Recently from BTS

- Pocket Guide to Transportation 2003
- BTS Products and Services Catalog 2003
- Journal of Transportation and Statistics, volume 5 number 1
- Maritime Trade & Transportation 2002
- National Transportation Statistics 2002
- State Transportation Profiles: Texas, Kentucky, Arizona, New Hampshire, Maryland, Wisconsin, South Carolina, Illinois, Connecticut, and Mississippi

Upcoming from BTS

- Transportation Statistics Annual Report 2001
- Airport Activity Statistics 2001
- Bicycle Use and Pedestrian Highlights Report
- International Trade and Freight Transportation Trends
- Issue Briefs: Commuting Expenditures Energy Intensity
- Journal of Transportation and Statistics, volume 5 number 2
- National Household Travel Survey 2001—Long Distance Data
- State Transportation Profiles: Missouri, Montana, Iowa, Rhode Island, Colorado, and Louisiana

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