

***FY 2008 Report on Customer Service***  
**Texas Transportation Institute**  
**The Texas A&M University System**

**Inventory of External Customers**

***A.1.1 Strategy: Sponsored Research***

TTI is a transportation research agency, conducting sponsored research for a wide range of public- and private-sector sponsors. The agency's basic services include conducting transportation research studies under contract to customers/sponsors, providing research results to those sponsors and the public, and aiding in the transfer of new technologies, processes and products to improve the state's and nation's transportation systems.

The Texas Department of Transportation is the Institute's primary client, accounting for about 57% of all research expenditures. Other research sponsors include private industry; municipal and regional transportation and transit agencies; technical societies and trade associations; the National Cooperative Highway Research Program (NCHRP) and the Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP) (both administered by the Transportation Research Board); the National Academy of Sciences; the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) and other federal agencies; and other states and countries.

TTI's customers include:

- **Individuals** serving as project directors for individual projects, who work with the TTI researchers (the Principal Investigator or PI). These are usually technical staff whose concern is the specific project.
- **“Key customers”** who oversee or manage research for a sponsoring agency or organization, and who determine overall direction for their agency's or company's research program.
- **“Institutional customers”** such as executives or senior managers of sponsoring organizations who determine research funding levels.

***A.1.2 Strategy: National Centers***

The Transportation Research and National Centers strategies serve the same customer base, as described above.

**Customer Satisfaction Survey/Data Gathering Instruments**

As a contract research agency, TTI must provide excellent service and research results to remain viable. Only 12 percent of the agency's budget comes from state appropriations (excluding infrastructure funding), with the remainder generated primarily by competitively acquired research contracts.

Commitments to customer satisfaction are incorporated into contractual obligations to research sponsors, so the expectations and objectives of each project are clearly defined and agreed on before a project commences. Other quality assurance measurements determined by the customer/sponsor include the number and timing of research reports. TTI has undertaken special initiatives to ensure project deliverables are completed on time.

Because its customer base is relatively stable, in its most recent survey, the Institute surveyed major customers from each of its primary sponsor groups/agencies in its most recent survey. Those customers include: state and federal transportation agencies; regional/metropolitan transportation agencies; private companies; and engineering consultant firms. The survey was conducted electronically.

For each of the 11 questions, customers were asked to rank each item from 1 to 5 as follows:

1. Outstanding
2. Above Average
3. Average
4. Below Average
5. Poor

An inventory of TTI major sponsors is provided in *Appendix A*.

## **Survey Results**

Overall, survey participants gave TTI's research services a ranking of 1.43 with 1 being "outstanding," and 2 being "above average." Customers were queried about TTI's research in terms of quality, on-time completion, usefulness, and the quality of research products and deliverables, as well as support services such as contracting and billing. Customers ranked all of these services as either outstanding or above average. TTI researchers received similar rankings for their expertise, communication skills and responsiveness.

The area that had the lowest score was related to the timeliness of contracting and billing services. The score of 2.0 indicated that customers rank TTI as above average in this category, but there is some room for improvement. A chart showing the survey questions and the average ranking for each question is included with this report as *Appendix B*.

## **Analysis of Survey Findings**

As noted above, TTI customers are very satisfied with the services received. The most recent survey, as compared to the previous one, showed an improvement in the timely completion of research projects. Although our sponsors are now indicating overall

satisfaction in this area, it continues to be a high priority for TTI's management. Improved technology, reporting and billing software is addressing the concern of contract and billing timeliness.

## **Performance Measures**

### ***Outcome Measures***

Percentage of Surveyed Customer Respondents Expressing Overall Satisfaction with Services Received	100%
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Percentage of Surveyed Customer Respondents Identifying Ways to Improve Service Delivery	0%
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### ***Output Measures***

Number of Major Sponsors Surveyed	22
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Number of Major Sponsors Served	41
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## **Internal Customer Satisfaction**

TTI implemented an internal customer satisfaction survey in fall 2007. According to this employee survey, TTI's internal services received a 90 percent approval rating by respondents, with 80 percent of the respondents rating those services "good to excellent." The survey addressed customer service in TTI's primary offices: business, communications, facilities and support, human resources, network and information, and research and development.

TTI administration places a high value on service to internal customers as well as to external customers/research sponsors. To this end, the agency conducts or takes part in customer satisfaction assessments such as the annual Survey of Organizational Excellence conducted by the University of Texas at Austin and internal agency service measurements of the TTI Network and Information Services unit.

### **Survey of Organizational Excellence:**

In the most recent survey for 2007, TTI had an overall response rate of 65%, which is considered a high return. The analysis highlighting organizational strengths and weaknesses revealed that TTI's scores are significantly higher than its benchmark organizations. TTI's scores ranged from 397 as the lowest to 405 as the highest. Scores above 300 indicate employee satisfaction.

The areas ranked highest by employees as those of substantial strength were the agency's commitment to quality and customer service (424), the physical environment (422), and

the agency's ability to respond to external influences and demands (414). Other strengths identified by employees include job satisfaction (413) and a lower level of perceived burnout (412).

Areas in which some improvements can be made include better internal communication, (although this measure is up 19 points from the previous survey) pay equity and team effectiveness. Nevertheless, TTI employees still ranked these issues in the high 300s and did not view any of them as significantly negative.

In reviewing the Institute's performance over time, the survey showed improvement in employee diversity, team effectiveness, internal communication and change orientation. The survey showed a slight decrease in satisfaction with employee benefits.

The TTI leadership and management teams are responding to the concerns expressed and making recommendations for improvements. All members of these teams were provided a copy of the survey results.

### **Network and Information Systems Customer Satisfaction**

The innovative use of information technology is critical to TTI's ability to meet its mission due to its multiple locations across the state. The Network and Information Systems group (NIS), continues to work with cross-functional teams to enhance productivity and improve communication through the innovative implementation, use and support of network resources, information systems, and other computing technologies. We continue to expand and improve the agency's intranet (TTINet) and our integrated e-mail system which serves as a personal, group, time, and information manager and communications tool. The TTI information system (TTI-IS) provides efficient and cost-effective ways of doing business.

Because their services are essential to the agency's operation, NIS maintains a log of microcomputer and network support service requests, complaints and other comments. Employees are asked to rate the service provided, and all comments are reviewed regularly as part of a continuous improvement process. Overall, these services continue to receive high marks with an average 94 percent overall approval rating, an indication that TTI employees are satisfied with the services provided.

### **Complaint Process**

Complaints regarding TTI services or research are relatively rare and are usually resolved with a telephone call. In the case of a formal written complaint, the following process is followed:

- Within one week of the receipt of a formal written complaint, an acknowledgement letter signed by the Agency Director or Executive Associate

Agency Director, as indicated below, is sent to acknowledge receipt of the complaint.

- Copies of the letter are also sent to other administrators/staff involved in the issue. In the case of human resource complaints, the Human Resources Officer is also copied. If the complaint involves legal or contractual issues, the A&M System's Office of General Counsel is advised, and included in any discussion of possible actions.
- The Institute seeks to resolve all complaints within 30 days if possible.

### **Customer Relations Representatives**

**Dr. Dennis Christiansen, Agency Director**, handles all programmatic/research project complaint issues. Texas Transportation Institute, The Texas A&M University System 3135 TAMU, College Station, Texas 77843-3135, (979) 845-1713, fax (979) 845-9356, email [dennis-c@tamu.edu](mailto:dennis-c@tamu.edu)

**Mr. Don Bugh, Executive Associate Agency Director**, is responsible for all financial, operations and human resources issues. Texas Transportation Institute, The Texas A&M University System, 3135 TAMU, College Station, Texas 77843-3135, (979) 845-1715, fax (979) 845-9678, email [d-bugh@tamu.edu](mailto:d-bugh@tamu.edu)

### **TTI Urban Offices**

#### **Arlington Office**

110 N. Davis Dr., Suite 101  
Arlington, TX 76013  
(817) 277-5503  
Fax (817) 461-1239

#### **Austin Office**

1106 Clayton Lane, Suite 300E  
Austin, Texas 78723  
(512) 467-0946  
Fax (512) 467-8971

#### **Dallas Office**

9441 LBJ Freeway, Suite 103  
Dallas, TX 75243  
(972) 994-0433  
Fax (972) 994-0522

#### **El Paso Office**

4050 Rio Bravo Drive, Suite 151  
El Paso, TX 79902  
(915) 532-3759  
Fax (915) 532-3762

#### **Houston Office**

701 N. Post Oak, Suite 430  
Houston, TX 77024-3827  
(713) 686-2971  
Fax (713) 686-5396

#### **San Antonio-TransGuide Building**

3500 NW Loop 410, Suite 315  
San Antonio, TX 78229  
(210) 731-9938  
Fax (210) 731-8904

**San Antonio-One Castle Hills Building**

1100 NW Loop 410, Suite 400

San Antonio, TX 78213

(210) 979-9411

Fax (210) 979-9694

## **Appendix A**

### **Texas Transportation Institute**

#### **Major Sponsors**

DOT-FEDERAL RAILROAD

PENN STATE UNIVERSITY

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

CAMBRIDGE SYSTEMATICS, INC.

DOT-FEDERAL MOTOR CARRIER SAFETY ADMINISTRATION

BATTELLE MEMORIAL INSTITUTE

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION - FHWA

DEPARTMENT OF ASSISTIVE & REHABILITATIVE SERVICES

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS

TEXAS MEDICAL CENTER

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

TEXAS COMMISSION ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

CH2M HILL

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION #601

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

HOUSTON-GALVESTON AREA COUNCIL

CITY OF HOUSTON

METROPOLITAN TRANSIT AUTHORITY

NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

NAS-NATIONAL COOPERATIVE HIGHWAY RES PGM

SCIENCE APPLICATIONS INTERNATIONAL CORP.

## **Appendix A**

### **Texas Transportation Institute**

#### **Major Sponsors**

DOT-UNIVERSITY TRANSPORT. CENTERS PGM.

WASHINGTON STATE DOT

WESTERN RESEARCH INSTITUTE

UT - AUSTIN

TTCI/AAR

NSSGA/AFTRE

NORTH TEXAS TOLLWAY AUTHORITY

PORTLAND CEMENT ASSOCIATION

SOUTH CAROLINA STATE UNIVERSITY

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY

INNOVATIVE PAVEMENT RESEARCH FOUNDATION

US DEPT. OF TRANSPORTATION

NICHOLS CONSULTING ENGINEERS

MOBILITY TECHNOLOGIES, INC

HARRIS COUNTY TOLL ROAD AUTHORITY

CLEAN AIR PARTNERS TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

ENGINEERED ARRESTING SYSTEMS CORP.(ESCO)

PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION



*Appendix B*

**Texas Transportation Institute  
Research Sponsor Survey Results  
FY 2008 Report**

<b>Question</b>	<b>Average Response</b>
1. How would you rate the research services provided by TTI?	1.19
2. How would you rate the quality of TTI research?	1.19
3. How would you rate the on-time completion of TTI research?	1.81
4. How would you rate the usefulness of TTI research?	1.31
5. How would you rate the quality of TTI research reports, videos and other deliverables?	1.19
6. How would you rate the expertise of TTI researchers?	1.19
7. How would you rate the communication skills and the responsiveness of TTI researchers?	1.19
8. How would you rate the quality of TTI's proposals?	1.88
9. How would you rate the quality and timeliness of TTI contract and billing services?	2.00
10. How would you rate the quality of TTI's research facilities?	1.31
11. How would you rate TTI's responsiveness to any complaints or concerns arising during a project?	1.44

**Survey Key**

- (1) Outstanding
- (2) Above Average
- (3) Average
- (4) Below Average
- (5) Poor