

A Strategic Plan for Transportation Statistics (2000-2005)

Bureau of Transportation Statistics

March 2000



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The Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS) is one of eleven operating administrations within the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT). BTS puts together data and information that others need to make decisions concerning transportation. We collect data; compile, analyze and publish statistics; and generally coordinate the statistical programs within DOT. We manage the National Transportation Library, and the Office of Airline Information. We lead the federal effort in developing geo-spatial data for transportation.

As one of the federal statistical agencies, BTS maintains a special degree of objectivity and independence. We provide special protections of confidentiality in our data collection, and we provide reports directly to the Secretary and to Congress. We do not advocate policies or programs. Our efforts are focused on getting—and helping to interpret—the data that can be used to better inform decision making, regardless of what the data show.

Our Mission

What We're About

Our mission is to lead in developing transportation data and information of high quality, and to advance their effective use in both public and private transportation decision making.

Our mission is the starting point for all of our programs and actions. It is a broad responsibility derived from legislation, in which Congress gives the agency life and sets the bounds for what we do. We don't come here with a blank slate—the mission is our “given.” But from there, it's left for us to dream what might be done in the broader context of today's (and tomorrow's) transportation system.

Our mission is translated into strategic direction by our vision ...

Our Vision for the Future

Where We're Going

Data and information of high quality will support every significant transportation policy decision, thus advancing the quality of life and economic well being of all Americans.

What does this look like over our time horizon through 2005 and beyond?

- It is our vision that one day everyone will come to BTS before starting a planning effort or policy study related to transportation, and we will have good data and information to give them.
- This means that we will have data ready for every significant transportation policy analysis being conducted.
- The data will be good and clean – and timely. We will be involved in setting up the process that makes the data good, clean and timely.
- We will make it easy to get DOT data, so that people will use the data more. People will use the data in many different ways, and find things that help make transportation better. High schools and colleges will use our data for teaching. We will encourage all of this.
- We will also be watching our data to discover emerging trends as they unfold.
- We will seize relevant results and circulate them, so more information will be developed through the synergy, and we will make sure that the essentials are delivered to those who can make transportation better.
- We will routinely observe system performance so we will know how well transportation is doing and find out where attention is needed. We will have the data so attention can be directed to these spots and effective approaches are found to deal with the issues.

Who are our customers?

- Congress
- DOT
- Other federal agencies
- States, MPOs
- Local governments
- Universities
- Private sector
- General public

Our job is to make transportation better – to enhance *safety, mobility, economic growth, the human and natural environment, and national security* (the five strategic goals of the Department of Transportation). This is our ultimate goal, from which we shall not waiver. We cannot do this all by ourselves, and we should not try. But we are part of the team that will. We must work with many, for our mission is bigger than we are. We can provide leadership for our part of the mission, and enthusiasm for all of it. Equally important, we must stay in touch with all of our customers and partners, ask often how we are doing, and heed their suggestions.

How Our Strategic Plan Will Work

From the more enduring mission of the organization and the strategic direction we have set, we will measure our success not in terms of activities but of *outcomes*. We will do this in six key areas that frame the strategic goals and objectives for BTS:

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Relevance * Quality * Timeliness * Comparability * Completeness * Utility | } | <p>Data and Analysis</p> |
|--|---|---|

These six goal areas reflect the key attributes of data and analysis that we have to get right if we are accomplish our mission effectively in a dynamic environment and realize the vision for BTS. It is through these goals that we contribute ultimately to the five strategic goals of the department—*safety* preeminent among them. We can be an important contributor toward achieving the DOT goals. But that requires that we continually rethink what we do and how we do it.

Our *strategic goals* and *objectives* will be our guideposts for judging success. Our *guiding principles* will provide general standards for *how* we must do our work, in order to maintain our long-term effectiveness. Together, these provide the basis for developing *strategies* and a mix of *initiatives* and activities that help us achieve success.



Our strategies and our initiatives must be flexible. This is important for two reasons. It provides wide latitude for the BTS workforce to be creative, to discover more effective ways to achieve the ultimate outcomes that our customers care about. And it allows us to adapt to

changing circumstances and be ready to take advantage of opportunities that we cannot yet see. We will plan our activities and set milestones to track progress, but always with an eye on the outcomes.

The BTS Strategic Plan will guide decision making and all other plans and work in BTS. This includes priorities for the budget, as well as decisions on program and project scope or direction.

DOT's Strategic Goals

**Safety – Mobility – Economic Growth –
Human & Natural Environment – National Security**

The overarching purpose of BTS' work is embodied in the strategic goals of the department. These five goals, and the performance goals derived from them, reflect the most important things that DOT aims to achieve. They focus programmatic efforts as well as budget priorities, and they convey to the public the value they get for their tax dollar. By concentrating on outcomes, they help assure that what we achieve as an organization will be worthwhile.

The need to measure performance against outcome-oriented goals presents some special problems:

- By definition, outcomes are beyond our direct control. This means that many external factors may influence the results, so we need to be especially careful in interpreting the data.
- There is often high variability in the results we seek to measure. In fact, often the “noise” in the data may exceed the “signal” that we are looking for.
- With outcomes, much of the data are from external sources. This gives us less control over the data, generally.
- Many of the more important outcomes cut across program and even modal boundaries. This further complicates the interpretation of results, and sometimes means there is no existing data owner.
- Many of the measures reflect outcomes by calendar year, while budgets and reporting deadlines are based on the fiscal year. This imposes a three month loss in time to prepare performance reports, and makes association with the budget more difficult.

The challenge for BTS in this context is to help develop data and analyses that are relevant, high quality, timely, comparable, complete, and accessible. Clearly the six BTS strategic goal areas should frame our contribution to the broader DOT goals. And within this framework, there are also several important and specific concerns that BTS must help address over the next several years:

Data Needs for Safety

- An ability to make comprehensive comparisons of fatality, injury, and accident rates across modes, with comparable scope and denominators.
- Uniformity in the quality of accident reporting.
- Common data on accident circumstances across modes.
- Better measures of accident precursors, and more data on near-misses and violations.
- More timely data for program intervention.
- Better use of technology for collecting data, and better methods for analyzing safety data.
- Integration of data bases—to connect a variety of related records, achieve data synergy, and provide “one-stop shopping” for program managers and researchers.

Data Needs for Mobility

- A means of measuring user transportation cost, time, and reliability with time series data.
- Better approaches for measuring access.
- A straightforward measure of congestion and its costs.
- A more complete understanding of variables influencing travel behavior.
- More timely and comprehensive data on the condition and use of the transportation system.

Data Needs for Economic Growth

- A means of measuring transportation cost, time, and reliability – at an aggregate level – with time series data.
- A comprehensive measure of the transportation capital stock.
- A better view of changes in the transportation workforce.
- Better measures of productivity in the transportation sector.
- A better picture of transportation-related variables that influence global competitiveness.

Data Needs for Human and Natural Environment

- Comparable and complete data on transportation emissions, noise, hazardous materials releases, and wetlands impacts.
- A better understanding of collateral damage to the human and natural environment.
- Better leading indicators for potential environmental issues.

Data Needs for National Security

- Better and more complete exposure data for drug and migrant interdiction programs.
- Data on the extent of the threats to electronic security for transportation systems.
- Better data on the vulnerability of the transportation system to intentional acts of disruption or destruction.

Strategic Goals & Objectives

The Outcomes We're Aiming to Achieve

Relevance. We aim to anticipate the needs of decision makers, provide the information that is most useful to them, and demonstrate a thorough understanding of major transportation issues and trends. If our work is not relevant, BTS is not needed.

Our objectives for relevance:

- 1) By 2000, good data and sound analysis will underpin every DOT strategic goal and performance measure, and every major DOT program evaluation (as scheduled in the DOT strategic and performance plans).
- 2) By 2001, “leading” indicators will be available for DOT strategic goals and most DOT performance measures, to help anticipate trends in each of these outcomes.
- 3) By 2003, good data will be available *in advance* to support every major transportation policy decision. BTS analyses of the data will also trigger major policy reviews.

Quality. We aim to provide data, analysis and information of high quality for transportation decision making. Whatever we provide will be accurate, reliable, and objective.

Our objectives for quality:

- 1) By 2001, all data that BTS collects will meet “high” professional standards.
- 2) By 2003, consensus data standards will be in use throughout DOT.
- 3) By 2005, DOT will consistently use “good statistical practice” in its program and policy analyses, program evaluations, reports, and publications—subject to external peer review.
- 4) Confidentiality policies will be clearly communicated, and confidentiality will be maintained for all voluntary survey data.

Timeliness. We aim to reduce the lag in data reporting, so that decision makers have a nearly “real-time” view of the transportation system and the factors that affect it. Where appropriate to the data, program managers and senior leadership should be able to talk about where things stand “as of last night.”

Timeliness, quality and cost are related variables that must be balanced by the programmatic value that is associated with each. However, historically DOT often has sacrificed timeliness for a level of quality or completeness that may be unnecessary for management use of the data. Timeliness can be improved in a variety of ways.

Our objectives for timeliness:

- 1) Every year, past year results or reliable estimates of results (CY or FY depending on the measure) will be available for the DOT Performance Report.
- 2) By 2003, transportation safety data will be available at least monthly, with no more than 30 days lag time.
- 3) By 2003, BTS aviation data will be available in the public domain within 30 days of receipt.
- 4) By 2005, all data that are both collected and published by DOT will reflect the past year, and most of these data will be available before June.

Comparability. We aim to provide a view of transportation that is consistent across modes and across time, to enable people to make comparisons and to make broad program and resource decisions. Comparability is hindered to some extent by the separate, historical development of transportation programs. It is also constrained to some extent by the need to rely on external data sources.

Our objectives for comparability:

- 1) By 2003, every important measure of transportation system condition, use and performance will be easily aggregated to a cross-modal measure. This will include risk and exposure data.
- 2) Worldwide transportation data will be increasingly comparable over time, with measurable progress.

Completeness. We aim to have data that cover transportation in every area of interest.

Our objectives for completeness:

- 1) By 2001, critical gaps in all departmental data systems will be identified, by consensus.
- 2) By 2003, most of these critical gaps will be filled.

Utility. We aim to make data easy to access, easy to understand, and easy to use.

Our objectives for utility:

- 1) Documentation for DOT data will be complete, to prevent misunderstandings or misuse.
- 2) By 2002, all major data sets for transportation will be accessible through the web, with user-friendly interfaces, and the ability to make links easily across data sets. And because transportation is inherently spatial, most data sets will also be accessible as spatial displays.
- 3) By 2003, research papers and reference material for transportation research will be readily available via the web.
- 4) The usefulness of BTS publications—as judged by customers/users—will improve measurably each year.
- 5) Access to DOT data will be so good that they become a first choice for use in teaching – from secondary school classes to advanced research methods, even in courses unrelated to transportation.

Guiding Principles

How We'll Manage Our Work

Each decision we make, and each strategy we conceive, must meet certain basic tests for how we want to manage. Each of these guiding principles is necessary to ensure the long term health and survival of BTS:

Mandates

1. *We must* meet every congressional mandate. This provides the basis for the very existence of BTS, and reflects what the public expects of us.
2. *We must* stay within the scope of our mandate. We do not formulate policy options; we support those who do. We must remain objective and unbiased in our data and information.

Focus

3. *We must* focus first and foremost on safety data. Safety is the single most important strategic goal for the department, and good data are critical to managing safety programs. Where we approach new initiatives in an incremental way, safety should be our first thought for beginning or demonstrating the concept.
4. *We must* cover all of transportation—identifying and filling in gaps in our collective understanding of the transportation system. And we must approach every problem through the lens of ONE DOT. BTS itself is a

manifestation of this concept, and of the need for a broad view across transportation.

5. *We must* stay abreast of developments in all of transportation and in those elements of statistics and information technology that are germane to the functioning of a statistical agency.

People

6. *We must* be customer service oriented – responsive to their needs, and interested in their feedback. Any other approach will put us out of touch, and we will lose relevance.
7. *We must* work with data providers with mutual respect, including appropriate protections of confidentiality and concern for the burden of data collection. Without this respect, we will not have access to good quality data.
8. *We must* work cooperatively with all collectors and users of transportation data in the private and public sectors in order to enhance understanding of the entire system without danger of duplicating effort. The burden of reaching out rests with BTS.
9. *We must* continually nourish and sustain our staff—our key asset. Their intellectual capital is critical to our capabilities, and their personal and professional development are important long term investments to be measured on a performance basis. If we ignore this, we cannot maintain our performance, or retain the respect of our peers.

Approach

10. *We must* continually search for more efficient ways to do our work – to automate, streamline or discontinue processes where possible, and design low maintenance systems. The taxpayer expects us to spend every dollar wisely, and every efficiency permits greater opportunity for increasing our effectiveness.
11. *We must* move quickly and take risks. We operate in a high technology environment, and a complex policy environment. We will quickly lose relevance if we cannot keep pace.
12. *We must* always do our work with grace and humility—virtues unto themselves. We must also acknowledge that many of the best ideas are outside BTS and rely on others to help us achieve our mission.

Strategies***How We Will
Achieve Our Goals***

Our objectives are ambitious; our operating environment and data collection are very decentralized; and our resources are limited. So we must become more efficient. We must streamline our processes and make best use of information technology.

Moreover, since most transportation-related data are collected by others, we can accomplish our work only with the support of others. We can garner this support by establishing a more prominent role for BTS—one of *natural leadership*. Such a role requires us to:

- Develop a reputation for excellence,
- Provide something of value to our partners, and
- Stimulate demand for our help.

Finally, in order to assess our efficacy, we must measure progress toward our objectives. These must be put into measurable terms and tracked, and then we need to intervene when we start to see problems.

Our strategies are aimed at helping to leverage resources, establish a leadership role, and manage for results. Collectively, these strategies will enable us carry out our mission and realize our vision:

To Build the Organization...

1. **Develop a staff of strong methodological experts** in statistics, and functional experts in all key areas of transportation and information technology – to serve as consultants, to improve the quality of transportation data and analysis, and to guide all BTS contract efforts. Recruit a chief statistician, and establish a position for a chief economist, to provide senior technical advice and research.
2. **Develop broad information technology (IT) expertise among all BTS staff**, to help identify opportunities for leveraging technology in our work. Ensure that all professional staff have some knowledge of data base design and statistical tools.
3. **Examine the internal functioning of BTS** through an organizational assessment. This would include assessing the work environment, generally, as it relates to the overall performance of BTS. Use the results of this evaluation to improve processes, then re-measure and repeat. Coordinate with other federal statistical agencies for potentially useful comparisons.
4. **Develop the learning environment**, to enhance professional development opportunities for the BTS workforce. Consider individual accounts for professional development, as well as a tuition assistance program for off-duty education.

5. **Revise the awards program** to base all performance awards on contributions to the goals of BTS. Evaluate the potential value of “goal-sharing,” whereby teams or the BTS organization collectively would share in an award based on measurable progress toward our strategic objectives.

To Build the Programs...

1. **Build our data collection around the Intermodal Transportation Data Base (ITDB)**, with web-based dissemination, online documentation, and links across data sets. By providing an inexpensive and accessible platform, ITDB could develop to replace many of the modal data bases that are used for analysis. Access and links to other data would expose gaps and inconsistencies, and help generate demand for documentation and comparable data, in particular. We should quickly demonstrate a prototype, then accelerate development and incremental deployment.
2. **Expand our statistical research and data evaluation** to better inform the design of surveys, the development of links across data sets, and the exploration of transportation indicators.
3. **Develop a transportation statistics discipline** that is recognized for its quality by federal, academic, and private sector statistical communities – because we cannot do all analysis ourselves.
4. **Develop a transportation research program.** Plan and budget 10-12 focused analyses each year, to help us understand the major issues in transportation, identify gaps and inconsistencies in the data, and provide a body of research that can be used to inform policy.
5. **Develop – and market – guidelines for good statistical practice.** These guidelines should address the “life cycle” of our data (including collection, documentation, presentation, and interpretation) and the key attributes of our data as reflected in BTS’ six strategic goals. We should build on the work of other federal statistical agencies, to help streamline the process and establish credible standards. We should also add substantially to the body of knowledge, to help establish BTS’ credibility with other statistical agencies.
6. **Lead the DOT effort in compiling, organizing, and analyzing system performance data** for the DOT Performance Report, and in measuring progress against the department’s strategic goals and objectives.
7. **Develop a set of key indicators for transportation**, and publish these monthly. Quickly develop indicators that provide interesting and useful information to DOT’s senior leadership. Undertake longer term research to explore/develop broad indicators of mobility.
8. **Focus resources and plans on filling critical data gaps.** Adapt our existing surveys and data collection systems where practical, or develop new data collection mechanisms.
9. **Introduce solutions or mechanisms for comparing data** where inconsistencies are identified (through research, outreach, or ITDB development, in particular). This will often

involve developing creative ideas to address longstanding differences in definitions or scope of data collection. Lead an international program that is focused on data comparability.

10. **Advance the National Transportation Library** by broadly collecting together the analyses of other government agencies, universities, and consultants, and making their work easily accessible on-line.
11. **Advance our Geographic Information Systems to state-of-the-art.** Increase the accuracy and resolution of the data; expand the scope of data collection to represent all transportation infrastructure of national interest and all DOT-funded projects; and make linkages with related data easy.
12. **Continually improve BTS products** through user feedback.

To Build Relationships...

1. **Develop lines of communication and good, collaborative working relationships** with other DOT offices—including both operating programs and data programs. This will help us keep in touch with the major issues others are facing, and better understand their needs and constraints. Develop a Committee on Transportation Statistics (CTSTAT) and continue the Data Initiative Working Group (DIWG) as forums for communication and collaborative effort on major initiatives. Focus the CTSTAT initially on developing ITDB and consensus guidelines for good statistical practice.
2. **Expand our outreach efforts** to develop stronger relationships with our stakeholders—especially top policy and decision makers—and the media, and to improve the flow of feedback from users. Seek their advice on concepts, methods, data, and products, and integrate their advice into products and processes. Develop cross-functional teams for outreach.
3. **Find better ways of measuring customer satisfaction** with BTS products and services.

From this strategic plan, we will develop a workforce plan, a new IT plan, and an annual performance plan with detailed measures to gauge progress against the strategic objectives. We will also reexamine BTS' organizational structure in the context of the strategic plan. And over the longer term, we must reexamine our authorizing legislation to assess whether any changes might help us better achieve our strategic goals.

BTS Legislative authorities and mandates

Compilation of statistics. BTS must compile and analyze a comprehensive set of transportation statistics to provide timely summaries and totals (including industry wide aggregates and multi-year averages). The statistics must be suitable for conducting cost-benefit studies, including comparisons among individual transportation modes and intermodal transport systems. [49 U.S.C. 111(c)(1)].

Topics. The statistics BTS compiles, analyzes, and publishes must include information on the topics listed below. [49 U.S.C. 111(c)(1)].

- (A) productivity in various parts of the transportation sector;
- (B) traffic flows;
- (C) travel times;
- (D) vehicle weights;
- (E) variables influencing traveling behavior, including choice of transportation mode;
- (F) travel costs of intracity commuting and intercity trips;
- (G) availability of mass transit and the number of passengers served by each mass transit authority;
- (H) frequency of vehicle and transportation facility repairs and other interruptions of transportation service;
- (I) accidents;
- (J) collateral damage to the human and natural environment;
- (K) the condition of the transportation system; and
- (L) transportation-related variables that influence global competitiveness.

Long-term data collection program. BTS must establish and implement a comprehensive long-term program for the collection and analysis of data relating to the performance of the transportation systems of the United States. The program shall:

- be coordinated with the modal administrators, the States, and other Federal officials;
- be coordinated with DOT's GPRA efforts to measure outputs and outcomes;
- ensure that data are collected in a manner that will maximize the ability to compare data from different regions and for different time periods;
- ensure that data collected are controlled for accuracy, made relevant to the States and MPOs, and disseminated to the States and other interested parties. [49 U.S.C. 111(c)(2)].

BTS is to coordinate the collection of information by DOT required for statistics to be compiled by BTS with related information-gathering activities conducted by other Federal departments and agencies. BTS shall identify information needs, review these needs at least annually with the Advisory Council, and make recommendations to DOT concerning research programs to provide such information. BTS should collect appropriate data not elsewhere gathered. [49 U.S.C. 111(c)(4),(5)].

Accessibility. BTS must make the statistics it compiles readily accessible. [49 U.S.C. 111(c)(5)]. BTS shall transmit to the President and Congress a Transportation Statistics Annual Report, which shall include information on the topics listed above, documentation of methods used to obtain and ensure the quality of the statistics presented in the report, and recommendations for improving transportation statistical information. [49 U.S.C. 111(j)]. BTS must maintain an Intermodal Transportation Data Base. [49 U.S.C. 111(d)]. BTS must facilitate and promote access to the National Transportation Library, with the goal of improving the ability of the transportation community to share information and the ability of the Director to make its statistics readily accessible. [49 U.S.C. 111(e)]

Customers. BTS' long-term data collection program must provide data relevant to States and MPOs. [49 U.S.C. 111(c)(2)(C)]. BTS' statistics are to support transportation decision-making by all levels of government, transportation-related

associations, private businesses, and consumers. [49 U.S.C. 111(c)(7)]. The Intermodal Transportation Data Base shall be suitable for analyses carried out by the Federal Government, the States, and MPOs. [49 U.S.C. 111(d)(2)].

DOT Statistical Policy. BTS is responsible for issuing guidelines for the collection of information by the Department of Transportation required for statistics to be compiled by BTS. The guidelines are to ensure that the information is accurate, reliable, relevant, and in a form that permits systematic analysis. [49 U.S.C. 111(c)(3)].

The Bureau shall review and report to the Secretary on the sources and reliability of the statistics proposed under GPRA to measure outputs and outcomes. [49 U.S.C. 111(c)(3)]. This is bolstered by the requirement that BTS coordinate its long-term data collection efforts with other efforts in support of GPRA. [49 U.S.C. 111(c)(2)(A)]. When requested by the Secretary, BTS shall also carry out other reviews of the sources and reliability of other data collected by DOT. [49 U.S.C. 111(c)(3)].

The Bureau cannot require any other department or agency to collect data. [49 U.S.C. 111(h)].

Except where specifically authorized, BTS can only use information it collects for statistical purposes and cannot make a disclosure where data about an individual can be identified. Neither government agencies nor courts can require BTS to make such a disclosure. Where the Bureau is authorized by statute to collect data for a nonstatistical purpose, it shall clearly distinguish the collection, by rule and on the collection instrument, so as to inform a respondent that is requested or required to supply the data or information of the nonstatistical purpose. [49 U.S.C. 111(i)].

Intermodal Transportation Data Base. The data base must be suitable for analyses carried out by the Federal Government, the States, and MPOs. In working on this, BTS is to consult with the Associate Deputy Secretary, the Assistant Secretaries, and the heads of the operating administrations. The data base must include:

- information on the volumes and patterns of movement of goods, including local, interregional, and international movement, by all modes of transportation and intermodal combinations, and by relevant classification;

- information on the volumes and patterns of movement of people, including local, interregional, and international movements, by all modes of transportation (including bicycle and pedestrian modes) and intermodal combinations, and by relevant classification;
- information on the location and connectivity of transportation facilities and services; and
- a national accounting of expenditures and capital stocks on each mode of transportation and intermodal combination.

[49 U.S.C. 111(d)].

National Transportation Library. The National Transportation Library shall contain a collection of statistical and other information. BTS must facilitate and promote access to the Library, with the goal of improving the ability of the transportation community to share information and the ability of the Director to make its statistics readily accessible. In developing the Library, BTS shall work with other transportation libraries and other transportation information providers, both public and private. [49 U.S.C. 111(e)].

National Transportation Atlas Data Base. BTS shall develop and maintain geospatial data bases able to support intermodal network analysis. The data bases must depict:

- transportation networks;
- flows of people, goods, vehicles, and craft over the networks; and
- social, economic, and environmental conditions that affect or are affected by the networks.

[49 U.S.C. 111(f)].

International Data. TEA-21 added transportation-related variables influencing global competitiveness to BTS' list of topics. It also requires BTS to complete a study of the highway transportation of international trade by June 2001. For the study BTS must:

- measure ton-miles and value-miles of international traffic carried by highway in each State;

- evaluate the accuracy and reliability of such measures for use in the highway apportionment formula;
- evaluate the accuracy and reliability of the use of diesel fuel data as a measure of international trade traffic by State; and
- identify needed improvements in long-term data collection programs to provide accurate and reliable measures of international traffic for use in the formula for highway apportionments.

[Section 5115 of TEA-21].

Aviation Information. The Bureau is to collect and disseminate information on civil aeronautics including, at a minimum, information on (A) the origin and destination of passengers in interstate air transportation, and (B) the number of passengers traveling by air between any two points in interstate air transportation. [49 U.S.C. 329(b)(1)]

Motor Carrier Information. The Bureau is to collect and disseminate information on motor carriers. BTS shall require Class I and Class II motor carriers to report annual financial and safety reports, containing, at a minimum balance sheets and income statements. BTS may require quarterly, periodic, or special reports from motor carriers, freight forwarders, brokers, lessors, and associations, or classes of them. In designing the reporting program, BTS must consider: (1) safety needs; (2) the need to preserve confidential business information and trade secrets and prevent competitive harm; (3) private sector, academic, and public use of information in the reports; and (4) the public interest. BTS must streamline and simplify the reporting requirements to the maximum extent practicable. [49 U.S.C. 14123].

Position within DOT. The Bureau is an operating administration of the Department of Transportation, the head of which reports directly to the Secretary. [49 U.S.C. 111(a), (b); 49 CFR 1.2 and 1.3].

Director. The Director, appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate, serves four years. The Director must have training and experience in the compilation and analysis of transportation statistics. [49 U.S.C. 111(b)].

Advisory Council on Transportation Statistics (ACTS). ACTS is to advise BTS on transportation statistics and analyses, including whether or not the statistics and analysis disseminated by the Bureau of Transportation Statistics are of high quality and are based upon the best available objective information. [Section 6007 of ISTEA].

Funding. BTS is authorized funding at \$31 million per year through 2003, as contract authority. [Section 5001(a) of TEA-21]. Under TEA-21, these funds are reserved from the distribution of the general obligation limitation. [Section 1102(c)(1)]. BTS is subject to the Research and Technology obligation limitation, which remains available for three fiscal years. [Section 1102(e) of TEA-21, as amended by the TEA-21 Restoration Act].

Sale Proceeds. BTS may retain funds it receives from the sale of data products, for the purpose of reimbursing the Bureau for necessary expenses incurred. [49 U.S.C. 111(k)].

Grants. The Secretary may make grants, cooperative agreements, and contracts for:

- investigation of the topics for which it must compile statistics;
- research and development of new methods of data collection, management, integration, dissemination, interpretation, and analysis;
- development of electronic clearinghouses of transportation data and related information, as part of the National Transportation Library; and
- development and improvement of methods for sharing geographic data, in support of the national transportation atlas data base and the National Spatial Data Infrastructure.

The grants, cooperative agreements, and contracts can be with public and nonprofit private entities, including State DOTs, MPOs, and institutions of higher education. Funding for these agreements is limited to \$500,000 per year. [49 U.S.C. 111(g)].