**NCHRP 08-36 Proposed Research Problem Statement**

1. **Title:** Advancing Sustainability through Multi-Agency Collaborations
2. **Background:** Sustainability, including social, economic, and environmental aspects, is a common goal in the transportation industry that cannot be achieved by a single agency or multiple agencies acting separately. Over time, sustainability in transportation has evolved beyond the environment to include elements such as livability, health, and economic development, which state DOTs have not explicitly embodied in their missions. Furthermore, MAP-21 and now FAST have elevated considerations for sustainability in transportation through the inclusion of non-traditional performance areas. As the definition of sustainability takes on new dimensions and agencies are expected to evolve and adopt new ways to measure and monitor progress, what are the implications to statewide planning? How can agencies plan and account for sustainability-related outcomes of their investments when performance areas are affected by the policies and decisions of multiple agencies or sectors?

Making progress on sustainability and other complex shared goals requires an active multi-agency collaboration and an understanding of how each agency might translate, measure, and act upon each goal. Multi-agency collaborations create opportunities to coordinate policies, share data, and pool funds that help agencies measure and generate multi-faceted sustainability outcomes from transportation and development decisions. There is precedence for multi-agency collaborations that have tackled sustainability challenges but the results and replicability of those partnerships are not well documented. The Sustainable Communities Partnership initiated a collaboration among US DOT, HUD, and EPA to advance sustainability outcomes of infrastructure and community development. How were the goals/guiding principles developed and translated by each agency? How well has the partnership advanced its guiding principles at federal, state, regional, or local levels, and have those guiding principles resulted in more sustainable developments? Are there other coordination models that have achieved sustainability objectives and could be scaled up or down?

1. **Statement of Urgency**

Transportation agencies recognize that there are limitations on ways they could influence societal benefits. Transportation Research Board, for example, has acknowledged this challenge and have started to invite “non-traditional” partners like health, housing, and other professionals to the annual meetings and to participate in interdisciplinary committees like the Health and Transportation subcommittee. On the agency side, states, like Washington State, have experimented with multi-agency coordination on shared goals, usually under the direction of top executives. As complexity and interconnectedness of agency goals increases, the need for collaboration also increases. Can we learn from past (or other countries’) experiments with multi-agency collaboration on ways to initiate, govern, and sustain those types of collaborations? Or would such effort require a brand new model? Through successful multi-agency collaboration models, it is anticipated that DOTs, transit agencies, or MPOs could develop and monitor performance measures that affect or are influenced by more than one agency in order to fully capture the sustainability impacts of transportation changes. Also, a collaborative model could change the way both transportation projects are implemented and partner agencies leverage their resources to improve transportation outcomes (for example, public health agencies promoting active transportation and as a result reducing single-occupant vehicle trips).

1. **Project Objective(s)**

The purpose of this study is to learn from previous multi-agency collaborations in the United States or abroad that promote sustainability objectives and measurable outcomes related to transportation investments, and address 1) what were the successes and challenges faced by the partnership(s)? and 2) can the partnership(s) model be replicated by state agencies? In focusing on sustainability, the study will need to evaluate partnership models that can capture environmental, social, *and* economic factors of transportation investments and evaluate trade-offs amongst those three factors.

1. **Relationship to Existing Body of Knowledge**

In 2013, the Urban Institute released the report *Can Federal Efforts Advance Federal and Local De-Siloing? Lessons from the HUD-EPA-DOT Partnership for Sustainable Communities*, which reviewed successes of the HUD-EPA-DOT Partnership for Sustainable Communities and future opportunities for de-siloing planning and project development. The study focused on HUD’s Regional Planning Grant program but acknowledged programs from other departments as well. Similarly, *NCHRP 750 Volume 4: Sustainability as an Organizing Principle for Transportation Agencies* and *NCHRP 708: Guidebook for Sustainability Performance Measurement for Transportation Agencies* examine issues of institutionalizing sustainability at transportation agencies and developing performance measurement frameworks. In addition to the sustainability-specific literature, there is a body of resources on related strategies like planning and environmental linkages, context sensitive solutions, or scenario planning that could be leveraged for more successful partnerships in this area. This study would build on the aforementioned efforts and potentially examine examples from other countries to understand the role of partner agencies in achieving sustainability objectives from transportation and how to advance strategies that can lead to successful, on-going collaborations.

1. **List of Anticipated Work Tasks**
2. Develop theory or literature-based framework to evaluate mechanisms, successes and challenges in implementing and sustaining multi-agency collaborations
3. Review of Sustainable Communities Partnership to evaluate scalability potential in the agencies’ programs by examining questions like: (a) What were the outcomes of transportation investments made by local, regional, and state partners? (b) Have partnerships been sustained or were they limited to a single project? (c) What are the characteristics of on-going partnerships? For example, does the relationship between the state agency and local governments or MPOs impact the way collaborations are structured and maintained?
4. Review of literature and web products to identify additional multi-agency collaboration examples initiated by states, regions, or peer countries to address sustainability objectives.
5. Develop case studies of successful and unsuccessful multi-agency collaborations initiated through SCP or other means, using targeted interviews if needed to supplement published information from Task 3.
6. Guidance for developing multi-agency collaborations
7. Recommendations for additional work on collaboration models and evaluation of success
8. **Estimate of Funds Needed: $**100,000
9. **Estimate of Time Needed to Complete the Research:** One-year
10. **Name, Affiliation and Contact Information of Submitter(s):**

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