

NCHRP Project 20-24(130)

# AASHTO 2021-2026 Strategic Plan

## Task 3 SWOT Analysis

**DRAFT** July 27, 2020

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HNTB

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# 1. Introduction

As proposed for Task 3, this document and its appendices provide a summary and analysis of the SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) exercise undertaken to support AASHTO's 2014-2019 Strategic Plan. The elements of this SWOT exercise form an important steppingstone to building the AASHTO Strategic Plan. The opportunities of today's dynamic times combined with the risks of its turbulence make a clear-eyed assessment of AASHTO's strategic position more valuable than ever. The exercise results summarized here reflect the fact that AASHTO is in a strong position today — in part due to the guidance provided in the last strategic plan — and frame many of the critical issues to be addressed in the next plan.

## SWOT Development

The SWOT analysis was developed using a three-part approach to gather and synthesize information. The three-part approach includes:

- 1) a survey of state DOT leadership and stakeholders;
- 2) consultations and interviews with select AASHTO leaders and staff; and
- 3) discussion and prioritization at the SWOT webinar held July 7, 2020.

**Survey:** The consultant team distributed an online survey to state DOT leadership, AASHTO staff, and other stakeholders for input on AASHTO and the current strategic plan. More than 95 of 175 stakeholders responded, generating a significant amount of information for review and analysis.

**Interviews:** Members of the team conducted in-depth interviews with 33 state DOT leaders and AASHTO staff members to gain further input to develop the initial SWOT. The interview and survey results were used to develop the initial SWOT and distributed in advance of the SWOT webinar.

**SWOT Webinar:** Members of the project panel, core team, and strategic plan advisory committee (SPAC) considered the initial and consolidated SWOT summaries at the July 7 SWOT webinar. Through discussion and polling exercises, the group developed a prioritized final SWOT.

## Document Organization

This document is organized into five sections and two appendices.

- 1. Introduction.** Describes the SWOT development process and document organization.
  - 2. Initial SWOT – Interview and Survey Summary.** Includes the summary of interview and survey results distributed to the panel, core team, and SPAC ahead of the July 7 SWOT webinar.
  - 3. Consolidated SWOT – Webinar Presentation Slides.** Presents the consolidated SWOT developed for discussion during the webinar.
  - 4. SWOT Webinar – Discussion Summary and Polling Results.** Includes webinar notes and detailed polling results.
  - 5. Draft Final AASHTO SWOT.** Presents the draft final SWOT developed through the webinar discussion and prioritization.
- Appendix A. SWOT Survey Data.** Compiles survey responses relevant to the SWOT development process.
- Appendix B. SWOT Webinar Slides.** Includes the full set of webinar presentation slides.

In addition to this document, the consultant team developed the presentation materials and facilitated the SWOT webinar on July 7, 2020 to complete Task 3.

## 2. Initial SWOT Interview and Survey Summary

This initial SWOT analysis was distributed to the panel, core team, and strategic plan advisory committee ahead of the July 7 SWOT webinar.

### Strengths

#### People (members and staff)

- The people – dedicated, knowledgeable, and professional members and staff
- Expertise and collective wisdom of members
- Diverse opinions of membership representing all 52 DOT's
- United membership creates a strong voice
- Truly member-driven
- Professionalism

#### Way of Working

- Collaborative
- Committee/council structure delivers results
- Flexible and reliable
- Growing ability to be nimble in fast-paced world
- Unity of purpose and clear vision
- Apolitical focus on transportation
- Strong set of core processes that is stable

#### Policy Making and Relationships

- Advocates effectively
- Ability to work with congress and FHWA – good personal relationships with policy makers and deep connection with federal decisionmakers, good standing on Capitol Hill
- Recognized as an unbiased bi-partisan advocate for transportation issues
- National voice for states
- Policy development, consensus building, and training
- Proven technical expertise and credibility on transportation policy

#### History, Mission, Reputation

- A clear, important mission to fulfill
- Importance of transportation to society
- Legacy of dedication to the nation's transportation system

- Good reputation
- History, advocacy and ability to represent state DOTs – Everybody in the transportation industry know AASHTO by the acronym
- A 105-year legacy of service, collaboration, and innovation

### Communications and Information

- Communication and outreach
- Provides members useful information
- Builds relationships and networks for information

### Products and Services

- Good products and services – advocacy, AASHTOWare, congressional visits, training
- Publications
- Strong link to research
- Leadership in innovation
- Education and training for members
- Programs and services
- Peer exchange and mutual support networks
- Technical committees
- Standards building

### Financial

- Strong financial footing

## Weaknesses

### People (members and staff)

- Disengaged states/members – some states do not participate fully
- Too much reliance on the same CEO
- Member and staff capacities to do what is needed
  - Staff IT and communication skills
- Inertia of the institutions within state DOTs
- Staff turnover

### Way of Working

- Lack of transparency for how AASHTO operates – lack of knowledge among its members - hard to navigate
- Lack of clear organization-wide roles and responsibilities, for both staff and members
- Lack of performance management techniques
- Slow to change – agility vs. inertia
- Committee processes are slow – collaboration, building consensus take time

- Reliance on member volunteers contributes to how long things take
- Committees can be very "siloed" which can lead to duplicate efforts or missed opportunities
  - Inconsistent practices across committees can be confusing
  - Lack of promotion of what councils and committees are currently working on contributes to silos
- Turnover in committee leadership and membership means lost institutional knowledge about what has already been done and where to find it
- Too much focus on highways and bridges and not enough multimodal
- Too many and too diverse interests being currently represented
- Lack of public outreach
- Too much dependence on state finances

### Policy Making and Relationships

- AASHTO is sometimes deterred from its mission by political differences across states
- The diversity of the DOTs can make it hard to have strong policy messages on all issues
  - Difficult to weigh the needs of large, small, urban, rural states and have a policy that supports all states equally
  - This sometimes leads to a lowest common denominator solution
- Tend to be more reactive than proactive – it's hard to get in front of issues and drive change
- Doesn't always consider the impact of policy on all parts of an organization
- Lack of engagement on urban mobility issues (bicycles, pedestrians, shared-mobility) that resonate at the local/city/county level

### History, Mission, Reputation

- Reliance on past glories
- National perception as too highway-centric

### Communications and Information

- AASHTO does not communicate across organization well
- Need more communication to all state DOT employees of the value AASHTO can provide
- Need to improve website

### Information and IT

- Membership rosters are not accurate or up to date
  - AASHTO Membership Information Management System (AMIMS)
  - Constant Contact
- Too many different IT solutions and difficulty using them
  - Video conferencing platforms
  - Balloting
  - Survey Monkey

- IT program is behind and needs to catch up with modern business practices (it is making progress now)

## Products and Services

- AASHTO needs to have a better new board member orientation
- AASHTOWare – slow to develop needed software
- Need consistency throughout all AASHTO committees and technical service program products and services

## Opportunities

### People (members and staff)

- Leverage the knowledge and talents of members
- Engage as many of the states and members as possible to broaden the organization's perspective – need to get all states to participate
- Cultivate future generation of transportation professionals
  - Continue to educate new leadership in transportation in understanding the future needs of the transportation system
- Use retirees as consultants and part-time staff
- AASHTO can continue to become more diverse in leadership

### Way of Working

- Develop a customer service and quality-oriented set of operating guidelines and procedures to ensure consistency, quality of service, and continual improvement
  - Include measurable/quantifiable goals to ensure that progress is being made and goals are being met
- Strengthen partnerships
  - Industry
  - Schools and universities
  - More diverse partnerships with other transportation organizations, both to advocate for transportation and to collaborate on issues
  - Increase collaboration
- Examine goals/mission/vision to drive AASHTO forward – this is a great opportunity to assess what's going well and what can be better
- Leverage high degree of credibility to build /expand augment resources, knowledge, and policy support
  - As DOTs get smaller, work shifts to consultants. AASHTO could leverage this resource to help member states.
- Capitalize on lessons learned through the current pandemic
- Think longer term. Have the executive committee set a key initiative(s) for a four-year period and carry that through the next four presidents

- Unleash innovation through improved information and knowledge flow/cross-committee engagement
- Take advantage of technology to engage as much as possible during these times
- Streamline some committees to increase focus

### Policy Making and Relationships

- Surface transportation reauthorization – speak with one collective voice about the benefits of infrastructure investment as a way to help bring back the economy post-COVID
- Coming out of COVID-19, AASHTO has the opportunity to drive national policy on emerging technologies to provide sustainable transportation in the future and recognize that State DOTs are becoming more customer-focused – mobility enablers rather just than infrastructure stewards
- Forward-thinking policies
- Focus more on multimodalism
- Leverage the expertise and connections of State DOT's to members of Congress and governors to advance AASHTO national goals
- Evolving need to change funding mechanisms for transportation in the future
- Underwrite policy research for emerging mobility areas
- Set a practical plan for the future of transportation and mobility

### Communications

- Provide information to public to further policy and educate on issues such as highway safety, how DOT's are stretching tax payer dollars. Help improve public opinion, build trust
  - Be out front with information on emerging technologies, policy or law changes
- Social media
- Consistent look of products to showcase information provided by AASHTO – communicate the AASHTO brand

### Information and IT

- Use latest technology
  - Leverage digital tools, data and AI to enhance services
  - Increase engagement
  - Remove roadblocks to timely information sharing and collaboration
  - Monetize virtual meetings – travel may remain difficult for some time
- Become more virtual
- Better website

### Products and Services

- New areas of emphasis to meet changing needs
  - Combine and leverage state resources

- Training is a big area of potential growth that is slowly being tapped, but some resources dedicated to this area could help it make a giant leap
- New consumers of AASHTO products and services. Involve a broader cross-section of entities in both committees and Technical Service Programs, including local and county governments, and figure out how they can participate financially as well, without disenfranchising states
- Focus products and services on what is most valuable to members. Strengthen those items and eliminate others.
- AASHTOWare expansion. More MaaS cloudbased delivery.
- Influence infrastructure design, operations and maintenance for the needs of 21st century mobility systems
- Facilitate knowledge transfer and best practices internationally
- Bring focus on national architecture for AV/CV; forge regional collaborations
- Data
- Research
- Develop a platform to spotlight progressive state DOT activities

## Threats

### People (members and staff)

- High turnover in membership - a lot of historical knowledge rests with members who either retire or get transferred, leads to missing goals, lots of time spent re-learning or re-hashing issues
- AASHTO staff turnover
- The aging workforce and lack of new member engagement (retirees not being replaced by younger workforce on AASHTO committees)

### Way of Working

- Contractors whose performance is not measured
- Committee priorities and AASHTO internal priorities do not always align
- State DOT declining budgets – financial instability means financial concerns for AASHTO
- Competition for scarce resources, both money and talent – member budget challenges and ability to pay or participate, members' time; staff is great, and therefore easily poached.
- Competition from other, better-funded orgs (some for-profit) that occupy the same niche, generally in aggregate with other organizations
- Challenges in bringing people together for meetings in the current environment
- The increasingly divisive political atmosphere in the country may make reaching consensus on routine basis more and more difficult
- Keeping up with changing trends in technology and membership needs
- Laborious processes that provide dated products
- Getting too complacent based on our strengths, not adapting more quickly

- Serving too many interests and becoming ineffective through lack of specific focus

### Policy Making and Relationships

- Balkanization of transportation policies by parochial and regional interests – state policies and programs that don't span state lines to address regional transportation issues
- Ceding leadership on a nationwide transportation policy front
- Not enacting more forward-thinking policies
- The focus on multimodalism potentially alienates members who want AASHTO to focus on highways and bridges

### History, Mission, Reputation

- AASTHO'S legacy is long, but the organization relies too much on its reputation – membership is changing, BOD increasingly is made up of non-engineers, more political leaders and technocrats who care less about legacy and more about what AASHTO offers

### Communications

- Not communicating the value of AASHTO

### Information and IT

- Rapid changes in technologies make it necessary for AASHTO to be adaptive
- Committee membership and information access limitations place a greater burden on individuals to transfer knowledge and workloads limit the ability to do so

### Products and Services

- Lack of consistent and protected ways to develop standards and publications
- Other organizations, such as NACTO, releasing guidance that is not well-researched but has popular support from advocacy groups or legislation – AASHTO's disconnect with local agencies sometimes drives those issues, as well as other issues that are more urban-focused

# 3. Consolidated SWOT

## Webinar Presentation Slides

This consolidated SWOT was presented for discussion at the July 7 SWOT webinar. See Appendix B for the complete webinar slides.

### Strengths

- United membership creates a strong voice
- Truly member-driven
- Diverse opinions of membership representing all 52 DOT's
- Committee/council structure delivers results
- Growing ability to be nimble in fast-paced world
- Apolitical focus on transportation
- Strong set of core processes that is stable
- Ability to work with congress and FHWA – good personal relationships with policy makers and deep connection with federal decisionmakers, good standing on Capitol Hill
- Recognized as an unbiased bi-partisan advocate for transportation issues
- Proven technical expertise and credibility on transportation policy
- A clear, important mission to fulfill
- Good reputation
- History, advocacy and ability to represent state DOTs – Everybody in the transportation industry know AASHTO by the acronym
- Good products and services – advocacy, AASHTOWare, congressional visits, training
- Publications
- Strong link to research
- Education and training for members
- Technical committees
- Standards building
- Strong financial footing

### Weaknesses

- Disengaged states/members – some states do not participate fully
- Too much reliance on the same CEO
- Lack of member and staff capacities to do what is needed
- Lack of clear organization-wide roles and responsibilities, for both staff and members
- Lack of performance management techniques
- Slow to change – agility vs. inertia
- Committees work in silos which can lead to duplicate efforts or missed opportunities
- Too much focus on highways and bridges and not enough multimodal
- Too many and too diverse interests being currently represented
- Too much dependence on state finances
- The diversity of the DOTs can make it hard to have strong policy messages on all issues
- Reactive rather than proactive
- Reliance on past glories
- AASHTO does not communicate across organization well
- Weak website
- Too many different IT solutions and difficulty using them - Need modern software
- Information is not up to date about committees and memberships
- Slow to develop needed software (AASHTOWARE)
- Lack of consistency throughout committees and technical service program products and services

## Opportunities

- Leverage the knowledge and talents of members
- Engage as many of the states and members as possible to broaden perspectives and diversity
- Cultivate future generation of transportation professionals
- Develop a customer service and quality-oriented set of operating guidelines and procedures to ensure consistency, quality of service, and continual improvement
- Strengthen partnerships
- Leverage high degree of credibility to build /expand augment resources, knowledge, and policy
- Capitalize on lessons learned through the current pandemic
- Think longer term
- Data
- Take advantage of technology to engage as much as possible during these times
- Streamline some committees to increase focus
- Surface transportation reauthorization
- Post COVID innovations
- Focus more on multimodalism
- Good information about transportation and its importance
- Better use of the web and latest technologies
- New areas to meet changing needs
- More training
- Tap new consumers of AASHTO products and services
- AASHTOWare expansion
- Facilitate knowledge transfer and best practices

## Threats

- Member and staff turnover
- Aging workforce and lack of new member engagement
- Contractors whose performance is not measured
- Lack of alignment between AASHTO internal organization and committees
- State DOT declining budgets
- Competition for scarce resources, both money and talent
- Competition from other, better-funded orgs
- Increasingly divisive political atmosphere
- Getting too complacent based on our strengths
- Serving too many interests and becoming ineffective
- Balkanization of transportation policies by parochial and regional interests
- Not enacting more forward-thinking policies
- The focus on multimodalism potentially alienates members who want AASHTO to focus on highways and bridges
- Relying too much on its reputation
- Not communicating the value of AASHTO
- Rapid changes in technologies
- Lack of consistent and protected ways to develop standards and publications
- Other organizations, such as NACTO, producing guidance

# 4. July 7 SWOT Webinar: Discussion Summary and Polling Results

## Participants

### Project Panel and Core Team

Carlos Braceras, Utah DOT  
Brandye Hendrickson, AASHTO  
Melinda McGrath, Mississippi DOT  
Patrick McKenna, Missouri DOT  
Diane Gutierrez-Scaccetti, New Jersey DOT  
Victoria Sheehan, New Hampshire DOT  
Mike Tooley, Montana DOT  
Jim Tymon, AASHTO  
Shawn Wilson, Louisiana DOTD

Lloyd Brown, AASHTO  
Andrew Lemer, NAS

Kirk Steudle, Econolite Group  
Susan Martinovich, HNTB  
Hyun-A Park, Spy Pond Partners  
Perry Lubin, Spy Pond Partners

### Strategic Plan Advisory Committee

James Bass, Texas DOT  
Clay Bright, Tennessee DOT  
Jennifer Cohan, Delaware DOT  
Yassmin Gramian, Pennsylvania DOT  
Nicole Longoria, Caltrans  
Julie Lorenz, Kansas DOT  
Lloyd MacAdam, Ohio DOT  
Russell McMurry, Georgia DOT  
Roger Millar, Washington State DOT  
Brian Ness, Idaho TD  
Bill Panos, North Dakota DOT  
Kyle Schneweis, Nebraska DOT

## Action Items

- **Team** prepare Candidate Goal Areas document
- **Team** plan August 6 Candidate Goal Areas Webinar

## Notes

### Welcome and Introduction

*Welcome to Strategic Plan Advisory Committee (SPAC)*

- Appreciate time and effort
- Next meeting in August – candidate goal areas

## Interviews and Survey Findings

### *Summary of interviews conducted*

- Generated items to be discussed in today's SWOT exercise
- See slides for interview findings (*Appendix B: Complete Webinar Slides*)

### *Summary of 90 surveys collected*

- Strong response rate: BOD members = 56%; Chairs who are not BOD = 53%; Staff = 49%
- See slides for survey findings
- Survey analysis document also available

## SWOT Exercise – Strengths

### **Proven technical expertise and credibility on transportation policy**

- **Russell.** Great asset, valued by congress, elected officials.

### **Recognized as an unbiased bi-partisan advocate for transportation issues**

- **Diane.** Maintaining objectivity is key, combined with technical expertise, produces strong reputation, high credibility.
- **Jennifer.** Important to distinguish between strengths and by-products of strengths; in this exercise, is a good reputation just the result of other strengths?
- **Patrick.** Lots of overlap, related points. The next exercise could reduce these to 3 or 4 categories (e.g. Proven transportation leader, technical expertise, vital mission)

### **Strong link to research**

- **Julie.** Link to research also critical to credibility.

### **Technical Committees**

- **Jennifer.** Critical role with respect to national standards.

### **A clear, important mission to fulfill**

- **Shawn.** Importance of transportation widely recognized.
- **Carlos.** What we do matters to everyone. Need to do a better job articulating and communicating value of transportation. Doing this right also helps advance AASHTO's own strength and stature as an organization.

### **United membership creates a strong voice**

- **Shawn.** Many approaches and perspectives on most issues. Question how much unison is needed or desired.

### **Diverse opinions of membership representing all 52 DOTs**

- **Victoria.** Certainly diversity a strength. Does not always lead to united voice, however.

### **Growing ability to be nimble in fast-paced world**

- **Julie.** Not yet a strength, though making progress and an important goal.
- **Carlos.** Nimbleness identified as weakness in previous strategic planning process.
- **Shawn.** Pandemic has revealed greater capacity than previously believed.

### **History, advocacy and ability to represent state DOTs – Everybody in the transportation industry knows AASHTO by the acronym**

- **Roger.** Impact on transportation policy in US – and globally – is undeniable.

### **Strong financial footing**

- **Carlos.** May not be at the top of the list, but this is what allows AASHTO to attain other strengths listed here.
- **Jim.** Also helped AASHTO to get where we are. Has helped sustain the organization during the pandemic.

## **SWOT Exercise – Weaknesses**

### **Disengaged states/members – some states do not participate fully**

- **Brian.** Some states may not be likely to get involved. But outreach to new members is a weakness.
- **Diane.** Limited orientation, lack of clarity on roles, processes for connecting and collaborating with peers

### **The diversity of the DOTs can make it hard to have strong policy messages on all issues**

- **Kyle.** Believe greater unity now. Question whether this comes at cost of ability to address some contentious c. May be related to agility. P3 example: states' range of outlooks on federal P3 priorities meant AASHTO response was not strongest. Hope is that unity doesn't just mean members no longer think issues 'worth the fight.'
- **Melinda.** Feel that debate still supported and valued. Agree diversity is an great strength. On the P3 example, maybe deliberation rather than agility is valuable; much learned since, reasons to *not* jump on a bandwagon.
- **Kyle.** Believe this is the case as well.
- **Carlos.** Diversity of DOTs may sometimes make it hard to have strong policy message, but it makes the policy messages better. Believe this is a strength. Should not shy away from the fact that diversity can make it harder but it's worth it, positive impact.
- **Patrick.** Agree and this connects back to nimbleness. But a worthwhile tradeoff. Can be hard to achieve consensus across regions of the county. But can work well – see last reauthorization. Have made progress since identified as an issue through last strategic planning effort. Staff is very nimble on the Hill and this is not always visible to members.
- **Unattributed.** This will stimulate discussion so worth including. Question whether 25-27 outcomes or 52-0 outcomes are desirable.

### **Too many and too diverse interests being currently represented**

- **Shawn.** Disagree with this point. Reflects diversity of membership. Not only correct but a strength. .

### **Too much focus on highways and bridges and not enough multimodal**

- **Yassmin.** Multimodal and active transportation need to continue to be supported.

### **Reliance on past glories**

- **Kyle.** Don't believe this one is correct (nor the "Reliance on same CEO")

### **Too much dependence on state finances**

- **Patrick.** As fees are ~5% of budget believe this is a misconception. Purchase of service more significant but separate. Could be worth improving communication on this point.
- **Mike.** Agreed, this is not a weakness.

### **Information is not up to date about committees and memberships**

- **Julie.** This (and others), merely tactical. Can look at these another time.

### **Committees work in silos which can lead to duplicate efforts or missed opportunities**

- **Roger.** With no vertical integration, 'bubble' more accurate than silo. Agency committee representation can be disconnected, focused on procedural challenges, internal issues. Can keep from effecting needed change. Policy disconnect between SME and CEO level.

### **Lack of engagement with social justice and equity issues**

- **Yassmin.** This is not addressed and believe this effort should address, for example, equity and access with respect to rural populations.
- **Jennifer.** Endorse this. Add seniors, those with disabilities, and transit generally. Just now starting to focus on these issues.

## **SWOT Exercise – Opportunities**

### **Engagement with social justice and equity issues**

- **Patrick.** Opportunity to engage with nationally significant movement and moment – opportunity for AASHTO to understand what is occurring. Opportunity to engage with members to
- **Roger.** Given strategic plan is time-bound, this is the moment to address equity in transportation, systemic racism in transportation. Addressing in this time is an opportunity for AASHTO and the DOTs

### **Engagement with as many states as possible to broaden perspectives and diversity**

- **Patrick.** Has been and continues to be an opportunity. Especially given agencies' executive-level turnover. Need to introduce and express AASHTO benefits to members.

- **Kyle.** Agree this opportunity is significant.
- **Russell.** Agreed

### **Cultivate future generation of transportation professionals**

- **Kyle.** Related to engagement with states. Challenge getting harder. Talent now more mobile – 40 year career rarer and traditional channels of supplying talent no longer reliable.
- **Russell.** This is an opportunity

### **Pandemic response and ‘new normal’**

- **Roger.** Opportunity here and believe it’s one that must be addressed. Others are already doing so.

### **Scenario planning skill building/Capitalize on lessons learned through pandemic**

- **Julie.** Opportunity to engage CEOs, build skills and develop platform for broader, longer-term thinking
- **Russell.** Agree with this

### **Leverage knowledge and skills of members**

- **Russell:** Don’t want this opportunity to be overlooked.

## **SWOT Exercise – Threats**

### **Competition from other organizations/Serving too many interests**

- **Jennifer.** ITS America, I-95 Coalition, others all angling for CAV space.
- **Yassmin.** Also opportunity for coordination?
- **Jennifer.** Yes and Cooperative Automated Transportation (CAT) Coalition great example.

### **Loss of organizational focus**

- **Jennifer.** AASHTO challenge is to avoid overextending. Should recognize what lane AASHTO is in and be cautious about directing resources outside; focus where real impact can be made.
- **Julie.** Highly-focused AASHTO more effective than a dispersed AASHTO. Important to recognize in context of strategic plan objective: increasing value to members.

### **Fracturing state role by regional interests/ Diminishing relevance**

- **Roger.** Challenge to maintain strong state role given increasing regionalization (multi-state, within-state). Threat to AASHTO is maintaining relevance if issues increasingly cross borders.
- **Carlos.** Biggest threat is being relevant to our public. Difficult when serving elected officials who also answer to different regional priorities. Potential for division, within states. Complicates role of association.

### Not communicating value

- **Shawn.** Not communicating value threatens ability to recruit next generation, to public support.

### Member and staff turnover/ Aging workforce/ Lack of new member engagement

- **Jim.** Rely on members to accomplish mission, organizational objectives. Any decline in availability of experienced and expert members threatens capacity to execute technical publications and standards AASHTO so well known for.

## SWOT Exercise – Polling Results

### Strengths

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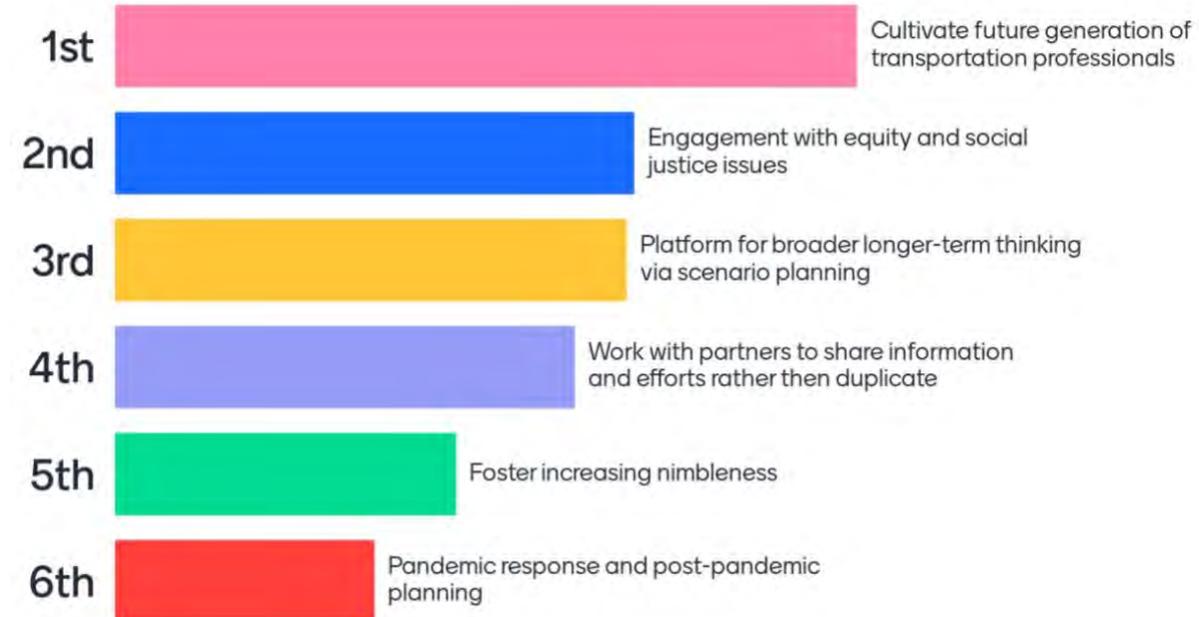
## Weaknesses

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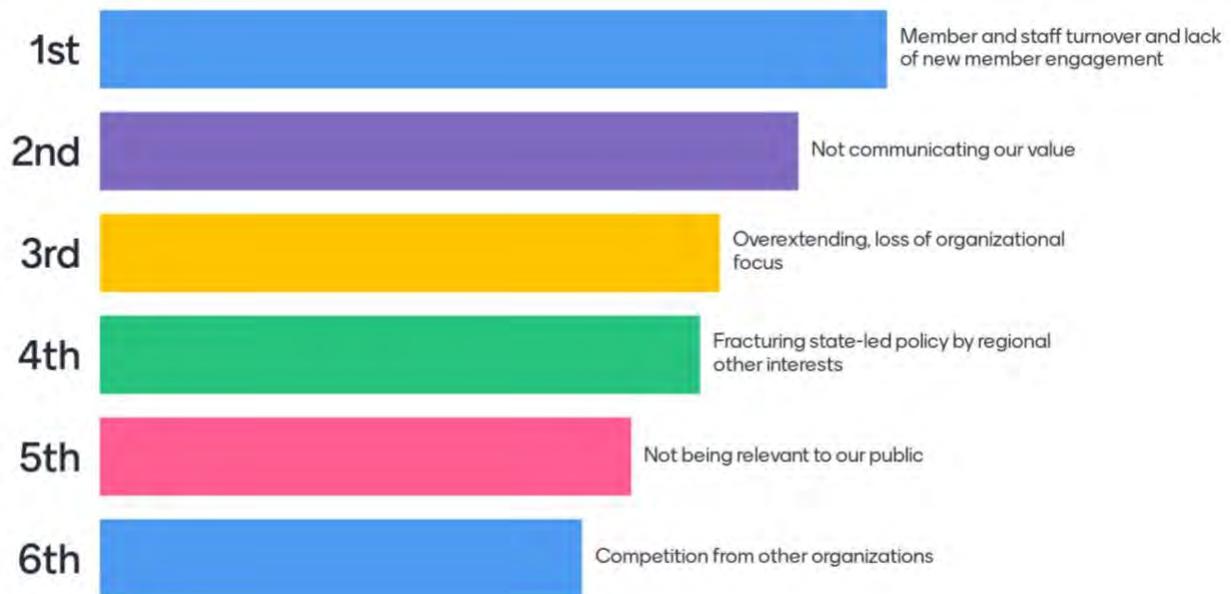
## Opportunities

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## Threats

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## Wrap-Up

### Developing candidate goal areas

- **Roger.** Need to structure these results, separate big-picture issues and less-significant insider issues.
- **Carlos.** Good material in original lists that didn't make it to voting. Though much of it tactical, also important. Should not lose track of these.
- **Jim.** Agree these are important and some can be applied internally to improve the organization.

This consolidated SWOT was presented for discussion at the July 7 SWOT webinar.

## 5. Draft Final AASHTO SWOT



The image shows a presentation slide for the AASHTO 2021-2026 Strategic Plan SWOT Exercise. The slide features a background image of a scenic landscape with a road leading towards a body of water and mountains. In the top left corner, there is a logo for the '2021-2026 AASHTO Strategic Plan'. To the right of the logo is a 2x2 grid of letters: 'S' and 'W' in the top row, and 'O' and 'T' in the bottom row. Below the logo and grid, the text reads: 'July 7, 2020 SWOT Exercise'. The main body of the slide contains a paragraph of text explaining the purpose and results of the SWOT exercise.

**2021-2026 AASHTO Strategic Plan**

S	W
O	T

July 7, 2020  
**SWOT Exercise**

**The opportunities of today's dynamic times combined with the risks of its turbulence make a clear-eyed assessment of AASHTO's strategic position more valuable than ever.** The elements of this SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) exercise form an important steppingstone to building AASHTO's 2021-2026 Strategic Plan. Within each category, issues are ranked based a July 7, 2020 prioritization exercise from 1 (highest priority) to 6 (lowest priority). The results of the exercise reflect the fact that AASHTO is in a strong position today, in part due to the guidance provided in the last strategic plan, and frame many of the critical issues to be addressed in the next plan.



## **S** Strengths

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- 1. Proven technical expertise and credibility on policy**
- 2. Recognized as unbiased bi-partisan advocate for transportation**
- 3. Vital role of technical committees in setting and supporting national standards**
- 4. Strong financial footing**
- 5. Clear, important mission to fulfill with broad societal impact (“matters to everyone”)**
- 6. History, advocacy, and ability to represent state DOTs**

**DRAFT** AASHTO Strategic Plan SWOT Exercise July 7, 2020



## **W** Weakness

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- 1. Committees work within bubbles, disconnected from policy priorities**
- 2. Slow to change, limited institutional agility and nimbleness**
- 3. Limited new member engagement: orientation, outreach, onboarding**
- 4. Limited engagement with equity and social justice issues**
- 5. Diversity of state DOTs makes strong policy message challenging on some issues**
- 6. Limited multimodal and active transportation focus**

**DRAFT** AASHTO Strategic Plan SWOT Exercise July 7, 2020



## Opportunities

- 1. Cultivate future generation of transportation professionals**
- 2. Increase engagement with equity and social justice issues**
- 3. Build skills and develop a platform for broad, long-term thinking via scenario planning**
- 4. Work together with partners to share information and efforts**
- 5. Foster increased institutional agility and nimbleness**
- 6. Promote organizational resilience and capacity-building** (includes engagement on public pandemic response and future crisis response)

**DRAFT** AASHTO Strategic Plan SWOT Exercise July 7, 2020



## **T** Threats

- 1. Member and staff turnover and lack of new member engagement**
- 2. Ineffective communication of AASHTO's value**
- 3. Overextension, loss of organizational focus**
- 4. Fracturing of state-level policy role by regional and other interest**
- 5. Diminishing relevance** (to public, partners, Congress, members)
- 6. Competition from other organizations**

**DRAFT** AASHTO Strategic Plan SWOT Exercise July 7, 2020

# Appendix A.

## SWOT Survey Data

### F1. What are AASHTO's Strengths?

Responses: 67 [25 BOD, 18 Chairs, 24 Staff]

BOD Comments:

- Policy development and training
- Diverse membership that represents all 52 DOT's
- Leadership & support by member organizations
- Credibility, personal relationships with policy makers, leadership in innovation, and customer service.
- It is truly member driven
- Great staff. Competent and great to work with.
- Visibility, relationships with Congress and Staff and USDOT, powerful voice when representing state DOT consensus.
- Collaborative framework with member states. Depth of connection with federal decisionmakers. Strong linkage to research.
- AASHTO's strength is in numbers. The ability to pursue policy or technical changes as a group substantially influences public transportation policy in America.
- AASHTO is a very professional and well respected in the industry and government. It has built that reputation on the producing good materials and sponsoring meaningful conferences.
- networking opportunities Jim and staff are v responsive and knowledgeable
- Leadership of the employees
- These were discussed in the interview
- Safety in numbers.
- AASHTO Ware. Congressional visits. Training.
- unity of purpose and clear vision apolitical mind set with focus on transportation
- Education
- Strong voice at the national level and can work with USDOT to solve issues more effectively than state's working individually
- Advocacy on behalf of State DOTs is the greatest strength. Committee and Council structure does bring results. Programs and services provide tremendous benefit to State DOT's
- Policy consensus, technical networks, peer relation
- Strong membership and participation. The organization can speak with a truly national voice.

- Communication, services
- Our ability to bring 50 states together to push issues of mutual importance. I have been in other organizations that never came close to this level of cooperation and focus.
- The membership, both leadership and technical ranks.
- Unity and communication.

Chair Comments:

- membership strong; seen as transportation experts;
- large expertise - well of knowledge
- The collective wisdom of the members
- Having a diverse and knowledgeable member base.
- Strong support of AASHTO Committees, multiple and effective communication tools, strong lobbying effort.
- Staff
- Reacting and getting quick action by the states. AASHTO's staff care and do an excellent job overall. Shannon and Melissa are excellent to work with!
- Its programs and services
- Communicating. Reaching out to engage states, making sure voices are heard. Providing us useful information to do our jobs. Advocating effectively.
- Hard working staff, dedicated towards transportation needs. Ability to work with congress and FHWA.
- Age. AASHTO has name recognition and a reputation as an advocate for state DOTs. AASHTO is effective at finding common ground amongst DOTs on a range of topics and practices. AASHTO staff are awesome and committed to helping state DOTs be the best they can be.
- competent and knowledgeable staff, responsive to state DOT's needs, organized well and nimble enough to mobilize on new & emerging issues
- The passion of it's members, an the ability to all learn from each other.
- National voice for states.
- The people, the staff are great to work with and are very knowledgeable, informed and helpful.
- Relying on the members for directions
- Coordination, communication, collaboration, excellent staff support (Matt is fabulous!)
- Policy Development, Technical Committees, Standardization

Staff Comments:

- Our 105-year legacy of service, collaboration, and innovation. While we no longer claim the mantle of "the voice of transportation," I think AASHTO certainly serves that role.
- A committed staff A talented pool of members A longtime legacy of dedication to the nation's transportation system
- Leadership, communications and outreach.

- Strong staff support, consistent messaging, consensus building
- Collaboration and consensus building. Committee member subject matter expertise.
- Our members are invested and see value in our programs and services
- Member driven policies and programs. Strong and competent staff. Peer exchange and mutual support networks Growing ability to be nimble in fast-paced world.
- Members
- Member driven and member-responsive Provides a variety of services, products Standing on Capitol Hill
- Policy development, working effectively with the administration, having credibility on critical transportation issues, bringing people together to develop technical standards and products state DOTs can use.
- Flexibility and reliability are AASHTO's greatest strengths.
- Strong programs and a LOT of industry respect for our name. Many folks are willing to help us in ways that would benefit us, if we let them.
- Proven technical expertise and credibility on transportation policy.
- AASHTO's reputation, AASHTO staff dedication
- Staff members working together to get tasks done in a timely manner.
- 1) The participation and knowledge of its members. 2) Strong commitment of the staff to making the organization operate efficiently and effectively.
- Excellent volunteering State DOT membership
- Members and the expertise they offer among various committees and councils Recognition as an unbiased and bi-partisan advocate for transportation issues
- Our flexibility. As a small, agile organization, we're able to work with DOTs with varying technical needs and capabilities. Our reputation. AASHTO is widely considered to be the authoritative source on transportation, both in terms of policy and technical standards.
- Our members and the ability for individuals to volunteer their time to share knowledge and best practices.
- Its history, advocacy and ability to represent state DOTs. Everybody in the transportation industry know AASHTO by the acronym.
- Providing resources/assistance to members. Serving as a voice on behalf of our members to the administration/federal agencies/congress.
- \*an army of dedicated members and staff \*a critically important mission to fulfill \*recognition that transportation is a vital part of commerce and the well-being of our economy \*
- That we do our best to meet the needs of our member departments.

## F2. What are AASHTO's Weaknesses?

Responses: 61 [21 BOD, 18 Chairs, 22 Staff]

BOD Comments:

- Echo chamber.
- Capacity
- too much reliance on same CEO's
- Each president begins his/her term with several key initiatives in mind. A year probably isn't enough time to effect much change. Then there is a new president with new initiatives and we lose focus on the previous initiatives.
- Too many and too diverse interests being currently represented.
- Pace of advancing issues to solutions can be a challenge.
- AASHTO is sometimes deterred from its mission by political differences between states.
- AASHTO needs to have a better new board member orientation. AASHTO is a large and complex association to navigate. Board members need to understand how to become engaged in committees and other opportunities. It is especially important for those of us who are appointed from outside the DOT.
- slow moving - understandably, as it's an association and members represent the spectrum of political, financial and demographic factors
- Website, adaptability
- Change is hard. It happens, but inertia has a home at AASHTO
- We seem to continue to do exactly the same things over and over. We need to use this strategic plan to forward our thinking.
- the need to consistently engage with organizations that tends to Minorities. good to see AASHTO engaging COMTO but i am sure there are other organizations we can reach out to
- Cost
- Difficult to weight the needs of large, small, urban, rural states and have a policy that protects or supports all states equally
- Lack of promotion of what Councils and Committees are currently working on. At times there is overlapping efforts, or items that come up that have been researched or worked on previously. As we see turnover in committee leadership and membership we are losing institutional knowledge of what has been produced previously, where it can be found etc.
- I would like to see them think longer term
- Broad membership base means innovative, cutting edge, controversial ideas fall by the wayside. National perception as too highway-centric can keep us out of certain conversations and minimize our input.
- While we are in a great financial position now, that has not always been the case. With the decreasing revenues to states, there may be pressure on the organization in decreased

participation in things like the TSPs. Some states may be pushed by their Governors or legislatures to actually end participation. Short answer: Dependence on state finances.

- The restriction of having to satisfy the position of so many different leaders, politically speaking.
- Very large and wide spread. The strengths combat these weaknesses.

#### Chair Comments:

- challenge of trying to satisfy all members for policy analysis and recommendations
- not enough involvement from states - certain states do not participate.
- un-engaged states/members
- Reliance on member volunteers to accomplish Committee efforts; member availability make impact timeliness of accomplishments.
- It can be difficult for a large organization to be adaptable or pliable.
- AASHTOWare
- At times, we only have time to react. It's hard to get out in front of issues and drive change, but that's where we need to be.
- Can't think of any
- Size and complexity, although it is mitigated about as well as can be.
- Doesn't always consider the impact of policy on all parts of an organizations.
- Fragmentation into silos. Inconsistent practices across committees can be confusing. Staffing may be inadequate to meet current expectations (particularly from a communication/information management perspective).
- Public outreach
- The diversity of the DOT's can make it hard to have strong policy messages on all issues.
- Need for more collaboration and communication between committees and councils.
- The time it takes for technical committees to complete it's work, it's hard for a few volunteers to get some of this done in a timely manner.
- Limited staff to cover all aspects of the job at hand
- At times, can be challenging to come to a policy position that will make all states happy. Compromise is part of the process. Can limit some areas to stay consistent with adopted policy positions.
- Communication to all of the state DOT employees of the value that AASHTO can provide

#### Staff Comments:

- AASHTO does not communicate across organization well. We do not use performance management techniques, which has the potential for blind spots and reactionary management decisions. Our IT program is behind and needs to catch up with modern business practices (we're making progress here, though).
- Agility. Sometimes changes take longer than it should.
- A "black box" to most members, reliance on past glories

- Collaboration, consensus building and management by committee are slow, deliberate processes that aren't nimble in circumstances that call for speed.
- customer/member experience is varied across programs/departments. Educating the members of the value of their membership with AASHTO from DOT field staff to leadership.
- Inertia of the institutions within state DOTs. Capacity (time and staff) to learn and leverage change factors.
- Diverse needs sometimes leads to a lowest common denominator.
- Stretched too thin in staffing Doing small amount in each area, how effective can that be in time. DOT members volunteering time and energy to important committee roles and responsibilities
- Being able to pivot quickly on the technical side.
- It can be very, very "siloed" -- which in some cases can lead to doubling of efforts or missed opportunities for cross-divisional collaboration.
- The reactive rather than proactive approach to policy development.
- Technology used by AASHTO (AASHTO uses multiple videoconference platforms - I am directed to use a platform that has been explicitly prohibited for use by some of my member departments; balloting is a recurring issue; AMIMS is a recurring issue; access to Constant Contact/SurveyMonkey is a recurring issue)
- Consistency throughout all AASHTO Committees and Technical Service Programs.
- 1) Lack of time of committee staff to devote to subject matter, as opposed to logistics surrounding the committees. 2) Lack of clear organization-wide roles and responsibilities, for both staff and members, so that all have a more evenly shared commitment to the organization.
- at times limited resources to support membership needs
- Lack of engagement on urban mobility issues (bicycles, pedestrians, shared-mobility) that resonate at the local/city/county level.
- Siloing. Committees and divisions collaborate with each other less than is ideal. While a one-size-fits-all approach is not desirable (as noted above, our flexibility is one of our greatest strengths), committees and divisions should support each other's work more than they do.
- The reduction in staff and the over extension of current staff at DOT's. When an agency asks employees to "do more with less", something has to give.
- Its reputation is focused on highways and bridges and is not multimodal.
- Lack of consistent internal processes--while this provides lots of opportunities for staff to develop an individualized way of doing things it can also create inefficiencies in day-to-day administrative tasks which can pull staff away from member services-related tasks.
- \*inconsistent, outdated, or undocumented operational practices \*membership rosters are not accurate or up to date for the most part \*lack of transparency for how AASHTO operates among its members \*staff turnover seems pretty high. \*multitude of IT solutions that serve only one or two purposes - each committee seems to have its own suite of tools they employ to resolve issues that come up

- There a still a lot of people within our member departments who do not realize who we are and what we do.

### F3. What are AASHTO's Opportunities?

Responses: 59 [22 BOD, 16 Chairs, 21 Staff]

BOD Comments:

- More diverse partnerships
- does AASHTO have an opportunity to be a stronger voice in DC?
- Technology, economic condition, and learning opportunities.
- the diversity of the board - use it
- Have the executive committee set a key initiative(s) for a four year period and carry that through the next four presidents.
- Embracing and accelerating innovation and technology to help DOTs. Leveraging state resources together.
- Evolution of programs as indicated. Stronger financial support. Additional staffing and resources. Capitalize on lessons learned through the current pandemic.
- When AASHTO can harness its resources appropriately, it can drive national transportation policy and technical processes across a broad spectrum of activities.
- I think there is a big opportunity for AASHTO to monetize virtual meetings. With our current COVID-19 crisis, and civil unrest, travel may remain difficult for some time.
- with rapid turnover and retirements, AASHTO can be the new source for thinking abt outsourcing \*\*\* AASHTO can help DOTs make sense of a rapidly changing world - I think this is the opportunity for thought leadership and could / should be a big part of the platform - address today and get a handle on the long-term and emerging trends in transpo
- become more virtual, update website
- Great talent and resource pool.
- Research. Social media.
- future generation of transportation professional with a different mind set must be cultivated
- Advocacy
- There is an opportunity now more than ever to help shape the new Transportation Bill.
- Strengthen relationships and partner with other transportation organizations, both to advocate for transportation and to collaborate on issues.
- a unified voice and technical support
- The impending collapse of the HTF funding structure gives us an opportunity to be innovative in thinking about the future: how we're funded, the services we'll provide, what should be different, etc. We also have an opportunity to broaden the way people think of the work of state DOTs and why what we do is important.

- There will be even a greater need from congress and the executive for AASHTO expertise in COVID recovery efforts as well as transportation finance. Congress may finally have to listen about transportation revenues and AASHTO is perfectly positioned to assist and guide the conversation.
- Our greatest opportunity is to set a practical plan for the future of transportation and mobility.
- To continue to be relevant.

Chair Comments:

- bringing focus to national architecture for AV/CV; forging regional collaborations integrating other modes and economics/workforce impacts of transportation investments
- getting all states to participate
- To speak with one collective voice about the benefits of infrastructure investment as a way to help bring back the economy post-COVID
- Always an ongoing opportunity to leverage the knowledge and talents of members.
- Be out front with guidance and information on emerging technologies, policy or law changes.
- Programs, focus areas
- Leveraging digital tools, data and AI to enhance services.
- Continue to lead new leadership in transportation in understanding the future needs of the transportation system.
- Leaning logistical processes. Unleashing innovation through improved information and knowledge flow/cross committee engagement.
- provide information to public to further policy and educate on issues such as highway safety, how DOT's are stretching tax payer dollars. Help improve public opinion, build trust
- Show leadership as the need to change funding mechanisms for transportation in the future will have to evolve.
- Improve the timeliness of decision making related to policy.
- To streamline some of the committees, have more focus.
- Use of retirees as consultants and part time staff
- Taking advantage of technology to engage as much as possible during these times - may allow more engagement.
- Coming out of COVID-19, AASHTO has the opportunity to drive the formulation and support of national policy on emerging technologies that can provide sustainable transportation in the future. AASHTO needs to move towards recognition of the fact that State DOTs need to become more customer-focused and start thinking of themselves more as a mobility enabler rather than an infrastructure steward (which is only part of what they need to be if they are to be a mobility enabler).

Staff Comments:

- We have excellent staff who care deeply about the organization. We have smart people who are considered leaders in the industry and who are trusted for their thoughts and opinions. We have the opportunity to better feature the very deep bench of experts - technical and policy.
- Help everyone at a DOT understand how they are connected to AASHTO and how they could benefit from participation.
- Data and forward-thinking policies
- Filling the gaps created in member agencies capabilities due to the economic crisis.
- Platform to spotlight progressive state DOT activities. Underwrite policy research for emerging mobility areas. Collaboration with sub-state level and non-traditional stakeholder organizations.
- Leverage the expertise and connections of State DOT's to members of Congress and governors to advance AASHTO national goals.
- AASHTO can make more of a stand in critical areas if we have more interaction with industry partners. Perhaps, AASHTO should assess which areas DOTs deem AASHTO services the most important and eliminate those programs that benefit the fewest and don't sustain the organization, and focus more energy and resources on those that do.
- More member engagement. New areas of emphasis to meet changing needs.
- AASHTO can continue to become more diverse in leadership. Over the past few years AASHTO has become more diverse and hopefully they will continue to do so.
- We have a lot of really smart people trying to do really smart things -- and whether they work or not, there's usually something useful to carry into future efforts.
- Engaging as many of the states as possible to broaden our overall perspective and representation.
- AASHTOWare expansion, surface transportation reauthorization
- 1) Training is a big area of potential growth that is slowly being tapped, but some resources dedicated to this area could help it make a giant leap. 2) Involving a broader cross-section of entities in both committees and Technical Service Programs, including local and county governments, and figuring out a way they can participate monetarily as well (without disenfranchising the states who are paying quite a bit to be part of the organization and its TSPs).
- Enjoys high degree of credibility and can Build /expand partnerships with Industry to augment resources
- Ability to influence infrastructure design, operations and maintenance that suits the needs of 21st century mobility systems. Contribute to enhancing safety on highways by facilitating knowledge transfer and best practices internationally.
- Recent leadership changes give us an opportunity to forge a more collaborative environment.
- As DOT's get smaller in size, staff wise, there is a shifting of the work to consultants and contractors. There is a partnering opportunity for AASHTO to leverage this resource.
- Focus more on multimodalism
- Engaging in this strategic plan development process provides an opportunity for the organization to examine goals/mission/vision. These are important exercises that help drive

organizations forward--this is a great opportunity to assess what's going well and what we can do better.

- \*develop a customer service and quality oriented set of operating guidelines and procedures to ensure consistency, quality of service, and continual improvement \*include measurable/quantifiable goals to ensure that progress is being made and goals are being met (ex: get a 9/10 rating on meetings; sell a certain # of publications; respond to emails within 2 business days...) \*broad engagement program aashto-wide with schools and universities \*using current technology to remove some of the roadblocks to timely information sharing and collaborating
- We still have an opportunity to make an impact on national policy changes and we still have an impact internationally through our standards.

## F4. What are AASHTO's Threats?

Responses: 55 [21 BOD, 14 Chairs, 20 Staff]

BOD Comments:

- Not understanding that our success is predicated on the success of our Cities and Counties.
- Expectations of stakeholders, politics, and economic condition.
- maybe not a threat but other member driven entities are focusing on the same issues
- Politics, which is getting ugly and divisive.
- Serving too many interests and becoming ineffective through a lack of specific focus.
- Financial instability of states equates to financial concerns of AASHTO.
- The biggest threat to AASHTO is political bias. Transportation is for all Americans and AASHTO must exist to serve all Americans, if it is to be effective.
- I do not see significant threats to AASHTO's continued ability to be successful.
- Laborious processes that provide dated products
- lack of dot revenue
- Might get left behind if we don't keep in front of transportation trends.
- Same people doing the same thing. Sometimes even wearing different hats.
- see F3
- Post-COVID world
- Having adequate funding to really make significant improvements to national infrastructure
- AASHTO's success comes from state DOT engagement. As we are all asked to do more with less, ensuring that volunteers continue to staff committees and put in the effort is a concern. What makes AASHTO successful is having voices from all the various DOT's around the table, to inform the discussion and the deliverables. Some states already participate in a limited way, but have all the benefits of membership, we need to ensure that is the minority.
- Budgets and promoting active membership with the next generation state dot workforce
- The impending failure of the HTF funding model is also a threat. Standing still while the world changes around us is a worry as well.
- Finances, and the aging workforce. It is not unusual for the Board of Directors to face turnover since that is the nature of those positions, but we are seeing more of our committee members retire and their replacements not step up into leadership roles.
- The threat to AASHTO right now is the COVID-19 response at the state level that could threaten the way we have operated. As an organization, our greatest threat is the sustainability of the workforce.
- To become too political and weaken our core values.

Chair Comments:

- revenue shortfalls at DOTs
- funding, devoted volunteers
- COVID budget cuts to discretionary spending.
- Funding, ensuring the highest priority member needs are met.
- Rapid changes in technologies, funding limitations make it necessary for AASHTO to be adaptive.
- Relevance
- Competition for scarce resources: money, i.e. member budget challenges and ability to pay or participate, members time. Competition for talent - staff is great, and therefore easily poached.
- Funding and knowledge loss.
- Staff and volunteer turnover. Budgets and travel limitations have reduced the exposure to and experience with AASHTO in our state DOTs. Committee membership and information access limitations places a greater burden on individuals to transfer knowledge and workloads limit the ability to do so.
- Loss of experienced members. Loss of member time to devote to large technical efforts as DOT's scale back employee numbers.
- Financial issues, with the current times it will be hard to send as many people to meetings.
- There continues to be an assumption that things will get better once we are funded properly. we may never be funded properly by Congress.
- Challenges in bringing people together in the current environment. Lots can be done remotely, but something is lost when you don't get to interact in person.
- Washington DC and becoming politicized rather than staying as a technical body.

#### Staff Comments:

- Our legacy is long, but we also rely too much on our reputation. Our membership is changing. Our BOD increasingly is made up of non-engineers. There are more political leaders and technocrats who care less about AASHTO's legacy and more about what the organization actually offers.
- Transportation system may soon be outdated
- Economic forces beyond AASHTO's control.
- Ceding leadership on a nationwide transportation policy front
- Current economic crisis in the country and state governments leading to possible shortfalls in funding AASHTO programs. The increasingly divisive political atmosphere in the country may make reaching consensus on routine basis more and more difficult.
- Balkanization of transportation policies by parochial and regional interests. State based policies and programs that don't span state lines to address regional transportation issues.
- Not being able to quickly react to fast changing times.
- Funding shortages, through decreasing highway trust fund, DOT's financial hardships, decline in member purchasing power of AASHTO products and services.

- Reduced funding for state DOTs, face to face meetings in the near term are unlikely or will have to be done differently.
- Competition from other, better-funded orgs (some for-profit) that also occupy our niche, generally in aggregate with other orgs. We need to find ways to maintain our ideological independence and financial viability within those frameworks. We have some leverage though, in the form of our reputation within the transportation sphere specifically. Put another way, they wouldn't want to eat our lunch if our lunch didn't look tasty.
- Not enacting more forward thinking policies and becoming the proverbial frog in boiling water-- getting too complacent based on our strengths noted above and not adapting more adroitly.
- AASHTO staff turnover, current economic environment, state DOT declining budgets
- 1) From a technical perspective, other organizations (e.g., NACTO) releasing guidance that is not well-researched but has popular support from advocacy groups or legislation. 2) AASHTO's disconnect with local agencies that sometimes drive the issues in item #1, as well as other issues that are more urban-focused.
- keeping up with changing trends in technology and membership needs
- Organizations with an urban focus (NACTO, C40, etc.)
- Funding challenges do to the current crisis. Infrastructure has become a partisan issue.
- One of the main threats is AASHTO not communicating the value of the organization to our members OR leadership of a DOT doesn't recognize and understand the value of AASHTO.
- To focus on multimodalism, there is a real threat of losing members who only want AASHTO focused on highways and bridges. I hate the use of the word threat. It is the challenge.
- From a competitor standpoint, AASHTO doesn't face many threats. We are the preeminent membership organization for state DOTs. In terms of existential threats, being slow to address internal process improvements.
- \*lack of consistent and protected ways to develop standards and publications \*potential loss of funding \*contractors whose performance is not measured \*high turnover in membership - a lot of historical knowledge rests with members who either retire or get transferred. Leads to missing goals, lots of time spent re-learning or re-hashing issues \*committee priorities and AASHTO internal priorities do not always align.

# Appendix B.

# SWOT Webinar Slides

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Today's meeting includes live polls. From your computer, tablet, or phone:  
visit [www.menti.com](http://www.menti.com) and enter code **52 66 03**

# AASHTO'S 2021-2026 Strategic Plan SWOT Webinar

(Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats)

NCHRP Project 20-24(130)  
July 7, 2020

 spy pond partners, llc with Econolite Systems Inc. & HNTB

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## Agenda

1. Welcome & Introduction
2. Interviews & Survey Findings
3. SWOT Overview
4. SWOT Review
5. SWOT Priorities
6. Application of SWOT in the Strategic Plan
7. Closing Remarks and Next Steps



[www.menti.com](http://www.menti.com) code **52 66 03**

2

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# Welcome & Introduction

# 1

3

## Project Objectives

### Support the development of the 2021-2026 AASHTO Strategic Plan

- Facilitate the work of AASHTO staff and membership
- Strengthen involvement of AASHTO committees
- Strengthen member understanding and commitment to AASHTO's goals
- Aide committee member efforts to identify and commit to plan components that are important to their work
- Provide a plan update that recognizes today's fast-changing environment



4

4

## Strategic Plan Advisory Committee

- Review and provide input on the products of the strategic plan development effort
- Help develop the strategic plan at a workshop in September
- Become ambassadors of the strategic plan through councils and committees and with other AASHTO members

5

5

## Project Tasks and Schedule

Task	2020												2021		
	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2					
<b>Start Up and Information Gathering</b>															
Task 1. Kickoff Meeting															
Task 2. AASHTO 2014-2019 Strategic Plan Review															
Task 3. SWOT Analysis (& Webinar) <b>7/7/20</b>															
<b>Plan Development</b>															
Task 4. Candidate Goal Areas															
Task 5. Work-to-Date Summary and Candidate Goals Webinar <b>8/6/20</b>															
Task 6. Candidate Goals and Objectives and Prelim. Imp. Plan Development															
Task 7. AASHTO Strategic Plan Advisory Committee Retreat <b>TBD</b>															
Task 8. Draft AASHTO Strategic Plan															
<b>Plan Finalization and Distribution</b>															
Task 9. Present Draft AASHTO Strategic Plan at AASHTO Annual Meeting															
Task 10. Final AASHTO Strategic Plan															
Task 11. AASHTO Committees Support															
Task 12. Final Report															
 Events															

6

6

# Interviews & Survey Findings

# 2

7

## Interview Summary Preview **Value to Members**

*Members and staff who were interviewed feel  
AASHTO provides value to its members, and that the  
recent restructuring helped improve that value.*

8

8

Interview Summary Preview

## National Transportation Policy Development

*Interviewees agreed that AASHTO's role in national transportation policy development is critical, but opinions varied on how to move forward.*

9

9

Interview Summary Preview

## Communicate the Value of Transportation

*Interviewees agreed that more work is needed to adequately communicate the value of transportation.*

10

10

Interview Summary Preview

## **AASHTO Programs**

*AASHTO's programs are highly valued by its members  
but some are better at meeting member needs than  
others.*

11

11

Interview Summary Preview

## **Current Strategic Plan**

*The current strategic plan is working with the recent  
restructuring improving the organization's  
effectiveness.*

12

12

Interview Summary Preview

## **Next Strategic Plan**

*The next strategic plan should drive decision-making with clear, concise information about AASHTO's direction.*

13

13

Interview Summary Preview

## **Build on Past Success**

*AASHTO can continue to build on its long history of success, sustaining its focus and mission while adjusting to future trends.*

14

14

Survey Highlights

## Purpose of AASHTO

- **Advocate, support, and enable:** the needs of its members
- **Develop policy** - be a voice in DC
- **Communicate** on behalf of the members – be a voice for the members
- **Connect the DOTs** in order to better serve the public – provide a forum for state to work together and learn from each other
- **Publish** transportation related standards and guidelines
- **Provide products and services** to its members and to the public – provide technical services – develop solutions

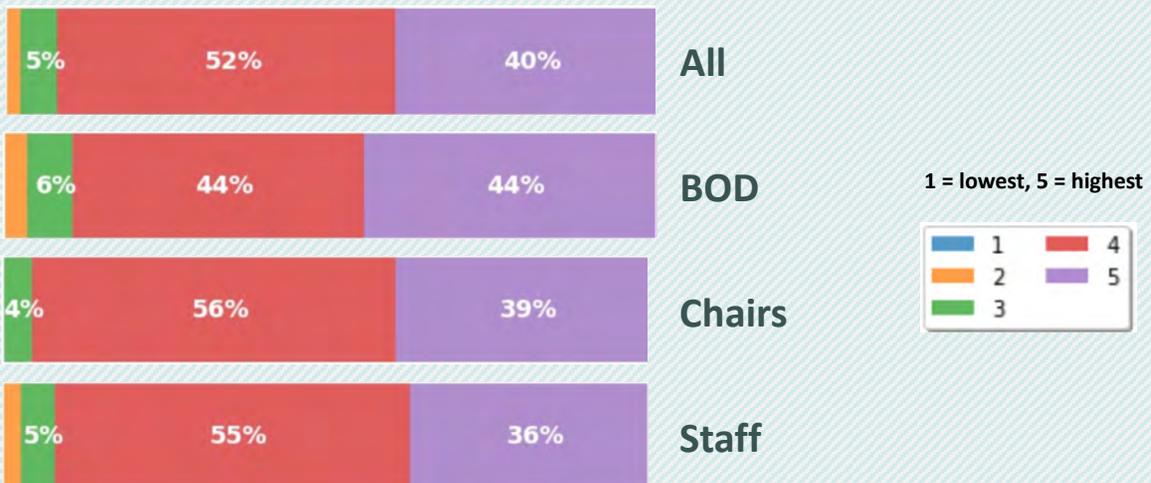
15

15

Survey Highlights

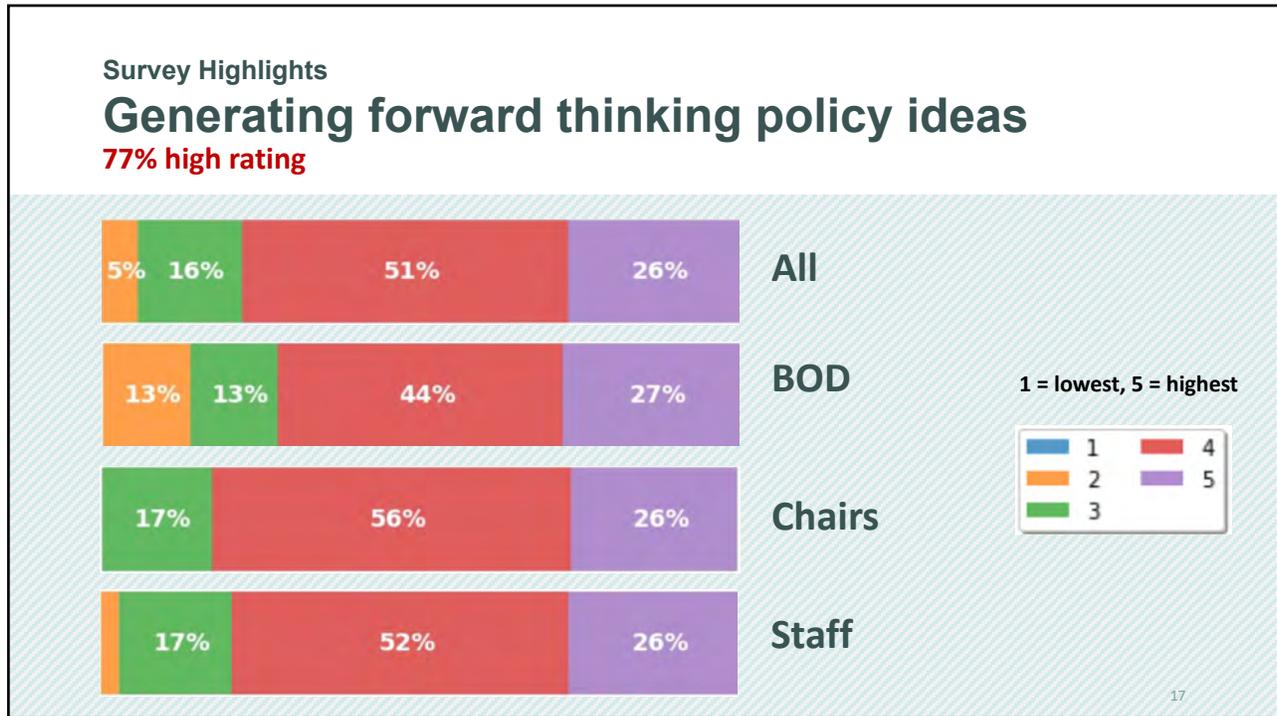
## How well does AASHTO serve its purpose?

92% high rating

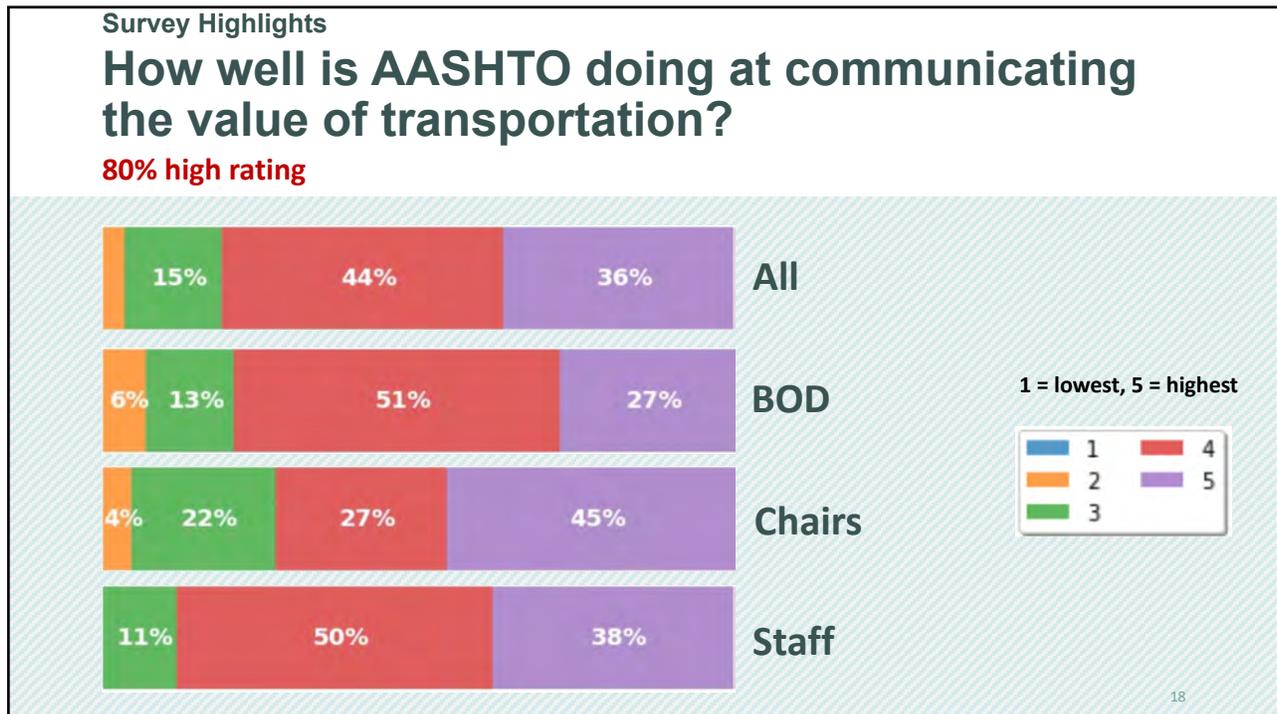


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Survey Summary Preview

# IMPORTANCE vs. SATISFACTION Comparison



AASHTO Journal

Daily Transportation Update

Transportation TV

AASHTO Website

Survey Summary Preview

# IMPORTANCE vs. SATISFACTION Comparison



# SWOT Overview

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## SWOT Purpose

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

- Provides an overview of the health of AASHTO
- Provides confidence on the direction that AASHTO should go towards with the strategic plan
- Strengths and opportunities provide ways for AASHTO to flourish
- Weaknesses and threats inspire improvements to mitigate risks



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# SWOT Review

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## Strengths

- United membership creates a strong voice
- Truly member-driven
- Diverse opinions of membership representing all 52 DOT's
- Committee/council structure delivers results
- Growing ability to be nimble in fast-paced world
- Apolitical focus on transportation
- Strong set of core processes that is stable
- Ability to work with congress and FHWA – good personal relationships with policy makers and deep connection with federal decisionmakers, good standing on Capitol Hill
- Recognized as an unbiased bi-partisan advocate for transportation issues
- Proven technical expertise and credibility on transportation policy
- A clear, important mission to fulfill
- Good reputation
- History, advocacy and ability to represent state DOTs – Everybody in the transportation industry know AASHTO by the acronym
- Good products and services – advocacy, AASHTOWare, congressional visits, training
- Publications
- Strong link to research
- Education and training for members
- Technical committees
- Standards building
- Strong financial footing

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## Weaknesses

- Disengaged states/members – some states do not participate fully
- Too much reliance on the same CEO
- Lack of member and staff capacities to do what is needed
- Lack of clear organization-wide roles and responsibilities, for both staff and members
- Lack of performance management techniques
- Slow to change – agility vs. inertia
- Committees work in silos which can lead to duplicate efforts or missed opportunities
- Too much focus on highways and bridges and not enough multimodal
- Too many and too diverse interests being currently represented
- Too much dependence on state finances
- The diversity of the DOTs can make it hard to have strong policy messages on all issues
- Reactive rather than proactive
- Reliance on past glories
- AASHTO does not communicate across organization well
- Weak website
- Too many different IT solutions and difficulty using them - Need modern software
- Information is not up to date about committees and memberships
- Slow to develop needed software (AASHTOWARE)
- Lack of consistency throughout committees and technical service program products and services

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## Opportunities

- Leverage the knowledge and talents of members
- Engage as many of the states and members as possible to broaden perspectives and diversity
- Cultivate future generation of transportation professionals
- Develop a customer service and quality-oriented set of operating guidelines and procedures to ensure consistency, quality of service, and continual improvement
- Strengthen partnerships
- Leverage high degree of credibility to build /expand augment resources, knowledge, and policy
- Capitalize on lessons learned through the current pandemic
- Think longer term
- Data
- Take advantage of technology to engage as much as possible during these times
- Streamline some committees to increase focus
- Surface transportation reauthorization
- Post COVID innovations
- Focus more on multimodalism
- Good information about transportation and its importance
- Better use of the web and latest technologies
- New areas to meet changing needs
- More training
- Tap new consumers of AASHTO products and services
- AASHTOWare expansion
- Facilitate knowledge transfer and best practices

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## Threats

- Member and staff turnover
- Aging workforce and lack of new member engagement
- Contractors whose performance is not measured
- Lack of alignment between AASHTO internal organization and committees
- State DOT declining budgets
- Competition for scarce resources, both money and talent
- Competition from other, better-funded orgs
- Increasingly divisive political atmosphere
- Getting too complacent based on our strengths
- Serving too many interests and becoming ineffective
- Balkanization of transportation policies by parochial and regional interests
- Not enacting more forward-thinking policies
- The focus on multimodalism potentially alienates members who want AASHTO to focus on highways and bridges
- Relying too much on its reputation
- Not communicating the value of AASHTO
- Rapid changes in technologies
- Lack of consistent and protected ways to develop standards and publications
- Other organizations, such as NACTO, producing guidance

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**SWOT  
Priorities**

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## SWOT Polling

- From your computer, tablet, or phone, visit [www.menti.com](http://www.menti.com)
- Enter code **52 66 03**



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# Application of SWOT in Strategic Plan

# 6

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## Questions?

- What are the group's biggest takeaways from what we have learned from today's SWOT exercise?
- How does the group see the application of the takeaways in the strategic plan?

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**Closing  
Remarks**

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## Project Tasks and Schedule

Task	2020												2021		
	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2					
<b>Start Up and Information Gathering</b>															
Task 1. Kickoff Meeting															
Task 2. AASHTO 2014-2019 Strategic Plan Review															
Task 3. SWOT Analysis (& Webinar) <b>7/7/20</b>															
<b>Plan Development</b>															
Task 4. Candidate Goal Areas															
Task 5. Work-to-Date Summary and Candidate Goals Webinar <b>8/6/20</b>															
Task 6. Candidate Goals and Objectives and Prelim. Imp. Plan Development															
Task 7. AASHTO Strategic Plan Advisory Committee Retreat <b>TBD</b>															
Task 8. Draft AASHTO Strategic Plan															
<b>Plan Finalization and Distribution</b>															
Task 9. Present Draft AASHTO Strategic Plan at AASHTO Annual Meeting															
Task 10. Final AASHTO Strategic Plan															
Task 11. AASHTO Committees Support															
Task 12. Final Report															
 Events															

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Thank you

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