

Section 10:
Internal Stakeholder
Interviews Summary Report

2005 Customer Satisfaction Survey Internal Stakeholder Interviews

Summary Report

Conducted for

**The Tennessee
Department of Transportation**

by

ETC Institute
TransTech Management



October 31, 2005

Contents

Overview	1
Perceived Benefits of the Survey	1
Expectations for the Customer Survey	2
How Senior Managers Rate the State’s Transportation System.....	4
How the Quality of the State’s Transportation System Is Changing.....	7
What Senior Managers Think TDOT Does Best	9
What Senior Managers Think the Department’s Customers Would Say that TDOT Does <u>BEST</u> ?	13
How Senior Managers Think TDOT Can Improve	16
Questions Senior TDOT Managers Would Like to Ask <u>Residents</u> on the Survey	20
Questions Senior Managers Would Like to Ask Other Groups	23
Suggestions to Make the Results of the Survey More Meaningful	24
Barriers or Obstacles that Could Impact the Implementation of Recommendations from the Survey	27
Other Comments	29

Overview

ETC Institute conducted one-on-one interviews with 35 senior TDOT managers during October 2005. Most of the interviews were conducted face-to-face during the week of October 10-14, 2005. Four interviews were conducted by phone.

The purpose of the senior manager interviews was to gather input about a wide range of issues related to TDOT's external customer survey, including the following:

- Perceived benefits of conducting the survey
- Expectations that managers have for the survey
- How senior managers rate the quality of the State's transportation system
- How they think the quality of the State's transportation system is changing
- What managers think TDOT does best
- How senior managers think TDOT can improve
- The types of questions senior managers would like to see on the survey
- Suggestions for making the survey results more meaningful to senior managers.

This report contains a summary of the comments that were made by the TDOT managers who were interviewed. The order that comments are listed does not reflect the priority that TDOT managers place on various issues. The report is designed to serve as an informational tool that will support the development of questions for the statewide customer survey that will be conducted during the Spring of 2006. In order to protect the confidentiality of those who were interviewed, specific names are not included in this report.

Perceived Benefits of the Survey

At the beginning of each interview, senior managers were asked if they thought a statewide customer survey was a valuable process for TDOT to undertake. All of the managers who were interviewed indicated that they thought the process was valuable. Some of the perceived benefits of conducting the survey, that were mentioned by senior managers, included the following:

- Customers are our clients; we live in a political environment, so we must listen. We need to know how people are feeling about government....this will affect the Governor and his performance.
- It is extremely important to do this and do it well. Our success depends on satisfying the customer.

Internal Stakeholder Interviews Executive Summary

- We need to get our customers to tell us what we're doing wrong and what we're doing better. How else can we know? If we don't know, how can we correct it?
- Very valuable if the solutions can be achieved within the next 4 years; if not, then it will die, as other initiatives have when the Administration changes. Solutions need to be staged in bite-sized steps that can be measured. Don't bite off too much at once.
- This will provide feedback to see if our work is having a positive effect. We've turned around a lot of newspapers... "open arms" is now the norm and the public recognizes it.
- This is the most important thing we've done in a very long time.
- If the internal perception of TDOT employees is that we're doing a great job, but the customers say we're not, then we must either change what we do OR work on our customer's perception.
- In today's environment, this is important, and the Administration is 'in tune' with the customers' needs.
- It'll be valuable if we'll use the results.

Expectations for the Customer Survey

Senior managers were asked about their expectations for the Customer Survey and what they would like to see happen as a result of this year's effort. Some of the comments in response to these questions are provided below.

- Not sure. Aeronautics is different from highways.
- This will help TDOT be more responsive. The public needs to understand that TDOT is responsive to their input.
- TDOT can get a good fix on what it is the public wants. I'd like for the public to get a good fix on what TDOT does. Get a mutual understanding of what the problems are and what it'll take to fix them.
- I want to see a real analysis – an analysis of the results – to determine how well we are serving our clients. It should be used as a temperature gauge on an on-going basis. Surveys need to be conducted over a period of time to gauge how things are changing. Get a real feel for what factors are impacted.

Internal Stakeholder Interviews Executive Summary

- I want to see a list of recommendations that each unit can use to improve itself in their customer relations.
- Gauging the temperature is important. We need to build in some kind of measurement...can't be just subjective. We need some objective comparisons. Also, peer-to-peer comparisons are critical.
- I'm interested in comparisons with peer states.
- We'll have some base line data from which to measure whether we're really improving.
- I hope this points us in the direction we need to go with issues we need to address.
- Use the information to make appropriate changes and/or deal with customer perceptions.
- This should improve TDOT's ability to deliver services.
- We need to get it implemented. Whatever is shown, good or bad, get something done with it.
- We've done surveys before, but this is the first comprehensive, statistically valid survey the agency has done. I think it will be very useful.
- The surveys will let us hear from new people who have not talked to us before.
- I hope this process will help our long-range planning process. Maybe we can find ways to develop new strategies for increasing revenue.
- I hope it will help us set priorities for investing the limited dollars we have. There are a lot of needs and very few dollars.
- I always like good feedback. It helps us make better decisions.
- It's hard for me to say. The results won't directly affect how my office does its job, but I think there will be benefits for many areas in the Department.
- If the people who work for TDOT feel better about what they do as a result of this survey, this project will be a great investment. Too often we only hear the negative. Our employees need to know what people outside this department really think, and I think this is a good way to get that information.
- I hope this helps us get national awards.

Internal Stakeholder Interviews Executive Summary

- I think this will give us some good information about where we are and how we can improve.
- I would like to be able to use results as one factor that determines DOT employee compensation.
- I would like to see the results used to help recruit business relocate to Tennessee.
- This may help us justify funding request.
- This should show accountability.
- We need actionable data that identifies specific opportunities to improve.
- I want to see benchmark data for use in future replications.
- The survey should provide assessment of all modes of transportation, not just roads.
- Provide best practices data regarding what other states are doing to assess customer satisfaction.
- Identify opportunities to improve customer relations.
- We need to learn what's important to the general public & whether to change any of our priorities.
- We need to get an accurate assessment of customer satisfaction with TDOT's services - to provide a performance review that holds TDOT accountable to its customers.
- This will help us develop good measures of TDOT performance as an organization by providing accurate, reliable measures of customer satisfaction.

How Senior Managers Rate the State's Transportation System

Thirty-three (33) of the 35 managers who were interviewed rated the State's Transportation system as good or excellent. Two (2) rated the transportation system as average and none (0) of those interviewed rated it as poor. Some of the reasons that senior managers gave their ratings are provided below.

- Our highways are excellent relative to all other states

Internal Stakeholder Interviews Executive Summary

- Highway – excellent; Transit – poor to moderate.
- It’s hard to give an over-arching answer: the interstate highway system is excellent. Rural secondary roads and bridges are limited by funding and geometry to turn them into a first class system.
- We have some of the best roads in the country. They are rated very high by truckers and maintained very well. Some parts are not as good as others, but GOOD overall. Most customers would say the system is good. We do not have tolls (yet!).
- We use our resources very efficiently – planning, design, construction and maintenance are done to high standards.
- We have an excellent road system. We’ve kept up with capacity on a state wide basis. Too much is focused on highway modes. Good on aeronautics. We need more in public transportation. We have allowed a backlog of congestion in our urban areas because of rural legislators.
- We have done a great job in adding capacity where needed. Probably GOOD PLUS!
- Basic rating by truckers is #3 in the nation. The bigger issue: we are a “pay as you go” state - no big bonds to pay off. Our peer states have a lot of debt. Another issue: TDOT is moving more towards a multi-modal approach, i.e., moving people and products rather than just building roads and bridges.
- “Just ride on it and see – then go to a border state and you’ll REALLY see!”
- In terms of commerce: “excellent.” In terms of people, transit and congestion: “good.”
- The roads are in excellent shape but the system may not be meeting public’s demands. We have capacity needs.
- There are noticeable difference when leaving Tennessee and driving to other states. From the standpoint of road condition, TN is “very good.”
- Surveys have shown the system is good. Truckers say it’s “top notch.” Compared to some other states. TN gets snow and ice, which makes maintenance harder and more expensive.
- Drive to other states and “listen to your tires.” Truckers rate TN high every year.

Internal Stakeholder Interviews Executive Summary

- We do a good job on the roadways. We deliver quality roads at a reasonable cost. Our fuel taxes in Tennessee have been about the same since 1986. Our taxes are among the lowest in the nation.
- We are consistently rated in the Top 5 in the nation for building roads and highways.
- We provide good service at a low cost, but there is definitely room for improvement in areas like public transit.
- Our highways are generally smooth and of high quality.
- We are good stewards of taxpayer money.
- I give the system very high marks for quality and safety, but the way we have gotten there has not always been so good. We used to only focus on the end project and not the means for getting there. We are doing better now, but we certainly had stumbling blocks along the way.
- I think we try to go out of our way to do more than what is just required. I think our employees really care about the services we provide.
- We are one of the best DOTs in the nation if you believe the trucker magazines. People who live here and have been to other states think we have it pretty good.
- Compared to our neighboring states, Tennessee highways are much better maintained.
- I think TDOT does a good job. We are so large and intertwined in the 95 counties and cities that there will always be some confusion, but overall, I think we do a very good job.
- Our interstates are among the best maintained in USA.
- The safety of our roads is excellent.
- While our roads are good, TDOT's services to other modes of transportation suffer. For example, there is no money in the TDOT budget for water transportation.
- While our roads are excellent, opportunities exist to improve our services related to rail and water modes of transportation.

Internal Stakeholder Interviews Executive Summary

- Our roads & airports are very good to excellent (truckers have consistently rated TN interstates as among the best in the US). However, opportunities exist to improve TDOT railroad services – ex: reduce number of collisions at RR grade crossings.
- We have better management of incidents – collisions and weather conditions.
- Length of time from project proposal to project completion is too long.
- Our roads are excellent (smooth). However, we are falling behind in our capacity to provide rail and water freight transportation services and to provide public transit services that are alternatives to private motor vehicles.

How the Quality of the State's Transportation System Is Changing

Compared to five years ago, twenty-one (21) of the senior managers interviewed thought the quality of the State's Transportation system had improved. Twelve (12) thought the quality stayed about the same and two (2) thought it had gotten somewhat worse. Some of the reasons for their ratings are provided below.

- Increased funding in aeronautics.
- Highways are fine...not enough on other modes.
- The system has not changed much but TDOT has gotten a lot better in dealing with our customers, improving customer service, and in our approach to dealing with people.
- TDOT has worked on system management and continued strong O&M.
- Change in maintenance activity to non-rush hour periods; evening work has helped a lot. Strong emphasis on highway safety. TDOT is very results oriented.
- Volume of traffic is increasing VERY rapidly, so it's hard to keep up. In future years, money will become a serious problem. Need to explore public-private partnerships and explore tolls. However, bonding is the last thing we should do.
- Problems have been identified and corrections made. Infrastructure has been improved, especially in Nashville area. Plus ITS applications have been received well by the users, in combination with the HELP program.
- TDOT has done well in providing more capacity.
- Funding is an issue, especially to address urban needs.

Internal Stakeholder Interviews Executive Summary

- We always had a pretty good system. Perhaps it's improved some in the last 5 years compared to other states.
- The volume of traffic is up. Limited resources affect our ability to maintain the system and impact our ability to purchase needed equipment.
- It surely did not get worse, but there's no basis to say it's "better."
- I think we are more accountable than we used to be. We do a better job of ensuring that we get quality products from our contractors.
- Public involvement has gotten much better. We do a better job of explaining why we do things. I think our decision-making process is perceived to be more open and fair.
- We are doing a much better job of getting feedback from rural areas.
- We are much more responsive. Our long-range transportation planning process was very good.
- Commissioner Nicely has made several conscious decisions to make this Department more customer-focused, and it has paid off.
- The Department is definitely much better on public involvement and public input. We actually let people ask questions now. There was a time when we didn't do that.
- We are much more responsive to the public and our public involvement is much better. We get the public involved much earlier in the process.
- It hasn't gotten worse, but funding constraints have limited some of our progress.
- Customer service has gotten much better since we started involving the public and getting their buy-in.
- We have increased our professional engineering staff and we are including the public in a more in-depth process with our projects. Our product is better as a result.
- Improvements in some geographic areas have come at the cost of no improvement in other areas; we have been robbing Peter to pay Paul.
- TDOT's management practices, processes and tasks have improved.

Internal Stakeholder Interviews Executive Summary

- While the number of road miles for which TDOT is responsible has increased, our resources (funds, work force) have decreased. Consequently, it is increasingly difficult to maintain (example: re-surface) the roads as well as we'd like.
- Roads and airports are much improved but there has been little or no improvement of our services to rail & water modes of transportation.
- We've become much more accountable to the public.
- The growth in demand for transportation services (all modes) now exceeds our capacity to meet those demands.

What Senior Managers Think TDOT Does Best

When asked what the Tennessee Department of Transportation does best, a wide range of responses were provided. Some specific comments are listed below.

- Road maintenance
- We have made great strides in customer service. We've focused on it a lot. We are now gathering information from customers and incorporating into our projects.
- We get the most bang for our bucks; we've got an excellent product; we have good efficiency from our workforce.
- Maintenance is good.
- Our end product is really good.
- We do a good job of Interstate system maintenance.
- We develop projects efficiently.
- Our service is best and we maintain the roads.
- We do a very good job in bridge design and a credible job in bridge maintenance, plus we have a good pavement management system.
- In the last 2-3 years, we've increased our customer service.
- We've done a good job in right-of-ways.
- We do well at the management of our financials. We are a "pay as you go" state.

Internal Stakeholder Interviews Executive Summary

- We do a good job in communications, especially with LEOs. It's not perfect, but doing better in keeping communications lines open.
- We have the smoothest roads in the nation.
- We have a good working relationship with Legislature.
- Customer relations - we've put a lot of resources into it.
- Good customer service is like night and day compared to a few years ago. We answer all mail without exception. Lots of public involvement.
- We have improved handling of project completion. We provide financial incentives to contractors to finish ahead of schedule.
- We provide an excellent highway network. TDOT looks at the network and tries to expand to provide economic routes. Our strategic goal is to connect all county seats to a "really good two lane" system! (There are 95 counties, of which 45 are done.) We are doing this for economic reasons....manufacturing, jobs, etc.
- We do a very good job in materials and testing research.
- We are getting more efficient at involving the public in transportation decisions.
- Community relations have improved a lot over the last few years.
- We do a good job of planning but our ability to deliver has been severely crippled through in-decisiveness. We are spending too much time getting customers' opinions.
- Maintenance is good.
- We treat our employees well.
- We are good at maintaining the system, especially the pavement smoothness.
- We are good at responding to the public's needs. If issues come up, we resolve them as best we can. We respond and take action on issues.
- HELP trucks.
- We've especially improved efficiency in our operations. We've all been challenged to do better in many areas.

Internal Stakeholder Interviews Executive Summary

- We work well with the Legislature, with MPOs, local mayors, etc. There is lots of emphasis on creating partnerships and insuring that everything we do is transparent.
- We're good at involving the public with our CSS (context sensitive solutions) program.
- We spend all our apportionment. WHY? We've never failed to have enough state apportionment to match federal funds.
- We've accomplished a lot of preliminary engineering on an enormous number of projects.
- We have good employees and resources. Our staff is dedicated.
- We're good at paying attention to the organization. The Commissioner has made an effort to get across the state and talk with employees.
- We have a very good planning section. Getting a long range plan will make us head and shoulders above many states. We need to stop promising everybody everything.
- We are good stewards of our money; we will work to overcome short-comings; our staff is dedicated.
- We have high quality roads for the cost because we have low taxes and I think the quality of our highways is pretty good.
- Our Aeronautics division does a great job of managing our public airports.
- The 511 system will be a great way to keep the traveling public informed.
- Our emergency service patrol receives a lot of positive feedback for helping people who are stalled on Interstates.
- We build and maintain good roads.
- The Smart Way message boards in urban areas have been well received.
- ITS is great. The changeable message signs and roadside help are very good.
- Our wildflower programs get many compliments. It makes our highways more attractive and is visible to the public.
- We have good design guidelines and standards.

Internal Stakeholder Interviews Executive Summary

- We provide safe highways.
- Employees know their jobs, and we do a good job of empowering employees to make decisions.
- We do a good job of maintaining highways.
- We are fiscally responsible – our “pay as you go” philosophy has been good.
- Our bridge program is good. A very high percentage of our bridges are in good condition compared to other states.
- We get projects done in a timely manner.
- We provide good value for the investment by taxpayers.
- We do a good job of publicizing the good things that TDOT does.
- We respond quickly to letters and e-mails that are sent to the Department. We respond to all letters within 7 days and all e-mails within 3 days.
- We build and maintain some of the best highways in the U.S.
- TDOT does a good job of keeping employees informed about issues. Internal communication has really improved over the past 2-3 years.
- We are more sensitive to environmental concerns. We look beyond just traffic flow issues when designing highways.
- Our public involvement’s much improved in past 2-3 years.
- Given our limited resources, we maintain all modes of transportation quite well.
- Management process: TDOT is better able than in the past to adapt to changes/requests by various user groups.
- Customer service: we are better at public involvement activities than we used to be – we honor our commitments to our customers.
- Our roads - motorists compliment TDOT built and maintained roads.
- We are building roads. There are many current projects to increase capacity and reduce congestion.

Internal Stakeholder Interviews Executive Summary

- Repair, maintenance and replacement of our bridges has them in very good condition.
- Incident management - collisions on highways are cleared quickly.
- We have been proactive at public outreach/involvement. Experts have been hired at HQ & Regional offices.
- Conserving and protecting the environment both natural and man-made: every project team must now include a person who is responsible for compliance to environmental protection laws. Environmental advocate positions have been created at HQ and every region and will be created at every area office.
- Mobility of general public – we provide very good roads and other transportation services that enable people to travel conveniently, quickly, and safely.
- Congestion relief – incidents (ex: collisions) are cleared quickly.
- Proactive public outreach – TDOT is a better partner with its customers than it used to be.
- Understanding our customers – TDOT is much better now at listening to its customers and soliciting public involvement than it was 2 years ago.
- Maintenance of roads –our roads are smooth and well maintained.
- Managing funds – TDOT does not have bonded debt – we’ve operated on a pay-as-you-go basis.

What Senior Managers Think the Department’s Customers Would Say that TDOT Does BEST?

When asked what the Department’s customers would say that TDOT does best, a wide range of responses were provided. Some of the specific comments by type of customer are listed below.

General Public:

- They probably think we are good at paper work (said with some sarcasm).
- We maintain the highway system very well.
- We maintain welcome centers (rest areas) very well.
- I think they think we are responsive.

Internal Stakeholder Interviews Executive Summary

- Many probably think we inhibit their travel. We sometimes get compliments on the HELP trucks and smooth roads, but the average person says, “Stay out of the way.”
- TDOT maintains the roads well; this is all they know.
- TDOT is much more responsive to the public’s input. We listen. Customers’ input affects how we build our roads.
- We’ve done well at paving, good road surfacing, widened roads, and HELP trucks in urban areas.
- We provide a good highway system (not necessarily good transit services).
- We communicate. We’ve made a serious commitment to this over last 5 years.
- We listen to them.
- They like the HELP program.
- We are fiscally responsible.
- We do a good job in maintaining the system.
- We do a good job in responding to questions and comments. TDOT listens. The level of trust is increasing slowly.
- We have a high quality well-maintained system.
- The roads are in good shape once they’re finished - until then, they’re less than impressed especially in urban areas.
- The public will think the condition of highways is good.
- I think the public thinks the department is more open than it used to be.
- I think the public will think our reputation has improved. Our employees aren’t ashamed of working for TDOT.
- The general public probably thinks that TDOT is much more willing to listen than we used to be.
- TDOT does a good job of maintaining highways.

Internal Stakeholder Interviews Executive Summary

- The public thinks we have a good product - our highways. I think they will think TDOT's management of interstates is very good, especially due to our Help Program.
- Public involvement activities have gotten much better.
- We're best at building and maintaining roads – especially interstates.
- We have safe, well maintained roads.

Other Groups:

- State legislators will probably view TDOT as being very cooperative. In the past 3-4 years TDOT has accommodated many requests without complaints.
- Rural officials will like our efforts to develop rural planning organizations (RPOs). The RPOs are a good initiative and long over due.
- Many stakeholder groups will probably think TDOT's long range planning process has been very good. We involved many people who had never participated before.
- State legislators who have been helped by the "HELP truck" program will give us very high ratings. There is nothing better for our Department than a personal testimony from someone in the State Assembly.
- Local governments seem happier with the Department. I think we cooperate better with cities and counties.
- Legislators think we do a fabulous job.
- Road builders are the toughest nut to crack. They are not very anxious to see TDOT diversify.
- State legislators have a lot of respect for the agency. I think legislators think TDOT employees are very professional.
- Smoothness of roads.
- TDOT is much more responsive to the public's input. We listen. Customers' input affects how we build our roads.
- Transit: we never can do enough to satisfy public transit people.

How Senior Managers Think TDOT Can Improve

When asked where the Department needed to improve most, senior TDOT managers offered a diverse set of responses. Some of the items that were mentioned as areas for improvement are listed below.

- I would like to see more of a multi-modal approach to transportation. We mainly focus on roads, which isn't necessarily bad given the demographics of our state. We have a lot of truck traffic on highways in Tennessee. If we could get some of the freight moved from highways to ships on railroads, we may be able to make the public feel safer about traveling on our highways.
- We need to restore funding for transportation that has been diverted by the State Assembly. The quality of our system will suffer in the long term without adequate funding.
- We need to continue partnering with other agencies.
- We need more feedback from the public to let us know how we are doing on a regular basis.
- Public Transit is very important. We need to give people more choices in both urban and rural areas.
- We need to be more "multi-modal" in our thinking. We need to consider biking, pedestrian, and transit options in all our of corridor studies.
- Communication has gotten better, but it still needs improvement. We don't do a good job of keeping the public informed between phases of a project.
- We need to continue emphasizing public involvement early in the design process.
- We need to communicate and coordinate within TDOT better. Sometimes delays are caused when our employees aren't working together.
- We are doing more public involvement, but it could probably be even better. Our initial efforts have been good – don't get me wrong- but I think there is a lot more we can do.
- We need to work with other agencies to determine what our role will be regarding the environment. The environment will be a big issue for us.
- We need to be better stewards of the environment. We are doing better at erosion control, but we are going to be expected to do more.

Internal Stakeholder Interviews Executive Summary

- We need more public transit services to get people out of the habit of only driving their cars.
- We will need more services to meet the needs of our State's aging population. Each year we have more and more seniors that need transportation services.
- We need to improve highway work zone safety to protect our employees and the public. I think the "merge left" program is a good start.
- Projects could be completed faster. Projects start and then they sit for several months before they start again. This is often due to utilities, but the public doesn't understand this.
- We need to better educate the public about our construction schedule.
- We need to inform the public about what funding is available and the reasons we are not able to fund all the projects that are needed in the State. A lot of people think TDOT has some sort of slush fund sitting around – and we don't.
- Do more roadwork during non-peak times to reduce delays experienced by motorists.
- We should evaluate proposed projects based on per use cost/benefit analysis to assign priorities to projects based on the number of users who will benefit.
- We could schedule projects better.
- Increase funding from sources dedicated to transportation – more funds from current sources and additional sources. Have funding that's adequate to pay for future increased demand for TDOT services.
- Increase funding for road maintenance to re-surface roads in a timely manner.
- Eliminate checkpoints on interstates to increase the rate of traffic flow, reduce congestion and time wasted due to traffic delays.
- There should be more funds for safety related enhancements – visibility of lane stripes, guardrails and signs should be improved.
- Improve the technical expertise of new hire staff for regional and area positions. People hired in recent years to replace retirees do not have enough practical field experience; all they have is book knowledge, not actual project experience.

Internal Stakeholder Interviews Executive Summary

- We should be more accessible to the general public – we could do better at getting media coverage of scheduled lane closings, use display boards and provide traveler information at all rest stops.
- Congestion management – further improvement is needed in our collaboration with other agencies (states, county, cities and towns) to prevent and clear congestion.
- Construction information – there should be better signage and better management of construction companies to shorten project length.
- Complete our long-range transportation plan so we have a good description of the requirements for transportation services and facilities for the next 25 years and the funds that will be required to provide them.
- Attain and retain adequate funding – current level of funding does not allow us to freely meet current demands for transportation services; demand will continue to increase in the future; the gap between funds and demand for services will continue to get larger.
- Need to get our story across as to what we're about.
- Cut out all non-value added stuff that we do. TDOT is doing a pretty good job and is very responsive.
- Without more staff, TDOT cannot do more.
- Continue the high level of maintenance; pay attention to the public, and pay attention to employees.
- Expand the HELP program into rural areas.
- We need to “right-size projects”. CSS is misapplied. I'm sick of this word. Do not over-design projects; don't paint fake bricks. CSS involves incredible levels of community participation, which is running up costs.
- We need more face to face contact with local government partners, especially in urban areas and MPOs.
- Improve data in the planning process, especially in the project management area.
- Project management; project tracking. We need to accurately tell someone when a project will be done to increase public accountability.
- We do pretty darn good.

Internal Stakeholder Interviews Executive Summary

- Look at relationships between land use and transportation from a community and regional perspective.
- Get more money.
- We need to improve the project development process, especially in the environmental areas. Don't rush to the answer. Rather, identify the problem, get information, share it with the local community, and make decisions together. Not the "DAD" approach – Decide, Announce, Defend. Think of "POP" – Publicly Owned Projects.
- Deliver projects on schedule and on budget.
- We still need to improve the public outreach component, although we do well. Maybe start the outreach process earlier.
- Be totally open as to what is in the program for about 3 years in advance. Publish more information about how we stack up against peer states.
- Get better information out to the public.
- Continue to improve the 511 program.
- We need better maintenance of traffic plans on our projects. TDOT is not requiring this of its contractors...we must push them harder and faster.
- Public involvement has been much better under this Administration. We still need more, especially in earlier phases of a project.
- Improve projects within the area of process re-engineering. We need to step back and look at each unit periodically. There is an inability to share data...too many stovepipes. We can't integrate the data and processes. We are short on information and long on data.
- Look for process improvements: no matter what we do, there's a better way to do it. Think outside the box, although the government has some constraints.
- Improve work zones and move people better.
- We need more employees.
- Make sound transportation decisions based on NEEDS rather than "pork."
- Hold the contractors feet to the fire within the construction zone in terms of the traffic control plan, signage, striping, etc.

- Keep tweaking the processes (example: context sensitive solutions are gradually producing better, more customer sensitive designs).
- State procurement processes are absolutely insane. They are mostly State and not TDOT – requirements.
- Increase ITS applications.

Questions Senior TDOT Managers Would Like to Ask Residents on the Survey

Senior managers were asked if they could think of any questions they would like to ask residents on the Customer Satisfaction Survey. Some of the questions and types of information they said they would be interested in learning are listed below.

- How would you rate the value you receive for your transportation taxes in Tennessee?
- How informed are you about how your transportation dollars are spent?
- How supportive would you be of using tolls to pay of the cost of maintaining some roads and bridges?
- Do you feel safe when traveling on State highways?
- Do you know which highways are maintained by TDOT?
- What do you think of TDOT’s public involvement process?
- How would you rate traffic congestion on highways?
- What do you think the Top 5 priorities for TDOT should be over the next five years?
- Do you know what services TDOT provides?
- What do residents think of our rest areas?
- How satisfied are you with biking and pedestrian facilities?
- How satisfied are you with the time it takes to complete projects?
- Do you think TDOT is doing a better job of managing construction sites?
- Would you be willing to pay to use a “hot lane”

Internal Stakeholder Interviews Executive Summary

- Do you feel safe in work zones?
- Are work zones easy to follow?
- Can you see pavement markings at night? What about in the rain?
- What do you think about TDOT's efforts to control erosion and sediment? Are we doing better?
- Do our designs really reflect the mode choice of residents? Or are residents selecting their mode choices based on our designs?
- What do residents think of our work zones?
- How can we get construction information to residents more effectively?
- Do people understand how we prioritize projects?
- Do you think TDOT has a good contracting process in place?
- Would you be willing to pay more for improvements to the State's transportation system? If so, how much? And how?
- How valuable do you think it would be to have light rail and expanded transit services?
- I would like to know how the public views the quality of work provided by TDOT employees. Does the public think TDOT employees are productive? Do they think we are doing a good job?
- I'd like to see what the public thinks about speed limits in work zones. People don't slow down and I'd like to know why.
- Have them assess willingness to pay more and how much more they are willing to pay.
- How supportive would the public be of indexing gas tax to rate of inflation?
- Assess the level of satisfaction with connection of roads within Tennessee, maintenance of roads, length of delays due to congestion at peak times and off-peak times.
- What does TDOT do best/worst?
- What innovative things could TDOT do to enhance its' services?

Internal Stakeholder Interviews Executive Summary

- What's an acceptable delay time due to road construction?
- Does TDOT close lanes at better times than it used to?
- List specific solutions to particular issues and ask respondents to select a preferred solution.
- Under what conditions would you use alternatives to your private motor vehicle?
- What can be done to improve safety on our roads?
- Would you accept more enforcement of traffic laws?
- Would you accept electronic law enforcement, like cameras that record moving violations?
- Assess the level of satisfaction with mobility in rural and urban areas.
- Identify preference for transit alternatives to the use of private motor vehicles.
- Identify concerns about mobility – under what conditions would you use various alternative modes of transit.
- Get observations on how they see the Tennessee system stacking up against other states.
- Do you personally have any complaints about TDOT services? Try to personalize it. Ask, “do you have any problems with TDOT?”
- How can we be more responsive to the public?
- Is reliability of time of trip most important? Is the length of the trip as important or is the time spent on the trip more important?
- How could TDOT serve you better?
- Could TDOT provide better information through the Internet?
- Do you consider highways safer today than they were 5 years ago? [Watch out for highway safety depending on things outside of TDOT control – design, law enforcement, driver behavior, and manufacturing.]
- What improvements would you suggest for improved highway safety?
- Get at issue of high percentage of truck traffic and safety.

Internal Stakeholder Interviews Executive Summary

- If you've had dealings with TDOT, what was your experience? Were you treated professionally?
- Are you aware that a lot about TDOT is available on the Internet?
- Does the public know what environmental permitting and other environmental processes cost?
- How long should it take to develop a project? [Build a case for education/explain the project development process.]
- Ask questions that are not tied to legal matters, e.g., TDOT's ability to do / not do things.
- Reference to right of way acquisition...did you get enough money for your property? Were you treated fairly? Were you treated with courtesy?
- What if you were not getting a project since TDOT was spending the money elsewhere? Would you like the money spread out more? Spend money on a few projects or spread out and do projects that do not involve so much Context Sensitive Solutions in the design process?

Questions Senior Managers Would Like to Ask Other Groups

Senior managers were asked if they could think of any specific questions they would like to ask of certain types of people or groups. Some of the types of questions they said they would like to ask are listed below.

- Economic Development Interests: Would you support more usage-based taxes to help raise revenue for transportation investments in Tennessee? Example, fees based on miles that are driven per year.
- City/County Officials: How has your perception of TDOT's public involvement process changed compared to five years ago?
- Tourists/Travelers: Do you like the State's travel information centers? How would you rate rest areas along state highways?
- Emergency Service Providers: How well does the design of state highways support your ability to provide emergency services? Do you have any concerns?

Internal Stakeholder Interviews Executive Summary

- Truckers:
 - How supportive would you be of using tolls as a funding source since the State has pledged not to raise taxes?
 - Do you have adequate notice about lane closures and construction?
 - How satisfied are you with the quality of highways in Tennessee?
 - How do Tennessee highways compare to other states?
 - How do roads in Tennessee compare to roads in other states? Do you prefer that lane closures for construction on major thoroughfares be done at night or on weekends?
- Rail freight users: Assess satisfaction to rail services.
- Water Freight Users: Assess satisfaction to water-borne transportation services.
- Hiking/biking Trail Users: Assess satisfaction to public transportation services.
- Rural residents: Have roads in your area improved in the past 5 years?
- Automotive manufacturers: are delays in trucking acceptable or do delays negatively impact your operation?
- Law enforcement: What can TDOT do to better enhance safety?
- MPOs: What suggestions do you have to improve the TDOT/ MPO relationship? [This is a serious problem for TDOT.]
- Legislature:
 - What do you think of user pricing for transportation? Of value-priced lanes? Of toll roads?
 - Would you support creating a State Infrastructure Bank?
 - What has been your experience dealing with TDOT?
- Contractors: How does the quality of TDOT stack up against other states?

Suggestions to Make the Results of the Survey More Meaningful

Senior managers were asked if they could think of some ideas that would make the survey results more meaningful. Some of their suggestions included:

- I would like to know about the methodology. How many people will be surveyed, etc?

Internal Stakeholder Interviews Executive Summary

- Let senior managers review the survey questions before you do the survey. I think the results will be more meaningful if you give us a chance to provide input on the types of questions that will be asked.
- Just keep us informed. I want to know what's going on.
- We will need to let employees know what the results are and what to do with them. If we don't inform our employees about this study, we will really be missing out on an opportunity to improve the organization. This survey won't do us any good if it is not shared.
- Represent other sample that includes all user groups, like truckers, commuters, and retailers.
- Identify benefits of findings to TDOT as an organization and to TDOT employees.
- Meet all requirements of the RFP so the deliverable meets all expectations with no exceptions.
- Help TDOT management team to act on results and implement needed changes. Examples: oral delivery of results, meeting of TDOT managers to create action plans that address opportunities to improve TDOT services. Make it easy for managers to make needed improvements.
- Identify our specific strengths and weaknesses and suggest specific corrective actions.
- So we know precisely what to continue doing and what particular things to change.
- Find out what we are doing well to help retain funding for those services the public judges us to do well.
- Use a credible methodology that will stand up under outside analysis to prevent TDOT employees who are sophisticated in research methodology from ignoring/criticizing the results due to methodological weaknesses.
- Be able to tell us what people are thinking about transportation.
- It needs to be summarized into manageable bites of information by subject matter.
- Quantify it. Be clear about what is asked. What is the intent of the question and how is it measured.
- Use simple terms for the public.
- Give the USA TODAY version. Lots of charts and color.

Internal Stakeholder Interviews Executive Summary

- Put parts of the results in the TDOT newsletter; also in the Title IV newsletter, the Diversity newsletter, and the DBE / Small Business newsletter.
- Establish a base line for the review. Be consistent in asking the same questions over time. Provide “here is where we are” and “here is where we want to be,” then measure over time.
- We need to make sure results are shared with “worker bees” and not just with executive staff. Everyone can learn from the results. Lower level employees are often closest to the public.
- Let the TDOT executives decide how wide it should be distributed.
- A report that uses a lot of graphics and color and pictures. Identify what we do best and need to do better. Create a report card with as positive a spin as possible so employees do not view it in a negative way.
- Set reachable, measurable goals that can be communicated and rewarded.
- We need some way to boil it down – use graphics. Pick the top ten things that need to come out of this. What do folks think of tolls, for example? What do folks think of a strong environmental focus, for example?
- Be careful as to the way things are organized. Big documents are commonplace, so we’re used to them, but they must be well-organized. Good structure so reader can find things easily without having to wade through a lot of material.
- Look for things that will enable us to prioritize. Do trade-off analysis (the long range plan SHOULD address this, but does it?). How can we best serve our customers with the money we have and still provide greater accessibility (the “highway folks” do not get it).
- There is strength in numbers so statistical validity is important.
- Public surveys may/may not validate TDOT’s own surveys. Be conscious of this.
- Make results available to every employee, with interpretation, i.e., what does it mean? Do not be overly critical of employees but recognize that they are doing well. Select “challenge areas” for improvement – whether real or perceptions. Get results out to the public, too.
- Post results on the Internet, distribute results to the Legislature, to MPOs, to RTPOs, to employees, etc.
- An outside third party should make recommendations based on the data.

Barriers or Obstacles that Could Impact the Implementation of Recommendations from the Survey

Senior managers were asked if they could think of any barriers to the implementation of recommendations that are based on the survey. Some of the responses to this question are listed below.

- No. I think our leadership is adaptable. Most people (TDOT managers) will think it is good to know how our Department is perceived. I think most managers will want to know what the public thinks about us.
- Years ago, there would have been resistance to change. Today, I think the agency is willing to change, and most people will look forward to seeing the results. Change isn't easy, but we have to make changes to meet the changing needs of the public.
- Culturally, our Department may not be ready to support non-highway initiatives even if these things are priorities to the public.
- We are pretty open-minded here. You need to involve us in the process. Don't make this into the most important issue for the agency all at once. You should build the significance of this study over time and let us contribute to the process.
- Our culture has changed quite a bit. We are more willing to listen and I think managers are more open. It's not that we were always inflexible, but we were certainly perceived as being inflexible by the public.
- Not in my division, but some people like to do things the way that always have. It's difficult to change people like that.
- I think the barriers have been broken down. Most senior managers are willing to support the customer-oriented initiatives because they have seen the benefits of getting public input.
- We need to ensure that Spanish speaking and minority populations are included in the survey. If these groups are not involved, the credibility of the study will be questioned.
- TDOT employees' objections to any findings that identify improvement opportunities: as underpaid state employees, we should not be required to meet the region's standards of customer service as private sector employees.
- Management at any level that does not participate in the process to actively manage customer satisfaction.
- Lack of staff with relevant expertise.

Internal Stakeholder Interviews Executive Summary

- Priorities on other assignments may keep managers especially at area and regional levels, from doing as much as needed to implement any recommended changes.
- Adequacy of funds and staff.
- TDOT has a tradition of ignoring customer preferences and acting as if it knows best.
- Report findings using language of TDOT employees.
- TDOT's organization prevents internal collaboration between bureaus and departments.
- Assessing customer satisfaction will be judged as frivolous by engineers whose focus is on building and maintaining roads and bridges.
- Our staff is nearing retirement – we have trouble attracting new people due to pay scales.
- Fear of change.
- We will have a lack of experience especially in 5 years when more people retire.
- The attitude that “I can outlast the Commissioner “.
- Sounds great, but nothing has changed before. Is anything really going to come out of this?
- Legislature
- Funding limitations.
- Biggest barrier to almost anything we undertake is that we go to the same people to do the work (resource allocation issue within TDOT). This is always a challenge. Is this REALLY important to us...how are we going to get it done? Folks think the communications focus is “not my REAL job!” There will always be a time and people commitment.
- TDOT is prepared to undergo change as we have in recent years. Everyone has been touched by the new community service emphasis.
- Election year.
- Perhaps resources (money and people) constraints.
- The current Commissioner will get it done.

- Cost. Time. Keep non-valued staff to a minimum.
- Resources (time and money). Cultural/organizational differences. Perception is everything.

Other Comments

At the end of the interview, senior managers were asked if there were any other comments they would like to make. These comments are provided below.

- It's a good idea every so often to hold up a mirror and see how you are doing. I'm glad we're doing this. It will be very helpful.
- We need to communicate the results of this survey to the rest of the organization at the end of the study. It won't do us much good if this information is not shared with our employees.
- We need to do a better job of following up on the recommendations. Do you see us doing this survey on a regular basis? If we do this regularly, we are more likely to pay attention to the results.
- I hope this study will address non-road issues in addition to highway issues. Public transit, bike lanes, and pedestrian facilities are important, too. We will always be building roads, but we need to look at other modes as well, and I don't want to see them left out of the survey.
- I'd like to know what residents and stakeholders think about our employees. Do they think our employees work hard? Do they think our employees do a good job?
- I think it will be real important that you ask a representative sample of residents what they think. Don't just ask the folks we hear from all the time. This survey needs to tell us what the typical person in this State thinks of TDOT.
- I'd like to know the rank and file of TDOT feels about the way we perform. I think most of our employees are happier now than they were three years ago, but I don't know for sure. It would just be good to know how they feel.
- The results should be presented in the context of long-term benefits to TDOT not short-term benefits.
- Compared to 5 years ago, is TDOT friendlier, more customer-focused, or more concerned about the environment?
- Include a description/definition of "customer".

Internal Stakeholder Interviews Executive Summary

- The Commissioner has always been strong on customer service and on treating people fairly.
- Quality peaked in 2000-2001 as a result of 1986 and 1989 fuel tax increases. Now we are more in a maintenance mode.
- The success of this study is the follow-up. Too much energy not to follow up strongly.
- It's a very valuable process. There needs to be something that makes this meaningful. For example, "we found out A, B, and C. No doubt that these findings are TRUE, so therefore TDOT needs to do D, E, and F, specifically." Get some HARD data. Here's what to concentrate TDOT resources on. Sort of like a benefit/cost approach. Lean more towards OBJECTIVE, and less on SUBJECTIVE! Find the real trends we're confident about and actually use it to allocate future resources.
- TDOT people are sharper and work harder than any other state.
- Legislators and public are most important.
- In the last 3-4 years, customer service has gone up a lot. It's good to do a 'gut check' from time to time, i.e., get a report card on how we're performing.
- Paying attention to employees and their security is important.
- I wish that we could get a product that would short-circuit political influence and bickering. Politicians would do what the public wants within TDOT resources. Stop the public from making "false accusations" against TDOT.