

Multi-Regional Training and Certification (M-TRAC) Annual Meeting
North Dakota State University – Fargo, North Dakota
August 26-27, 2009

M-TRAC held its annual meeting in Fargo, North Dakota on August 26-27, 2009. This meeting was held at the North Dakota State University and was also webcast. There were eighteen in attendance and several joined via webcast at various times throughout the meeting. A special thank you to Julie Rodriguez and Susan Henrickson for a great job hosting the meeting. The list of attendees is attached. The power points from the meeting are also included.

A social time was held on Tuesday evening for the group as they arrived. This was a great time to “catch up” before the actual meeting started.

The meeting officially began on Wednesday with a welcome and introduction of the participants.

The first presentation was on the Transportation Curriculum Coordination Council (TCCC) by Chris Anderson. Chris and Cathy Betts are the representatives from M-TRAC to the TCCC. The presentation is included with the power points. Chris did stress the importance of states participating in the TCCC pooled fund. Every state is using the TCCC/NHI developed web based training, but only a handful are participating in the pooled fund. Unfortunately, without participation there is a limited amount of work the TCCC can accomplish. Considering each training that the TCCC develops would cost the state anywhere from \$50,000 to \$250,000 or more to develop, the pooled fund contribution is very cheap.

Kevin Monaghan and Emily Lloyd attended to present on the TCCC/NHI joint effort on web based training. They both did an excellent job and the group was very appreciative of their attendance and presentations. Kevin covered such areas as development, courses completed, marketing, attendees, and a host of other items pertaining to the web based training and other work they have accomplished for the TCCC. The progress and attendance of these courses in the few months they have been active is unbelievable. Kevin’s power point includes the number of attendees from each state, total attendees of each course, evaluation numbers, and much more. Kevin’s goal is to have over 10,000 attendees by October and this looks very likely.

Eric Nepomucceno presented for NICET. Eric demonstrated a new interactive web testing on Nuclear Density. The testing requires the student to actually perform the test virtually. This type of program is very expensive, but very impressive. NICET remains a testing only group and does not provide training. They do have experience requirements before they allow testing.

John Troutman presented for ACI via webcast. ACI is now providing web based training of their manuals. The content is the same as that included in their manuals. They continue to have written and proficiency testing.

Emily and Kevin made a presentation on Quality On-Line Learning after lunch. Again they had great information to share with the group. Emily took the lead on this presentation and covered such items as 508 compliance, technology, development programs such as Captivate, learning objectives, style guides, and more!

Emily's presentation brought about a discussion by the group on Instructor Led Training (ILT) versus web based training (WBT). There are times that ILT's will be needed, but in today's workforce when people need to have specific training right away, WBT's are the answer. This is difficult for some of the boomers that aren't good with computers but the workforce in 10 years will require this type of training.

There were various state presentations the first day and these are included in the power points.

A discussion was held on reproduction of AASHTO standards. Will Stalcup and Brian Legan reported on their research on reproducing AASHTO specifications and test methods. New Mexico pointed out to AASHTO how much money they gave to them each year. Brian was finally granted permission to reproduce AASHTO material for use in their manuals for DOT employees at no charge. It appears each state would need to request permission to reproduce AASHTO materials at no charge and then this would only be permissible for DOT employees.

During the course of the meeting the agenda items of Adjusting to the Times and Experience requirements were covered.

During a number of the state presentations the representatives talked about how they were making program changes for efficiency and effectiveness and how they were adjusting to the times. There were states that are taking their certification training "on the road" to different parts of the state to save travel expenses for participants. There are states that are offering parts of their courses via web based or web conference. There are states that are offering their recertification materials via web base. The need is to offer quick, as needed, training on particular skills. The use of the web will become an important part of training programs.

It appears all states ask their technicians to acquire experience prior to material's testing and inspection, but rarely have a requirement. NICET requires experience, but doesn't provide training. Missouri offers temporary certification and the technician must test within 1 year. They feel this helps the technician get experience prior to full certification. Although experience requirements would be great, the validity of the experience and the recordkeeping is very difficult to obtain and verify.

A discussion was held on course charges and costs. The cost of training by the states for certification/qualification is fairly close. States have similar problems with no shows and most have charges for those that don't show up for class and don't cancel. These vary state by state. It appears a number of states have the most problems with their

own DOT people not showing up. Some states go so far as to charge the state employee's cost center.

Dennis Dvorak of the FHWA office in Chicago presented the second day. The group appreciates Dennis's continued support of the M-TRAC group and all the valuable information he brings to us. Dennis just came from a meeting where the Code of Federal Regulation 637 was discussed, so he was prepared to bring us some new information. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) is giving them the opportunity to have a National Review with a Construction Program Evaluation. They will be looking at including qualification for construction inspection in the CFR. Dennis covered their findings with the state reviews that have been held. Check out Dennis's power point for more information.

Ted Barela of New Mexico gave a presentation on the Construction Inspection Workplan they have developed. They reward their inspectors that stand up to the contractors by enforcing specifications and quality work. They have had excellent success with this program, so check his power point for more information.

Ray Belk from Texas DOT did an excellent job of sharing information on TxDOT's program. Ray covers both the HR and technical training for Texas. They have 14,000 employees and a 10% turnover annually. Ray talked about laying the foundation for a business case. The foundation should include:

- Metrics – if you can't measure it, you can't evaluate it. Gather information to present – numbers and trends

- Who is the audience to which you will be presenting? Tailor the case to them.

- Use eye popping statistics based on actual events and trends in your department.

- Be professional – use graphs, charts – not the sky is falling

- Be a change agent – be willing to step out and take on a project/program to show you can do it, rather than waiting for a project/program to be assigned to you.

Ray also discussed knowledge transfer. Formal knowledge transfer, which includes a higher degree of accuracy and validity of information. This could include, Communities of Practice, Team Rooms, Formal Interviews, Process Mapping. The informal knowledge transfer where there is no control over the content or validity of information, such as, Wikis, Blogs, Twitter.

The group discussed exams and the difficulty of developing good questions. A proposal was made to have an exam exchange among the coordinators. It would give everyone a bigger pool of questions to develop exams. Plans were made for those wishing to participate could bring copies of exams to next year's meeting to exchange with others wishing to participate.

Julie Rodriguez and Gary Berreth are working on web based training to share with the TCCC/NHI. The first series they are developing is on Bridge Construction Inspection. Thanks for your willingness to share with all of us.

The group discussed the change of relationship with the National Highway Institute. NHI has become much easier to work with and continue progress toward sharing materials and offering, with TCCC, to bring states excellent web based training at no charge. They are also working to make registration into these courses easier with a single entry registration.

If anyone has a good topic for a web based training they would like to see developed, or better yet, a power point that would make a good web based training, please let Chris know.

Thanks so much to Ray Spellman for making his notes of the meeting available for these minutes. Too many items were discussed to include all of them, but Ray had most everything in his notes. Be sure to review the power points for details on all presentations.

The next meeting was discussed. The group discussed meeting jointly with TCCC, NTTD, and a number of other groups in Austin Texas in November 2010. This would be similar to the joint meeting held in Kansas City a few years ago. The group felt it was difficult, especially for the individuals that were on multiple groups to focus on M-TRAC at a joint meeting. It was decided that we encourage as many M-TRAC representatives as possible to attend the joint meeting, but the M-TRAC group will have their normal meeting in August or September. Will and Jeff are going to check on holding the meeting in Kansas City or St. Louis. With the difficulty by states to travel, we hope by keeping it in the Midwest, more states can participate. Information on the next meeting will be available in the spring.

Thanks to everyone that participated and/or contributed to the 2009 M-TRAC meeting.