



SEPTEMBER 30, 2011

# SSTI Annual Report

## **State Smart Transportation Initiative**

Transportation is a basic social and economic need. Providing affordable choices to meet transportation needs is an acknowledged responsibility of government. However, mobility solutions conceived a generation ago might not be economically or environmentally sustainable today.

The mission of the State Smart Transportation Initiative (SSTI) is to promote “smart transportation” practices that foster equitable economic development and environmental sustainability, while maintaining high standards of governmental efficiency and transparency.

SSTI operates in three ways:

1. As a community of practice, where participating agencies can learn together and share experiences as they implement innovative smart transportation policies.
2. As a source of direct technical assistance to these agencies on transformative and replicable smart transportation reform efforts.
3. As a resource to the wider transportation community, including local, state, and federal agencies, in its effort to reorient practice to changing social and financial demands.

SSTI is funded by the U.S. Department of Transportation and the Rockefeller Foundation. For more information, visit [www.ssti.us](http://www.ssti.us).

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**State Smart  
Transportation Initiative  
Annual Report**

## Introduction

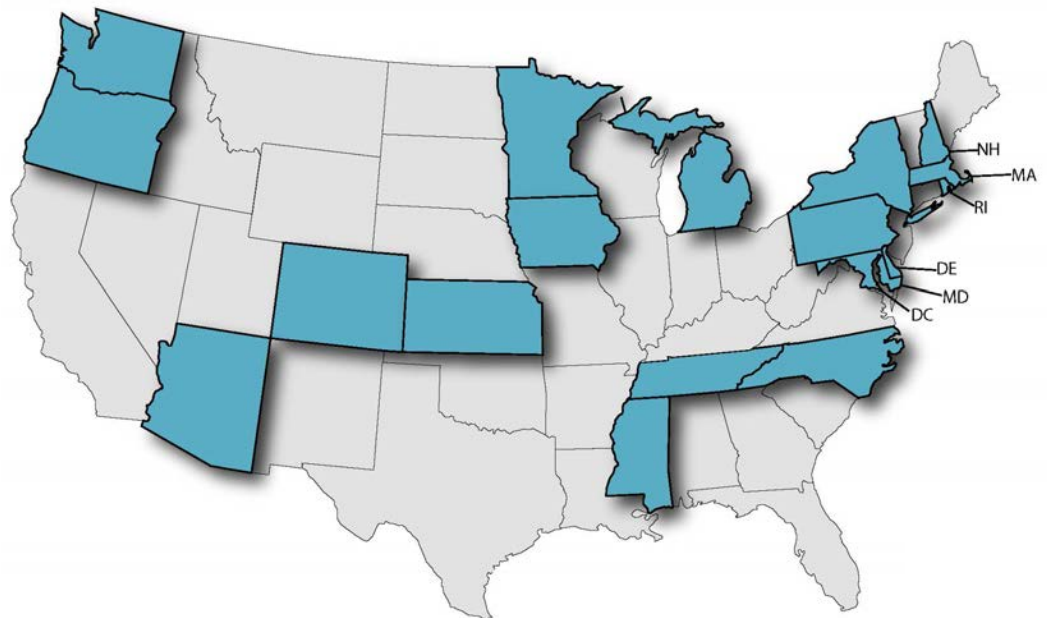
Through the generous funding of the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT)/Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Rockefeller Foundation, the State Smart Transportation Initiative (SSTI) has completed its first year working with state DOT executives to improve transportation systems and outcomes.

SSTI’s theory of change is that real transportation reform requires enthusiastic buy-in from key state and local decision-makers, particularly CEOs of state DOTs. Over the past year we have grown SSTI to include 19 such CEOs. Two other states are prospects.<sup>1</sup> SSTI’s member agencies differ in many respects, but they all share a commitment to rethinking policies and processes to produce better, smarter outcomes.

SSTI provides member states with technical assistance in replicable and transformative transportation reform, and convenes DOT executives as a “community of practice.” SSTI also serves as an information hub on smart transportation, disseminating transportation developments and news to the broader community.

This document describes SSTI’s activities to date, and assesses its progress towards encouraging transportation reform.

SSTI Member States



<sup>1</sup> California and Illinois.

## Community of Practice

The SSTI Community of Practice (COP) provides a venue for DOT executives, and their senior managers, to share strategies, experiences and best practices. SSTI facilitates this information-sharing by hosting in-person meetings and by providing information on issues related to the discussions. As detailed below, SSTI has held three Community of Practice meetings in its first year. Meeting participants have acknowledged the COP's value in providing "intimate discussion, sharing of experiences and insights by fellow CEOs."<sup>2</sup>

CEOs typically stay in office for only a few years, so SSTI works with outgoing and incoming CEOs to keep states moving forward towards reform. In 2010, despite the political upheaval and many changes in state government, only one original SSTI state – Ohio – dropped off the roster, and it was replaced by several new entries.<sup>3</sup>

SSTI promotes smart transportation practices that advance environmental sustainability and equitable economic development, while maintaining high standards of governmental transparency and efficiency.

### Community of Practice Meetings.

In September 2010, SSTI held its inaugural Community of Practice meeting in Minneapolis. Forty DOT representatives, including eight CEOs, attended the event, which featured best practices from Pennsylvania, Washington and Minnesota.

The second Community of Practice meeting occurred in February 2011 in Seattle. Although structured similarly to the Minneapolis meeting, the Seattle event failed to attract significant CEO participation (26 DOT staff and three CEOs), and did not prompt serious discussion or action among the participants. The sheer number of presentations crowded out member participation and information-sharing. The mix of mid-level, senior and executive staff in the room also impeded conversation. As a result, SSTI consulted with member CEOs and a meeting facilitator, and revised the COP meeting format. COP meetings now require (with limited exceptions) attendance by a member CEO. Roundtable, peer-to-peer discussions on topics vetted and seeded by the CEOs dominate the agenda, with the goal of providing actionable information for use within the state DOTs. To enable more executives to attend, meetings take place at a hub airport venue and over a 24-hour period.

SSTI's July Community of Practice meeting at the Detroit airport successfully incorporated these changes. Twelve CEOs attended the event, sharing best practices and lessons learned on transportation revenue and "managing with less." The meeting highlighted the COP's value as a venue for like-minded CEOs to openly share successes and challenges

<sup>2</sup> July 2011 Community of Practice meeting participant.

<sup>3</sup> Massachusetts, Michigan, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island and Tennessee.

From the July 2011 meeting:

*"I found the dialogue organic and very rewarding. The depth of the discussion (was) very important."*

- Matthew Garrett,  
Director ODOT

*"There is a non-judgemental free flow of ideas and policy discussion. There is time to delve into areas, try out new ideas and put theories to the test."*

- John Halikowki,  
Director ADOT

implementing the goals of smart transportation. Feedback from the event was very positive.

SSTI expects some evolution of the Community of Practice, as we continue to engage CEOs on their smart transportation interests and needs. Given interest in opportunities for intimate, peer-to-peer discussion of ST topics, SSTI plans to host at least two Community of Practice meetings per year.

Materials from past meetings can be found on the SSTI website, [www.ssti.us](http://www.ssti.us).

## Technical Assistance

SSTI offers direct technical assistance to a few agencies each year as they take on transformative and replicable reform efforts. SSTI selects technical assistance projects intended to advance smart transportation in a meaningful way in the states where the projects take place, and that also produce transferable lessons for other states and the transportation community. Through a competitive proposal process, as well as consultation with member CEOs, SSTI launched 12 technical assistance projects in its first year. Because states' situations vary, and because many smart transportation solutions are not yet well-defined and documented, SSTI does not have a single approach to technical assistance.

One tactic is to organize a high-level strategy session between a team from SSTI, the DOT executive and key agency staff. These strategy sessions focus the DOT on a set of smart transportation outcomes and ideas for achieving them – activities that SSTI could support with follow-up technical assistance. In its first year, SSTI held strategy sessions in Oregon, Pennsylvania and Washington, where we reviewed the DOTs' efforts at reform, and in Arizona and Iowa, where we explored ways these "trailing states" could begin to make change. Strategy sessions are also planned for North Carolina, Tennessee and Kansas by the end of 2011.

A second tactic is to solicit projects via RFP, or to hold one-on-one CEO discussions on a project of interest. This approach resulted in projects in Colorado, Delaware, Iowa, Kansas and Massachusetts (pending new CEO appointment), and a multi-state economic impact project.

## Technical Assistance Projects.

Projects are described here in roughly chronological order.

**Pennsylvania.** In January 2011, SSTI held a two-day session in Harrisburg with PennDOT, reviewing reforms implemented in the previous eight years and exploring ways to build on that momentum as a new administration took office. Representatives from Arizona and North Carolina DOTs were part of the review team. Results are published in a May 2011 report, "SSTI

Review of PennDOT's Smart Transportation," available at [www.ssti.us](http://www.ssti.us).

PennDOT staff and its incoming CEO reported that the sessions stimulated their thinking about new opportunities. The report has prompted conversation or inquiries to SSTI in at least four states: Arizona, North Carolina and Tennessee, as well as in Pennsylvania.

**Washington.** In February 2011, SSTI held a similar two-day session in Olympia, reviewing WSDOT's efforts to advance sustainable transportation. Again, representatives from Arizona and North Carolina DOTs took part. Results are published in a September 2011 report, "SSTI Review of Washington State DOT's Sustainability Efforts," available at [www.ssti.us](http://www.ssti.us).

The review resulted in immediate agency action: following discussions with SSTI, WSDOT reworked its "Moving Washington" messaging campaign to downplay new capacity and stress system preservation. The SSTI team has also discussed future technical assistance with Secretary Hammond; possibilities include state transit funding or a fix-it-first investment strategy to underlie a revenue campaign.

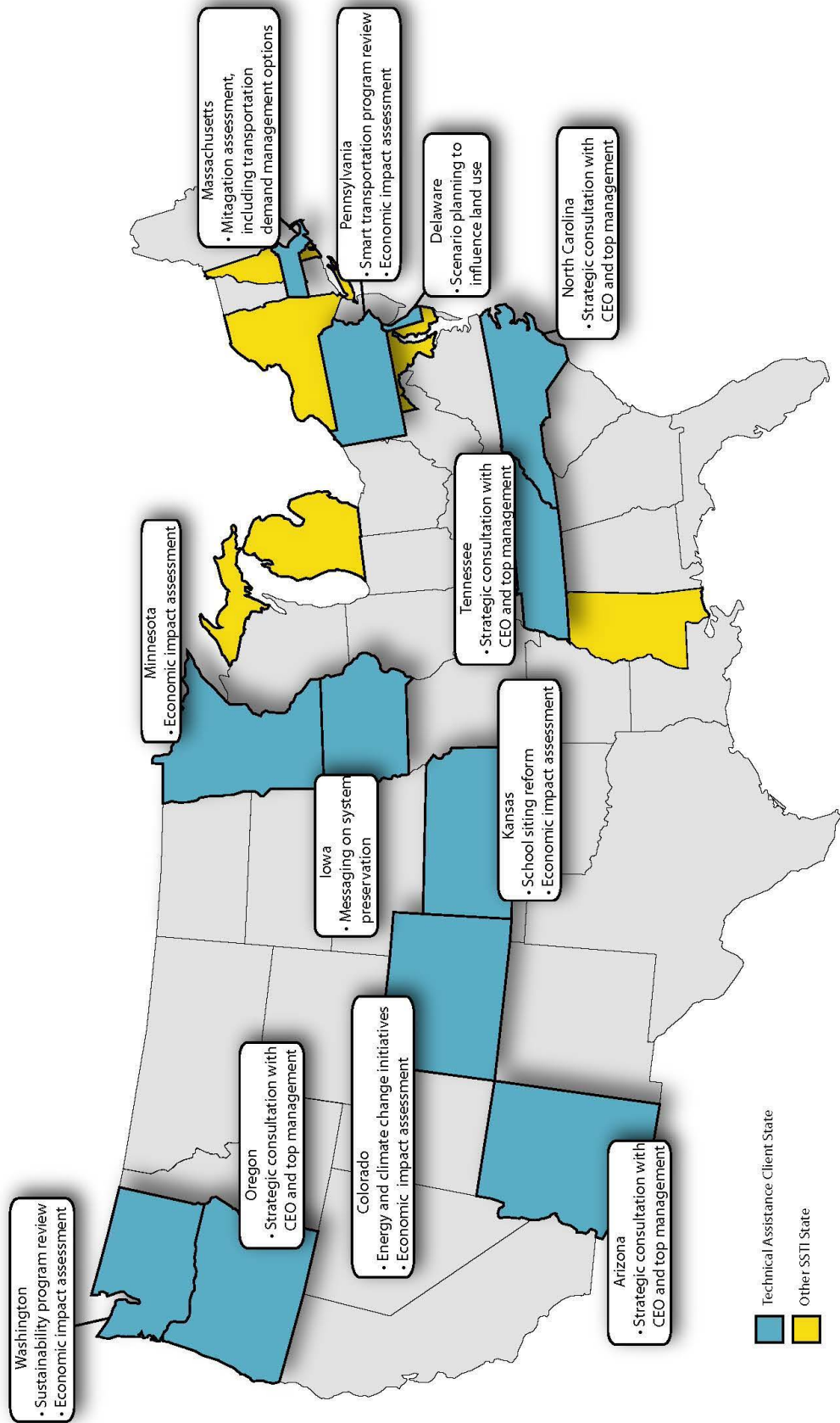
**Colorado.** In early 2011, SSTI began assisting CDOT in organizing a set of meetings with other state agencies and major MPOs to produce a framework for lowering energy demand and associated greenhouse gas emissions from transportation. The first stakeholder meeting took place in May, with SSTI providing both facilitation and policy direction on issues including transportation demand management, ITS and trucking electrification. Subsequent meetings have resulted in a short-list of energy reduction strategies that CDOT, major MPOs and/or other state agencies can adopt. A final collaborative meeting of agency leaders will take place in November 2011 to roll out approved strategies.

**Iowa.** In March 2011, SSTI held a strategy session in Ames. This meeting included a wide-ranging exploration that led to some immediate changes – notably a change in the thinking of Iowa DOT staff about automatically including new lane-miles with all major rebuild projects. The strategy session also led to a follow-up technical assistance project. In June, SSTI and Iowa launched a technical assistance project to shape a fix-it-first investment strategy, along with a messaging strategy, as part of the DOT's upcoming revenue campaign. At this writing, the project is ongoing.

*"The exchange was informative. With state budgets tight, few opportunities are available to attend conferences or find out what other states are doing as (DOT staff) struggle with the new era of constrained resources and aging infrastructure. PennDOT personnel gained insight into practices in other states from the questions and comments of the interviewers."*

- PennDOT senior staff member

## States Receiving SSTI Technical Assistance



**Arizona.** In May 2011, SSTI held a two-day strategy session in Phoenix to explore whether and how ADOT could implement a variety of progressive reforms described in its vision statement, "Building a Quality Arizona." The meeting ended with the state engineer, who had earlier stated some skepticism about "new normal" practices, urging SSTI to return in short order to maintain positive momentum from the session. SSTI returned to Arizona in September to conduct a planning session for ADOT staff. This session produced a more concise statement of the senior staff's intent, and action items for staff members in advancing reform. At this writing SSTI is keeping in contact with the CEO and others to encourage progress and offer further support where needed.

**Delaware.** In May 2011, SSTI launched a project to provide DelDOT with a new scenario planning tool. The tool, combining existing GIS and travel demand modeling capabilities, will let DelDOT demonstrate graphically the consequences of wise and poor development decisions to land-use authorities. At this writing, the tool is under development with delivery expected in late 2011.

**North Carolina.** SSTI awarded assistance in its initial round, and Secretary Gene Conti has been consistently involved in the Community of Practice. SSTI will conduct a peer discussion with NCDOT, similar to the first Arizona strategy session, in November 2011.

**Massachusetts.** In May 2011, MDOT requested SSTI assistance in updating its mitigation program. Among other topics, this effort will explore ways to use and monitor TDM programs as mitigation measures, in place of roadway improvements. Due to a change in executive leadership, SSTI has delayed launching this project until the newly appointed CEO approves.

**Kansas.** Also in May 2011, KDOT requested SSTI assistance in influencing school siting decisions toward low-travel options. SSTI launched the project in August with an in-person meeting with KDOT and the Kansas Department of Education. SSTI staff will provide research assistance, conduct interviews and provide recommendations to KDOT. At this writing, the project is ongoing.

Secretary Deb Miller has also expressed interest in a corridor planning and design strategy session in Topeka. SSTI plans to complete this strategy session in October.

*"I would recommend this process to other state DOTs as a way to highlight issues and develop a path forward as we all try to address the changing nature of our transportation systems in the 21st century."*

*- Paula Hammond,  
Secretary WSDOT*

**Multi-state.** In July 2011, SSTI launched a project with DOT staff in Colorado, Kansas, Minnesota, Oregon, Pennsylvania and Washington to improve the measurement of economic impact from transportation investments. A consultant is working with the states and will deliver recommendations in late 2011.

*Practical technical assistance is what SSTI seems to do well, which is very good and significantly different from AASHTO."*

- July 2011  
meeting participant

**Oregon.** Director Matt Garrett, inspired by SSTI's report on PennDOT, invited SSTI to meet with his top staff in September, and to return and brief his transportation commission in October. Garrett hopes to build support for more funding of non-highway modes and to instill in his department a more multimodal culture.

**Tennessee.** Also inspired by SSTI's PennDOT report, Commissioner John Schroer invited SSTI to provide feedback on TDOT's "top-to-bottom" agency review. SSTI will meet with TDOT in October.

## Outreach & Education

SSTI serves as a resource to the wider transportation community, including local, state and federal agencies, in efforts to reorient policy and practice. SSTI wants the smart transportation message to inform as many policy and decision-making discussions as possible, including those outside of our technical assistance and COP activities. To this end, SSTI has engaged a communications firm to guide our outreach efforts, and is nearing completion on a redesign of our informational website; the upgraded version will serve as a more robust clearinghouse for smart transportation information.

Through the Community of Practice meetings and technical assistance projects, SSTI is also developing a portfolio of best practices from member states. SSTI will disseminate best practices through the website, SSTI News, and other publications. By the end of 2011, SSTI will publish summaries from our technical assistance projects and a resource on laws that support smart transportation. Finally, SSTI has developed a series of short handouts highlighting smart transportation successes and opportunities. These "Snapshots" depict smart transportation policies in practice.

One of the premises of working at the state level is that good results there will redound to the cause of reform at the federal level. SSTI's members help carry the best practices and message of SSTI to the broader community. The direct experience of our members will influence other members more than outside advocacy, and could provide useful organizing opportunities. For example, many DOTs favor a more flexible approach to

tolling of Interstates, enabling both demand management and user-based revenue collection. Several CEOs discussed this issue in the July Community of Practice meeting, inspiring a follow-up webinar featuring USDOT chief economist Jack Wells and Rhode Island DOT Director Mike Lewis.

The outreach part of SSTI's mission developed after the COP and technical assistance efforts were established, and remains a work in progress. At this writing SSTI has a ListServe of 213 participants. The last five editions of SSTI News, sent between June 10<sup>th</sup> and September 12<sup>th</sup>, were opened by an average of 34 percent of recipients, about half of whom clicked at least one link leading to the SSTI website. Our website has been averaging roughly 600 visits per month, with an average of 2.5 pages viewed per visit. We have also seen strong interest in SSTI webinars and had 50 participants call in for our most recent webinar, held August 30<sup>th</sup>. This was twice the number that participated in our first webinar on June 28<sup>th</sup>.

## Conclusion

SSTI's goal is transformative change in transportation policy and practice. Our strategy has been to recruit, befriend and help one key set of such decision-makers – state DOT CEOs – by:

1. providing direct technical assistance to transportation agencies,
2. convening of transportation executives and staff as a community of practice, and
3. information-sharing with the transportation community at large.

Please note, moreover, that the three efforts are mutually supportive – the whole of the effort is more than the sum of the parts. Over its first year, SSTI has produced the following early wins:

- Demand for services is strong and strikingly bipartisan. Despite significant upheaval in the November 2010 election, SSTI now has more DOT CEOs than before it, and technical assistance offerings are nearing capacity.
- CEOs are actively engaged in the Community of Practice, with a dozen sharing lessons learned and best practices at the July Community of Practice meeting.
- Strong positive reactions from CEOs and staff in states where site visits have taken place. In Washington State, even before the report was finished, staff reworked their messaging to downplay new capacity and emphasize system preservation.
- We anticipated that CEOs learning from peers, if only to see the sheer possibility of reform, was an important part of change. SSTI

members consistently report the value of interacting with their peers on issues of smart transportation. One example is SSTI's very first report, on changes at PennDOT. Across the spectrum, CEOs and staffers have told us "right, that's what we want to do! Tell me more and help us do that."

- Three focused technical assistance projects will conclude by the end of the year, with replicable best practices disseminated to member states. For example, Colorado's energy efficiency/GHG reduction framework, the Delaware scenario planning tool, and the multi-state economic impact work will enrich the smart transportation arsenal available to our members and others.

Going forward, SSTI will continue to work in these ways, along with carrying smart transportation policy and practice to the broader transportation community.

## Appendix A: SSTI Timeline

### September 2010

Community of Practice meeting held in Minneapolis, Minnesota, from September 22-24 with 40 state DOT representatives in attendance.

SSTI Advisory Committee awards technical assistance to Arizona, Colorado, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Washington.

### October 2010

Scopes of Work finalized with technical assistance teams for Washington, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Arizona and Colorado projects.

Scope of Work finalized with communications consultant TSD.

Website and ListServe launched for communication with Community of Practice members.

SSTI staff member Michele Mackey begins.

### November 2010

First SSTI News edition published, featuring sustainability best practices from FHWA and SSTI member District of Columbia.

SSTI staff members Ellen Partridge and Bill Holloway begin.

### December 2010

Finalized Memoranda of Agreement with three state DOTs for technical assistance: CDOT, PennDOT and WSDOT.

Began recruitment of new DOT executives following November election results.

Published smart transportation "Snapshots" highlighting best practices from member states available on the SSTI website resources page ([www.ssti.us/resources](http://www.ssti.us/resources)). Several additional SSTI Snapshots are undergoing final revisions and will be made available on the redesigned SSTI website in fall 2011.

Two editions of SSTI News published, featuring best practices from SSTI members Kansas (Railroad Loan/Grant program) and Washington (VMT Reduction).

## January 2011

The SSTI Expert Panel conducted its first DOT review, visiting PennDOT in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, to identify smart transportation best practices and next steps for the agency.

SSTI staff met with the CDOT project team to launch the Colorado Energy Smart Transportation (COEST) Initiative in Denver, Colorado, and to interview and hire a facilitation expert for the COEST collaboration process involving over 20 state, federal and local agencies.

SSTI staff represented the initiative at the TRB Annual Conference, and held meetings with USDOT/FHWA and TSD.

SSTI News edition published, highlighting a Washington DOT report demonstrating equitable VMT reduction strategies.

## February 2011

Following SSTI's post-election analysis, recruited and added six new states: Massachusetts, Michigan, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island, and Tennessee.

The SSTI Expert Panel conducted an onsite review of WSDOT in Olympia to identify smart transportation best practices and next steps for the agency.

Community of Practice meeting held in Seattle, Washington, from February 23-25 with twenty-nine DOT reps in attendance.

COP member states expressed interest in improving economic impact metrics of transportation investments as follow-up to the February Community of Practice meeting.

Interim report on SSTI technical assistance projects distributed to member states.

Two editions of SSTI News published, sharing best practices from potential member states New York (smart growth zoning handbook) and California (Green Trade Corridor project).

## March 2011

SSTI Expert Panel conducted a strategy session with Iowa DOT to provide recommendations in advance of CEO transition.

SSTI staff consulted with CEOs to revise meeting format following low executive attendance at the Seattle meeting.

"Review of PennDOT Smart Transportation" published and disseminated to SSTI member states.

TSD delivered a preliminary SSTI Communications Plan, describing various strategies for increasing visibility and improving outreach to SSTI targeted audiences.

SSTI News edition published, discussing reductions in VMT, and the return of the Freight Act.

## **April 2011**

Meeting held with new Pennsylvania DOT Secretary, Barry Schoch to discuss next steps following publication of the "Review of PennDOT Smart Transportation."

Documented and provided recommendations following the Iowa DOT strategy session.

Second RFP for technical assistance projects released to SSTI members.

SSTI News edition published, highlighting SSTI member Washington's report quantifying the GHG reduction impact of sidewalk coverage.

Pat Field hired to help design and facilitate the July Community of Practice meeting.

## **May 2011**

Recruitment discussions initiated with California, Florida, Illinois and North Dakota.

SSTI Expert Panel conducted onsite strategy session with Arizona DOT to identify next steps for the agency.

Participated in the CDOT formal kick-off meeting for the Colorado Energy Smart Transportation Initiative in Denver.

Represented SSTI at the AASHTO Spring meeting, and met with WSDOT Secretary Paula Hammond to discuss findings from the onsite review.

Received, reviewed and approved three requests for technical assistance from member states: Kansas, Massachusetts and Iowa.

Surveyed member CEOs on state best practices and topics of interest for the July Community of Practice meeting.

Solicited proposals from communications firms with transportation experience to replace TSD in the creation of a comprehensive SSTI outreach strategy.

Two editions of SSTI News published, discussing location efficient communities, the economics of greenfield development, and PAYD insurance programs.

UW Urban Planning student, Austin Outhavong hired as a summer intern to assist with SSTI publications and research.

Jessica Topp hired as the Center on Wisconsin Strategy's new Event & Outreach Specialist with responsibilities to assist SSTI.

## June 2011

Launched technical assistance projects with Iowa DOT (fix-it-first investment), and Kansas DOT (low travel school siting options).

Met with USDOT, FHWA and EPA in Washington, DC, to discuss SSTI progress.

Met with Smart Growth America to share information about technical assistance projects.

First webinar held, featuring a discussion of the "Review of PennDOT Smart Transportation" with Jim Ritzman and Bill Petit of PennDOT and Doug MacDonald of the SSTI Expert Panel.

Two editions of SSTI News published, highlighting reports on highway capacity & congestion reduction, TOD & Employment, and the impending Boomer mobility crisis.

Hired Spitfire Strategies to develop SSTI's communications plan, and provide technical assistance for IDOT's public messaging campaign on investment strategies.

Hired UW Communications to redesign SSTI's website.

## July 2011

Community of Practice meeting held in Detroit from July 12-13 with thirty-six DOT representatives in attendance, and featuring round-table discussions of best practices and challenges from member states in the areas of transportation financing and management.

Delaware DOT technical assistance project launched to develop a scenario-planning tool.

Engaged the Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT) to assist with a multi-state study of economic impact metrics.

Two editions of SSTI News published, featuring SSTI member Commissioner Schroer's Pay-per-Mile idea and SSTI expert panel member Michael Meyer's USDOT presentation on performance management's role in improving highway and transit systems.

## August 2011

Attended the first of seven Citizens Advisory Committee meetings with Spitfire and Iowa DOT to help determine a public messaging strategy.

Held a kick-off call for the multi-state technical assistance project on economic impact metrics with six DOTs: Colorado, Kansas, Minnesota, Oregon, Pennsylvania and Washington.

Second SSTI Webinar held on Tolling and Congestion Management, featuring Jack Wells, Chief Economist of USDOT and Michael Lewis, Director of RIDOT.

Two editions of SSTI News published, discussing increased tolls in Illinois to primarily cover road maintenance, and the FHWA's Traffic Volume Trends showing continued VMT reductions in 2011.

## September 2011

Consulted with member CEOs on best practices and topics of interest for the November Community of Practice meeting.

Published "Washington State DOT's Sustainability Efforts," detailing best practices and findings from the onsite review.

Provided the Iowa DOT with Spitfire's interim Media Scan and materials.

Received an interim report from Spitfire describing the Community of Practice's suggestions and perceptions of SSTI.

Two editions of SSTI News published, discussing the GAO report detailing the marginal costs of trucking over rail or waterborne shipping, and small buckets of cash/savings from Illinois, Maryland and Virginia.

Ann Grodnik, Center on Wisconsin Strategy finance consultant hired, with responsibilities to assist SSTI.







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