Florida Model Task Force Meeting Summary
November 12 & 13, 2003
Orlando, Florida

Wednesday November 12, 2003

The Wednesday meeting consisted of several presentations. Three presentations were made by out-of-state agencies on their experiences with TransCAD conversion. These were Ken Cervenka with North Central Texas Council of Governments, Leta Huntsinger with North Carolina Department of Transportation, and Chris Petro with Northwest Louisiana Council of Governments. These presentation have been posted on the FDOT Systems Planning website for those interested in their context.

Following these three presentations, Howard Slavin with Caliper, Inc. made a presentation on TransCAD version 4.7. Version 4.7 includes many routines that mimic Tranplan routines. These routines will enable the user to convert to TransCAD without experiencing a major change in model results. The version will be released later this year.

Fred Treyz with REMI gave the last presentation. It was entitled "Transight: Integration of Travel Demand Models with the REMI Model for Economic Evaluation of Transportation."

Thursday November 13, 2003

Introduction & Welcome
The tri-chairs welcomed the members and thanked everybody for coming to Orlando to participate in the MTF meeting. Next, Warren Merrell, Manager of the FDOT Systems Planning Office was introduced to provide an update on the latest developments in the Systems Planning Office.

FDOT Systems Planning Office Update
Warren announced that Bob McCullough, Manager of FDOT Systems Traffic Models retired and that Huiwei Shen would be taking over the Systems Traffic Models responsibilities in the interim. Warren recognized Bob for all his hard work, especially involving the MTF.

Warren informed the members that FDOT's new secretary, Jose Abreu, has made several changes in the Central Office Planning office. For one, he has added the position of the Assistant Secretary for Intermodal Systems Development, which is currently filled by Ysela Llort, who was formerly the State Transportation Planner. The focus in planning is on intermodal connections, which includes transit, freight and particularly their connection to the Florida economy including economic diversity, trade and tourism. As such, the transportation models should help plan a transportation system to support the growth in trade and urban development in the State of Florida.

In addition, Warren assured the members of the MTF that the Systems Planning Office will continue to fully support the MTF. As a closing note, the tri-chairs informed members that they would write a letter to Secretary Jose Abreu to inform him of the history and importance of the MTF.

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Presentations on FSUTMS-TransCAD Transition

Next, three interrelated presentations were made. The presentations can be found on the FDOT Systems Planning website. The first part, presented by Huiwei Shen (FDOT Systems Planning Office) and Danny Lamb (FDOT-District 7), focused on the current activities in the Systems Planning Office and decisions made by the MTF tri-chairs. The second part, was presented by Tom Rossi (Cambridge Systematics, Inc), and focused on short-term improvements that could possibly be made to FSUTMS/TransCAD during the conversion process. Ram Pendyala with USF gave the third and last part of the presentation. It focused on possible long-term improvements to FSUTMS.

Huiwei Shen briefly went over the TransCAD selection process, which was finalized by vote during the May 2003 MTF meeting. Since then several activities have taken place:

- The TransCAD software package has been distributed to public agencies
- Many TransCad training workshops have been held throughout the State
- The FDOT Systems Planning Office is coordinating the TransCAD conversion process

The current round of TransCAD workshops is focusing on familiarizing the planner with TransCAD. Although many changes have been made to the workshops since they started to customize them more towards the FSUTMS users, the next round of TransCAD workshops will be designed with the FSUTMS-TransCAD version in mind. This "new round" of workshops are planned to start next fiscal year.

The conversion process is well on its way. The Gainesville model has been converted and the Northeast Florida Regional Planning model will be next. During the Gainesville conversion process many issues surfaced dealing with "what entails a conversion." Caliper developed many routines that will mimic the Tranplan routines. These routines can be inserted into TransCAD, instead of using the in-built routines of TransCAD to provide similar answers. Whether an area decides to use these routines instead of the TransCAD routines is largely up to the Districts and the MPOs.

The scheduling of the conversion of the Florida models should not be a problem since the need is spread out over the next year. However, each District and MPO will need to decide how involved they want to be during the conversion process. Huiwei asked for the Districts and MPO to contact the Systems Planning Office if they had any questions.

Tri-chair Danny Lamb pointed out to the members that this MTF meeting was very important since the members were going to be working on defining FSUTMS using TransCAD. Danny explained to the members that their input was going to be requested in listing those FSUTMS items that they wanted to see maintained in TransCAD, those items that could be easily added to TransCAD in the short term, and those items that could be eliminated in the transition.

Danny pointed out that the tri-chair had made several decisions related to the short-term transition. These are the incorporation of:

- Floating point arithmetic (eliminate bucket rounding procedures of FSUTMS-Tranplan)
- TransCAD gravity model; Tranplan gravity model is slightly different
- TransCAD transit skimming and assignment method which is widely adopted

After the presentations, the MTF tri-chairs requested input from the members on five different topics. These were trip generation, trip distribution & mode, highway network, transit network and the assignment process for highway and transit. The members were divided into groups and were asked to take a "brainstorm" approach to the group interaction and develop a list of items that they felt were important in dealing with the short-term/interim migration of FSUTMS-Tranplan to FSUTMS-TransCAD. The lists are documented in five separate files which are posted on the FDOT Systems Planning website.

Open Discussion and Questions

Once the group effort was finalized an open forum was held during which the members could ask questions or discuss different items with the complete MTF. A request was made to fully document the conversion process, much in the style as the series of Task Reports developed as part of the first conversion from UTPS to Tranplan. Another request was made to have a schedule of when models are going to be converted and what will be implemented at that time. It was pointed out that at this particular time there is no schedule developed, however once the White Paper is completed perhaps there will be a better feel for what will be involved, and when it can be accomplished.

A suggestion was made to use the FDOT web page to disseminate information and be able to discuss items with other members. The newsletter will also be used to disseminate information on the conversion process and also to circulate the executive summary of the White Paper. Using both the newsletter and the web page would enable the members to actively participate.

Conclusion/Discussion on Course of Action

The next step will be to develop a White Paper to document all the interim/short-term improvements that can be conducted right now during the conversion/validation migration process from FSUTMS-Tranplan to FSUTMS-TransCAD. The draft White Paper is scheduled to be completed by the end of this year, at which point it will need to be reviewed and approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:45 PM.