

***FY 2010 Report on Customer Service***  
**Texas Transportation Institute**  
**The Texas A&M University System**

**Inventory of External Customers**

***A.1.1 Strategy: Sponsored Research***

TTI is a transportation research agency, conducting sponsored research for a wide range of public- and private-sector sponsors. The agency's basic services include conducting transportation research studies under contract to customers/sponsors, providing research results to those sponsors and the public, and aiding in the transfer of new technologies, processes and products to improve the state and nation's transportation systems.

The Texas Department of Transportation is the Institute's primary client, accounting for about 52% of all research expenditures. Other research sponsors include private industry; municipal and regional transportation and transit agencies; technical societies and trade associations; the National Cooperative Highway Research Program (NCHRP) and the Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP) (both administered by the Transportation Research Board); the National Academy of Sciences; the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) and other federal agencies; and other states and countries.

TTI's customers include:

- **Individuals** serving as project directors for individual projects, who work with the TTI researchers (the Principal Investigator or PI). These are usually technical staff whose concern is the specific project.
- **"Key customers"** who oversee or manage research for a sponsoring agency or organization, and who determine overall direction for their agency's or company's research program.
- **"Institutional customers"** such as executives or senior managers of sponsoring organizations who determine research funding levels.

***A.1.2 Strategy: National Centers***

The Transportation Research and National Centers strategies serve the same customer base, as described above.

**Importance of Customer Satisfaction**

As a contract research agency, TTI must provide excellent service and research results to remain viable. Only 12 percent of the agency's budget comes from state appropriations (excluding infrastructure funding), with the remainder generated primarily through competitively acquired research contracts.

Commitments to customer satisfaction are incorporated into contractual obligations to research sponsors, so the expectations and objectives of each project are clearly defined and agreed upon before a project commences. Other quality assurance measurements determined by the customer/sponsor include the number and timing of research reports.

### **TxDOT Customer Service Assessment**

In 2008-2009, TTI undertook an assessment of customer service to TTI's primary research sponsor, the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), to identify the Institute's areas of strength in support of the TxDOT Research Program and to identify areas of improvement.

On-site interviews were conducted at 36 TxDOT offices (25 TxDOT Districts and 11 Divisions) from October 2008 to February 2009. During the process, 151 TxDOT personnel participated in the assessment. Without exception, every interviewee saw value in the TxDOT research program, in which TTI is the largest participant. Key findings related to TTI's customer service were as follows:

- TxDOT divisions, districts and offices have a very positive view of TTI's research strengths and contribution to the TxDOT Research Program.
- TTI is perceived as having a "can do," problem-solving attitude.
- There are some gaps in understanding between engineering researchers and engineering practitioners.
- There is a need for improved, ongoing communications and presentation of research results.

TTI is implementing the recommendations from the customer service assessment in Strategy 1.4.4. of the *TTI Strategic Plan, 2010-2015*.

### **Customer Satisfaction Survey**

Because its customer base is relatively stable, in its most recent survey, the Institute conducted an electronic survey of a sampling of its major customers from each of its primary sponsor groups/agencies. Those customers include: state and federal transportation agencies; regional/metropolitan transportation agencies; private companies; and engineering consulting firms. An inventory of the major sponsors is in *Appendix A*.

For each of the 11 questions on the survey, customers were asked to rank each item as follows:

1. Outstanding
2. Above Average
3. Average
4. Below Average
5. Poor

## Survey Results

Responses to nine of the 11 survey questions were 1.4 or higher, with 1 being “outstanding,” and 2 being “above average.” Customers were queried about TTI’s research in terms of quality, on-time completion, usefulness, and the quality of research products and deliverables, as well as support services such as contracting and billing. The highest average survey rankings included the expertise of TTI researchers (1.1); the quality of TTI’s research (1.1); the research services provided by TTI (1.3); and the quality of TTI research reports, videos and other deliverables (1.3).

The area that had the lowest score was related to the on-time completion of TTI research. The score of 2.0 indicated that customers rank TTI as above average in this category, but there is some room for improvement. A chart showing the survey questions and the average ranking for each question is included in *Appendix B*.

## Analysis of Survey Findings

As noted above, TTI customers are very satisfied with the services received. The most recent survey conducted in 2010, as compared to the previous survey, showed very similar results, with improvements in research quality, expertise of TTI researchers, quality of TTI’s proposals, quality and timeliness of contract and billing services, quality of TTI research facilities, and TT’s responsiveness to any complaints or concerns arising during a project.

Although our sponsors have above average satisfaction in the area of on-time completion of research projects, this area continues to be a high priority for TTI’s management. New employee performance management software and greater management emphasis on on-time completion of projects is addressing this concern.

## Performance Measures

### *Outcome Measures*

Percentage of Surveyed Customer Respondents Expressing Average Overall Satisfaction with Services Received	100%
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Percentage of Surveyed Customer Respondents Identifying Ways that TTI Can Improve	7%
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### *Output Measures*

Number of Major Sponsors Surveyed	14
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Number of Major Sponsors Served	33
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## **Internal Customer Satisfaction Survey**

TTI implemented an internal customer satisfaction survey in spring 2010. According to this employee survey, TTI's seven internal services received an overall 84 percent approval rating by respondents, with four of the seven internal services receiving an 85% or above rating. The survey addressed customer service in TTI's primary offices: administration; business; communications; facilities, safety and support services; human resources; network and information systems; and research and development. The offices scoring less than 85 percent in the "good" and "excellent" categories combined are developing strategies and benchmarks for improvement.

## **External Survey of Organizational Excellence:**

TTI administration places a high value on service to internal customers, as well as to external customers/research sponsors. As a result, the agency also takes part in external customer satisfaction assessments such as the annual Survey of Organizational Excellence conducted by the University of Texas at Austin.

In the most recent survey for 2010, TTI had an overall response rate of 72%, which is considered a high return and 7% higher than the response rate for the 2008 survey. The analysis highlighting organizational strengths and weaknesses revealed that TTI's scores are significantly higher than its benchmark organizations. TTI's scores ranged from 355 as the lowest to 421 as the highest. Scores above 300 indicate employee satisfaction.

The areas ranked highest by employees as those of substantial strength were the agency's physical environment and work atmosphere (421); commitment to quality, customer service and continuous improvement (417); and high morale and a lower level of perceived burnout (411). Other strengths identified by employees include the agency's ability to respond to external influences and demands (409) and an appealing employee benefits package (407).

Areas in which some improvements can be made include team effectiveness (376), pay equity (365), and better internal communication (355). Nevertheless, TTI employees still ranked these issues in the high 300s and did not view any of them as significantly negative.

The TTI leadership and management teams are making recommendations for improvements in the areas in which TTI scored the lowest. All members of these teams were provided a copy of the survey results.

## **Complaint Process**

Complaints regarding TTI services or research are relatively rare and are usually resolved with a telephone call. In the case of a formal written complaint, the following process is followed:

- Within one week of the receipt of a formal written complaint, an acknowledgement letter signed by the Agency Director or Executive Associate Agency Director, as indicated below, is sent to acknowledge receipt of the complaint.
- Copies of the letter are also sent to other administrators/staff involved in the issue. In the case of human resource complaints, the Human Resources Officer is also copied. If the complaint involves legal or contractual issues, the A&M System's Office of General Counsel is advised and included in any discussion of possible actions.
- The Institute seeks to resolve all complaints within 30 days if possible.

### **Customer Relations Representatives**

***Dr. Dennis Christiansen, Agency Director***, handles all programmatic/research project complaint issues. Texas Transportation Institute, The Texas A&M University System 3135 TAMU, College Station, Texas 77843-3135, (979) 845-1713, fax (979) 845-9356, email [dennis-c@tamu.edu](mailto:dennis-c@tamu.edu)

***Mr. Don Bugh, Executive Associate Agency Director***, is responsible for all financial, operations and human resources issues. Texas Transportation Institute, The Texas A&M University System, 3135 TAMU, College Station, Texas 77843-3135, (979) 845-1715, fax (979) 845-9678, email [d-bugh@tamu.edu](mailto:d-bugh@tamu.edu)

### **TTI Urban Offices**

#### ***Arlington Office***

110 N. Davis Dr., Suite 101  
Arlington, TX 76013  
(817) 462-0525  
Fax (817) 461-1239

#### ***Austin Office***

1106 Clayton Lane, Suite 300E  
Austin, Texas 78723  
(512) 467-0946  
Fax (512) 467-8971

#### ***Dallas Office***

9441 LBJ Freeway, Suite 103  
Dallas, TX 75243  
(972) 994-0433  
Fax (972) 994-0522

#### ***El Paso Office***

4050 Rio Bravo Drive, Suite 151  
El Paso, TX 79902  
(915) 532-3759  
Fax (915) 532-3762

#### ***Houston Office***

701 N. Post Oak, Suite 430  
Houston, TX 77024-3827  
(713) 686-2971  
Fax (713) 686-5396

#### ***San Antonio-TransGuide Building***

3500 NW Loop 410, Suite 315  
San Antonio, TX 78229  
(210) 731-9938  
Fax (210) 731-8904

#### ***San Antonio-One Castle Hills Building***

1100 NW Loop 410, Suite 400  
San Antonio, TX 78213  
(210) 979-9411  
Fax (210) 979-9694

**Appendix A**  
**Texas Transportation Institute**  
**Major Sponsors**

American Association of State Highway and  
Transportation Officials

Battelle Memorial Institute

Cambridge Systematics, Inc.

Capital Area Metro Planning Organization

Carbon Chain Technologies Limited

City of El Paso

Dallas Area Rapid Transit Authority

Department of Assistive & Rehabilitative Services

Department Of Transportation - FHWA

El Paso County, Texas

Environmental Protection Agency

Houston Advanced Research Center

Kittleson and Associates, Inc.

Laborers Health and Safety Fund of North America

Metropolitan Transportation Commission of California

Michigan Department Of Transportation

Midwest Research Institute

NAS-National Cooperative Highway Research Program

NAS-Strategic Highway Research Program

National Academy Of Sciences

Safe, Inc.

Science Applications International Corporation

Telvent

Texas Commission on Environmental Quality

Texas Department Of Public Safety

Texas Department Of Transportation

Transportation Technology Center, Inc.-Association of  
American Railroads

Transurban (USA) Development Inc.

Trauner Consulting Services, Inc.

USDOT Research & Innovative Technology

Virginia Tech

Virginia Transportation Research Council

Washington State DOT

**Appendix B**  
**FY 2010 Texas Transportation Institute Research Sponsor Survey**

Question	Average Response
1. How would you rate the research services provided by TTI?	1.3
2. How would you rate the quality of TTI research?	1.1
3. How would you rate the on-time completion of TTI research?	2.0
4. How would you rate the usefulness of TTI research?	1.4
5. How would you rate the quality of TTI research reports, videos and other deliverables?	1.3
6. How would you rate the expertise of TTI researchers?	1.1
7. How would you rate the communication skills and the responsiveness of TTI researchers?	1.4
8. How would you rate the quality of TTI's proposals?	1.4
9. How would you rate the quality and timeliness of TTI contract and billing services?	1.75
10. How would you rate the quality of TTI's research facilities?	1.22
11. How would you rate TTI's responsiveness to any complaints or concerns arising during a project?	1.3

If you have any suggestions on how TTI can improve, please provide us with your ideas. Comments received were as follows:

- *The Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS)/Division for Rehabilitation (DRS) are very pleased with the more than twenty plus years in partnership with TTI. Lance Bullard and his staff have always been accessible to DARS staff in resolving major issues involving our customers, the consumers.*
- *Thank you for letting me complete the survey. I was extremely impressed with TTI and all of the individuals we worked with. The facilities and the people working for TTI are second to none in my opinion. I hope to work with your agency more in the future.*
- *Find ways to meet project schedule (e.g., not proposing on projects if staff is too busy to meet the expected schedule.)*

**Survey Key**

- (1) Outstanding
- (2) Above Average
- (3) Average
- (4) Below Average
- (5) Poor