

# AASHTO 2014-2019 STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE DRAFT V2

*Prepared for:*

Strategic Plan Update Committee

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**SPECIAL NOTE:** This report **IS NOT** an official publication of the National Cooperative Highway Research Program, Transportation Research Board, National Research Council, or The National Academies.



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NCHRP Panel for Project 20-24(94), FY 2014  
*Support for Development of AASHTO's 2013-2018 Strategic Plan*

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## Plan Overview

The 2014-2019 Strategic Plan sets a course for the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) in support of its member State departments of transportation. The Strategic Plan is focused on providing direction for AASHTO as an association. It does not provide direction on the overall transportation system or the activities of its member departments of transportation.

The Strategic Plan was developed under the guidance of a Strategic Plan Update Committee consisting of 17 State DOT executives. The Plan update was conducted under the National Cooperative Highway Research Program Project 20-24(94). The process for updating the Plan included a survey of AASHTO members, interviews with State DOT CEOs, AASHTO staff, partner organizations and external stakeholders, and a detailed assessment of the external transportation environment. The detailed results of this background work were documented in a separate SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) technical report. Appendix B contains a summary of the SWOT analysis. Plan development culminated in a retreat where the Strategic Plan Update Committee drew on the input from members and staff to develop a proposed strategic direction and implementation strategy to carry on AASHTO's tradition of success.

This document contains the findings of the Strategic Plan Update project. It is anticipated that once this draft plan has been discussed and approved by AASHTO's Board of Directors, it will be converted into a concise, graphic-oriented version suitable for distribution to the public.

## Challenges and Opportunities

AASHTO most recently updated its strategic plan in 2009. Emerging internal and external factors suggested that the time was right for the development of a new Strategic Plan. The factors that underscored the need for an update include new leadership, staff retirements, economic and funding challenges, changes in demographics, technology change, energy and the environment. The new Strategic Plan provides an opportunity to address these and other challenges and to ensure that AASHTO continues to be a leading resource for its members and the transportation industry in the future.

Based on a review of challenges and opportunities, several issues were identified as primary considerations when updating the Strategic Plan. AASHTO's services are highly valued, but there are opportunities to improving areas like communications, committee structures, partnerships, and technology resources. AASHTO faces challenges in a divided political climate and due to funding and staff constraints at member organizations. To be successful in the future, AASHTO needs to become more nimble and adaptable while still representing the diverse views of its members.

# AASHTO's Vision, Mission, and Values

The AASHTO Strategic Plan Update Committee reframed AASHTO's vision, mission and values as part of the 2014-2019 Strategic Plan.

## Vision Statement

The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials supports members in the development of transportation solutions that create economic prosperity, enhance quality of life, and improve transportation safety in our communities, states, and the nation as a whole.

## Mission Statement

The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials supports its members through policy development, advocacy, technical services, and leadership development and through advancing partnerships and promoting innovation.

## Values

AASHTO has several core values that govern its day-to-day decision-making. AASHTO is:

- **Safety-Focused** (*in operations and through relentless pursuit of safer transportation*);
- **Innovative** and Adaptable (*forward-looking and willing to explore new solutions and adapt to evolving member needs*);
- **Collaborative** (*active in partnership and inclusive to those with shared vision and values*);
- **Accountable** (*open and transparent, responsive to stakeholder needs, operating with integrity*);
- **Service-Oriented** (*activities and initiatives are aimed at supporting member departments and their interests*).

# AASHTO's Goals and Strategies

AASHTO's goals and strategies were identified by the AASHTO Strategic Plan Update Committee. They are based on input from surveys and discussions with AASHTO leaders, staff, and membership, and an assessment of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of AASHTO. The Plan focuses on four key goals:

1. Provide Value to Members
2. Provide Innovative Technical and Professional Services and Products
3. Be a Leader in National Transportation Policy Development
4. Communicate the Value of Transportation

Goals 1 and 2 are more internally focused on AASHTO while Goals 3 and 4 are more externally focused. For each Goal, action-oriented strategies and potential implementation actions are identified. It is recognized that additional work will need to be done on a select list of the implementation actions to develop a focused, practical and implementable action program to guide AASHTO activities.

## 1. Provide Value to Members

AASHTO is dedicated to providing the highest possible value to its members. Members provide the backbone of AASHTO's policy development, advocacy and strong technical services.

Strategies to accomplish this goal include:

### 1.1. Regularly self-assess AASHTO value to members

AASHTO will regularly reach out to members to understand how members perceive the value AASHTO is providing them and how AASHTO can improve its member service.

Implementable actions include:

- Create a process to periodically review AASHTO value to members

### 1.2. Identify and address the needs of all members

AASHTO will focus on identifying and addressing the diverse needs of the organization's members.

Implementable actions include:

- Improve communication opportunities with/for membership
- Educate members and CEOs about available AASHTO services and resources
- Tailor member service strategies to accommodate differing state DOT needs

### **1.3. Promote awareness of AASHTO resources, including its technical services**

AASHTO will promote awareness of available resources to improve the value of existing programs for members.

Implementable actions include:

- Define and communicate the AASHTO brand
- Expand new member education and initiation on-boarding programs
- Document AASHTO staff roles and responsibilities and make that information broadly available
- Explain the AASHTO budget, pricing policies and value to members

### **1.4. Develop and cultivate future leaders and core competencies within member agencies**

AASHTO will support the long-term health of the transportation industry, including development of future generations of leaders and future core competency needs.

Implementable actions include:

- Provide/support leadership and technical training
- Identify core competency needs and how AASHTO programs can help address gaps (such as back-office support programming)

### **1.5. Ensure alignment of organizational activities to the strategic plan**

AASHTO will work to ensure the alignment of committee activities and technical services and products to the strategic plan. AASHTO will work to improve the adaptability of committees and help committees coordinate and collaborate on cross-cutting transportation issues.

Implementable actions include:

- Review committee structure and expectations
- Review research agenda and activities to ensure support for innovation and implementation of innovative strategies
- Align AASHTO president's focus areas with the strategic plan

## 2. Provide Innovative Technical and Professional Services and Products

AASHTO will maintain and build on its well-recognized and highly-regarded technical services and products that are widely used by members and the larger domestic and international transportation community. AASHTO will continue providing state of the art technical services and products to members in the face of mounting challenges, which include a thinly stretched staff, reliance on volunteer services of members, and demands for affordable products and electronic access to technical products.

Strategies to accomplish this goal include:

### 2.1. Make technical service and product areas financially self-supporting

AASHTO will strengthen its technical services by focusing investment on products and services that meet the organization's mission and can be financially self-supporting or generate revenue.

Implementable actions include:

- Establish principles for evaluation of technical services and products (such as competitiveness with other service providers)
- Assess issues and trends at state DOTs to identify gaps in technical service and product offerings

### 2.2. Identify improvements to technical service delivery

AASHTO will improve technical service delivery and increase the value of existing and future products and services for their members.

Implementable actions include:

- Explore platforms and innovative approaches for technical services and service issues
- Make technical products more affordable and available

### 2.3. Identify and support high priority research

AASHTO will continue to identify national research priorities that help member agencies develop and implement effective transportation solutions. Among other items, research should explore the proper role of innovative technologies to support improvements to transportation system performance.

Implementable actions include:

- Conduct a critical review of technical service and product areas
- Identify research gaps
- Work with AASHTO committees and partners to develop and implement effective research efforts addressing national priorities

### **3. Be a Leader in National Transportation Policy Development**

AASHTO seeks to advance the interests of its membership by playing a leadership role in transportation policy development. One of AASHTO's great strengths is its access to and influence on national decision-makers. AASHTO is committed to working with partners in transportation policy development.

Strategies to accomplish this goal include:

#### **3.1. Monitor and share national and state policy and legislation**

AASHTO members have an important stake in national transportation policy. AASHTO will monitor national and state policy and legislative activities.

Implementable actions include:

- Regularly monitor policy and legislative activities and inform membership of opportunities and threats
- Engage membership in presentation of national and regional transportation needs to Congress

#### **3.2. Explore innovative policy areas and challenges**

AASHTO will be forward-thinking in the policy development area, proactively identifying opportunities and challenges.

Implementable actions include:

- Develop a strategy for encouragement of innovation, such as innovation forums
- Focus attention on the steps required to support the implementation of research results and best practices
- Pursue opportunities to improve system performance by accommodating and encouraging innovative technologies in construction, maintenance, operations, and management processes

#### **3.3. Enhance AASHTO's policy effectiveness through collaborative partnerships**

AASHTO has a successful track record of working collaboratively with many partners. Partnerships with external organizations can be an effective way to leverage AASHTO resources and to extend the Association's reach.

Implementable actions include:

- Develop a plan for enhancing beneficial partnerships
- Develop tool kit for the engagement of partners (including private sector partners)
- Convene meetings/summits around key transportation issues to collaboratively set priorities

### **3.4. Support members in developing practical, cost-effective multimodal transportation solutions**

AASHTO recognizes that its members have diverse needs and concerns and that solutions utilizing one or more transportation modes must be considered.. AASHTO will work internally and with partners to address these multimodal needs.

Implementable actions include:

- Recognize and support national performance measures to move towards zero fatalities for all transportation system users
- Strengthen partnerships that support a multimodal focus
- Recognize and support the development of a full range of transportation solutions that meet the needs of a diverse set of states and communities

## **4. Communicate the Value of Transportation**

AASHTO will work with members to develop the tools to communicate state and local transportation needs and priorities. AASHTO will continue to help communicate the value of transportation at the national level.

Strategies to accomplish this goal include:

### **4.1. Provide members with the tools to tell the transportation story**

AASHTO will support the efforts of its members to make transportation needs resonate with decision-makers and transportation users.

Implementable actions include:

- Identify audiences and opportunity areas for telling the transportation story
- Partner with members and other organizations in communication the value of transportation

### **4.2. Facilitate broad understanding of the link between transportation investment and economic prosperity, quality of life, and safety**

AASHTO will continue to advance the national dialogue on transportation and draw a clear link between investment in transportation and benefits in economic prosperity, quality of life, and improved transportation safety for America's citizens.

Implementable actions include:

- Develop strong transportation narratives and tools that have broad impact on the transportation dialogue

# Appendix A: AASHTO Strategic Plan Update

## Committee Members

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AASHTO Executive Director

## Appendix B: Summary of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats Assessment

Strategic plans provide a broad roadmap, assessing where an organization currently stands, what it expects to provide to its members now and in the future, and what actions it must take to get there. At its most elemental, a strategic plan asks and answers the questions: What do we do? For whom do we do it? How do we excel? What should our priorities be? and What do we need to change? In order to answer those questions, a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis was conducted for AASHTO. A SWOT analysis is a thoughtful assessment of the “*here and now*,” strengths and weaknesses that exist today for the organization and the “*what might be*,” opportunities and threats that may emerge over time, both internal to the association as well as its external operating environment.

This section provides a list of key SWOT findings. Based on these findings, several “big issues” for AASHTO to consider were also identified.

### *AASHTO’s Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats*

#### Strengths

- AASHTO is recognized as a “go to” source for transportation information by its members and its external partners.
- AASHTO’s technical services are recognized as “sterling.” AASHTO is considered an “honest broker” of technical services. AASHTO’s technical services are valued.
- AASHTO has access to and influence on Congress and the Executive Branch as a result of its broad base of 52 members and their constituents. It can mobilize its members quickly.

#### Weaknesses

- AASHTO’s committee structure has grown unwieldy, the committees often operate in silos with little cross-communication, and the committee processes are slow and uneven across the organization.
- AASHTO is slow to adapt to change and lacks nimbleness and flexibility.
- AASHTO members, including its Board of Directors, do not have enough information about the organization. There is a lack of understanding about the organization’s finances, staffing, and committee structure and relationships.

#### Opportunities

- AASHTO members and staff see opportunities for expanding partnerships with other transportation organizations and other organizations are eager to expand their partnership with AASHTO, increasing the organization’s reach and effectiveness.

- Performance reporting by the states provides the organization with the opportunity to demonstrate the value of transportation.

## Threats

- The current transportation funding structure is not sustainable.
- Today's more partisan, politically divided environment makes it hard for AASHTO to maintain its organizational cohesion, the organization's shared sense of purpose, and an effective advocacy role.
- AASHTO needs to protect its ability to deliver strong technical services. Its administrative systems and tools are outdated, the AASHTO staff is stretched too thin and works on too many initiatives, and the volunteer experts from state DOTs that AASHTO relies on are no longer as available due to tight budgets, nor are they as knowledgeable due to retirements and staffing reductions.
- Other organizations with a more multi-modal focus may chip away at AASHTO's ability to represent all state DOTs.

## *AASHTO's "Big Issues" To Address*

Based on the most significant findings of the SWOT, the following set of issues were identified as primary considerations when updating the strategic plan:

- AASHTO's technical services are highly valued but there are concerns.
- AASHTO is highly valued and is considered the "go to" organization for transportation information by the majority of interests but not all.
- More and stronger external partnerships are desired.
- Funding is far and away the most important external issue to members, but it is recognized that AASHTO's role is constrained by the current political climate.
- AASHTO's technology resources need to be upgraded.
- The AASHTO committee structure needs attention.
- AASHTO members from CEOs on down need education about AASHTO.
- To be successful in the future, AASHTO needs to become more nimble and adaptable while still representing the diverse views of its members.