Ahh, TRB – greatest of all great transportation events: let me count the ways. Every year, the promise of your arrival never fails to usher great excitement and joy into the hearts of transportation professionals the world over. The allure of your countless, electrifying presentations, engaging social activities, and outstanding cast of transportation rock stars is more than sufficient to pry even the most dedicated of practitioners from their beloved work to mingle and be generally very, very merry.

The Transportation Research Board is a much-respected institution that collects much of the most important research in the field of transportation, publishes it, and provides a forum at its annual conference in Washington DC for researchers to present it. At UT, the annual conference is virtually synonymous with “TRB”; no other single event in the year is likely to inspire as much excitement -- and anxiety for those with the opportunity to present! For the entire week of the conference, UT’s transportation department essentially shuts down; department classes are cancelled because virtually no students remain in Austin to attend them -- or professors to teach them!

The annual conference attracts over 10,000 professionals from all areas of the field, including engineers, economists, and policy makers from the public sector, private sector, and academia. Upon arriving at a hosting hotel, a TRB attendee is given a monstrous compendium of upcoming sessions and events and faces the formidable challenge of planning his or her schedule for the week. The sessions cover all conceivable topics related to transportation and exist in two principle media: presentations and posters. The presentation sessions allow presenters to speak to large audiences about their research; the poster sessions provide a more intimate setting for attendees to meet the research authors and better familiarize themselves with the material.

TRB also provides innumerable opportunities for networking with other transportation professionals. Committee and subcommittee meetings provide a forum for attendees to meet some of the most prominent professionals active in their particular field of interest; it is no coincidence that so many of our own faculty at UT hold important seats on these committees!

If committees are not your cup of tea -- and even if they are -- you will likely enjoy the UT Reception! Every year, all UT alumni are invited to descend upon the North Cotillion Room in the Marriott to share favorite stories from their days at UT over a refreshing beverage and a tasty snack of cheese and fruit. What, you disparage our cheese and fruit?! Well, then you shall be banished to the Texas A&M reception where, if its lack of any notable comestibles doesn’t bother you, then its population of Aggies surely will!

The annual conference of TRB is truly a spectacle. With its immaculate combination of interesting research presentations, useful networking opportunities, and entertaining social events, TRB simply should not be missed by any transportation student at UT!
Parental characteristics among factors influencing family weekend activities

Whether a child has an older father or lives with a single father are among important factors affecting how kids spend weekend time.

The study, based on a national survey, was done to reveal how family structure and dynamics influence weekend leisure activity choices. These activities influence travel choices, which in turn can inform cities regarding infrastructure planning for future travel needs.

“It’s becoming clear that children’s age and the presence of children have a substantial impact on adult travel patterns,” said Professor Chandra Bhat. "If we don’t understand the interactions within families and how that is influenced by demographics, we’re not going to understand how to forecast travel patterns."

The study focused on families with children between 5 and 15 years of age who participated in the 2002 child development-related survey of the U.S. Panel Study Income Dynamics. Bhat and graduate research assistant Ipek Sener analyzed the families for time spent in various in-home and out-of-home activities. Which parent spent time with a child on Saturdays and Sundays, parental age and other family characteristics were among the factors considered.

Bhat and Sener presented results from the study on 1,574 children at the annual meeting of the Transportation Research Board in Washington, D.C. Their findings include the following:

• The children spent a daily average of 7.5 hours on weekends at home in leisure activities, including watching TV, playing computer games and playing with siblings. When they left home for leisure, a mother’s age didn’t influence how likely the child was to participate in a leisure activity with her. However, one in four children with fathers 65 years or older spent time with their fathers outside home in leisure activities compared to one in 10 children whose fathers were aged 50 to 65. The likelihood that children spent time outside of home with their fathers continued to drop as the father’s age fell.

• Children whose fathers had at least a bachelor’s degree were more likely to spend time socializing outside home in general, and to spend a longer time doing so, than children with less well-educated fathers. Children whose mothers had at least a bachelor’s degree less often spent time shopping outside home in general, and spent a shorter time doing so, than children with less well-educated mothers.

• Children who lived only with their fathers participated more often in out-of-home leisure activities with only their father, and spent more time doing so, than children from two-parent households. When the father’s race was considered, African-American fathers were somewhat less likely than fathers of other races to spend time outside the home with their children, regardless of partner arrangement.

• Boys were somewhat more likely to participate in active recreation than girls. That included participation in organized sports or bicycling in their neighborhood.

• Caucasian children were somewhat more likely to participate in active recreation outside of home and in passive recreation (such as going to sporting events and arts and crafts activities) than children who are African-American, Hispanic or of other races.

"We’re not completely certain," Bhat said, "but it’s possible that there’s a lack of adequate recreational facilities in and around neighborhoods of non-Caucasians."

Bhat discusses study results like these while participating on national panels that consider improving neighborhood travel options to meet recreational and other needs, and to improve travel-forecasting methods. He has worked extensively with the Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan planning organization, and has served on national panels to examine land-use and transportation planning undertaken by metropolitan planning organizations in cities such as Los Angeles, San Francisco and Washington, D.C.
TEXAS 4000 FOR CANCER

Pop quiz, transportation engineers: What is the best way to get from Texas to Alaska? Most people would say airplane, or possibly recreational vehicle if you have some retirement money saved up. But how about on a bicycle? It may seem far-fetched, but one UT transportation engineering student is going travel from Austin to Anchorage, Alaska on a bike, pedaling over 4,500 miles as part of the longest annual charity bike ride in the world, the Texas 4000 for Cancer. Beginning this June, Michael Vitek will join his forty-six other Texas 4000 teammates in a human-powered trek that will last over two months and cover the majority of the North American continent. Mike follows in the footsteps of two alumni transportation graduate students, Mike Schofield and Nick Warrenchuk, who participated in the ride in 2006.

There are three main purposes of the Texas 4000: spread hope to cancer patients and their families, share knowledge about the disease, and finally to raise money for cancer research. Each rider must raise at least $4,000, which is in turn donated to cancer-related research grants or cancer treatment facilities. To get more information about the charity and learn how to donate, check out their website at www.texas4000.org.

Spring 2007 Important Dates

January 16  Classes Start
January 21-25  Transportation Research Board Conference
February 1-3  TexITE Annual Meeting
February 6  February Birthday Party
February 24  Introduce a Girl to Engineering Day
March 3  Explore UT
March 5  March Birthday Party
March 9-11, 23-25, 30- April 1  Prospective Student Visitation Weekends
March 12-16  Spring Break
April 3  April Birthday Party
April 4  CTR Symposium
May 1  May Birthday Party
May 2  Last Day of Classes
May 9-12, 14-15  Final Exams
May 19  Graduation
Laura, Steve, Jeff, Rachel, and Eric (not pictured) won first place in the college division of the City of Austin’s annual Austin Found scavenger hunt.

Many THANKS to our corporate partners!! Your involvement in our program is invaluable!

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Thank you to contributing writers Steve Boyles, Ian Hlavacek, Jeff LaMondia, and Mike Vitek!

How well do YOU know the city of Austin?

Last October, a group of transportation students competed in Austin’s annual treasure hunt, a fundraiser to benefit early childhood education. Over forty teams showed up to participate early Sunday morning, receiving cryptic clues to Austin locations that they had to find.

Each team had to solve a puzzle to reveal the clue, then either walk or take the bus to that location to receive the next puzzle, until they had found all twelve. Putting their knowledge of Austin landmarks and the city transportation system to the test, Eric, Jeff, Laura, Rachel, and Steve set out to search. After nearly five hours and ten miles of walking, our team returned victorious, winning the college division and placing fifth overall! Congratulations!

Could YOU answer this Austin Found clue?

Each of the seven popular Austin restaurants has had a letter added to its name, and the resulting group of letters has been rearranged. First unscramble the letters in each rearrangement to determine the name of the popular Austin establishment and find the extra letter. The seven extra letters, taken in order, will spell the clue to your destination.

SO AS IS
TRY KALE BEEN
IRISH GIN EEL ROLL
LETHAL GRINDS
SNUG MEAL
STUD RYE
EMU INN FROG SALAD

Solution:
OASIS - (S)
KERBEY LANE - (T)
SHORELINE GRILL - (I)
THREADGLES - (N)
MANUELS - (G)
TRUDYS - (E)
FONDA SAN MIGUEL (R)

The new Austin City Hall has a lot of design features … but the one that seems to have grabbed most people’s attention is, well, the pointy thing … what architect Antoine Predock calls the “stinger,” the copper-clad extrusion that sticks out nearly 50 feet from the building and 40 feet over Second Street.

Jason Lemp presents his research on land use models at TRB.

Are you a college sophomore or junior? Be sure to check out information about UT’s Undergraduate Summer Internship in Transportation (USIT)! Applications are available online:
www.caee.utexas.edu/dept/area/trans/undergrad_opp/usit.html

Have something you would like printed in the next issue of the transportation department’s newsletter? Email it to the editor, Ashley Haire, at haire@mail.utexas.edu.

http://www.caee.utexas.edu/dept/area/trans/trans.html