



February 12, 2026

To: Office of the Assistant Secretary for Research and Technology, U.S. Department of Transportation

Re: Transportation Research and Development Strategic Plan (FY 2026–2030) RFI (Docket No. DOT-OST-2025-2085)

To whom it may concern:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments to inform the development of the U.S. Department of Transportation's Research, Development, and Technology (RD&T) Strategic Plan for FY 2026-2030. As the national organization representing Transportation Demand Management (TDM) professionals and mobility leaders across public, private, nonprofit, and academic sectors, the Association for Commuter Transportation (ACT) strongly supports a research strategy that centers people; how they travel, why they travel, and what options are available to them.

Across every purpose articulated in 49 USC Chapter 65, mobility, congestion reduction, safety, infrastructure durability, environmental stewardship, and system preservation, TDM research represents a high-value, low-cost opportunity to improve outcomes nationally. Yet TDM remains substantially under researched at the federal level.

Below are responses to the questions posted in the Request for Information.

1. How should DOT prioritize and invest in research activities over the next five years? Over the next 25 years?

DOT should prioritize research that directly advances understanding of travel behavior, commuting patterns, and the effectiveness of TDM strategies, especially given rapid changes in work and mobility. TDM strategies include planning, operations, programs, marketing, communications, pricing, incentives, technology, and data-driven approaches that collectively improve mobility, reduce congestion, and support cleaner air. Over the long term, DOT should establish a sustained national TDM research program to support longitudinal data, behavioral insights, and system-level demand management.

2. What types of research activities should DOT undertake to meet its strategic goals?

DOT should expand research on the effectiveness of non-infrastructure strategies such as commuter incentives, employer programs, and multimodal connections. These studies can reveal cost-effective ways to reduce congestion, emissions, and safety risks by shifting demand rather than continually expanding supply. In January 2026, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) released a study evaluating the use of TDM strategies at airports for both employees and passengers. The study found that TDM approaches are effective tools for managing congestion and travel demand in airport environments, demonstrating measurable benefits for mobility and the traveler experience. This work

provides a valuable foundation and underscores the need for expanded research into TDM's effectiveness across a wider range of transportation contexts. Building on this research would help USDOT advance its objectives, including improving mobility, reducing congestion, and preserving infrastructure.

3. What key trends influence transportation today and into the future?

Hybrid work, demographic shifts, and new mobility technologies are fundamentally reshaping travel demand and peak-period patterns. Research is needed to understand how these trends interact with traveler behavior and what TDM strategies are most effective in different communities.

4. What emerging challenges or knowledge gaps warrant additional RD&T activities?

Significant gaps exist in national TDM data, standardized evaluation methods, and research on rural transportation needs. Targeted studies would strengthen DOT's ability to forecast, measure, and influence travel behavior across diverse populations and geographies.

5. How can DOT best lead and coordinate its RD&T activities across sectors?

DOT should convene a multi-sector national TDM research working group to align priorities, share methodologies, and coordinate pilots. This would help ensure consistency in data, evaluation, and deployment across federal, state, local, and private partners.

6. How can DOT use its research portfolio to develop national standards that drive interoperability?

National standards for TDM data, mobility metrics, and integrated trip-planning platforms would reduce fragmentation and improve systemwide coordination. DOT's leadership can create consistent frameworks that support seamless multimodal travel and scalable TDM strategies.

7. What activities should DOT adopt to facilitate deployment of research results?

DOT should fund TDM pilot programs, collaborate with professional associations to provide open-access toolkits, and provide technical assistance to agencies and employers. Embedding deployment pathways into each research initiative will accelerate real-world adoption and measurable impact.

TDM offers high-impact, low-cost tools to advance every element of DOT's statutory research mission yet remains under-researched at the national level. Elevating TDM within the RD&T portfolio will strengthen mobility, resilience, and performance across the entire transportation system.

Given these findings, ACT urges USDOT to integrate TDM-focused research into the RD&T Strategic Plan as a core element of its national transportation research agenda. Doing so will ensure that the department is well-positioned to identify best practices, evaluate emerging strategies, and support the development of policies that strengthen the nation's transportation system for the present and future.

Thank you for your consideration,



David Straus

ACT Executive Director