**American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials**

**Special Committee on Research and Innovation**

**FY2026 NCHRP PROBLEM STATEMENT INSTRUCTIONS**

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| **GENERAL GUIDANCE**   1. NCHRP uses an online submission system. The link to the online submission system will be available soon on the NCHRP homepage. Submission is accomplished by typing or cut-and-pasting text into an online form that follows the NCHRP problem statement template [here](https://www.nationalacademies.org/webdocs/nchrpproblemstatementtemplate/NCHRPProblemStatementTemplate.docx?channelToken=b9515dcea9b44b1caeec286a25accf32&tStamp=1721406722836). 2. This document provides guidance for preparing a problem statement. 3. Please note that there are character or word limits for some sections. These will apply once the submitter begins the online submission process. 4. Submitters are encouraged, but not required, to vet or submit problem statements through an appropriate AASHTO Committee or Council. 5. While anyone can write or contribute to preparing a problem statement, **NCHRP only accepts problem statements from**:    1. **Employees of state DOTs**    2. **AASHTO staff on behalf of an AASHTO Committee or Council**    3. **Federal Highway Administration**    4. Problem statements received from any other source will not be considered. 6. **Problem statements are due by midnight EST, November 1, 2024 at**    1. Late submittals will not be accepted.    2. No attachments are permitted.    3. No live links to online resources are permitted. 7. The AASHTO Special Committee on Research and Innovation (R&I) will select projects based on five key factors:    1. The potential research results are of national interest.    2. How well the research addresses critical needs and strategic objectives of AASHTO and the state DOTs.    3. The likelihood that the research objective can be successfully achieved within the constraints of the proposed time and funds.    4. The likelihood that the research will produce implementation-ready products.    5. The likelihood that the research will be implemented by state DOTs. 8. **A note on implementation:** NCHRP emphasizes implementation of its research results. We are asking problem statement submitters to focus on developing practical products that have a high probability of being implemented. 9. Questions on the process can be directed to [MyTRB@nas.edu](mailto:MyTRB@nas.edu), |

**Instructions for Preparing an FY2026 NCHRP Problem Statement**

The following instructions describe the information needed for each section of the problem statement. Please note character or word limits where listed; the online submission form will not allow entries that exceed the noted limits.

**Note:** Use ctrl-V (PC) or cmd-V (Mac) to paste your text into the submission form fields. Due to browser settings, fields with formatting options (rich-text fields) will not allow you to right-click and paste.

**1. PROBLEM TITLE** (20 words)

* Communicate what the research is about in as few words as possible. The reader should be able to at least partially understand what the problem statement is about just by reading the title.

**2.** **RESEARCH OBJECTIVE** (250 words)

Prepare a concise objective statement (e.g. The objective of this research is…) describing:

* The desired outcome(s) and expected final product(s), e.g., guidance or guidelines, a test method, equipment, a tool, specifications, a manual, a new or revised process, etc.
* Major tasks or activities the research contractor will likely have to perform in order to successfully conduct the research.
  + Describe the tasks or activities in enough detail to demonstrate that the objective can be fully achieved and that the estimated funding is justified and sufficient.

**3.** **BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND NEED FOR RESEARCH** (1000 words)

* Crisply describe the problem to be solved, and whom it affects.
* Explain why the research will solve this problem.
* Explain whether and how the proposed research related to the strategic plan or research agenda of an AASHTO Committee(s) and/or Council(s).

**4. LITERATURE SEARCH SUMMARY** (500 words)

Describe how your proposed research differs from, or will build upon, the existing body of research found in a review of relevant literature (do not include the literature search results). If no search is performed, justify why it was not needed.

At a minimum, literature searches should be conducted on TRID (<http://trid.trb.org>), which includes the Research in Progress database (<http://rip.trb.org/>).

* An excellent resource on conducting literature searches is Transportation Research Circular E-C194: Literature Searches and Literature Reviews for Transportation Research Projects**,** available at <http://www.trb.org/Publications/Blurbs/172271.aspx>.
* If you are not comfortable conducting the search yourself, you can contact your local transportation library or the TRB Library ([trblibrary@nas.edu](mailto:trblibrary@nas.edu)) and ask them to conduct the search for you.

**5.** **URGENCY AND POTENTIAL BENEFITS** (1000 words)

* Describe why solving this problem is important to a majority of state DOTs.
* Explicitly describe what the benefits of implementing the results of this research will be, and who will experience those benefits.
* Describe the consequences s of not conducting this research, and who will experience those consequences.

**6. ALIGNMENT WITH THE 2021-2026 AASHTO STRATEGIC PLAN** (250 words)

In no more than 1 paragraph, describe how this research is aligned with the [2021-2026 AASHTO Strategic Plan](https://www.aashtoplan.com/)’s Goals and Objectives listed on page 5.

**7. IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS** (500 words)

* Describe how state DOTs can implement the research within their own organization and what major steps they would need to take.
* Explain who within a state DOT will likely be responsible for using the research results.
* Identify existing venues or processes that could be used to facilitate implementation.
* Describe what kinds of additional products and activities (e.g. brochures, summaries, presentations, training workshops, peer exchanges, pilot testing, and verification and validation of the research results) may help create awareness and facilitate implementation of the research results.

**8. RECOMMENDED RESEARCH FUNDING AND RESEARCH PERIOD** (use whole numbers with no commas, periods or $ sign)

Research Funding: Provide an estimate of the total funds needed to accomplish the research objective.

* Underfunded research is much less likely to produce implementable products. The present cost for research usually averages about $275,000 for 100 percent of a professional employee’s time per year. This figure represents a fully loaded, professional rate that would include an individual’s direct salary and benefits and an agency’s overhead or indirect costs. Average rates for supporting staff might be approximately one-half those of professionals.
* The requested funding must be enough to ensure adequate and timely data collection and analysis of original/field data if that is needed.
* The funding recommendation must also include other expenses required for the research such as purchase of materials, extensive physical testing, or computer modeling.

**Note:** If the problem statement is selected, the level of funding provided may be adjusted by the AASHTO R&I Committee.

Research Period: Provide an estimate of the time needed to complete the research. Enter a whole number between 12 and 48.

**Note:**  If the problem statement is selected, the research period may be adjusted by the project panel to allow for panel review of interim and final deliverables.

**9.** **Has This problem statement or a different version of the problem statement been submitted**  **to NCHRP before? If yes, in what calendar year?** Provide an explanation of why this is being resubmitted and what differences, if any, there are from the prior submittal. (250 words)

**10. PROBLEM STATEMENT AUTHOR(S)**

Anyone may author or contribute to an NCHRP problem statement and should be identified in this section.

* For each author, provide their name, affiliation, email address, and phone.

**11.** **POTENTIAL PANEL MEMBERS**

List individuals you recommend to serve as volunteer members of the research oversight panel if this problem statement is selected.

* The name of the individual, their affiliation, email address and phone.
* Please consider recommending appropriate AASHTO Committee or Council members as potential panel members.

**Keywords:** All problem statements will be distributed to subject matter experts in state DOTs, AASHTO, and FHWA for review and comment. Agency staff will use keywords/terms to help them direct problem statements to the appropriate reviewers. Avoid terms that are very broad, i.e., Engineering or Environmental. Suggest keywords/terms that are specific to the technical discipline(s) most likely to be involved with the proposed research.

**12.** **REQUIRED KEYWORDS/TERMS –** 3 required keywords will be derived from the Transportation Research Thesaurus (TRT). The online submission form features a “type ahead” function; simply start typing a word and potential keywords or terms will appear for the submitter to choose from. For information on TRB’s TRT, go to [**https://trt.trb.org/**](https://trt.trb.org/)

**13.** **OPTIONAL KEYWORDS/TERMS** -- 3 additional keywords which may be entered as free text. (each optional keyword/term is limited to 5 words per keyword/term)

**14. PERSON SUBMITTING THE PROBLEM STATEMENT**

**Note:** This information will come from the submitter’s MyTRB login credentials and is read-only in the NCHRP Balloting System.

* Name of individual
* Phone number
* Email address
* Affiliation (is limited to): [state] DOT

FHWA [office]

AASHTO staff on behalf of the AASHTO Committee or Council

**\*\*\*\*\* END \*\*\*\*\***