

Coordinating Council Communication Plan

August 2009

Introduction

The ITE Coordinating Council Communication Plan is intended to guide the use of resources in communicating with the Council membership and other key audiences inside and outside the Institute. In developing this plan, the Coordinating Council reviewed its 2009 Action Plan, the ITE Strategic Plan, the current communication audit, and input from ITE members and staff.

The goals for this plan are to:

1. Provide technical information to members
2. Support communities of interests
3. Improve product delivery
4. Enhance visibility for ITE and the transportation profession

Target Audiences

The target audiences for the Coordination Council Communication Plan have been identified and prioritized into primary and secondary audiences. The primary audiences are those to whom the Coordinating Council will focus regular and continuous direct communication. These primary audiences include the IBOD, members of the Coordinating Council, members of SCORP, and active Task Forces.

Secondary audiences are other key groups that may receive information either indirectly from the Coordinating Council, for example through individual Councils or IBOD representatives, or may be targeted for specific projects or other periodic activities. These include the ITE membership, Districts and Sections, and sister organizations or agencies. The focus, frequency, and media for each of these target audiences are suggested below.

Primary Audiences:

- IBOD – Coordinating Council will provide updates on Council activities to the IBOD three times a year in conjunction with regularly scheduled IBOD meetings. This will be done through written reports and representation on the IBOD.
- Council Chairs –The focus of communication with the Councils should be on guidance and coordination between Councils and Council activities. This occurs through three regularly scheduled Coordinating Council meetings, Council Chair reviews, the Council Operating Guidelines, New Chair Orientation, and individual communication with the Chairs.
- SCORP – The primary communication with SCORP is through the three regularly scheduled SCORP meetings, the policy document, review of project proposals, and the active involvement of the CoCo Vice Chair as the Chair of SCORP.
- Task Forces – The current Task Forces (Energy and Climate Change and Roundabout) are structured under existing Councils. Task Forces Chairs should attend the Coordinating Council meetings to be more directly engaged in cross-council coordination.

Secondary Audiences:

- ITE membership – Although the Coordinating Council ultimately serves all members of the Institute, communication directly to the membership at-large is not a primary focus of the Coordinating Council. Communication to the membership generally goes through staff led initiatives (e.g. ITE Journal), the elected leadership, and individual Council communication. In some cases it may be appropriate for the Coordinating Council to initiate communication or outreach to the membership as a whole; for example, when introducing a new topic area or initiating a new project. The frequency and media used would be driven by the specific needs and messages.
- Districts and Sections – Through the current leadership structure, Sections and Districts coordinate with the International leadership through representation on the IBOD. There may be specific technical activities that would be enhanced through geographic diversity; or opportunities to enhance local activities with Coordinating Council support. It is anticipated that these activities would more commonly occur through a specific Council but may, on occasion, be served most effectively through direct communication from the Coordinating Council. The frequency and media used would be driven by the specific needs of the activity.
- Other Organizations or Agencies – The Coordinating Council may pursue communication with sister organizations (such as ASCE, APWA, and TRB), public agencies, or members of the public in support of new initiatives, enhancing the visibility or perception of the profession, or exploring partnership opportunities. These communications should be clearly focused to deliver specific outcomes.

Messages

Three main message themes have been identified for Coordinating Council communications:

- General information on key projects and achievements – This would include new projects, awards, or other initiatives undertaken by the Coordinating Council.
- Marketing new products – The Coordinating Council may be involved in announcing and promoting new products.
- Coordination and support of the Strategic Plan – Coordinating Council activities that are consistent with, and in support of the goals and objectives of the ITE Strategic Plan should be articulated to the membership.

Media and Outreach

The Coordinating Council should provide ongoing communication through:

- Website – The Coordinating Council website should provide current, updated information on the Coordinating Council activities as well as access to current information for the individual Councils.
- Annual Report – The Coordinating Council should provide an Annual Report that outlines current activities and showcases projects. This could be posted on the website, provided as an article in the Journal, or even developed as a video posted on the ITE website or social networking sites.
- Journal – Increased and enhanced focus on Councils and Council activities in the ITE Journal would enhance the engagement of members in these activities.

In addition to these regular forms of outreach, the Coordinating Council should consider the use of surveys to gather information from its membership and from the ITE membership at large.

Council Framework

Within the Coordinating Council there are 12 Councils. Each of these Councils should develop a Communications Plan that addresses their members' needs and the unique focus of the Council.

At a minimum, each Council should provide:

- Web page – A Council Web page that outlines the purpose of the Council, the Council leadership, and current projects and activities. It is essential that this website be updated regularly and that all information is current! If new information is posted on a regular basis the site will attract more use.
- Newsletters – At a minimum, each Council should provide two newsletters per year to its membership. These do not need to be lengthy or comprehensive but they do need to provide timely and thought-provoking ideas and updates. In addition to distribution the Council members, these should be posted to the website.

In addition to the Web page and newsletters, each Council should consider additional communication media. Some of the Councils currently use one or more of the following:

- Enhanced newsletter format and frequency – In addition to the minimum of two newsletters per year, enhanced format and frequency may provide opportunities to expand the level of detail, kind of information, and timeliness of information.
- ListServes – ListServes have been used with varied success. The Traffic Engineering Council ListServe has been the most successful to date. New formats and applications, such as social network groups and wikis may replace this application as technology continues to evolve.

Wikis – The Pedestrian and Bicycle Council has implemented a wiki on their site as a more current interactive application for communication to and between its members. The purpose of this wiki is to “enable interactive discussions and resource sharing by creating an online ‘home’ for the ITE Pedestrian/Bicycle Council. This site would house news and announcements, provide links to best practices, and encourage lively discussions. Some or all of the wiki could be restricted to ITE members and/or Council member to encourage greater membership and participation. The ultimate goal of the wiki would be to enhance the benefits of ITE to members and further ITE’s and the Council’s reputation as the key “go-to” source for best practices, news and announcements, event archives (such as webinars), and general professional networking.”

- E-mail from the Chair – Regular or event-driven communication from the Council Chair to the Council membership is a readily available tool to enhance information sharing.
- Online Social Networks – ITE has created social groups and accounts on popular online social networks like Facebook and LinkedIn to support a sense of community and provide opportunities for social and technical networking. Councils should consider the appropriateness of these social networks for engaging current and potential members.

These are some currently used examples of expanded outreach and communication. Others may be available and should be considered in terms of their application to each Council’s purpose and communication objectives. Options that require internet applications, mass e-mails, conference calling capabilities, or other technologies should be coordinated with ITE staff. When

considering your audience there should be some discussion about limits to access of information – i.e. should Council membership be required, or ITE membership, or is access completely open.

Each Council is expected to develop a communication plan outlining:

- Audience(s)
- Message(s)
- Media
- Products
- Schedule
- Activity lead

This plan will help organize and deliver timely and interesting information to the Council members; identify the need for and opportunities to solicit information; and engage current and potential members in the Council's community of practice.