Advocacy in our industry is a daunting task. Advocacy topics can be controversial and the line between advocacy and lobbying may not be commonly understood. This paper provides recommendations to ITE’s Advocacy Committee with a copy to the International Board of Direction to better empower the membership to be the voice of the transportation industry.

Prepared By: Andrew Cibor, Andy Kaplan, Anna Martin, Andrew Swisher, David Thatcher, and Scott Walker
ITE’S ADVOCACY COMMITTEE

The Advocacy Committee was formed in January of 2014 through an initiative of the current International President, Hibbett Neel. By March of 2014, Monica Suter and Sam Schwartz were selected as the initial Co-Chairs of the Advocacy Committee. In addition to the Co-Chairs, the following eight members initially comprised the committee representing eight different states and Canada.

- Sam Schwartz (New York) – Co-Chair
- Monica Suter (California) – Co-Chair
- Bernie Arseneau (Minnesota)
- Howard Chapman (South Carolina)
- Jason DeGray (New England)
- Dave Gehr (Virginia)
- Charles Huffine (Colorado)
- Joanna Kervin (Canada)
- Nelson Schaffer (Pennsylvania)
- Wayne Tanda (California)

The Committee met in person for the first time at the ITE Technical Conference and Exhibit in Miami, Florida in March of 2014 and will meet again at the ITE Annual Meeting in Seattle, Washington in August 2014. As a follow-up, several conference calls have kept the Committee organized and on-task. Several initiatives have already seen progress as summarized below:

1. Advocacy Network in ITE Communities –

   The Advocacy Network has been active in the past several months. There are currently 236 members in the community, 97 discussion threads (of which 14 are current from the past 6 months) and 3 recent blog posts from ITE Headquarters.

2. ITE Webinars

   Two webinars have taken place on advocacy-related topics. The first was “Taking the Plunge into Social Media for your Next Transportation Project” and was free to all members. This webinar was attended by 94 members. The second was in June of 2014, “Effective Communications and Advocacy Strategies”, at a cost of $75 per member. The number of participants for this conference is not known to date.

3. Sessions at ITE Meetings

   Monica Suter and Sam Schwartz hosted a Transportation Advocacy session at the ITE Technical Conference and Exhibit in March which was well-attended. A similar session is planned for the upcoming ITE Annual Meeting in Seattle in August.

4. ITE Journal Articles

   There have been several recent articles in the ITE Journal on the importance of ITE’s role in transportation advocacy. The first was the President’s Message in April of 2014 followed by an
introduction to the new Advocacy Committee and Advocacy Network by Monica Suter. In addition, recent articles have been published on topics related to advocacy, funding, public relations, and communicating with legislators.

**LEADERSHIPITE**

The inaugural LeadershipITE program kicked off in the fall of 2013. The international class is comprised of 30 members that were formed into five teams of six participants. Each team selected a ‘hot topic’ to address and provide recommendations on to the ITE Board of Direction at the 2014 ITE Annual meeting. One team comprised of the following individuals selected the topic, “Defining ITE’s Role in Transportation Advocacy”.

- Andrew Cibor (Idaho)
- Andy Kaplan (New Jersey)
- Andy Swisher (Iowa)
- Anna Martin (Texas)
- David Thatcher (Canada)
- Scott Walker (Kentucky)

Upon selection of this topic in the fall of 2013, the LeadershipITE advocacy team was introduced to the Advocacy Committee and began to work with the Committee. After discussions and meetings with Hibbett Neel and members of the Committee, the LeadershipITE advocacy team developed recommendations for refinement of the Advocacy Committee’s mission statement, and some ITE advocacy goals and objectives.

*The LeadershipITE advocacy team’s intent is to support and assist the Advocacy Committee in its mission to advocate for transportation on behalf of ITE. The team is extremely appreciative of the opportunity to be involved with the Committee and hopes these recommendations will help build upon the initiatives that the Committee has already embarked upon.*
RECOMMENDATION: ITE SHOULD REVISE THE MISSION STATEMENT OF THE ADVOCACY COMMITTEE.

OBJECTIVES:

- Review the Advocacy Committee mission statement in conjunction with possible updates to ITE’s Strategic Plan.
- Educate and empower membership to be the voice of the industry.

WHY?

The Advocacy Committee will be involved in the development of ITE’s message (talking points) for many issues, some of which are likely to be controversial. The mission statement for the committee should align with the mission and goals of ITE’s Strategic Plan. The Advocacy Committee fits within the Strategic Plan of the organization and is a critical piece to being the voice for the transportation industry. The current version of the Strategic Plan was adopted prior to the formation of the Advocacy Committee. ITE and its Advocacy Committee need to provide a consistent message to the general membership.

For reference, the current mission statement of the Advocacy Committee is as follows:

“The purpose of the committee is to define and prioritize issues for which ITE and its members should be advocating at international, national, regional or local levels. The committee may also develop materials to support the role of transportation professionals as advocates. ITE will implement a Legislative and Regulatory “community” to which the members may volunteer to participate.”

HOW?

The Advocacy Committee will begin reviewing the Committee’s Mission Statement at the 2014 ITE Annual Meeting in Seattle. We recommend that the ITE Advocacy Committee mission statement be revised as follows:

The purpose of ITE’s Advocacy Committee is to empower the membership to be the professional voice of the transportation industry for the benefit of society and to act as a vehicle for the dissemination of information relating to advocacy needs between staff and membership. The advocacy committee with assistance from the general membership will:

- Define and prioritize issues affecting the industry at the international, national, regional, and local levels.
• Assist staff in identifying sources of information that will assist in the advocacy of these issues.
• Assist staff in alerting the membership of advocacy needs.
• Encourage and educate the membership to advocate for the transportation industry.
**RECOMMENDATION:** ITE leadership and staff should make it a priority to advocate the ITE-adopted policies, canons of ethics, safety action plan, and strategic plan to its members.

**OBJECTIVES:**

- Educate membership on the policies already in place.
- Provide a link between the existing policies and the need to advocate for the industry.

**WHY?**

Many ITE members are not aware of ITE’s adopted policies or familiar enough with them to effectively advocate on ITE’s behalf. Below is a summary of applicable policies.

- **ITE’s Mission:** “To be the principal source of professional expertise, knowledge and ideas promoting transportation science and principles internationally.” -- *ITE must thoroughly vet and share its principles and adopted policies internally before effectively promoting them externally.*

- **ITE’s Mission Statement:** “Through its products and services, ITE promotes professional development of its members, advocates, supports and encourages education, stimulates research, develops public awareness programs and serves as a conduit for the exchange of professional information.” -- *ITE needs to provide mechanisms or enhance existing ones to share ideas in order to develop its members and become successful advocates.*

- **ITE’s Big Audacious Goal:** “To bring together transportation’s body of knowledge and professional voice for the benefit of society.” -- *The ITE voice can be stronger if its members, Chapters, Sections, and Districts develop and share a consistent message.*

- **ITE Strategic Professional Knowledge Goal:** “Increase awareness of the relevance and range of ITE’s information to target groups.” -- *The first target group of ITE’s policies should be ITE members.*

- **ITE Strategic Transportation Public Policy Goal:** “Increase member’s involvement in transportation-related public policy discussions and action.” -- *The first discussions should occur between ITE members.*

**HOW?**

LeadershipITE recommends enhancing the use of the following resources to increase ITE’s internal awareness of and action supporting adopted policies:

- **ITE Staff**
  - Review national transportation-related bills and popular national publications. Distribute summary with links to more information to the ITE Board, the Advocacy Committee, and
committees related to the topic with references to applicable ITE-adopted policies to spur
discussion and action.

• ITE Journal
  o Continue including the Ethics Forum in the ITE Journal and build upon it to also include
discussion relating to ITE-adopted policies.
  o Highlight ITE’s policies and encourage members in op/ed’s like Jason DeGray’s article on
  “What’s Next for ITE?”
  o Consider articles highlighting success or “lessons learned” stories relating to ITE adopted
  policies.

• ITE Advocacy Committee
  o Tweet, email, post on the ITE Community, present at conferences, organize webinars, etc.
educating members on adopted ITE policies and how they relate to member’s day-to-day
  activities.
  o Work with staff to develop a brief fact sheet and/or bullets to be distributed to ITE members
  that can be used to assist in discussions with decision makers on hot topics.

• ITE Leadership
  o Develop and encourage means for tracking and sharing advocacy, legislative, and public
  relations updates at the national and local levels.
  o Develop an effective means for evaluating and updating adopted policies.

• ITE Meetings
  o As a part of presentation sessions, the moderators should introduce the session’s theme and
  reference relevant ITE polices for the discussion.
**RECOMMENDATION:** The Advocacy Committee and/or ITE should communicate the thoughts and opinions of the organization to our peers in other organizations, the general public, and key decision makers.

**OBJECTIVES:**

- Allow ITE to be a strong advocate for the industry.
- Educate key decision makers.
- Educate the general public (possible focus placed on youth as part of a long term plan)
- Partner with peers in other professional organizations

**WHY?**

ITE should more actively communicate the positions of the organization to peers in other professional organizations, the general public, and key decision makers. By doing so, ITE’s relevance will be stronger. People increasingly get information from electronic media and receive this information in small pieces. ITE needs to develop a strategy of communicating relevant industry positions to a wide audience in attention grabbing headlines. Guidance should be provided on communications at all organizational levels and a clear direction should be provided about whether members may “speak on behalf of ITE”.

**HOW?**

The following action items are proposed for this effort:

- **Advocacy-Lobbying Guidelines**
  The Advocacy Committee should produce advocacy and lobbying guidelines to clarify what level of advocacy and lobbying can be pursued by ITE and its members. The product should address common questions and concerns from members.

- **Press Releases (Focus area of ITE’s revised communications strategic plan)**
  A review of past press releases indicated that they have not been very frequent (2012 (1), 2009 (5) and 2008 (1)). Make them frequent, attention grabbing and relevant – something that people will want to write articles on, interview key members of ITE about, etc.

- **Infographics**
  The Advocacy Committee should consider developing Infographics as they could be a great tool in communicating ideas. ITE-generated infographics could be used in press releases, on billboards, pamphlets or electronic media on a national or local level. Infographics could be used to explain complicated ideas to key decision makers. Examples include:
LeadershipITE  Defining ITE’s Role in Transportation Advocacy

http://futurecapetown.com/2013/10/16-of-the-best-transport-infographics-on-the-web/
http://blog.visual.ly/celebrate-independence-with-these-17-infographics-about-bicycling/

- **Social Media (Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, YouTube, etc.)**
  Perform an annual review of the use of social media to determine which tools are most effective.
RECOMMENDATION: THE ADVOCACY COMMITTEE AND ITE SHOULD INITIATE AND / OR INCREASE COLLABORATION AMONG TRANSPORTATION-RELATED PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS.

OBJECTIVES

• Increase meaningful and appropriate communications with related member groups about important transportation topics, legislation, and initiatives.
• Increase opportunities for global participation in technical activities and information exchange.
• Increase collaboration within the global community and other diverse groups to strengthen the impact of advocacy efforts.

WHY?

The majority of ITE’s peer organizations have established and defined action plans with respect to transportation-related advocacy. As a result, they have a longer history of successes and failures of such efforts which would help ITE, as the role of the Advocacy Committee continues to evolve. Identifying areas of potential overlap with peer organizations and non-transportation organizations (e.g., Chamber of Commerce, PTA’s, health organizations, etc.) could further strengthen the attempts of both organizations to advocate on a topic. In addition, the ability of ITE to understand topics which are important for ITE, but under-represented by those organizations, would be strategic.

Through such coordination, ITE members will enjoy a collegial and collaborative environment that advances technical knowledge, provides opportunities for workforce development and creates forums for global information exchange and networking.

(See Appendix A for a list of related organizations and their advocacy efforts):

HOW?

The following action items are proposed for this effort:

• Look at the information in Appendix A and determine if any peer organizations are missing or misrepresented.
• Assign peer organizations for ITE staff and / or Advocacy Committee members to reach out to either directly or through a formal letter expressing interest in strategic collaboration.
• Maintain a list of cooperative peer organization as well as a list of identified ‘hot topics’ of importance to both organizations.
Identify ITE members who are also active in peer organizations (if any) who would be willing to serve as a liaison on advocacy issues.
RECOMMENDATION: THE ADVOCACY COMMITTEE SHOULD ESTABLISH CLEAR, MEASURABLE GOALS RELATED TO TRANSPORTATION ADVOCACY FOR ITE.

OBJECTIVES:

• The Advocacy Committee should establish clear and measurable goals and objectives.
• Provide for a measure of success which can steer the committee in the future.

WHY?

While the Committee has been extremely active the past several months, the key question is, “are we reaching the members”? The activity on the Advocacy Network suggests that the word is getting out and it is a topic about which many members are passionate. However, only a small fraction of our membership is currently engaged. The Advocacy Committee should establish clear, measurable goals that can be reevaluated annually. Goals will give the Committee intent and direction, and feedback can be provided to the ITE Board and Membership on successes and opportunities. Transportation Advocacy can also be a controversial topic among the membership as it is often confused with lobbying. Clear goals that are transparent and align with the mission of ITE and the Advocacy Committee will be important to gain the support of the ITE membership.

HOW?

The following goals are recommended for consideration by the Advocacy Committee. These action items recommend clear and measureable goals for the Advocacy Committee. The goals should be reevaluated yearly. The Advocacy Committee should also work together to establish the long-term goals of the Committee.

• Advocacy Mission Statement – In the next 12 months, the Advocacy Committee will review and refine the committee’s Mission Statement in collaboration with possible related changes to the ITE Strategic Plan.
• ITE Journal – The Advocacy Committee will publish advocacy-related articles in the ITE Journal quarterly.)
• Advocacy Network – In the next 12 months, subscriptions to the Advocacy Network will reach 500 members (currently have 236 members).
• Webinars – The Advocacy Committee will host quarterly webinars on Advocacy topics and successes.
• Email Blasts – The Advocacy Committee and ITE Headquarters will post monthly updates on the Advocacy Community on current transportation topics such as funding bills, etc.
• Champions – In the next 12 months, the Advocacy Committee will identify one “champion” in each District who will work closely with the Advocacy Committee to distribute information and
appropriate “call to action” to District membership. The Advocacy Committee will also encourage Section and Chapter champions where there is interest.

- **Partnerships** – In the next 12 months, the Advocacy Committee will identify appropriate contacts at four (4) peer organizations. The intent of the contact is to form relationships that may be mutually beneficial to both organizations to exchange ideas and information, and potentially partner on transportation advocacy-related issues.

- **Advocacy Materials** – In the next 12 months, the Advocacy Committee should establish a sub-committee to lead the development of Advocacy materials. These materials can be used for both internal and external advocacy related to education on key topics. Examples may include press releases, talking points for legislators, infographics, videos, and billboards.

- **Advocacy Guidelines** – In the next six months, the Advocacy Committee should produce advocacy and lobbying guidelines to clarify what level of advocacy and lobbying can be pursued by ITE and its members.

- **Long Term Goals** – In the next 12 months, the Advocacy Committee should establish goals for Years 2, 5 and 10 and develop a strategy around achieving those goals. Long term goals could include:
  - Organizing legislative gathering(s)
  - Mentoring
  - STEM education outreach
  - Promoting the profession
  - Partnerships with non-transportation focused organizations (e.g., Chamber of Commerce)
RECOMMENDATION: ITE SHOULD DEFINE A CLEAR PROCESS FOR ADVOCACY ACTION PLANS

OBJECTIVES:

• Provide a structure within the organizational framework of ITE for advocacy activities.
• Balance rapid response through independent staff activities, while ensuring oversight of positioning.

WHY?

ITE is an organization of members led by an elected Board of Direction. In order for ITE to take formal action and to take a position on a subject, it should do so within the organizational leadership structure. To maximize efficiency the Advocacy Committee should set-up official protocols pre-authorized by the International Board of Direction to establish parameters of actions that can move forward without having to obtain additional authorization. Further, ITE staff’s role and assistance with action items are critical to quickly advance information to the general and elected memberships. The position taken by the staff should be aligned with the broad interests of the membership as defined by the Board of Direction. In order to allow for quick movement within a defined organizational leadership structure, a process should be defined to support staff’s ability to take actions automatously, but within limitations previously defined by the Board of Direction.

HOW?

LeadershipITE recommends that the ITE Advocacy Committee refine a process to develop topic specific action plans and present this to the Board of Direction for approval.

• Policy Statements (Board of Direction): Within the context of ITE’s strategic plan, the ITE Board of Direction has the responsibility to adopt policy statements about external forces of which ITE membership may have an interest. These policy statements are intended to be broad enough to be adapted to emerging situations, however clear enough to direct staff actions aligned with the intents of the Board.

• Deciding to Act (ITE Staff): Within the context of existing published policy statements, specific legislation or other actions impacting the membership of ITE can be identified and screened for action. Conceptually, ITE staff can identify sources of legislation or actions which to respond. The broader membership, including sections, peer organizations, and other advice organizations can request ITE staff to review a specific legislation and interpret a policy statement, to determine what, if any, action is warranted.
LeadershipITE recommends that the Advocacy Committee, in collaboration with the International Board of Direction, develop a flow chart to illustrate and summarize the process to act regarding advocacy issues. The following page illustrates a draft example prepared by the LeadershipITE advocacy team.
LeadershipITE

Defining ITE’s Role in Transportation Advocacy

Outside Legislation or Action

ITE Board of Directors

ITE Policy Statements

ITE Advocacy Committee

ITE HQ Staff Review

If impacting existing ITE policy statement

Educational Materials

ITE Advocacy Action(s)

Policy

HQ Staff

Member

Outside Org

Other

ITE Section Board of Directors

Formal ITE National Position on Specific Topic

Formal ITE Section Position on Specific Topic

Must be fully aligned with ITE National Position

Strategic ITE Action Plan

HQA Staff Activity

Member Actions

Outside Org Partnership

Outside Org Joint Events

Member Communication

Other

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Attachment A – Peer Organization Reviews

1) ASHE (American Society of Highway Engineers)
   a. On the front page of the ASHE website, there is a small box labeled “Federal Program Position”, which links to a two page position paper on Federal programs.
   b. Part of ASHE’s Strategic Plan is to switch from being ‘reactive’ to ‘proactive’
   c. Outside of this box, did not see major area of website dedicated to advocacy

2) ASCE (American Society of Civil Engineers)
   a. One of the 4 major tabs for ASCE on website is “Issues and Advocacy” [http://www.asce.org/Government-Relations/Government-Relations]
   b. That main category is broken down into 9 subtasks
   c. Well-known for Infrastructure Scorecard
   d. Includes an area for getting involved

3) ACEC (American Council of Engineering Companies)
   a. First of seven tabs is advocacy
   b. First sub-bullet is ‘Key Issues” which is a list of legislation, etc along with links to larger articles about
   c. Break issues down into 9 different topics ranging from education to transportation to legal reform

4) AASHTO (American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials)
   a. Vision and Mission on their webpage (http://www.transportation.org/Pages/VisionandGoals.aspx) clearly states their vision as “the voice” and mission to “advocate” transportation-related policy
   b. Daily Transportation Update provide on-going activity around the county

5) NACTO (National Association of City Transportation Officials)
   a. Did not initially see the word ‘advocate’ on main parts of website; however, much of their policy has an advocacy component (http://nacto.org/policy/)
   b. Site has a ‘press release’ section which includes articles with NACTO mentions

6) TRB (Transportation Research Board)
   a. Isn’t as much of an advocacy group as is a research agency with information exchange
   b. [http://www.trb.org/AboutTRB/MissionandServices.aspx]
   c. TRB doesn’t necessarily advocate, but has research and data to support advocacy

7) IBTTA (International Bridge, Tunnel and Turnpike Association)
   a. The fourth of seven major tabs is “Government Affairs & Advocacy”
   b. Key issues, policies, and positions are clearly defined (http://www.ibtta.org/government-affairs-advocacy)
   c. Site is easy to read and not overwhelming

8) ITS America
   a. ITS America has a full section of their website dedicated to advocacy: [http://www.itsa.org/advocacy] and seems to do a great job laying out where they stand on various issues. Some items of note:
      1. ITS America has an official campaign (called Campaign for ITS) which is intended to fund their advocacy activities.
      2. Each month, ITS America members can participate in Congressional Roundtables, which include a meeting with a member of the US Congress.
      3. Member of the organization worked with members of Congress to get an ITS bill on the table called the SMART Technologies for Communities Act
      4. They have a great page with downloadable documents on Reauthorization including letters and presentations - [http://www.itsa.org/advocacy/toolsandresources]

9) WTS (Women’s Transportation Seminar)
   a. Advocacy is not shown as a key dropdown, but WTS in general has some very specific goals
   b. Does state goal of “Become a leading source and authority throughout the transportation industry” [https://www.wtsinternational.org/about-wts/goals/]

10) Alliance for Biking and Walking, League of American Bicyclists, etc.
    a. A primary focus of bicycling advocacy groups is to advocate for bicycling