Message from the Conference Chair

Paul J. Wagner, Washington State Department of Transportation

On behalf of the ICOET Steering Committee, I’m pleased to present the proceedings of the 2009 International Conference on Ecology and Transportation, held September 13-17, 2009 in Duluth, Minnesota. This was the fifth biennial ICOET bringing together world experts to share the most current knowledge and best practices at the intersection of transportation and the ecological sciences. Attended by more than 400 professionals, ICOET 2009 featured over 120 presentations from 16 countries in its technical program and poster sessions.

‘Adapting to Change’ was our 2009 conference theme, and it certainly reflects the times. We face environmental change and are learning what climate change means for us, just as we feel the effects of political change and tremendous economic change from the current recession. The environmental challenges that come with addressing transportation needs seem more urgent and more complex, requiring innovation and adaptation. The participation at ICOET by hundreds of transportation and environmental professionals, and their research contributions to the proceedings, are an important part of finding and sharing those successful adaptations.

Each ICOET brings new and exciting elements to the conference program thanks to the many organizations that participate, and this year was no exception. Some of the highlights at ICOET 2009 included:

- Presentations from 16 countries – Australia, Brazil, Canada, France, India, Ireland, Israel, Mexico, the Netherlands, the People’s Republic of China, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, Wales, and the United States – were accepted this year, including several countries new to ICOET. Another first for the conference was a tribal presentation by Native American participants from Minnesota’s Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa. Participation from the international community at ICOET greatly enriches the body of research presented at the conference, and provides a vital global perspective on both the state of the art and state of the practice in addressing ecological issues associated with transportation infrastructure.

- Rick Ridgeway, noted adventurer, author, filmmaker, and Vice President of Environmental Initiatives for Patagonia Inc., provided an exceptional keynote address on Freedom to Roam, a campaign and coalition founded by Patagonia to protect wildlife corridors that connect crucial animal habitats. His remarks are available for view on the conference Web site at www.icoet.net. We thank Rick for his inspiring words and generous donation of his time to attend and support ICOET.

- The 2009 Federal Highway Administration Environmental Excellence Awards ceremony was hosted for the second consecutive year at ICOET. Award winners from 12 environmental categories were recognized at the September 14 luncheon. FHWA sponsors this biennial awards program to honor state and local partners, projects, and processes that excel in meeting growing transportation needs while protecting and enhancing the environment. Details on the 2009 winners are included in the “Special Session” section of the proceedings.

- Our host agency, the Minnesota Department of Transportation, planned two excellent field trips, including one demonstrating their progressive work in reconstruction along the ecologically sensitive North Shore of Lake Superior. Mn/DOT’s North Shore Scenic Byway initiatives were honored by FHWA with a 2009 Environmental Excellence Award presented at ICOET.

The port city of Duluth on Lake Superior was an ideal venue for ICOET 2009, at the intersection of land and water, striking natural beauty amid transportation corridors. We were delighted to visit this engaging location, and are sincerely grateful for the hospitality shown by Mayor Don Ness and the citizens of Duluth, by the Duluth Entertainment Convention Center, and by our Mn/DOT co-hosts who provided outstanding services to the conference.

Numerous sponsors – governmental, non-profit, and private – also deserve thanks for their contributions to bring us together at ICOET 2009. You’ll find these groups listed on the back cover of the proceedings. I wish to thank personally the many volunteer members of the ICOET 2009 committees and subcommittees who worked tirelessly to plan, organize, and generate an outstanding program. I hope that you will use these proceedings to continue to advance your efforts to protect and enhance our environment when planning and implementing transportation programs.

It is not too early to begin planning for the next ICOET. The 2011 conference will be hosted by the Washington State Department of Transportation. We hope to see you there!