

PREFACE (GARY EVINK, CONFERENCE CHAIR)

Never in the history of the development of the transportation system in this country have the challenges for the transportation professional been greater. The rapid increase in growth of our population and economy has overwhelmed our transportation system in many areas of the country. Additionally, the changes in land use associated with growth have left many ecological problems – loss and degradation of water quality, air quality, wildlife habitat, and fisheries habitat. Transportation problems on our public lands are taxing the very values for which these lands are being managed. The environmental issues that improvements to our transportation system face are very complex and demand new answers to maintain and indeed improve the state of the environment in this country. This proceedings is the result of the first international conference designed to address this broad range of ecological issues related to surface transportation development.

The International Conference on Ecology and Transportation (ICOET) is the marriage of two highly successful environmental conferences dealing with transportation - The International Conference on Wildlife Ecology and Transportation (ICOWET 94, 96, and 99) and The National Conference on Transportation, Wetlands, and the Natural Environment (Connections 96 & 98). The sponsors will be presenting ICOET every two years to provide the most current information about what is happening in the ecological sciences as related to the transportation industry.

The sponsors desire an international conference since the issues are worldwide. The very health of this planet depends on wise choices given the consequences of continued environmental deterioration. The sponsors of this conference recognize the central role that transportation plays in the array of possible futures. The world has become a smaller place because of the wonderful improvements that have taken place in transportation, so it is important that we internationally share what we learn.

Another hope of the sponsors is that the conferences will be multi-disciplinary in nature because the knowledge required by transportation professionals continues to expand daily and covers all of the ecological sciences. As you look at the papers contained in this proceedings you will see that many environmental agencies, public interest groups, and the transportation industry have presented their expertise. It is hoped that by this cross-functional sharing of information, all will have a better understanding of the ecological and social relationships.

Finally, as conference chair, I hope that you will recognize the leadership being demonstrated by the groups sponsoring this conference. The environmental challenges facing the transportation community are immense, complicated, and often controversial. The sponsors of this conference have stepped out and said that they will address these issues through the sharing of views, expertise, and the best scientific information that we can gather. There is a diversity of opinions expressed in this document – some opposing. It takes leadership to face these often opposing views and bring together the best information and science to facilitate effective decision-making. Decisions will be made every day, and it is the goal of the sponsors of this conference to make sure that such decisions are well informed with respect to the environment.

So we met in the beautiful state of Colorado to share our thoughts, knowledge, and even some of our dreams for a more environmentally sound transportation system for the world. It was a positive step that you took in attending this conference or obtaining the proceedings. Now, we each are again dealing with the everyday problems related to developing our transportation plans, projects, and system. I hope that what you may have learned from the conference and this proceedings will inspire you to do your best.