

Understanding Multi-State, Stakeholder Directed, Corridor Coalition Building: An  
Interstate-81 Case Study

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## ABSTRACT

Corridor coalitions have been described by some as a model for the development of public-private partnerships to help finance and manage corridor wide traffic flow programs and construction projects (Vega & Penn, 2008). Others have suggested corridor coalitions could also be effective tools for the development of strategic growth planning in mega regions and possibly as part of a national infrastructure and economic growth strategy (Todorovich, 2009). Through a case study of the Interstate 81 Corridor Coalition, this dissertation describes the coalition's characteristics, analyzes its evolutionary development and explores governance participation possibilities. This study based on data from a mixed methods research approach provides a framework for assessing conceptual characteristics, a responsiveness continuum for understanding contextual dynamics and a governance model of components for evaluating collaborations. The evidence suggests some planning, funding and coordination difficulties associated with the absence of governance entities with corridor wide authority are being addressed by various national transportation institutions and associations. Corridor coalitions that exhibit developmental characteristics such as competency, sustainability, diversity and commitments consistent with relevant public agencies may be appropriate for roles in governance. Likewise, the responsiveness of corridor coalitions to governance related contextual developments may be a primary determinant of their possible role in governance. This I-81 case study provides evidence of an evolving coalition, where the descriptive characteristics contribute to a type of responsiveness to corridor concerns that could lead to governance participation.

## DEDICATION

In Memoriam to my mother, Mae Nell Wilson Orr (1934-2002) whom I thank for teaching me how to work, study, pray and dream. Thanks Mama, for giving yourself to the dream of creating hope and opportunity for your family, and for making the most of your God-given gifts.

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# Chapter I

## Introduction

Because transportation projects and programs impact so many aspects of the physical environment and socio-economic circumstances of the United States society, leadership and cooperation are required to administer them effectively. That is why transportation officials have looked for ways to partner with other agencies and stakeholders to address complex multi-issue, multi-jurisdictional problems. One fairly new and promising approach to collaborative transportation programming and planning in large geographic regions is the corridor coalition approach. These are coalitions of stakeholders, organized to address a variety of issues such as infrastructure, policies, economics and operations connected to specific interstate highway corridor systems. Consequently, some have described corridor coalitions as models for the development of public-private partnerships to help finance and manage corridor wide traffic flow programs and construction projects (Vega & Penn, 2008). Others have suggested corridor coalitions could also be effective tools for the development of strategic growth planning in mega regions and possibly as part of a national infrastructure and economic growth strategy (Todorovich, 2009).

In fact, some European scholars have described corridors as comprehensive planning opportunities where spatial development is facilitated by looking at corridors as infrastructure bundles that connect socio-economic clusters of activity. This point calls attention to circumstances where corridor centered planning demonstrates responsiveness to bottom up private sector preferences and to the influence that traffic has on socio-economic processes connected to infrastructure development. The corridor coalition

approach may also be a means of ensuring responsiveness to how socio-economic processes and infrastructure development influence traffic factors. Likewise, understanding the decision making impact of contextual dynamics, such as membership characteristics, organizational objectives and collaborative relationships, is important to corridor coalition scholars (Priemus & Zonneveld 2003) and this research. Since the 1990s, dozens of corridor coalitions have emerged in the U.S. with limited empirical evidence on how they develop and operate.

Through a case study of the Interstate 81 Corridor Coalition, this dissertation explores the implications of the coalition's contextual characteristics, operations, and development. To add to the scholarship on corridor coalitions, this research seeks to identify the coalition's membership and contextual characteristics, observe how the coalition adapts to developments over time and assess the governance implications of the coalition's development. One goal of this dissertation is to provide empirical evidence pertaining to participants and their interactions, developments and their impacts, and the resultant governance implications. Another goal is to assist practitioners and scholars involved in corridor coalition building and theory development.

Founded in 2007, the I-81 Corridor Coalition is comprised of government officials, stakeholders and civic leaders from New York, Maryland, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Virginia and Tennessee. The coalition is a self-directed entity in that it does not operate according to any particular government policy or receive its guidance from any particular political authority. Instead, the coalition's steering committee of elected officials, state department of transportation (DOT) representatives and stakeholders from member states, along with the coalition chairperson and executive director, provide

leadership. The multi-jurisdiction quality of the coalition raises questions about how leaders from multiple sectors and various disciplines, jurisdictions and interest areas have been able to make steady progress towards a sustainable organization and contribute substantively to problem solving in the corridor.

Although the I-81 Corridor is in part modeled on the I-95 Corridor Coalition, the distinctiveness of the I-81 coalition makes it an intriguing approach to addressing transportation corridor concerns. From its founding through the coalition's 2011 Annual Conference, this coalition continues to evolve along a stakeholder-directed participatory trajectory, making it a phenomenon worthy of closer observation for the practical and theoretical implications of the role it may play in transportation.

### **Background Policies and Programs Framing the Research**

In their research of collaborative transportation efforts in Chicago and Los Angeles, Weir, Rongerude, and Ansell (2009) find that vertical power is essential to such efforts. One reason being that policy decisions and resource allocations in transportation planning have too often been the product of politically charged back room deals with little if any substantive public involvement. They further reference such conditions for the influence they had in 1960 on then future United States Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan. He was known for having predicted that inequities in highway construction planning processes would ultimately cause significant damage to the nation's social fabric. Thirty years later, his beliefs about the benefits of stakeholder involvement in the metropolitan area planning processes inspired Moynihan to spearhead the drafting and passage of the 1991 Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA). ISTEA is a landmark transportation policy reform initiative, intent upon making policy processes

more productive through broader inclusion of transportation stakeholders in regional planning (Weir et al., 2009). Despite this recognition of the importance of including the perspectives of diverse stakeholders in transportation planning decisions, the extent to which this approach is practiced in corridor coalitions remains unclear.

Transportation officials have demonstrated their acknowledgement of the role of contextual circumstances in planning transportation projects and related problems. Evidence of this is apparent in the history of the Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) programs, which have their origins in the 1949 National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA). NEPA directed transportation agencies to consider the adverse impact road projects could have on the environment and other cultures affected by their project designs and management.

One key development in becoming more responsive to the environmental contexts in transportation planning happened in 1988. That is when the American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO) formed the National Highway System (NHS), leading to their 1994 adoption of the NHS Design Standards policy, which included the following:

*BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the member departments of AASHTO will work through AASHTO's design standards committees with DOT and with interested parties on design criteria and on a design process for NHS routes that integrate safety, environmental, scenic, historic, community and preservation concerns, and on standards which also fosters access for bicycle and pedestrian traffic along with other transportation modes.*

This resolution was followed by the 1998 publication of *Thinking Beyond the Pavement; National Workshop on Integrating Highway Development with Communities and the Environment*. The Maryland DOT State Highway Administration, with sponsorship from AASHTO and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), produced

this document to share their views about the benefits of a more inclusive and responsive approach to planning. Then in 1999, the United States DOT conducted CSS workshops with 140 practicing engineers, which led to the approach being endorsed by the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE).

A final phase of this evolution to responsive planning in transportation came when the USDOT FHWA launched the [contextsensitivesolutions.org](http://contextsensitivesolutions.org) website in 2004 and in 2005 the Safe Accountable Flexible Efficient Transportation Equity Act; A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) legislation passed. Section 6008 of the Act cited the 1998 Maryland conference, stipulating adoption of CSS characteristics and processes. As of January 2012, 44 states report on their websites use of CSS practices or the implementation of a full blown CSS program, for including stakeholders and environmental concerns in transportation project and program planning.

Although the CSS characteristics are widely cited, how corridor coalitions respond to these inclusive and responsive aspects of the transportation planning agenda is not clear. It is also unclear how transportation officials are responding to coalition efforts and the degree to which these interactions represent evidence of substantive stakeholder participation in transportation governance. It is clear, however, that this agenda of encouraging individual and organizational stakeholders to participate in governance has become fairly common as politicians, administrators, scholars and practitioners respond to complex problems and citizen dissatisfaction (Ansell & Gash 2007, Breyer 2006, Campbell 2005, Fung 2003 & 2006, Halvorsen 2003, Kim, et al. 2005, King, Feltey, Susel 1998, Schachter 1997, Schachter & Aliaga 2003). Often the primary concern of these participation efforts is process authenticity, where the emphasis is on improving

relationships among agencies and stakeholders. At other times, the call for stakeholder participation is more about innovative solutions, coordinated information sharing and entrepreneurial collaborations to improve complex problem outcomes.

The implications of the policy initiatives above suggest a call for participative dynamics that reflect inclusion and diversity in transportation planning. Also implied in these initiatives is a desire to see more authentic representation of pertinent issues and consideration of the most innovative options available. Likewise, the literature on substantive participation often calls for responsive public administrators, who can equip stakeholders with the skills needed to meet the challenges of authentic participation. These responsive administrators recognize the value of stakeholder involvement and use public participation efforts as an opportunity to facilitate team building, organizational development, collaborative discourse and relationship building (Schachter 1997, Schachter & Aliaga, 2003). This responsive administrator approach to stakeholder participation is among the dynamics this dissertation hopes to discover, describe and explain.

Besides suggesting stakeholders may be allowed a more substantive role in decision making processes, the call for administrative responsiveness to stakeholders leads to questions about government cooptation (Campbell 2005, Bertelli & Lynn, 2006). Concern about cooptation is also found in the literature where scholars express a need for theory building to clarify how collaborative efforts affect bureaucratic responsiveness to political principals (Fisher 1983, Bryer 2006, Rabinovich 2007). The concern is that administrators responses' to collaborative efforts through providing resources and training to stakeholders represents evidence of stakeholder influence on governance.

## Clarifying the Research Questions and Considerations

Given the importance of transportation corridor coalitions and the lack of knowledge about their functioning, three overall research questions guide this dissertation. The first is *what are the membership and contextual characteristics of the I-81 Corridor Coalition?* This question acknowledges the significance of understanding the characteristics of the coalition in relation to membership attributes and dynamics internal to the organization. The evidence obtained in the pursuit of this answer will be used to describe aspects of the coalition that I argue are significant to membership development, organizational objectives, and decision making. Included in these dynamics will be information about membership perspectives on a variety of characteristics. Whether those perspectives are based on geographical concerns, professional expertise, interest group objectives, or the identity of the actors, knowing their perceived significance will help clarify the coalition's story.

As for determining which events and developments may be drivers of coalition action, the literature offers some suggestions about likely areas of interest. These suggestions, along with my own participant observations, provide guidance for focusing the interviews, surveys and other data collection efforts. It is important to understand if members have demonstrated their commitments to the coalition either financially or by written endorsements and how the coalition has responded to those commitments. In some instances choosing not to respond to certain circumstances may also be considered significant. For example, choosing not to pursue a particular funding opportunity or a partnership request may represent evidence of competing priorities.

Examples of developments that may be driving coalition behavior include funding decisions, gaining or losing key participants, policy decisions, progress or setbacks pertaining to coalition efforts, and changes of leadership or objectives (Mizrah & Rosenthal 2001, Weir et al. 2005). Identifying examples of membership perceptions related to such developments could contribute significantly to insight about the implications of coalition efforts, capacity and sustainability. Being able to describe the coalition's characteristics and development is an essential step in the process of being able to explain the coalition's implications for transportation governance.

### **Coalition Evolution: Adapting to Events and Developments**

The second research question asks *how have the coalition's characteristics and operations evolved from its 2007 founding through its 2011 Annual Conference?*

Where question one seeks to provide some basic mapping of the coalition's members and contextual characteristics, this question focuses on the organization's evolutionary dynamics. In this instance evolution as a concept is understood to indicate adaptations that represent responses to events and developments, observed over time. This use of evolution does not assume each adaptation is an example of improvement. Rather it illustrates how various characteristics, resulting from changing events and developments, influence coalition behavior. This question seeks to describe and explain how various events have been associated with changes in coalition objectives, activities and decisions. Just as evolution refers to how an organism's characteristics change over time as it adapts to environmental conditions, this question looks for evidence of the coalition's responsiveness (Fisher 1983), or lack there to various contextual conditions.

With various transportation planning entities looking for ways to incorporate stakeholder participation in policy objectives, this study of the I-81 coalition may provide insight regarding relevant challenges and opportunities. Therefore, an approach to recognizing responsive connections between coalition dynamics and stakeholder participation will be used (Bryer 2006, Fisher 1983, Greening & Gray 1994, Hoyt, Huq & Krieser 2007, Rabinovich 2007, Schachter & Aliaga 2003). Clarifying how different events and contextual characteristics influence decisions that lead to coalition changes is fundamental to constructing the story of the coalition's evolution. More about using the responsiveness approach will be described in the literature overview and in the research methodology.

### **Assessing the Coalition's Governance Possibilities**

The final research question draws conclusions from the evidence gathered in the previous two by asking, *based upon the coalition's characteristics and evolution, what may be implied about the coalition's role in transportation corridor governance?* This question provides an opportunity to focus on the I-81 Corridor Coalition's characteristics and practices to see what may be implied about the coalition's potential as a participant in transportation governance. Governance means here *the processes where government agencies at various jurisdictional levels interact in constitutionally legitimate vertical and horizontal relationships with public and private stakeholders to provide responsive, deliberative, consensus-oriented guidance that shapes policies for social and economic outcomes*. This definition of governance is from a compilation of components from Pedersen et al.'s (2011, p.376) "Pluricentric Coordination in Public Governance", Ansell & Gash's (2007, p. 544) "Collaborative Governance", the United Nations Development

Program's (2006, p.12) "Engaged Governance" and Hill & Lynn's (2004, p. 176) "Logic of Governance". For this dissertation, whether and how the guidance results from responsive, deliberative, and consensus oriented processes is particularly important.

For the purposes of this research, the governance questions focus first on coalition objectives, priorities and adaptability along with leadership style and decision making. The research also calls attention to whom the stakeholders represent and on what shared interests, economic or social, they agree. Particular attention will be given to evidence of horizontal and vertical collaborations with government officials for the sake of influencing policy design or implementation. The impact of jurisdictional boundaries on decision making and resource sharing will also be examined with attention given to the coalition's responsiveness to authority. With six states and dozens of planning regions located along the corridor, these questions of jurisdiction become matters of significant interest to the governance process. Because the I-81 coalition has made appeals to the various regional planning organizations along the corridor, noting the nature of their support and participation in coalition efforts is also important.

### **Organization of the Research**

To answer the research questions identified above, I will follow the chapter outlines presented here. The next chapter will focus on framing the literature according to each of the three research questions. First the information related to the characteristics of coalitions in general and corridor coalitions in particular will be clarified to inform the observation and data gathering processes. Part of the approach to this overview is to identify themes that describe basic coalition building dynamics. Specific attention will also be given to influential factors considered particularly specific to regional

transportation coalitions. As indicated by the first question, this will include literature on coalition memberships and the contextual characteristics of pertinent coalition developments and objectives.

After the coalition building literature, research pertinent to question two will focus on organizational responsiveness to explore the impact of key events and developments. Attention will also be given to insights from the administrative responsiveness literature, primarily to ascertain the implications of the coalition's responsiveness in relation to its possible role as a governance participant. Together, the coalition building and responsiveness literature is expected to clarify connections between coalition evolution and decision making behavior. Finally, chapter two will also look at participatory governance literature to support the analysis process pertaining to the I-81 Corridor Coalition as a potential governance participant. With so much ambiguity pertaining to governance theory, part of the challenge for this section will be to frame the literature to show how the I-81 initiative does or does not represent a viable governance approach.

Chapter three will be dedicated to the research methodology, detailing the research philosophy, the various data collection instruments, types of analysis and the coding process. Again, the chapter will be organized with the research questions in mind to describe how each component of the process intends to facilitate the data gathering and analysis process for a given question. Included in this section is a description of a responsiveness approach to elite interviewing (Rubin & Rubin, 2003) and how the other data sources, conference field notes, online membership questionnaire and coalition documents are used. The role each of the sources plays in answering a given research

question will be described to clarify the story development and information integration process. I will also describe how a responsiveness approach to data collection and analysis represents an interpretive constructionist philosophy for building the coalition's narrative. The method of information coding will be discussed to clarify its application for each question.

With the literature and methodology clarified, chapter four presents the evidence and analysis pertaining to the first research question. Likewise, the second question will be addressed in chapter five and the third research question in chapter six. Chapter Seven will give an overall assessment of the research methodology and findings. A reminder of the strengths and weaknesses of the research design will be included with the implications of the research conclusions.

## **Chapter II**

### **Framing the Questions: Coalitions, Responsiveness and Governance**

The purpose of this review is to gain insight from scholarship pertaining to initiatives similar to transportation corridor coalition building as a means of framing the concerns addressed in the dissertation questions. The chapter begins with an overview of a nationwide sample of transportation corridor initiatives to identify key characteristics that may inform the research questions. A review of the broader regional coalition building literature is then followed by a review of how previous research has treated the components of the three research questions. For the first research question, I review literature about coalition building membership characteristics and dynamics. For the second research question the focus turns to organizational and bureaucratic responsiveness for discussing the evolution of the coalition. Finally, to better understand the coalition's possible role in corridor governance, the review will consider the implications for governance drawn from the coalition's characteristics and evolution.

### **Overview of Transportation Corridor Initiatives**

Vega & Penne (2008) provide a helpful introduction to these geographically large, corridor-centered initiatives, showing there have been multiple efforts to create coalitions in response to complex transportation projects and programs. Like the participation initiatives identified in Chapter I, Vega and Penne's descriptions are helpful as templates of what the I-81 Corridor Coalition may be or may become. Such coalition forming efforts also serve as reminders that when it comes to federal funding, the characteristics, objectives and successes of other corridor coalitions may represent funding competitors for the I-81, making them a relevant part of this coalition's environment.

## **Early Transportation Corridor Initiatives and Federal Guidelines**

It is worth noting that some of the earlier corridor initiatives, like the Southeastern High Speed Rail Corridor and the Midwest Regional Rail Initiative (MWRRI), are freight and passenger rail projects that started their planning phase in the 1990s. It is also useful to know the funding standards for the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient, Transportation, Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA – LU). Vega & Penne 2008 record the following project and program based federal funding criteria for corridor coalitions: 1. Generate national economic benefits, 2. Reduce congestion and improve transportation safety, 3. Enhance the national transportation system, 4. Garner support for non-federal finances, 5. Provide dependable financing, 6. Use new technologies and 7. Help maintain or protect the environment.

The guidelines for funding under the USDOT Corridors of the Future Program (CFP) similarly call for collaborative efforts that lead to the development of multi-state transportation corridor coalitions. The basic expectation is that these coalitions will be capable of identifying projects for investment that will reduce congestion without putting an additional strain on the Highway Trust Fund (Vega & Penne, 2008). Thus the corridor project applications submitted for this program were judged on their ability to address concerns pertaining to: 1. Congestion reduction, 2. Mobility improvements for freight and people, 3. Economic benefits and support of commerce, 4. Value to the user based on increased safety, intermodal convenience, environmental benefits and faster travel speeds, 5. Innovations in project delivery and financing and 6. Private financial investments. After a two phase selection process the following awards were made by the USDOT for the Corridor of the Future: \$21 million to I-95 from Florida to the Canadian

border; \$5 million for I-70 in Missouri, Illinois, Indiana and Ohio; \$15 million for I-15 in Arizona, Utah, Nevada and California; \$15 million for I-5 in California, Oregon and Washington; \$8.6 million for I-10 from California to Florida; and \$800,000 for I-69 from Texas to Michigan.

Each of these awards represents an opportunity to identify the types of characteristics, objectives and achievements USDOT planners considered valuable. A look at the characteristics and objectives of the award winning coalitions promises to provide insight into planning gaps or concerns that need to be addressed by other initiatives. As indicated in Table 1, the standards for qualification under the CFP and SAFETEA-LU programs are basically the same. Likewise, both programs call for the outcomes to be achieved through collaboration with other public and private entities.

**Table 1: Transportation Coalition Funding Criteria**

<b>SAFETY-LU Standards</b>	<b>Corridors of the Future Standards</b>
National Economic Benefit	
Decrease Congestion/ Increase Transport Safety	Decrease Congestion
Improve National Transportation System	Increase Freight & Passenger Mobility
Increase Provision of Non-Federal Project Funds	Increase Private Investments
Increase Dependable Financing	Increase Economic Benefits & Support Commerce
Increase New Technology	Increase Innovation in Projects & Funding
Maintain & Protect Environment	Value Added; Safety, Intermodal, Speed & Environ

(Vega & Penne 2008)

### **Details of Corridor Coalition Models**

The following overview provides a means of assessing how the various corridor coalition initiatives demonstrate the desired attributes indicated in Table 1. First, a look at the I-95 coalition reveals that its 20 year history includes a Vehicle Probe Project which provides travel time and speed information for the 20,000 free-way and highway miles it covers from New Jersey to Florida, including Rhode Island. The coalition also provides Incident Management Training for First Responders and has developed the

Integrated Corridor Analysis Tool (ICAT) for analysis of traffic flow trends across the various states. The I-95 Coalition's commitment to training engineers, planners and policymakers is also evident in the seed money it has provided to the Consortium for Information Technology Systems (ITS) Training and Education, the Operations Academy and the Freight Academy (Pedersen & Tarnoff, 2011).

This combination of programs could easily satisfy all of the criteria stipulated under the CFP in Table 1. However, one thing the I-95 Corridor Coalition has not done is exercise any decision making authority, because the expressed governance role of the coalition is to advise, not to decide. Still, implementation of the listed programs positions the coalition to provide guidance to transportation professionals and stakeholders. By contrast, the Interstate-70 Corridor Coalition features a Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) approach to all of its project design and decision making processes. Its website (<http://i70mtncorridorcss.com/>) includes a list of programs for bridge repair, car seat safety, alcohol and impaired driving, bicycle and pedestrian support and teen driver support. There is also a projects list, organized according to the six regions of the corridor, which provides links to information and photos for nearly 40 projects. Project background information and objectives along with other details are available there. Again, the programs appear to satisfy the qualifying criteria but in this instance the emphasis on promoting stakeholder inclusion in planning processes is more deliberate.

Besides looking more closely at these selected corridors of the future, a broader overview includes some of the two to three dozen additional domestic and international coalitions. For example, the North America Corridor Coalition (NASCCO) founded in 1994, covers 2,500 miles of highway from Canada through the central United States and

into Mexico. Its initiatives include a focus on transportation innovation and security, energy efficiency and logistic workforce development (<http://www.nascocorridor.com/>). There also is the Delta Regional Authority (DRA), which is less of a corridor initiative but a large, eight state congressional initiative led by an appointee of the U. S. president and the governors of the participating states. In five years it used \$48.5 million of authority funds to leverage over \$700 million in federal and private funds for economic development and improved quality of life for residents.

It is not difficult to see from this very limited overview that initiatives like the I-81 Corridor Coalition have been emerging for about 20 years and that their leaders have chosen a variety of approaches to solving problems associated with their geographical regions. Lessons from these other corridor initiatives may help put the characteristics of the I-81 effort into perspective and help develop an evidence-based narrative of its potential role in transportation governance. A general awareness of these other coalitions as part of the contextual circumstances of the I-81 Coalition's challenge may also provide insight into the responsiveness dynamics of this coalition. The level of awareness of these initiatives by leaders of the I-81 Coalition and the amount of effort they have invested to take these perspectives into consideration also represent part of the coalition's development story.

### **Regional Coalition Characteristics Themes and Concepts**

The overview of coalitions above is followed by an emphasis on literature oriented to the research questions. The first research question, *what are the membership and contextual characteristics of the I-81 Corridor Coalition?*, calls attention to the literature about the membership and contextual circumstances of regional coalitions.

This section examines findings on questions such as who participates in these coalitions, what factors influence their decisions and what may be implied by coalition impacts.

This begins with the acknowledgement that complex societal problems have for decades inspired government and community leaders to embrace coalition building as a means of moving beyond the inadequacies of traditional top down bureaucratic problem solving methods. Often, the preferred approach in these instances has been in favor of more collaborative and participatory civic engagement strategies. One reason is that the features common to coalition building, such as stakeholder inspired innovations, collaborative resource options, community advocacy and consensus decision making, are viewed as promising attributes for governance participation (Fung & Wright 2001, Light 2007, Pedersen et al. 2011).

However, just as the concerns being addressed vary, so do the coalition types and organizational results experienced by leaders and participants in these initiatives. One might conclude that coalition building is contextually sensitive and best approached with some awareness of meaningful coalition dynamics. The need for awareness of coalition dynamics is particularly true in situations where significant investments have been committed to the success of a particular initiative, as is often the case in transportation-related coalition building (Callahan, 2007). There is therefore a need for research that takes into consideration policy arena specifics important to sustainable coalition building. This is apparent in the research outlined in Table 2. The evidence demonstrates a great deal of interest in understanding sustainable coalition building from functional and theoretical perspectives.

**Table 2: Integrated Overview of Coalition Characteristics**

Reference	Participants	Context & Dynamics	Impacts & Implications
Kimbrell, J. (2000)	State officials, various autonomous organizations, secondary associations, academics, private philanthropist, legislators, community leaders, students, neighboring states	<b>Social Change agenda;</b> Responsiveness of public administrators and legislators to research and community health needs, results in policies to support coalition reform agenda. Funding request denied, coalition expanded to include neighboring states. Funds from philanthropists.	<b>Cooperative impacts; 501.c3</b> incorporation, <b>community based service delivery</b> programs, multi-level <b>leadership training</b> instituted, <b>student internships</b> established, partnerships with neighboring states, winning competitive grant funding, <b>Political impacts;</b> passage of community healthcare legislation
Mizrahi & Rosenthal (2001)	Community leaders, public administrators, elected officials, volunteer organizations, social workers	<b>Urban Social Change agenda;</b> Resource limitations, search for best practices, conducive environment, competent leaders & members	<b>Strong core group,</b> political & financial supporters, organizational longevity, goal attainment, member empowerment, networking, information sharing
Gainsborough (2003)	Business organizations, local politicians, farmers, environmentalist, real estate developers, manufacturers	<b>Economic Development agenda;</b> Pursue regional collaborations through coalition building in (Los Angeles, Houston, Portland) to overcome local government fragmentation, seek governance not government to improve economic health of the region	Importance of <b>resources, capacity to act,</b> collaborative stakeholder responses, workforce related social agendas, profitability and growth management. Overcoming NIMBY through political action to elect favorable candidates, develop leadership & unity
Weir, Wolman & Swanstrom (2005)	City and Suburban coalitions in Chicago, New York, Cleveland, Detroit, Cincinnati, political and community leaders	<b>Political Economics agenda;</b> <b>Population shifts mean loss of federal funding, devolution,</b> regional coalition building for collaborative vs. competitive action, infrastructure needs	Relieve partisan tension by <b>identifying non-political champions to lead coalitions,</b> counter power struggles with multi-generational forums for innovative solutions
Alpert, Gainsborough & Wallis (2006)	Creation of the South Florida Regional Transportation Authority from an informal coalition of stakeholders	<b>Infrastructure development;</b> Highway congestion, 6 <sup>th</sup> largest Metropolitan Statistical Area in the U.S., TEA-21, pursuit of governance	RTA primarily a result of a multi-sector governance coalition effort. Business partners served as policy entrepreneurs, jurisdictional boundaries overcome
Gerber & Gibson (2009)	100 Largest MPOs in the United States (elected officials, community leaders, public administrators)	<b>Regional Transportation Planning agenda;</b> assessing SAFETEA-LU, and ISTEALU, TEA-21 Legislation impacts	Politics, elected officials show favoritism for local over regional considerations, public administrators key to regional effectiveness with project planning resource decision
Weir, Rongerude & Ansell (2009)	Transportation Coalitions in Los Angeles 2003, Chicago 2005, community leaders, transportation and elected officials, philanthropist, corporate partners, voluntary associations	<b>Regional Transportation Planning agenda;</b> ISTEALU Legislation	Chicago's coalition was more effective than LA's because it had <b>powerful corporate partners and engaged citizen groups which facilitated 'virtuous cycles' in the policy process</b>

As Table 2 indicates, one of the more common methods used for observing who is involved in coalition building, how they operate, and what their accomplishments imply

is the case study approach (Kimbrell 2000, Gainsborough 2003, Weir, et al. 2005, Alpert, et al. 2006, and Weir, et al. 2009). By highlighting participant characteristics, organizational objectives, key events, developments and concerns, the researchers identify trends for comparing and analyzing similar coalitions.

Thematically it might be said that *legislators, public administrators, businesses, volunteer organizations, farmers, philanthropists, students, educators and leaders from various communities and states have worked together to improve socio-economic conditions* (Kimbrell 2000, Mizrahi & Rosenthal 2001, Gainsborough et al. 2003). Under the same conceptual heading another theme worth including is *transportation officials and MPO planners from larger metropolitan and suburban areas around the country join legislators, community leaders, philanthropists, businesses and corporations to address infrastructure and economic development concerns* (Weir et. al 2005, 2009, Alpert et. al 2006, Gerber & Gibson 2009). A third theme is *characteristics such as stakeholders' areas of interest, experience, competency and levels of commitment identify keys to successful regional collaboration*. Likewise, *knowing how this coalition emerged, the policy concerns and the decisions that influenced organizational sustainability, are valuable to practitioners and theorists alike*.

Another theme that describes coalition dynamics is *coalition participants and partners joined to secure funding, draft legislation and form authoritative bodies for improved healthcare and transportation services* (Kimbrell 2000, Weir et al. 2005, 2009, and Alpert et al. 2006). These case studies suggests that *to overcome fragmentation caused by multi-jurisdictionalism and partisan gridlock, some initiatives were*

*empowered by government officials with authority to provide guidance for better governance outcomes* (Gainsborough 2003, Alpert et. al 2006, Weir et. al 2009).

Thus, given the details from the studies in Table 2 and the introductory themes framing this research, the organizing concepts that can be used to interpret the characteristics of effective coalitions can be summarized as **diversity, competency, commitments and sustainability**. As the introduction indicates, diversity describes having a variety of participants representing a full range of relevant issues and innovative perspectives. Similarly, competency is a matter of performance and problem solving, with particular attention given to administration and safety. Matters of sustainability refer to the management and pursuit of economic, environmental and human resources while commitments focus values and priorities represented in choices pertaining to partnerships, programs, projects, policies and plans.

### **Insights from Studies of Contextual Coalition Dynamics**

In addition to the descriptive themes and concepts drawn from the studies in Table 2, helpful insights about the contextual dynamics of the coalitions studied should be noted. Mizrahi & Rosenthal's (2001) interviews of leaders from 41 metropolitan social change coalitions in the New York / New Jersey provide insight into how leaders define and achieve organizational success. The researchers reported that the events and developments that motivated their investigation included changes in the availability of resources and the growing prevalence of agency workers being called upon to lead or serve on community problem solving coalitions. In a sense these two developments became the driving forces or variables that inspired stakeholders and administrators to act. Thus the authors stress that *limited resources and reduced services inspired*

*stakeholders to pursue civic engagement, which contributed to administrative innovations.*

One way of interpreting the dynamics of the inspired stakeholder and innovative administrator theme is to rephrase the behavior conceptually. That is to say *committed citizens were unwilling to settle for sub-par services and committed administrators were unwilling to ignore constituent appeals for competency.* Although it seems neither group was able to resolve the concerns alone, collaboratively solutions and resources were found. What the Mizrahi & Rosenthal (2001) study suggests is that sometimes when administrators demonstrate their community concern by partnering with stakeholders to help them reach their goals, communities and democratic societies are strengthened. In this case the participants in the research were so moved by their outcomes that they developed a framework for collaborative coalitions based on the practices found to work best for them.

The Mizrahi & Rosenthal study's four essential criteria for building effective coalitions were as follows. First, the political, economic and community environment must be conducive to coalition building. Second, the core group of the coalition must be committed to working together towards a common goal. Third, the coalition's ability to secure political and financial resources is essential. Finally, there must be a level of organizational and participatory competency among coalition leaders and members. To place their findings in terms of the four conceptual foci of this study is to define the environment conducive to coalition building as having a broad base of diverse and supportive participants. The committed group of members dedicated to shared goals clearly expresses the importance of commitment. Likewise the ability to secure resources

speaks to sustainability, while the importance of competency or the ability to act effectively is also clear.

A look at the dynamics in Kimbrell's (2000) study of the health care coalition developed by the Louisiana State Public Health Agency also reveals key themes and concepts. The coalition that inspired the research began as public officials responded to a challenging and visionary 1989 publication of research by the Institute of Medicine on the Future of Public Health.<sup>1</sup> In this case public officials were the initiators of the coalition. They led the way in recruiting participants from state agencies, universities, private medical organizations and advocacy groups.<sup>2</sup>

The impacting event and development that led to the building of that coalition was a research publication and the associated training of public officials. The article also states that the ongoing professional training and research involved in the coalition building process was at times paid for by private philanthropists, who were instrumental in the success of the coalition. Training and research are Competency factors while the funding and its source are matters of Sustainability and Commitment. The evidence goes on to illustrate how essential these concepts of commitment and sustainability are to the culture of collaborative partnerships. One theme that conveys this is *agency leaders recognized that the sustainability of these initiatives would require skilled leaders at every level of engagement.*

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<sup>1</sup> Members of the Department of Health and Hospitals (DHH) Office of Public Health (OPH) were thus inspired to take the lead on the Governor's Conference on Infant Mortality. Conference participants agreed that as an outcome of the conference the Louisiana Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Coalition should be formed, and based on the model of the Michigan MCH.

<sup>2</sup> The coalition's next significant success came in 1991 when they partnered with several other organizations and legislators to pass the Adolescent School Health Initiative Act, which authorized the development of school based health centers. Despite not receiving state funding for the centers, in 1992 the coalition was able to operate four centers on donations from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

So, in collaboration with Mississippi, Arkansas and Alabama the South Central Public Health Leadership Institute (SCPHLI) was created. A key theme is *when coalitions involve powerful partners working across multiple state lines and jurisdictions, new institutions may be formed*. The work of the Institute was complemented by a year-long series of training workshops sponsored by the National Civic League, with the goal of equipping community members to implement the Healthy Communities vision. Thus the coalition's evolution is rich with examples of adaptation, later viewed as part of a responsiveness continuum, and *evidence of how powerful an initiative may become when diverse partners and ideas expand its scope and influence*.

### **Perceptions in Contested Coalition Arenas**

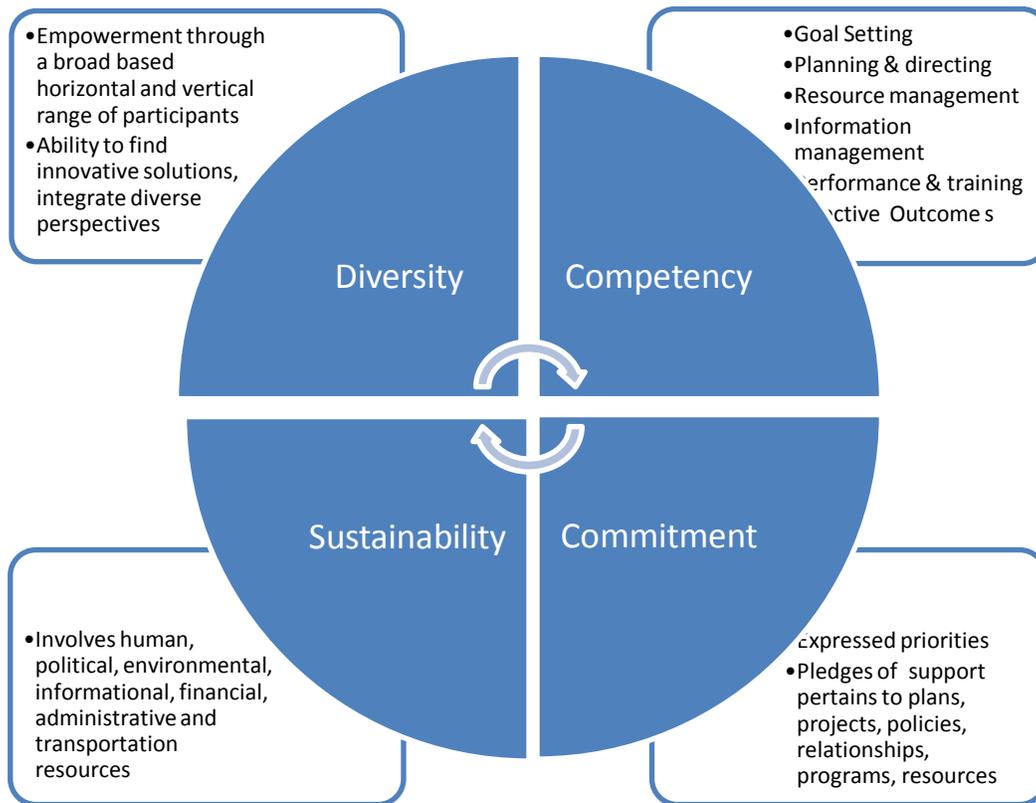
However, if OPH represents an excellent example of agency leadership resulting in better collaborative outcomes, Weir, Wolman & Swanstrom (2005) make it clear that in coalition building, context matters. Their research offers an opportunity for learning from a coalition building environment that is much more politically contested and where the stakeholders are less likely to agree about the best course of action or even what goals to pursue. The organizational autonomy of stakeholders and membership stability emphasized in Mizrahi & Rosenthal (2001) do not appear to be as much of a priority, largely because the problems involved political opponents coping with reduced federal funding and infrastructure failures rather than health and wellness. This study of coalition building included Detroit, Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland and New York in a complex distributive politics coalition environment (Lee, 2003). For these participants the agenda was at times less about the project and policy outcomes and more about who got the credit or blame for the decisions made.

Besides the urgency of the problems they faced, the development driving the coalition building initiative was the availability of federal funds. Competitive grants provided funds to coalitions comprised of localities where solutions were derived through multi-jurisdictional collaboration. This implies, *the federal government may at times financially encourage innovative multijurisdictional collaborations to resolve infrastructure and economic development problems.* Conceptually, this demonstrates the value of diversity and sustainability as a means of securing commitments and ensuring competency in complex problem solving. Other noteworthy lessons from this initiative derive from the discovery that partisan and ideological tensions may be ameliorated by organizing multi-generational information forums and the identification of non-partisan coalition leaders to facilitate better decision making.

### **Connecting the Literature to Research Question One**

Based on the coalition examples provided, the contextual characteristics common to most coalitions appear in Figure 2. The figure shows the four categories that will be used in the analysis of interview and questionnaire data: diversity, sustainability, commitment, and competency. Some of the themes describing these characteristics highlight the variety of participants, while others show the impact of research and training services, as well as infrastructure competency. Funding initiatives and project processes that reflect the coalition's commitments are also include. In contested coalition settings decision making innovations have been described to highlight the process of building trust and overcoming barriers to collaboration. There are also indications that in some instances where coalition actions have led to the formation of new institutions, authoritative governance bodies have emerged.

**Figure 1: Framework of Coalition Characteristics**



The framework of concepts also illustrates the benefits of this approach for describing significant coalition characteristics and organizing influential events. First of all, by using descriptive themes to identify coalition characteristics, the process of organizing details conceptually becomes somewhat more apparent. Likewise, by giving dynamic descriptions of the characteristics, the process of clarifying how they relate to other factors or may influence coalition activities is also more apparent. This approach also lends itself to the discovery of the events and developments that have influenced the coalition’s growth and trajectory.

## **Coalition Responsiveness and Organizational Evolution over Time**

The next step is to further identify contributions from the literature pertaining to the second research question; *How have the coalition's characteristics and operations evolved from its 2007 founding up to its 2011 Annual Conference?* The most pertinent literature for this question is that on responsiveness and decision making. Review begins with identifying examples of coalition decision making and responsiveness in relation to influential events and developments. The intent of this portion of the research is to provide deeper understanding of how the coalition is evolving in terms of adaptation.

In order to identify evidence of responsiveness and coalition characteristics changing over time attention focuses on themes and concepts associated with influential events and developments. Therefore, to understand the coalition's evolution, several sets of literature are used to frame the unfolding of events over time. The responsiveness literature provides a basis for understanding how the coalition handles conflict and adapts to developments and other changes over time. Similarly, I use decision making literature to address the role of relationships and membership dynamics in coalition evolution. Particular attention will be given to the decision making literature associated with bureaucratic responsiveness and a model of decision making types (Breyer 2006). Finally, this portion of the review will also clarify the extent to which the virtuous cycles (Weir et al. 2009) approach to decision making is apparent in the coalition as a pattern of building on key relationships and opportunities.

## **Responsiveness as Organizational Adaptation and Evolution**

The number of ways responsiveness has been used varies. In governance literature responsiveness involves agents responding to principals. On the other hand, the

organizational literature presents responsiveness as a means of describing adaptation to competitive circumstances or critical events. In either case, responsiveness is a form of decision making where internal and external organizational characteristics and dynamics influence performance and outcomes (Fisher 1983, West 2001, Hatch 2003, Bryer 2006, Hoyt, Huq & Kreiser 2007, Potowski 2002, Balla 2000, Bryer & Cooper 2007, Rabinovich 2007).

Fisher (1983) characterizes responsiveness as an organization's ability to recover from a catastrophe and demonstrate manageability of internal stress. Rabinovich (2007), focusing primarily on public agencies, describes responsiveness as a matter of circumstances where political dynamics represent the primary decision making variable. Building on the cited literature this study views responsiveness as *the organizational decision making process of choosing to act in relation to changes in circumstances that represent challenges or opportunities*.

Further investigation of the literature on responsiveness provides insight into what may influence the responsiveness of an organization or coalition. Hoyt, Huq and Krieser (2007) offer examples indicating possible dynamics in their testing of fifty nine automotive supply companies. They found five enablers known to influence organizational responsiveness. Two of these, worker competency and strategic commitments seem most relevant to this research.

For insight on the four characteristics used in this study, Hoyt et al. (2007), provide helpful clues. Their study clearly indicates competency as a factor and diversity is implied in the idea of depending on worker demographics. The third enabler is also clear in its focus on commitments and the role of resources in the strategic plan.

Sustainability also appears to be a responsiveness variable. The authors' findings also show agreement on goals and information expertise are powerful tools in decision making processes. Potowski (2002) further indicates technologically complex problems generally prompt decisions that increase autonomy and the discretion to act. Given the technological complexity of many transportation projects and programs, this perspective is worth keeping in mind.

Through a study of how the U.S. Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA) responded to legislators, interests groups and private citizens, Balla (2000) emphasizes the importance of noting the impact of internal organizational stressors such as resources, work load, and past decisions on agency actions. The author concludes this is an indication that responsiveness is less contested when it involves actions related to delivery of services. Taken with Potowski's (2002) findings, the research addresses how the amount of agreement or conflict associated with responsiveness varies in relation to resources and technical complexity. This implies sustainability matters are likely to cause more deliberation whereas competency matters are likely to be consensus builders. These observations are primarily relevant in relationship to how characteristics and responsiveness may interact.

Bryer & Cooper (2007) looked at choices made by agencies faced with conflicting demands and concluded five factors influence responsiveness. They are a. organizational culture, b. leadership, c. rules and structure, d. dependency on stakeholders making demands and e. the amount of external control the agency is under. Similarly, in his evolutionary case study of three Los Angeles regional transportation governance initiatives, Callahan (2007) highlights an "untold story of American politics" regarding

mechanisms that promote cooperation. His observations about dealing with conflicts and the importance of finding new resource options also provide insight for coalitions facing conflicting demands.

### **Responsiveness and the Analysis Process**

Focusing on organizational decision making as a means of understanding the evolutionary dynamic of the coalition includes having a conceptual awareness of the likely types of decision making and their implications. The literature on decision making is voluminous and cannot be reviewed here. Noteworthy, however, is recognition in the decision making literature of the limitations of rationality and the prevalence of organizational politics in decision making processes. This observation is summarized in Mary Jo Hatch's (2003, pp. 269-296) recognition of the groundbreaking research of James March, Herbert Simon and Richard Cyert. Hatch (2003) illustrates the benefits of a symbolic-interpretive approach to understanding these processes, by first describing how ambiguity and uncertainty pertaining to goals and information impact the effectiveness of well-known organizational decision making approaches. Specifically she refers to such approaches as the Rational, Coalition, Trial and Error and Garbage Can Models<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> With the rational model, information uncertainty and goal ambiguity may hinder the effectiveness of the process by leaving decision makers without the information needed to reach goal agreement. Conversely, in a trial and error approach there may be sufficient information to reach agreement on the organizational goal but uncertainty pertaining to the method of goal attainment. In the coalition model approach there may be adequate information but goal ambiguity due to conflicting participant interests. In this case the alternative goals of attaining power for control decision making and influence for interest accommodation are likely to involve a great deal of goal ambiguity and information uncertainty. Organizations using this model are likely to have more politicized decision making processes for these reasons. Finally, the garbage can model, found in organizations with high participant transience is also given to goal ambiguity and information uncertainty. However, in this instance the decision making is characterized as situational rather than strategic and likely to be more influenced by relationships among participants.

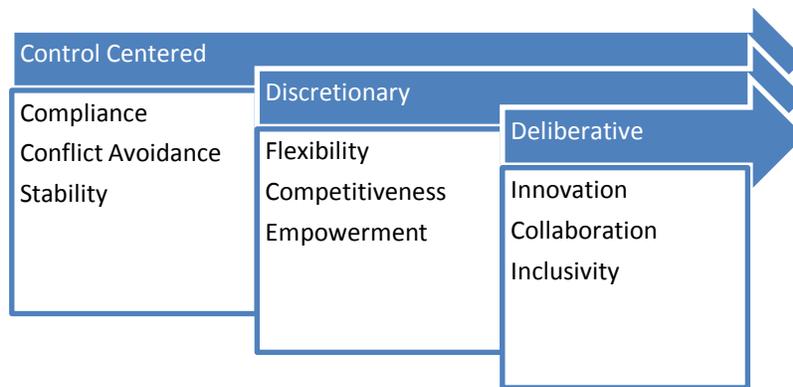
These perspectives reveal that organizational decision making involves reaching agreement on goals and objectives as much as it involves using information to identify those goals and facilitate their attainment. Also involved are efforts to control resources for desired outcomes. In both cases, whether goal attainment or resource control, these decision making dynamics involve initiatives meant to secure power and control in relationships. Here decision making dynamics are categorized as responsiveness and the resources pertain to sustainability with goal attainment alluding to commitments.

One approach to gaining insight into these organizational dynamics comes from a comparison of literature that focuses on methods of responsive decision making and the objectives of responsive decision making. For example, in an effort to make sense of responsive decision making in complex governance settings, Bryer (2006) offers an ethical perspectives framework for matching decision making processes to responsiveness. Specifically, his typology offers Control Centered, Discretionary, and Deliberative Decision Making as three types of bureaucratic responsiveness. The control centered method uses adherence to regulations and procedural practices to foster accountability, transparency and trust in decision making. The discretionary method assumes trustworthiness and permits freedom in decision making for the sake of dynamic innovative and entrepreneurial responsiveness. In the deliberative method, trust is built through dialogue and decisions are made by consensus for the sake of building committed relationships among participants.

Figure 2 illustrates these methods and correlating objectives to show a responsiveness progression from compliance and stabilization to competitiveness, ending in innovation. The continuum represents another means of analyzing the evolution of

coalitions because it is a decision making approach to assessing perceptions and implications of various actions. With the continuum clarifying the decision making objectives it represents a means of assessing how the various characteristics may also influence decision making. Thus, the responsiveness continuum may serve as a tool for following the evolution of the coalition by linking relevant events to coalition characteristics and broader objectives.

**Figure 2: Responsiveness Types and Objectives Continuum**



The three types of decision making and corresponding objectives represented in Figure 2 allude to contextual objectives of stability, empowerment and inclusivity. Context is particularly important in governance settings where stakeholders seek a voice in decision making. The first, control centered approach fits a traditional, policy driven process where accountability and organizational stability are essential. The second, discretionary approach features flexibility and the empowerment to respond without the delays that hierarchical procedures may impose. Where the control centered approach places trust in the system the discretionary approach places trust in the leadership. One intends to prevent radical changes while the other intends to promote innovation and entrepreneurial license. The third and final approach, deliberative decision making calls

for dialogue and consensus building. Decisions are negotiated in a spirit of inclusivity to preserve relationships while drawing on the broader array of ideas for problem solving. The deliberative approach is better suited to strategic decisions whereas the discretionary method is often better in operational settings. Control centered decisions primarily govern procedures for accountability and transparency.

### **Virtuous Cycles in Responsive Decision Making**

Each of the three models described in the responsiveness continuum refers to trust as part of the logic behind the chosen approach. This is understandable given that decision making in governance and coalition building sometimes involves contentious differences of opinion, particularly where infrastructure and funding challenges persist. To counter some of the negative impact such dynamics may have on the coalition's progress, some suggest adopting a virtuous cycle decision making agenda (Weir et al. 2009). I refer to it as an agenda rather than a methodology because simply put, a virtuous cycle in coalition decision making is a perpetual process of facilitating one good thing leading to another. In the words of Ansell & Gash (2007) it is a means of perpetually generating small collaborative victories to develop trusting relationships and is used here as an ideal by which to measure how well the I-81 coalition conforms to using this process.

For Weir et al. (2009) and Patashnik (2003) applying a virtuous cycle agenda to the governance arena means creating conditions where each positive outcome leads to another positive outcome. They offer two essential conditions for creating a virtuous cycle culture, successful governing arrangements and empowered stakeholders. The first is said to facilitate the flow of top down energy. This corresponds with Pedersen et al.'s

(2011) contextual framing and illustrates how important partners with the authority to act are to organizational competency. The second condition alludes to the importance of diversity for innovative bottom up participatory energy from a broad constituency base. This framing of virtuous cycle responsiveness is compatible with Bryer's (2006) deliberative decision making method. Both approaches respond to situations for positive outcomes, seek to build trust among participants and empower stakeholders to participate in the decision making.

The approach of Weir's virtuous cycle and Bryer's continuum of responsiveness provide a means for assessing the impacts of various characteristics. The importance of a virtuous cycle perspective is particularly relevant to this research for a number of reasons. For one, it offers insight regarding often expressed concerns about insufficient empowerment of MPOs and concerned stakeholders (Weir et al. 2009, Wolf 2004, Alpert & Gainsborough 2006). For another, by using events and developments as a means to observe coalition decision making, this research calls attention to the coalition's ability to capitalize on progress. This research may well facilitate information gathering pertaining to the organization's potential role as an effective governance participant. Using the virtuous cycle perspective will also provide an opportunity for insight related to how the organization's evolution informs strategies for enhancing organizational diversity, competency, commitments and sustainability.

### **Membership Dynamics in Coalition Evolution**

It is important to note that question two aims to clarify how the coalition has been evolving by observing not only patterns evident in decision making responsiveness, but also changes in membership dynamics. Understanding the implications of changes in

coalition membership dynamics is considered especially significant to the organization's evolution, given the importance of membership competency, objectives and working relationships (Mizrahi 2001, Kimbrell 2000, Weir et al, 2009). Membership dynamics are directly related to the coalition's evolutionary activities and sustainability, in part because of the members' role in decision making. Perhaps of even greater consequence may be the impact of membership interactions with other governance participants who may have common objectives and are collaborators with, or competitors of the coalition. Finally, because of the various interests and affiliations of each member, tracking them by the coalition initiatives they support is one way to add value to a demographically based assessment of their impact on the coalition's evolution.

Likewise, part of how membership dynamics impact coalition evolution is related to whether members choose to behave in their own interest or in the interest of their constituents. Acting as agents of political, public or private constituents will impact how members respond to various events and developments (Wamsley et al. 1990, Bertelli & Lynn 2006). This point is made clear in Callahan's (2007) list of common conclusions for why efforts to create regional governance initiatives are often unsuccessful. By listing: 1. ineffective executive officers 2. fiscal officers who overestimated revenues 3. incompetent project managers and 4. overly influential contractors as common barriers to success, Callahan introduces a variety of scenarios that influence membership dynamics.

The primary concerns in these scenarios are matters of competency and loyalty. In whose interest might the decision makers be acting and how does the coalition manage the tension that could result from conflicting loyalties or competency concerns?

Furthermore, given the scarcity of funds for the various organizations in Callahan's (2007) research and the generally competitive nature of transportation initiatives, questions of loyalty and accountability are part of assessing membership dynamics. Since the participants in these coalitions operate in a variety of jurisdictions, whether and how the coalition develops a corridor based identity and level of commitment is a matter of great importance. These scenarios may be opportunities to see how resources other than funding may be leveraged to build corridor-based relationships and agreement on priorities. Two membership dynamics that serve as relevant indicators in this regard are member contributions to the coalition and endorsement of specific organizational objectives. Along with matters of leadership and competency, contributions and endorsements represent dynamics which over time may have significant influence on the coalition's evolutionary narrative.

### **Connecting the Literature to Research Question Two**

The concerns raised in the literature are particularly significant to understanding how the I-81 Corridor Coalition, with its diversity of stakeholders, large number of jurisdictional partners, and lack of policy or agency oversight, actually operates. Likewise, for the sake of connecting the relevance of these occurrences to the coalition's evolution, the same basic framework presented for observing the evolution of coalition characteristics will be used for measuring changes over time in membership characteristics.

### **Clarifying the Governance Implications of the Coalition**

As the evolutionary evidence is presented, the coalition's objectives and ability to attain them become more apparent. However, the extent to which the emerging coalition

narrative describes an organization prepared to participate at a regional level in corridor governance has not yet been made clear. This lack of clarity is due in part to the ambiguity and unknowns pertaining to what governance is and how stakeholders become substantive participants in regional governance processes (Alpert, Gainsborough & Wallis, 2006). Thus the third and final research question for this dissertation is ***based upon the coalition's characteristics and evolution, what may be implied about the coalition's role in transportation corridor governance?***

As stated here governance refers to *government agencies at various jurisdictional levels interact in constitutionally legitimate vertical and horizontal relationships with public and private stakeholders to provide responsive, deliberative, consensus oriented guidance that shapes policies for social and economic outcomes*. Thus the question becomes, how compatible are the coalition's objectives and capabilities with those of transportation governance efforts and how successful might this relatively new organization be at playing a meaningful role as a governance participant?

It is worth noting that historically speaking, stakeholder participation mechanisms like the I-81 Corridor Coalition are similar to the civic organizations, public commissions and reform movements from which the field of public administration emerged (Schachter 1997, Bertelli & Lynn, 2006 p.17). Similarly, conversations about how governance works often lead to reminders about the practical and theoretical overlaps within the field of public administration (Frederickson & Smith, 2003). Consequently, answering question three also involves looking at the role public administrators play in collaborative, pluricentric, stakeholder engagement. The literature presented here seeks

to clarify what may be implied about the I-81 Corridor Coalition’s potential as a governance participant collaboratively engaged with transportation officials.

**Governance Descriptions and Indicators**

Frederickson & Smith (2003, pp. 243-244) describe governance as “a virtual synonym for public administration” which is as a field evolving to incorporate a variety of nontraditional policy processes and actors. For them governance is also a label in need of a theory to explain institutional relations among agencies in the context of a disarticulated state. Such an assessment could be taken to suggest that governance questions are actually public administration questions, focused on the challenges and opportunities associated with the expectations of a more informed and engaged society. Challenges include theory development to clarify relationships between civic and government participants in regional governance settings and opportunities such as more responsive relationships with stakeholders, addressing complex governance concerns. In Table 3 I have presented an overview of some of these challenges and opportunities as identified in literature.

**Table 3: Governance Challenges and Opportunities**

<b>Challenges</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>
<b>Hill &amp; Lynn (2005)</b>	
1.Theory and practice of interactions between vertical and horizontal governance components 2.Dealing with patterns of corruption in contracting	1.Promising approach to overcoming fragmented administrative practices 2.Enhances government by adding horizontal coordination to traditional vertical hierarchies
<b>Callahan (2007)</b>	
3.Interest group conflicts vs. fragile collaborations 4.Ineffective executive directors, fiscal officers, project managers, contractors and local politicians 5.Cost overruns, negative environmental reviews 6.Inadequate explanations of complex institutions in public administration research (p.291)	3.Hope of overcoming political conflict 4.Public agencies can evolve, creating nested institutional solutions to address political problems 5.Successful regional solutions are intensely local 6.Allocation dilemmas may be resolved by leveraging additional resources
<b>Pedersen, Sehested &amp; Sorensen (2011)</b>	
7.Loosely coupled, ambiguous institutional logic 8.Operating across all sorts of organizational,	7.Flexible approaches to coordination permits adaptability, for balancing competing objectives

systemic and institutional boundaries	such as fixation & flexibility, control & autonomy, unity & diversity, simplicity & complexity. 8.Dynamic approach to governance that promotes decentered, interactive communication between otherwise disconnected stories and practices
<b>Ansell &amp; Gash (2006)</b>	
9.Expected to react to government failures 10.Complexity of institutions and knowledge requirements 11.Blurred boundaries between public and private sectors	9.Consensus oriented decision making in forums with multiple stakeholders and public agencies, 10.Avoid the high cost of adversarial policy making 11.Develop innovative collective learning and problem solving methods
<b>Gerber &amp; Gibson (2006)</b>	
12.Lack of regional governance mechanisms awareness regarding impact on policy outcomes 13.Difficulty balancing regional and local interest 14.Governing bodies membership inconsistencies 15.Nationwide inconsistencies concerning the nature of governance mechanisms 16.Challenge of getting authorities to share power	12. Including non-legislative, non-governmental actors in decision making. 13.Shared policymaking rather than sharp separation of powers 14.Multiple policy making arenas 15.Governance arrangements distribute hundreds of billions of federal, state and local funds
<b>Alpert, Gainsborough &amp; Wallis (2006)</b>	
17.Capacity for coordinating large scale solutions 18.Lack of political support and regional government structure 19.Resource dependency	16.Promoting regional cooperation policies 17.Diversity of focus, cooperative relationships 18. Involvement of public, private and non-profit coalitions

Before summarizing the implications of the research cited in Table 3, I summarize each study. Callahan (2007) suggests governance is “a product of institutional design that attempts to facilitate the benefits of coordination and collaboration in a political environment, with intense competition among local governments for funding.” This perspective appears to underscore the challenges posed by the competitive atmosphere of governance and the conflicting agendas of governance participants. Thus there is a need for new institutional structures or collaborative entities to empower local grassroots participants and to overcome systemic defects. Naming every participant from administrative executives to elected officials, contractors and fiscal officers, Callahan calls for new entities and empowered stakeholders to overcome structural defects in the current system. Underscoring the competitive interactions that accompany the scarcity of

government funds and management incompetence were specific points of focus of this call for scenarios where all participants win.

Pedersen et al. (2011) also describe U. S. governance as being in a state of need for more, better pluricentric coordination mechanisms to guide the collective actions for coordinated public decision making. They further suggest there is a need for a continuum of the forms and degrees of governance to depict its evolving nature as an adaptive and contextually interpretive process. Besides systemic design flaws they indicate concern about governance ambiguities and inconsistencies evident in the practices of public officials who lack relational competency to manage conflicts and power struggles. With a well presented narrative of the evolution of governance they conclude that the potential of governance to resolve major problems depends largely upon the competency of its leaders.

Ansell & Gash (2007) acknowledge governance as an evolving method of responding to the impact of failed adversarial and managerial modes of policy making and implementation. A particularly noteworthy focus of this assessment is the implication that governance mechanisms are employed when other approaches have failed. It also introduces the possibility that these failures may in fact contribute to the competitive tension alluded to earlier. Likewise, there is also the possibility that the adversarial dynamics are directly related to the limitations inherent in hierarchical decision making methods (Pedersen et al. 2011). One additional point of note is that the heads of state, global leaders and scholars at the Sixth Global Forum on Reinventing Government also recognize governance as a collaborative multi-stakeholder response to the challenges of policy making and implementation (Kim et al., 2005).

Similarly, in their meta-analysis of 137 governance cases, Ansell & Gash (2007) identify the key attributes to a contingency model of collaborative governance, noting that a virtuous cycle focusing on small wins tends to deepen trust, commitment and shared understanding. Based in part on their process of “successive approximation” to establish the attributes of these mechanisms, they conclude that collaborative governance is: “A governing arrangement where one or more public agencies directly engage non-state stakeholders in a collective decision making process that is formal, consensus-oriented, and deliberative and that aims to make or implement public policy or manage public programs or assets (Ansell & Gash, 2007, pp. 544).”

Hill & Lynn (2004) provide an overview of 800 research studies, to highlight the ambiguities and inconsistencies in governance. Their goal was to clarify what is empirically known about these new forms of hybridized and associational governance. What they found was new administrative mechanisms used to facilitate governance within a system of constitutional authority. This authoritative component to governance may be viewed as somewhat surprising in light of the impression that a less hierarchical decision making dynamic is needed to facilitate productive collaboration. However, it is consistent with Pedersen et al.’s (2011) finding that governance decision making requires a blend of vertical and horizontal methods to be effective.

These attempts to identify governance mechanisms to address failures of the state, effective management of expensive infrastructure projects and programs, and the complexities of multijurisdictional problems are the subject of Callahan’s (2007) research. He looks at three regional transportation governance authorities in Los Angeles from 1978 to 2002, characterized as disappointing experiments in an attempt to move

from government to governance. Given that some local officials described the outcome of these efforts as public administration failures at every level, the apparent expectation is for public administrators to make governance more effective.

Callahan's (2007) findings offer helpful recommendation for responsive administrators seeking to address these types of concerns. First of all, since political tension and conflict are inevitable when multiple jurisdictions, interest groups and agencies unite to solve large complex problems, coalition builders should avoid setting up internal structures liable to create unwanted competition. Secondly, since problem solving is not linear, resource allocation should be fairly distributed to competing constituencies. Thirdly, coalition builders should develop an appreciation for the problem solving opportunities apparent in local perspectives and adaptations. Finally, governance officials should utilize the principles of demand-side politics and supply-side cooperation for broad distribution of resources and development of collaborative partners. Callahan thus concludes that conflict is endemic to the governance milieu and cooperation is likewise based on contextual solutions.

The types of experiences observed in the Los Angeles experiments are not unfamiliar based on the call by researchers for specific training to prepare public administrators to facilitate citizen participation initiatives. Schachter & Aliaga (2003) in their review of curriculum content for U. S. Masters of Public Administration programs, noted the lack of focus on skill development pertaining to citizen participation methods. They also articulate a concern shared by others regarding the need for an innovative administrative ethos that embraces the value of substantively including citizens and other stakeholders in governance processes (King et al. 1998, Schachter 1997) that includes

markets, civil society and institutions along with agencies in governance (Kim et al. 2005). The point, of course, is not that governance means everyone must be involved but that opportunities for productive involvement should be created for stakeholders who are willing to contribute to solution finding (Campbell 2005).

Caron & Giauque (2006) in their analysis of public servants in Canada and Switzerland discuss the ethical challenges involved in applying New Public Management (NPM) market oriented practices to public service. At issue is the tendency of a “results oriented ethics” agenda to motivate self-interest over public-interest where a public interest orientation represents responsiveness among civil servants. Another observation involves the pursuit of an innovations and best practices agenda at the expense of following regulations and policy guidelines. One conclusion may be that the political pressures related to the sometimes high profile objectives of governance privatization strategies demand the ability to skillfully balance the application of administrative and political techniques. This is another clear call for training administrators to facilitate recognition of these value conflicts in governance processes and to equip participants to resolve these dilemmas.

### **Connecting the Literature and Research Question Three**

Based on the literature pertaining to coalitions and responsiveness and governance in transportation corridors, this study of the I-81 investigate the role the coalition may play in transportation corridor governance. Summarizing the literature integrated for this research, governance may be described as a historically grounded participatory democracy process (Fung 2003, 2006, Hirst 2002) normally initiated by government or elected officials (Kimbrell 2000, Halvorsen 2003, Pedersen et. al. 2011) and involving a

variety of mechanisms and stakeholders for the purpose of sharing information and resources, to solve complex public problems (Schachter 1997).

When applied to the I-81 coalition the governance processes are often multi-level, multi-jurisdictional and multi-disciplinary. They also involve cooperative, competitive and collaborative relationships that vary along a responsiveness continuum from tightly to loosely coupled forms of coordination (Bryers 2006, Hill & Lynn 2006, Pedersen et al. 2011). The success of such phenomena generally depend upon a number of contextual dynamics such as support from political and administrative officials, resource availability, commitment of participants, competence and intermediate successes (Ansell & Gash, 2007).

The characteristics gleaned from this research served as guidance in the data collection and analysis processes. Specifically, the themes stated in this review of the literature which focus the analysis include;

1. Political and administrative officials work with diverse stakeholders for social and economic improvements
2. Transportation planners work with diverse stakeholders for infrastructure
3. Stakeholder interest, competency, commitments and resources influence the success of regional initiatives
4. Relevant policies and decision influence coalition evolution
5. Stakeholder collaborations may lead to the formation of authoritative institutions
6. Overcoming multijurisdictional fragmentation may require empowerment of non-governmental stakeholders
7. Resource and service limitations may inspire stakeholder engagement and administrative innovations
8. When citizens and administrators committed to adequate services collaborate solutions can be achieved
9. Leadership training at every level is necessary for sustained innovations
10. Federal funding has be used to incentivize collaborative initiatives

## Chapter III

### A Mixed Method Interpretive Case Study

*By combining multiple observers, theories, methods, and data sources, researchers can hope to overcome the intrinsic bias that comes from single methods, single observers and single theory studies (Denzin, 1989 in Rocco et al. 2003)*

Because this research sought to explore, describe and explain the I-81 Corridor Coalition by focusing on its influential events and organizational characteristics over time, I chose a mixed method case study approach. The geographical size and organizational characteristics of the coalition make it a theoretically complex case study, requiring a methodology capable of gathering quantitative and qualitative data for an integrated analysis. Since the objectives of the study are to identify key characteristics of the coalition and describe the changes over time, a mixed methods approach appeared best. The mixed methods approach is also well suited for gaining insight from the elite stakeholders such as those involved in the I-81 corridor coalition (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

Another reason for the mixed method case study approach is because it is flexible enough to incorporate positivist<sup>4</sup> and naturalist<sup>5</sup> philosophies of data collection and narrative development (Marshall & Rossman 2006, pp.56-57). Furthermore, since this dissertation presents an in depth analysis of coalition characteristics and dynamics for possible generalization to other corridor coalitions, it may be considered an elaborated

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<sup>4</sup> Positivist researchers look for measurable evidence to identify variables that may be causally related, thus providing explanations pertaining to the phenomenon under observation (Burrell & Morgan 1979, pp. 5, 83, 197, Rubin & Rubin 2005, pp.23-24).

<sup>5</sup> Naturalist researchers use participant observation and interviews to gain data, by listening or taking part in the activities, they explain the phenomenon being observed from the notes of what they hear and see (Rubin & Rubin 2005, pp.2, 22).

case study<sup>6</sup>. Having an elaborated case study agenda also corresponds philosophically with an interpretive constructionist<sup>7</sup> type of qualitative research. Integrating these research perspectives and methods permits the investigator to pursue both a theory building and an applied practices agenda, for a critical, plausible and authentic analysis (Yin 2009 pp. 17-21, Rubin & Rubin 2005, Rocco, Bliss, Gallagher & Perez-Prado 2003, Brower, Abolafia, & Carr 2000).

Using both qualitative and quantitative methods facilitates obtaining the type of general data required for identifying influential contextual characteristics and the implications for understanding them. Particular attention is paid to identifying impactful events and developments and interpreting the events in terms of the responsiveness continuum that clarifies pertinent patterns, relationships and implications. Likewise, the literature is used to inform the process of identifying likely contextual characteristics and to provide guidance on the types of factors that tend to influence coalition behavior. This includes using the literature-based themes and the organizing concepts of diversity, competency, sustainability and commitments to inform data gathering and analysis. Also as indicated in the responsiveness literature, the goal is to describe the coalition and factors influencing the coalition's decisions. For a broader understanding, efforts focused on what the coalition's objectives and capabilities, as indicated by its evolution, imply about its potential role in governance.

### **Clarifying Mixed Method Research Processes**

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<sup>6</sup> Elaborated case studies seek to describe happenings in a manner that clarifies the broader implications of the phenomenon under observation (Rubin & Rubin 2005, pp. 6-7)

<sup>7</sup> An interpretive constructionist researcher values how participants perceive and understand the events and developments involved in a given phenomenon, as a means to identify shared or agreed upon meaning. Using the various and agreed upon perspectives a relevant interpretation of the phenomenon may be constructed.

This chapter includes a description of the techniques applied in this methodology along with some explanation of the specific processes for answering each research question. Rocco et al. (2003) do an excellent job of clarifying the history of mixed methods research and the benefits of integrating philosophical paradigms. These include being well suited for the use of triangulation techniques, which utilize information from multiple data sources and are part of the growing appeal of this approach. They began by citing Denzin (1978, 1989) and Patton (2002) for a brief history of how triangulation was developed to reduce inconsistent findings. What follows in their work is a very insightful summary of how to match paradigms and quantitative or qualitative methods to the purposes, questions and issues under consideration.

Rocco et al. (2003) also address the polarizing ontological and epistemological positions of theoretical purists and suggest viewing contrasting positions as points on a continuum of possibilities, rather than contested alternatives. Such a perspective suggests a mixed methods approach is a less purist framing of what is and what can be known. Because it is less extreme, the continuum approach to framing the information encourages choosing collection and analysis methods based either on their pragmatic value of practicality and effectiveness or their dialectic value of synergistic integration. From these positions researchers are encouraged to look for methods that are complementary rather than compatible and to choose triangulation techniques for increased validity. To facilitate choosing the mixed methods approach most appropriate for a given project, Tashakkorie and Teddlie (1998) provide three project stages and a summary of mixed methods types.

### **Overview of the Data Collection and Analysis Stages**

Table 4 first identifies the research objective and then specifies the recommended type of data and analysis method. As indicated, there are three basic types of investigations and each has at least two ways to approach the collection and analysis process. Not shown in the table is an addendum to the framework that includes a description of two additional types of mixed methods. Type VII is a parallel mixed model where methods are mixed simultaneously in at least one of the three stages. Type VIII is a sequential mixed model involving a project with at least three phases wherein each phase seeks to explore or confirm questions raised in the previous phase.

**Table 4: Summary of Mixed Method Types**

I.	Confirmatory Investigation Qualitative Data Statistical Analysis	II.	Confirmatory Investigation Qualitative Data Qualitative Analysis
III.	Exploratory Investigation Quantitative Data Statistical Analysis	IV.	Exploratory Investigation Qualitative Data Statistical Analysis
V.	Confirmatory Investigation Quantitative Data Quantitative Analysis	VI.	Exploratory Investigation Quantitative Data Qualitative Analysis

(Rocco et al. 2003)

Table 4 shows six sets of methods comprised of various combinations of two types of research investigation, two types of data collection and two types of data analysis. As the labels suggest, an example of confirmatory research involves efforts to verify a hypothesis regarding something familiar, while exploratory research is less predetermined, seeking to describe and explain something unfamiliar. The Type VII parallel mixed study model best fit this dissertation project. In all three research questions, there are stages of information gathering and analysis where mixed collection and analysis methods are employed simultaneously.

In the first stage of the research, information from the literature and field notes is used to inform development of the membership survey and interview questions. The survey was launched and within three weeks, the interview process began, providing characteristics, events and data that could be interpreted for implications. The second stage involves the use of quantitative survey data, qualitative elite responsive interviewing and field notes with purposive sampling and hierarchical coding. By briefly observing the initial survey responses, insight into the coalition's membership and responsiveness dynamics were incorporated into the questions for subsequent elite interviews.

While the second stage of the hermeneutic<sup>8</sup> process involved the integration of data from various sources including the early interviews, this third stage focused on beginning the coding process. As I conducted additional interviews a more broadly articulated story began to emerge, leading to reoccurring themes and perception patterns. These descriptions of the coalition's contextual dynamics enabled a richer analysis of the implications evident in the coalition's decision making. As the themes from various data sources are constructed and integrated, more clarity is gained about key characteristics and influential developments.

The analysis process also included several stages. First the survey information was collected and presented in some basic demographic formats to describe

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<sup>8</sup> Hermeneutics refers to a philosophical approach to clarifying the meaning of textual data, where text includes to evidence of human behavior. This evidence may include documents such as organizational files, records, interviews, charts, research reports, statistical data, field notes, speeches and others. Text may also refer to phenomena such as ceremonies or even buildings. Hermeneutical methods of analyzing evidence of human behavior involve reviewing the available textual data to gain a general understanding of what has occurred. Then by conducting additional reviews of the data with an eye towards gaining depth of understanding a narrative emerges from the circular process of comparing contextual circumstances and the associated embedded meanings (Balfour & Mesaros 1994, Thompson 1997).

characteristics such as respondents' years of experience, areas of expertise, priorities, funding commitments and perceptions of the coalition. Then the information was presented in some time based order to show changes in those characteristics over time. The interviews were organized according to big picture concepts and behavior themes for comparison with the survey findings regarding coalition characteristics. One benefit of this framing is the clarification of patterns that may reveal the impact of significant events and developments. Using triangulation from the various sources a list of key events and developments emerged for the stage of analysis pertaining to the coalition's evolution.

Part of the evolutionary timeline was constructed using the field notes from the coalition's annual conferences. Each conference represents a significant event in that new presentations are made, different chairman and steering committee announcements are shared and new attendees join the effort. As with the interviews the conference information is organized into narrative statements that can be coded as themes and concepts. As additional items for the timeline were identified, they were added to the list in chronological order and as they may relate to each other responsively. Thus a preliminary narrative of responsiveness and evolution was developed. The organizing concepts and member perceptions were used for guidance in the integration process. Using the responsiveness narrative, a synopsis of coalition characteristics and behavior is presented in light of the governance literature for the assessment of the coalition's potential role in governance. Thus a quantitative assessment of the coalition's characteristics and evolution combined with a qualitative analysis of the theoretical implications of the coalition's objectives and capabilities emerge.

## **Development and Operationalization of the Research Questions**

Since the observer in social science research is not assumed to be neutral, the following is a brief disclosure of personal perspective for research purposes. I first became aware of the I-81 Corridor Coalition in 2008, when as the Executive Director of the Virginia Rail Policy Institute (VRPI) I was invited to the coalition's second annual conference in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Both VRPI and the coalition were fairly new organizations with a number of common concerns about improving transportation outcomes. VRPI focused on better rail planning, policies, projects and programs in Virginia and the I-81 had a six state, multi-modal, Interstate 81 related transportation planning, policy, projects and programs focus.

It was impressive that both served as provocative examples of individuals and organizations mobilizing in response to inadequacies in existing transportation governance processes. The fact that the I-81 coalition involved multiple states implied among other things, these initiatives intend to address transportation governance concerns pertaining to large multijurisdictional geographical regions. Also, the fact that such a broad array of stakeholders were voluntarily organizing to address these governance inadequacies, implied the issues represented were complex and significant.

These actions were thought provoking, especially given that scholars were calling for more empirical evidence to describe the role of voluntary associations in governance (Hill & Lynn, 2004, Campbell 2005). Some of the questions that came to mind included who exactly these stakeholders were and what could they hope to actually accomplish through this coalition? What would it mean if they were successful and how might they achieve this success? What are they responding to and what theoretical insight might be

gained through an analysis of their responsiveness processes? What information would be needed to gain insight into the nature of this coalition and how would coalition leaders and members respond to such an investigation? Finally, given that the I-81 Corridor Coalition had nearly 200 participants representing transportation agencies, non-profit organizations, private corporations, academics and elected officials from Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Maryland and New York, what would it take to get answers to some of these questions?

Things became even more intriguing when I attended the 2009 conference, this time convened in Roanoke, Virginia. Some changes had taken place, progress had been made on establishing the organizational structure and a website had been launched. Tensions between key organizations and constituents had been largely resolved, and since I was no longer affiliated with VRPI, my freedom to look at the Coalition as a dissertation project meant a change in relationship with coalition leaders.

### **Perspectives on using Surveys to Clarify Coalition Characteristics**

With the background in mind, I turn to techniques used for each research question. For the first research question, *what are the membership and contextual characteristics of the I-81 Corridor Coalition?*, using the literature as a guide to some of the characteristics important to coalition success yields participant diversity, competency, sustainability and commitments (Mizrahi & Rosenthal 2007, Wamsley & Wolf 1998, Bryer 2006) and contextual dynamics. With the growing number and diversity of coalition participants, important are the impressive flexibility apparent in the variety of commitments, how the organization responds to sustainability challenges, and competency in transportation policies and projects. Sustainability factors are also quite

relevant given the stakeholder donation system that accounts for the vast majority of coalition funds.

Methodologically, since questionnaires are commonly used to sample a chosen population for information about the distribution of their characteristics, attitudes and beliefs, surveys represent a good means of getting information for question one. While there are some validity questions related to the honesty and accuracy of responses, surveys are considered an ideal way to gain a small amount of information from a large group of people. Ideas for addressing such validity concerns include identifying a small group of supportive participants to pre-take the survey and to provide comments for improving the instrument prior to its distribution to the chosen sample.

Other benefits of the survey for data collection include the variety of methods for administering the instrument and the ability to include open and closed end questions for a mixed method of analysis. Survey data is often considered capable of exploring who, what, where, how much and how many questions without needing to control the circumstances of subject under study (Yin 2009). In the case of the I-81 corridor coalition, the test group was comprised of coalition steering committee members and the means of administering the survey was online and on paper at the 2011 annual conference.

### **Preparing the Survey**

The points of focus in the survey for identifying who the coalition members are include questions on representation based upon state of location, level of jurisdictional authority, organization type, areas of professional expertise, length of time affiliated with the coalition, length of time involved in transportation, donor status and endorsement

status. When grouped in light of the organizing framework the first six items are forms of diversity and the last two reflect commitment. Competency is also indicated by expertise and longevity just as the donor and endorsements relate to sustainability. The survey also asks for members' opinions about projects and programs of interest, coalition priorities, organizational sustainability, events and developments, and key coalition supporters. Broadly speaking, the data from these opinions also are intended to explore commitments, sustainability, diversity and competency. The surveys also seek to get a measure of importance or commitment on certain matters by asking members to rank the sustainability significance of various organizational characteristics and key coalition supporters. (See Appendix A for a copy of the survey.)

To keep the survey from being perceived as intrusive, complicated or time consuming the initial questions were easy to answer multiple choice affiliation and identification type questions. No self-identification questions were included and the questions required no short answers or decision making, since they only called for acknowledgement of matters such as organizational location, years of experience and areas of expertise. Next, participants were given a series of questions with lists of approximately twelve items such as events and developments, organizational priorities, and keys to sustainability and asked to rate them based on their significance to the coalition's objectives.

Dispersed among the rating questions were several yes or no queries about organizational financial commitments and/or project endorsements. Then a set of three nearly identically worded leadership type questions were used to identify participant perspectives on coalition decision making processes. Several additional questions were

used to get opinions on specific coalition objectives and influencing factors. An open ended question was included at the end for narrative feedback on the perceived governance role of the coalition. The other survey questions also afforded participants the opportunity to offer narrative feedback, inclusion of items not listed or to select not observed. Altogether, the survey included twenty seven items.

After several dissertation committee reviews of the survey draft, a letter of endorsement was obtained from the I-81 Corridor Coalition Executive Director. This letter was presented to the committee and forwarded to the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB) along with the research application and human factors protocol. The protocol described the research design and objectives as well as the expectations of confidentiality and the terms of participant consent; it also included the link for accessing the survey online. Once IRB approval was secured, the project number was included on the protocol and sent with the endorsement letter by the executive director to the steering committee members. The members of the executive committee were asked to complete the survey within the next week and submit their feedback in the comments section for the appropriate questions. Once the feedback was incorporated into the survey the executive director again sent the notice and protocol electronically, this time to the entire coalition membership.

### **Conducting the Survey**

The survey was constructed and administered using the Survey Monkey support service. Two weeks after its launch, the coalition held its annual conference. As a means of encouraging participants to complete the survey, flyers were made and placed on each table notifying attendees that hard copies of the survey were available for anyone

interested in completing it on paper rather than electronically. The executive director also made an announcement to advise attendees of the coalition's interest in the outcomes of the research. In fact, he reported the coalition's intent to post the finished dissertation on the I-81 Corridor Coalition website. Members were also advised that a few of them might be contacted for some follow up interviews to clarify the implications of the surveys.

### **Interviewing Approach and Objectives**

It is important to remember that while questionnaires are considered appropriate for describing contextual characteristics, they are viewed as inadequate for examining the type of complex relationships found among coalition members (Marshall & Rossman 2006, p.125). To supplement the survey information and gain in depth awareness about organizational responsiveness and significant events and developments, a qualitative elite interviewing process is employed. I chose Rubin & Rubin's (2005) responsive interviewing approach, in part because it recognizes the need for observational guidance and interviewing strategies to collect and understand the data for this type of in depth analysis. Where some qualitative approaches encourage theory comparison as a primary method and means of discovery, this one adds a means of taking into consideration how the data gathering instruments affect findings (Langley 1999, Rubin & Rubin 2005). For example, what has been apparent with coalition participants is that while they seem genuinely interested in supporting this dissertation process, there are real restraints on the time they allot for responding. Likewise, since the interviewees have such depth of awareness, it is best to use an interviewing approach that allows for enough redundancy

to verify perspectives and enough flexibility to explore disclosures revealed in the process.

This flexibility component is also important in light of the recognition that one of this study's aims was to understand some of the relationships among members and events. Thus there was a need for flexibility in the construction of the interview questions and in determining which participants should be included in the interviewing sample. This is a key aspect of the Rubin & Rubin (2005) approach, which calls for a framing of the project that permits construction and interpretation of the narrative both during and after the data collection process. It means appreciating each interviewee, or conversational partner, for their insights pertaining to specific aspects of the research and for their role as referents to other key persons or variables.

While it is understood that participant assessments of key events and developments are critical to the analysis process, it is also essential that these views be considered in light of the literature. Together the literature and the responses allow the researcher to gather evidence on the characteristics and nature of a given phenomenon, which then informs arguments that support or challenge previous understanding and predictions on the matter. For the process to be authentic, one must properly identify and interpret the role of relevant contextual characteristics (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p.27).

Honoring the perspectives of coalition participants and scholars requires a data collection process that uses a purposive sample of coalition participants and an interviewing process that seeks evidence supporting or refuting relevant literature. Interviewees were selected based upon their availability, their awareness of key coalition events and contextual characteristics, as well as their representation of a particular

perspective on the significance of a given event or characteristic. Generally speaking, the steering committee members represent those most included in coalition decision making processes and are believed to be the best target population for the interviewing aspect of data collection. It also has to be taken into consideration that the coalition leadership was more comfortable allowing committee members to be interviewed than permitting a process what might seem imposing to the membership at large.

### **Recognizing Participant Concerns**

One of the concerns, and somewhat of a limitation, is the coalition leadership's desire to guard the privacy of its members. It is also prudent to recognize that coalition affairs may at times be viewed politically and with so many members holding leadership positions in related organizations, asking many questions of many people could in some way impact the trust component of the coalition atmosphere and dynamics. These concerns are implied in the decision by the executive director not to share membership emails for the dissemination of surveys and related messages.

These privacy and time concerns represent yet another benefit of using Rubin & Rubin's (2005) responsive interviewing model because of the guidance it provides in the framing of interview questions. The fundamental principles of the model, honoring relationships, depth rather than breadth of understanding, and design flexibility are ideal for this research project (p.30). With expert tips on conducting the interview, the Rubins' model emphasizes the importance of gaining depth by pursuing contextual information. To gain depth, the researcher must "deal with the complexity of multiple, overlapping and sometimes conflicting themes while paying attention to the specifics of meanings, situations and history" (p.35). This means asking follow up questions during the

interview and designing questions for future interviews based upon the information that emerges from each preceding interview.

A method unlike many traditional approaches to interviewing, one distinguishing aspect of the responsive interviewing model is the way it lends itself to integration of data collection and analysis processes. By not designing all the questions in advance but shaping future questions by listening to interviewee answers, the approach promotes a triangulation type of narrative development. More specifically, the model uses main questions, follow up questions and probes as a means of gaining depth of understanding. It also indicates that at times follow up contact may be warranted to clarify participant insights on matters of interest. For example, mapping the membership and establishing key contextual variables calls for broadly dispersed quantitative types of information and a qualitative depth of understanding.

To then establish how the coalition's characteristics, organizational responses and member perceptions are related to one another, the responsive interviewing method views these three factors respectively as themes, concepts and narratives or implications. This means organizing questions and data to ensure information continuity, so that narratives acknowledge the role of contextual characteristics in organizational responses. It also means looking at disconnects between narratives and behaviors that may be caused by contextual characteristics. Consequently, it becomes important to find ways to clarify how themes and concepts are connected in the narrative, because understanding the process and applying it correctly contributes to better research analysis. By improving the analysis process the research becomes a better resource for theory building and praxis.

## **Conducting the Interviews**

One way to use the Rubin & Rubin responsiveness approach to clarify the coalition narrative is to identify key internal and external developments and the connections among them. By establishing which organizational behaviors are associated with specific influencing events, this research focuses on constructing an authentic narrative from the perspectives of participants with the added value of research based theoretical credibility. The participants targeted were ten of the twenty members of the coalition's steering committee, which under the leadership of the chairman make the majority of the coalition's decisions. Since participant availability was somewhat limited, it seems best to ask only a few questions with the hope of gaining depth of information on a small range of topics, rather than breadth of input on a wide range. Using the responsiveness approach to adjust the questions as needed ensures flexibility and depth of discovery for appropriately expanding the range of topics covered.

Beginning with six questions, the initial four steering committee members interviewed were asked questions that assessed: 1. how the coalition changed over time, 2. the pros and cons of being stakeholder directed, 3. transportation planning and policy objectives, 4. pros and cons of being a multi-jurisdictional organization, 5. leadership's response to sustainability concerns and 6. advice for others interested in forming a similar coalition. The second round of questions was presented to two different members of the committee selected according to their availability, with modified questions to focus on noteworthy events and developments. These questions began by pursuing participant responses to events and developments such as; 1. thoughts of expanding the coalition to Memphis, 2. reactions to the I-95 Corridor Coalition's loss of federal funding, 3. analysis

of the coalition's decision to change chairpersons, 4. responses to the call of conference presenters for the coalition to serve in an MPO type of leadership role for the corridor, and 5. advice for others interested in forming a similar coalition.

In round three another set of two steering committee members, also chosen based upon availability, were interviewed using the same questions as round two with one exception. The advice question was changed to ask for the coalition's top three next steps planning and action objectives. The final set of interviewees had their question four slightly modified to ask for feedback on the coalition's decision to accept funding from private corporations. This use of events and developments for data organization and narrative construction provides an opportunity for an exploration of the implications of events and developments that alter the coalition conversation and the implications of these changes.

### **Filling Gaps: Field Notes, Documents & Textual Analysis**

To further triangulate and improve the quality of this research, a third data collection and analysis method was employed for organizing and interpreting the textual evidence. Conceptually, textual evidence is a metaphor for written, verbal and nonverbal human action that permits observers to document and organize these behaviors for analysis (Balfour & Measors 1994, Thompson 1997). More specific to this research question, those texts will be the field notes from the annual coalition conferences and organizational documents. For these, a hermeneutical process of interpretation is being used to guide the information organization and analysis. Among the reasons for adopting this approach for the analysis is the fact that the textual information is complex, contextually sensitive and interpretation is a demanding process. To do it effectively

requires an iterative process that systematically guides the information gathering and organizing process, as well as the means for understanding the roles of various influencing factors. An approach that fits the research context and is suitable for integration with the other data collection and analysis methods is also helpful.

This contextual responsiveness is particularly significant given the nature of the coalition and more broadly the nature of transportation planning and governance processes. The literature in support of using a hermeneutic framework for understanding participatory transportation dynamics and governance processes views the approach as necessarily innovative and robust enough to accommodate a variety of textual types and substantial quantities of information (Balfour & Measors, 1994, Wilson 2001). With an eye towards how the politics of transportation planning may lead to decision making that often appears incoherent and erratic, the hermeneutic framework offers a means of clarifying the coalition story. By finding links between the various perspectives, it overcomes the weaknesses of an instrumental rationality approach to understanding transportation policy, projects and program processes. Instead of decision making behavior that follows conventional assumptions about optimization and empirical evidence, transportation decisions are influenced more by societal values, institutions, public opinion and stakeholders (Wilson, 2001).

Another key contextual condition in transportation that requires a responsive methodology is the idea that planners and participants are autonomously engaged in analytical roles such as modeling, forecasting and conducting economic evaluations. What is more important to remember is that because of its political nature, transportation governance is at times more likely to seek broad support and cost dispersion to reduce

conflict and to create win-win outcomes (Wilson, 1997). Thus the objective of the hermeneutic methodology is to develop a valid interpretation of the textual evidence and to craft a valid story of the phenomenon. By recognizing the influence of social and historical conditions, as well as key relationships and the researcher's background, the hermeneutic approach is given to an integrated and holistic representation of the case under study (Balfour & Mesaros, 1994).

The key to hermeneutic approach is the hermeneutic circle, which is an iterative, three stage process of assessing the textual evidence, integrating the various perspectives and constructing the contextually responsive narrative. Since hermeneutic scholars prefer to say it is not a methodology but a framework (Gadamer 1993), there is flexibility in how the process is framed. For example, Thompson's (1997) version of the stages focus first on identifying key patterns expressed in the text, then identifying patterns that emerge across the narratives and finally constructing a broader, contextually authentic narrative of the implications derived from the analysis. More specifically, the first stage is called an "intratext" analysis and it involves becoming familiar with the text and recognizing patterns that offer expressed or implied meanings. Stage two, "intertext" analysis is the process of comparing and contrasting the individual texts for broader patterns and meanings. A significant part of this stage is the importance of being open to revising how previously reviewed texts have been interpreted, as the observer acknowledges new learning and where interviews are concern, it also means modifying questions.

This attention to the researcher's awareness is in part the focus of Thompson's third and final stage. It involves the process of acknowledging a priori background

conditions and the significance of the “researcher-as-instrument” (Hirschechman & Holbrook 1992, Sherry 1991). Not only are the significance of the researcher’s perspectives and a priori assumptions taken into consideration but there is also the reminder that hermeneutics is a time sensitive process and the process of constructing narratives is like discovering “temporal trajectories” (Thompson 2001). Finally, there are five aspects of the model that researchers are encouraged to develop. 1. Reveal the plot lines of the organization, 2. Identify symbolic parallels regarding the meaning of different events, 3. Reflect inter-textual relationships where the narratives become integrated into the participants’ stories, 4. Indicate existential themes of identity influenced by narratives, 5. Illustrate shared meanings and conventionalized viewpoints.

Since the responsiveness interviewing method is conceptually consistent with hermeneutic principles, using the categories derived for the concepts, themes and implications found in the interviews supported the integration of the sources. Likewise, even though the conferences happened prior to the data collection processes, the surveys and interviews represent some of the a priori, background information for the analysis of conference texts. Similarly, consistent with the hermeneutic circle concept of comparing texts and using discovery to revise interpretations, the conference field notes and documents also inform the analysis of the survey and interview information. While in the presentation that follows, Thompson’s five aspects will not be deliberately pursued and developed, when they are apparent, they will be acknowledged. Of the five, plot lines, symbolic parallels and the conventionalization of shared meanings are expected to be the most apparent and beneficial to clarify.

Based on personal notes from the 2009, 2010 and 2011 annual conferences, the data gathering objective of this effort is to triangulate other gathered information for stronger research validity and to introduce additional depth for a richer assessment of the phenomenon. More specifically, I document the actual conference events in terms of who was speaking and what their organizational affiliations were at the time. Understanding the importance of integrating real world events with the needs of the data collection plan is a critical component of contextual case study research. Thus, participant observation is a staple component in case study data collection, and field notes are a standard approach to such data collection. For this part of the project, an unobtrusive measures approach was adopted. This essentially means “the researcher is expected to observe or gather data without interfering in the ongoing flow of everyday events.” Such data are classified as documents and archival records (Marshall & Rossman 2005, p.124) or in the hermeneutic tradition, texts.

### **An Evolutionary Story of Impacts, Responses and Implications**

The collection of data for the second research question; *How have the coalition’s characteristics and operations evolved from its 2007 founding up to its 2011 Annual Conference* began with the annual conference field notes. These will serve first of all as a basic timeline for orienting the responsiveness events, developments and decision to fit the evolutionary analysis. By clarifying coalition dynamics from the perspective of conference presenters and the basic themes implied by those observations, a basic evolutionary change narrative will begin to emerge. Building on that basic narrative will involve adding a responsiveness analysis of the identified decisions and developments.

These will provide focal points for assessing changes in coalition characteristics over time.

Next, in keeping with the hermeneutic circles approach, relevant information from the surveys will be assembled to support or clarify perceptions related to the coalition's evolution. Similar to the approach employed for answering question one, the survey analysis generally involves focusing on questions that ask about changes in membership perceptions related to coalition objectives and organizational attributes or priorities. The short answer questions and comments sections will also be examined for evidence of key events, developments and indications of organizational changes over time or shifts in response to contextual conditions. For example, since question #3 of the survey calls for the year and month an individual began to participate in the coalition, it will serve as a means to establish patterns that may be related to membership changes. Likewise, Question #7 of the survey is expected to be useful for identifying events and developments that were considered significant to the coalition's sustainability.

Some other examples of how the survey responses may be used to further construct the evolutionary narrative are as follows. Questions #8 through #10 allow each respondent to express their awareness about perceived changes in coalition priorities between the time they began participating and the time they answered the survey. Question #11 approaches the matter of growth and sustainability differently, instead of asking about key events it calls for recognition of key organizational conditions and behaviors. Questions #12 through #15 query participants about their organization's financial and /or written endorsement of the coalition in general and specific programs in particular. Question #16 looks for membership perception pertaining to key coalition

partners and #17- #19 looks for perceptions pertaining to leadership and decision making. Crossing these responses with endorsement and longevity answers may also lead to insight about power dynamics in the coalition.

For clarity on how member perspectives changed, the data collection focus turns to the interviews, where the questions were particularly helpful for this portion of the research. From the first question the purposive process of acknowledging changes and influencing factors was explored with additional attention given to how the members responded to the changes. Answers to these questions will be analyzed and interpreted for insight with specific attention to events, developments and influencing factors. They will also be used to identify other patterns or meanings expressed by the members regarding the changes involved. As indicated in the methodology of the first research question, responsiveness interviewing methods were used to revise the questions for better depth of information. Therefore, the questions reflect the most recent changes in coalition objectives and actions in a way that probes the membership's response to these developments.

A good example of this process and focus is apparent in the first three questions of the second round of interviews. Based upon presentations and remarks by coalition leadership, steering committee members were asked "What does it mean to coalition members and leadership that there is talk of expanding the coalition to Memphis?" The follow up on this was "How does this fit with how you have seen the coalition evolve so far? (What are the challenges and opportunities?)". Similarly the second question of the round was also a response to conference presentations and discussions. Citing membership differences between the I-95 and I-81 Corridor Coalitions and the I-95 loss

of federal funding, interviewees are asked how the I-81's uniqueness affects its strategy, sustainability and objectives. They are also asked about the perceived significance of various federal funding initiatives.

Looking also at the question of expanding the coalition is also part of the focus of the interviews which provide an opportunity to get insight on how the coalition responds to changes. These may also represent an opportunity to observe how the coalition responds to mission and vision conflicts among the leaders and members. This may be a matter of politics or a matter of economic development versus competing for federal funding. The possibilities are of course many and their implications of various importance. There are also questions about the coalition's scope and funding strategies that represent another part of the narrative. Scrutinizing the linkages between the interviews and conference notes for evidence of patterns, perceptions, themes and implications will provide evidence for building this narrative. This may include implications from the selection of presenters or the remarks of the leadership.

The conference notes will be organized and transcribed much like the interview documents according to presenters, themes and implications. This will make integration with other data already in the responsiveness format smoother. Again, a hermeneutic approach will be used to first thoroughly describe the conference setting, events and atmosphere. Afterwards, a deeper analysis will be employed to highlight the aspects of the conference that fit the analysis framework and for identification of any new observations. In order to better understand how the conferences contribute to the evolution of the coalition, the individual conference texts will be compared and contrast with information from the literature. Specifically, the responsiveness analysis will

involve understanding the relationship between decision making objectives and processes for any given event or development. By viewing decisions as facilitators of positive, negative or situational coordination (Pedersen et al.) and the process by which they were made; by direction, discretion or deliberation (Bryer 2006) much may be understood about the coalition's evolution.

### **Corridor Coalition Roles and Governance Implications**

The final question is *based upon the coalition's characteristics and evolution, what may be implied about the coalition's role in transportation corridor governance?* Answering this question involves gathering the findings of the previous two questions to construct a cogent description of the I-81 Corridor Coalition's characteristics and capabilities as they relate to governance, particularly in transportation. The uniqueness of this challenge by comparison with the other questions begins with the information gathering process. First of all, the survey only directly addressed the matter of governance in the final question, where participants are asked their opinion about the coalition's potential governance role. It does however explore information about the coalition's objectives, resources and sustainability, which are also very pertinent to the answer of this question. Finally, because vertical power or legal authority is an important attribute in governance, one other area of the survey that may be useful is the portion containing partnerships, endorsements and demographic data. This is true because these areas offer some indication of the governance positions held by coalition supporters.

The interviews also offer promise for clarification of the coalition's capacity, behavior and inclination regarding governance participation. Not only is the governance role question asked directly but perhaps even more helpful are the objectives shared when

asked to identify the next three action items for the coalition. The matter of vertical power is once again involved in that many of the steering committee members are elected officials with legitimate governance objectives and with the autonomy and discretion to act. This suggests that they not only have resources and relationships that may be leveraged on the coalition's behalf but as members of the steering committee they represent very significant players in the decision making process. Consequently, there is an implied greater probability of the coalition pursuing a governance role if its primary decision makers believe a role in governance is in the best interest of the coalition.

Finally, the field notes and other coalition texts, represent a rich source of information pertaining to the roles the coalition has been invited to play and the roles they've demonstrated capacity and interest in playing. As in the previous questions the information gathered will be organized according to the hermeneutical framework already established. Once again the responsiveness interviewing approach to analyzing concepts, themes and implications will be employed to clarify the perceptions and narratives of the members. As the "temporal trajectories" of the coalition's evolution become more apparent, triangulation will be used to reinforce observations pertaining to key relationships and emerging connections with the literature.

Continuing with an interpretive approach to understanding the coalition as a type of voluntary association phenomenon with some type of participation in governance appears to be an effective way to ascertain what its characteristics and evolution may infer. As suggested in chapter two this involves describing the relationships among participants and exploring the evolutionary dynamics of coalition decision making. Key events and developments will be used to focus attention on a variety of situations for an

in depth look at how the coalition makes choices and the governance implications of the related decisions. The survey information indicating membership perceptions of these influential developments and other variables will help establish the concepts and themes of this analysis. In the same sense, steering committee member input on influential factors will also inform this analysis. Since both survey and interview data were gathered simultaneously, the input from the membership and the responsiveness interviewing process contribute to more depth of understanding on the topic from interviews with the leadership.

Conference proceedings recorded in the field notes from 2008 through 2011 will also provide significant help in the narrative development pertaining to the coalition's role in governance. The selection of speakers and topics as well as committee reports and updates on steering committee decisions are included in the types of information contained in the field note data. As with the other collected data this information will be organized according to themes, concepts and implications for integration and interpretation. Patterns of relationships among the variables will be described and explained based upon the evidence and literature.

What remains to be considered is the process of clarifying how the narrative contributes to theory building related to the I-81 Corridor Coalition. Where possible the analysis will identify conclusions that may potentially be related to description and explanation of other organizations like this coalition. The primary interpretive focus will involve understanding what is implied by who the coalition members are and what their responsiveness conveys about their role in governance. Attention will also be given to the interest represented by the coalition and the visions of democracy implied in their

decision making. Contextual characteristics will also be identified in the organizing of concepts and themes.

### **Summarizing the Research Methods**

Consistent with the goal of describing the characteristics of the I-81 Corridor Coalition, the survey information serves as a guide for the data gathering and organization process. After recording basic statistics on coalition demographics, significant events, projects, programs and priorities, some membership perception information is also recorded and organized both statistically and categorically. The basic categories used for clarifying what the data generally implies are derived from the responsiveness interviewing and hermeneutic approaches to analysis. Using a coding framework of concepts, themes and implications supports subsequent efforts to integrate data from other sources in relation to each question. This will also contribute to the process of clarifying perceptions related to the analysis.

A similar coding process is used in organizing the data from the elite interviews. After transcribing the notes from each interview the information will be organized both according to the survey outline and the concepts, themes and implications framework. This again is followed by an integrating process, where the statistical evidence and qualitative narrative are compared for greater depth of awareness pertaining to the coalition's characteristics and evolution. The final data source, field notes and other textual data will also be integrated for insight regarding the coalition's characteristics, evolution and governance implications.

### **Limitations, Challenges and Opportunities**

It should be acknowledged that several limitations made it difficult to gain the breadth and depth of analysis originally hoped for. First of all, the number of respondents to the survey in comparison to the number of recipients was rather small. Also, though the steering committee members were very supportive and helpful, there were some availability challenges to the interview process. Identifying key events and happenings for analyzing the coalition's responsiveness was difficult to manage and gauge. Hopefully, the examples available represent a valid sample of factors influential to the coalition's evolution. In similar fashion, since the coalition's actual decision making process is so informal, it was difficult to actually observe content and character of the arguments and conclusions. Finally, the volume of information made the coding and organizing process challenging; however, the analysis model offered a fair, though imperfect remedy to this concern.

## Chapter IV

### Integrating the Coalition Characteristics Evidence

To answer question one, “*what are the membership and contextual characteristics of the I-81 Corridor Coalition?*” this chapter begins by describing the evidence on membership and selected contextual characteristics. As indicated earlier, the descriptive approach employed here takes into account the hermeneutic goal of exploring the significance of the various characteristics as they relate to Coalition objectives and actions. With the characteristics evidence acquired from the various data sources, a storyline has been developed. For example, quantitative survey evidence presented in tables and figures will be used to describe actual occurrences and perceptions (Yin 2009, p. 107). Likewise, by using the responsive interviewing approach, an events-based coding process helps clarify the relevant themes and concepts (Rubin & Rubin 2005, pp. 224-225).

With themes to describe what is happening in the coalition and concepts to provide big picture explanations of the implications, the evidence for this question also has practical and theoretical value. Particularly because the coding process uses the descriptive themes to assess how the four characteristic: sustainability, competency, diversity and commitments, are implied. Therefore, factors such as location, organizational jurisdiction, years of experience and areas of expertise are the focus of some questions while information that describes coalition objectives, priorities, endorsements, funding and decision making adds depth to the analysis. Information pertaining to these factors will be organized to facilitate subsequent efforts to explain

their relevance to the sustainability, competency, diversity and commitments concepts in the coalition.

### Applying the Conceptual Framework to the Survey

As a preview to this portion of the analysis, Table 5 shows some basic themes indicated in the survey data. These have been arranged using the four coalition characteristics with the survey questions that may be referenced for answers. Some survey questions reveal multiple examples of pertinent characteristics related themes.

**Table 5: Conceptual Analysis of Survey Data**

Concepts	Themes	Source
Diversity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Regionally balanced multi-jurisdictional support</li> <li>2. Broad range of expertise</li> <li>3. Wide range of partners</li> </ol>	Q1, Q2 Q5 Q16
Sustainability	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Steady growth in membership since 2007</li> <li>2. Strong organizational attributes</li> <li>3. Strong, wide range of sponsors</li> <li>4. Effective fundraising methods</li> </ol>	Q3 Q11 Q16, 21 Q23
Competency	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Strong indicators of expertise and years of experience</li> <li>2. Strong membership and organizational attributes</li> <li>3. Effective leadership presence</li> <li>4. VTTI research credentials</li> <li>5. Founders and funders provide leadership</li> </ol>	Q4, 5, 6 Q11 Q17,18,19,20 Q25
Commitments	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Agreement on objectives and goals</li> <li>2. Financial and written commitments of support</li> <li>3. Policy advocacy support</li> <li>4. VTTI and other partnerships</li> </ol>	Q8, 10 Q12,13,14,15 Q22 Q27

What Table 5 makes apparent is that the four characteristics found in the literature consistently provide a relevant means of viewing the survey data and describing the coalition’s characteristics. As the information from each question is presented, the

characteristic implications become more apparent. Ultimately, the information provided helps describe the internal contextual dynamics of the coalition.

### **Describing Participant and Membership Characteristics**

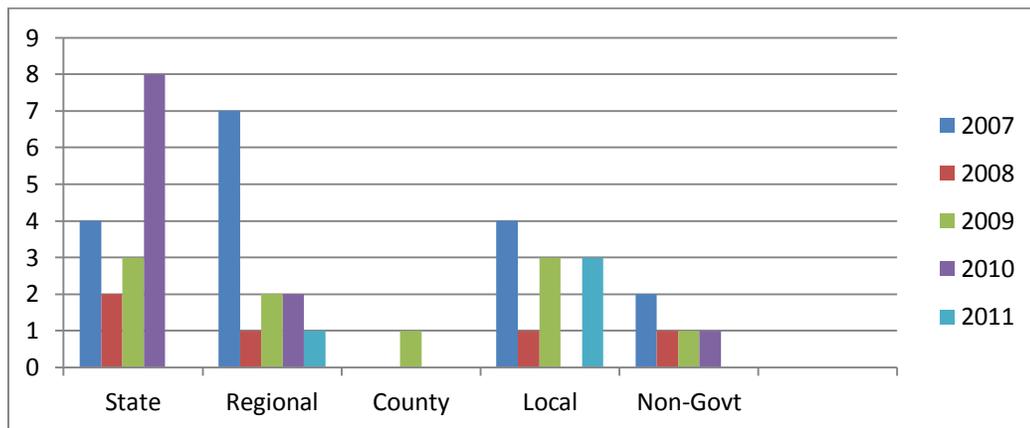
Fifty two respondents, 13.3% of those to whom the surveys were sent, posted their responses with various degrees of completion. With N = 52, 94.2% answered at least 21 of the 27 survey questions, and 88.4% answered at least 24 of 27 questions. The three most often skipped questions were #4 (skipped by 28.8%) which asked for organizational affiliations, # 10 (skipped by 25%), which was skipped by direction if respondents had less than one year of membership, and #27 (skipped by 46.1%), which asked about the VTTI Memorandum.

Because a list with demographic information on the overall coalition membership was not made available, a direct comparison cannot be made between the overall membership and the sample population. However, some demographic information was made public with regards to the 99 pre-registered attendees of the 2011 Annual Conference. This information is considered relevant as a means of broadly describing various characteristics of the I-81 coalition participants, even though the information provided for those attendees does not directly correspond to the type of data collected on survey participants. From the six coalition states plus North Carolina and the District of Columbia, these attendees may be categorized as follows: Private Businesses (PB) – 31%, State level Public Administrators (SPA) – 26%, Local Public Administrators (LPA) – 10%, Voluntary Associations (VA) – 10%, Regional Planners (RP) -9%, Higher Education (HE) – 6%, Elected Officials (EO) -4%, Law Enforcement (LE) - 2%, and Federal Public Administration (FPA) -1%. Otherwise, based on this information and

based on those attending the conferences, no major difference between the sample demographics and the population, such as age or gender, is apparent. However, not having specific comparable information on the whole population and the survey respondents, it is impossible to tell if there are systematic differences between the two. It should be noted that while those identified as regional planners is much lower than survey respondents, many participants, especially the SPAs and Eos, also serve in multiple capacities, including as planners.

The survey questions that provide the best overview of coalition membership characteristics are numbers 1-8 and 10-15. The results of these are presented next, beginning with Figure 3, which shows the survey respondents by area of jurisdiction and calendar year of joining the coalition. The jurisdictional information is based on the responses to Question #1 and the year of joining is based on Question #3.

**Figure 3: Membership by Jurisdiction and Year (N=47)**



Among the highlights indicated in Figure 3, 36.2% of respondents joined in 2007, 10.6% in 2008, 21.2% in 2009, 23.4% in 2010 and 8.5% in the first half of 2011. By jurisdiction 36.2% were state level, 27.7 were regional, 25.5% were local and 8.5% were non-governmental voluntary associations. The highest single year jurisdictional

representation is seen in the number of state representatives who joined in 2010. The representation by individual states shows a very high percentage of respondents, 75% came from Virginia, Pennsylvania and Tennessee combined. One respondent indicated the District of Columbia as their area of operation.

### Founders, Affiliations and Expertise

Since the survey respondents who joined the coalition in 2007 and in the first six months of 2008 represented almost half of the membership (41.7%), they are referred as founding members, or “founders”. For a better description of the founders who participated in the survey and to facilitate subsequent comparisons with the broader membership, their responses to questions four, five and six, are provided next. Question four asks for other types of organizations they are members of, five focuses on areas of professional expertise and question six records years of transportation experience.

Question four shows 70% of the founders report being affiliated with regional planning organizations, 50% with state and county administrative agencies and 30% with non-profit organizations, 5% were elected officials. The majority of the founders had multiple affiliations. Figure 4 shows the founders’ organizational responses in relation to the members, interviewees and the Steering Committee members.

**Figure 4: Overview of Organizational Affiliations (N=48)**

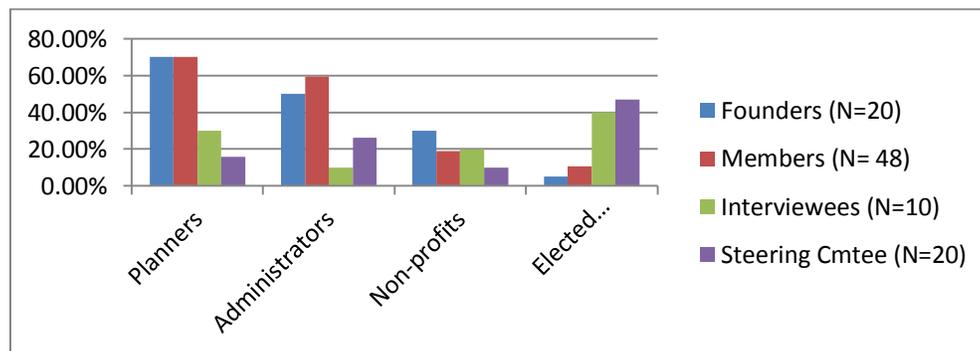
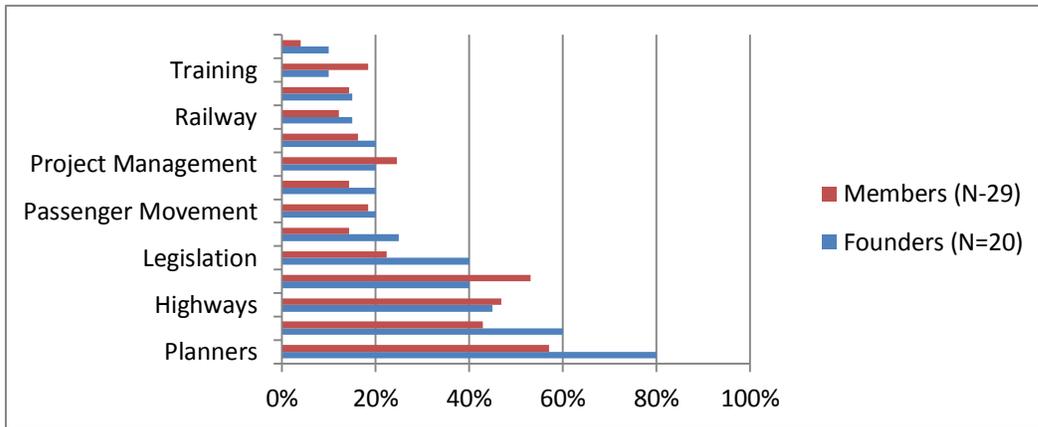


Figure 4 compares the founders' affiliations with those of the general responding members, interviewees and steering committee members. While the founders were predominantly planners and administrators the leaders that make up the steering committee were primarily elected officials. Since the interviewees represent about 50% of the steering committee it seems appropriate the largest group represented among them was elected officials and planners were the second most. It is somewhat peculiar that administrators were so well represented among the founders and members but not so much on the steering committee. Figure 5 continues this process of comparing the attributes of founding members to the general membership.

**Figure 5 – Areas of Professional Expertise (N=49)**



The areas of expertise responses from question five, (see Figure 5), show 80% of the founders were planners, 60% identified themselves as administrators, while 45% have highway expertise, 40% safety and legislation and 25% freight movement. An additional 20% each claim expertise in Project Management, Environmental Planning, Passenger Movement and Research. Only 10% noted Training as an area of expertise. By comparison the non-founding members also show Planning as their top area of expertise (57.1%) but Safety (53%) is a close second. Highway (47%) expertise for members

topped Administration (43%) thus making it the fourth most common area. Project Management (24.6%) rounded out the top five for members with Legislation (22.4%) a close sixth. Another noteworthy comparison of the areas of expertise shows non-founding members giving less attention to Freight Movement (14.3), which is surpassed among members by Passenger Movement (18.4%), Training (18.4%) and Environmental Planning (16.3%).

As indicated, the years of transportation experience have been provided in response to survey question six. Responses show half of the founders with approximately 30 years of experience and four with ten years or less. Overall, the average 'years of experience' for the founders was approximately 22 years. Likewise, 19 of the non-founding members have at least 30 years of experience and another 16 have at least 20 years. Only 10 of the remaining members show less than ten years of experience, for an overall average of 23.8 years of experience. Thus one unexpected indication is that while both groups are very seasoned and virtually equal in years of experience, the founders actually appear to be slightly younger. What this implies is not clear but in some regards it seems to reflect more age diversity and perhaps more diversity of perspectives among the founders.

### **Recognizing Funders and Endorsers**

Besides viewing the coalition membership as founders and remaining members, another possibly helpful way to identify influential membership characteristics is to look at those who provide resources and endorsement support. The funders and endorsers questions, numbers twelve through fifteen on the survey, describe coalition characteristics pertaining to the membership's financial and program or project

commitments. The questions on donations and endorsements indicate that 67.4% of the founding members (N=20) made monetary donations of some sort to the coalition and 82.3% offered some type of written endorsement. Also, 35.3% of them made multi-year endorsements and 52.9% made more than a single donation. Together, a full 89% of the earliest coalition participants provided funding or written support of the organization.

By comparison 22.8% of the non-founding respondents (N=32) made multi-year donations and 43.8% made at least a single event contribution. Written endorsements were made by 40% of the non-founding respondents and 34.2% made project endorsements. Based on these numbers the founding coalition participants demonstrated a notably greater level of commitment to providing substantive support for coalition operations and objectives.

Jurisdictionally, of the 43.8% (N=48, skipped = 4) who budgeted funds for the coalition, 50% of them represented state agencies, while regional and local governments accounted for 21% each and 7% had non-governmental membership. By state; 43% of the contributors were from Virginia, 28% from Pennsylvania, 14% from West Virginia and 7% each from Maryland and Tennessee. Answers to Questions 12 through 15 did not show contributions from New York, probably due to expressed budgetary restrictions, but they did participate in the endorsements.

Organizationally, 47% of the 14 respondents making multiple year contributions came from regional planning authorities, 35% came from state DOT members, 6% each came from local government, non-governmental organizations and institutions of higher education. Of the 70.8% who provided written endorsements (N= 48), 29% each came from state and regional agencies, with 20.8% each from local government and non-

governmental organizations. By state the endorsement distributions included 28% from Pennsylvania and 24% each from Tennessee and Virginia. Maryland added 12%, West Virginia 8% and New York 4%. These numbers show a strong commitment to the coalition from state agencies and regional planners, with Virginia and Pennsylvania consistently leading the way.

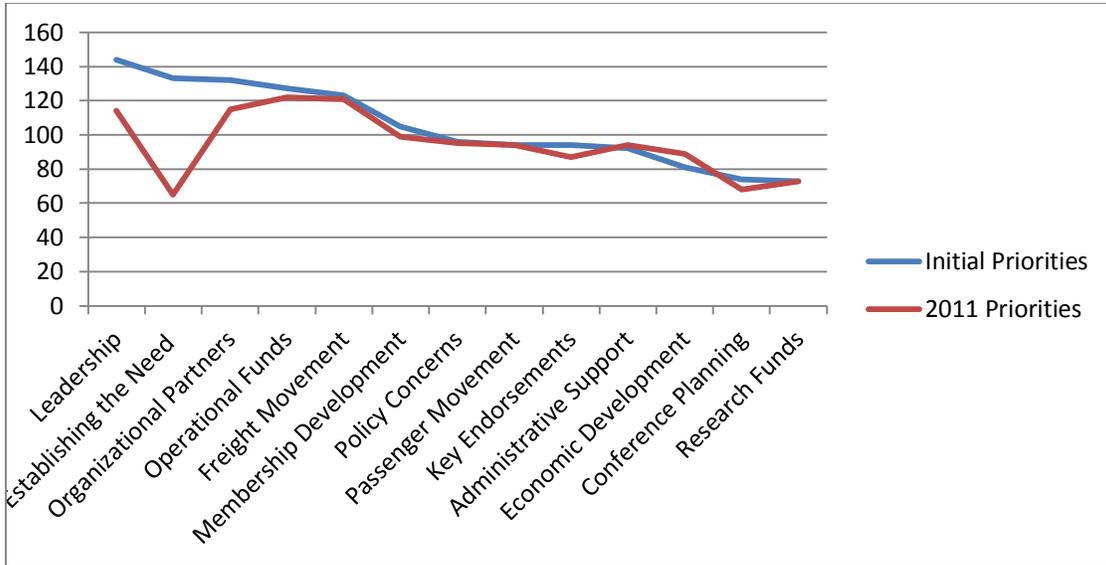
Ultimately, 60.4% of the respondents (N=48) provided financial support to the coalition and 55% of these funders were founders. When the eight written endorsers who did not provide funds are added to this number, 77% of the respondents demonstrated their commitment by some tangible means of support.

### **Ranking Priorities and Objectives**

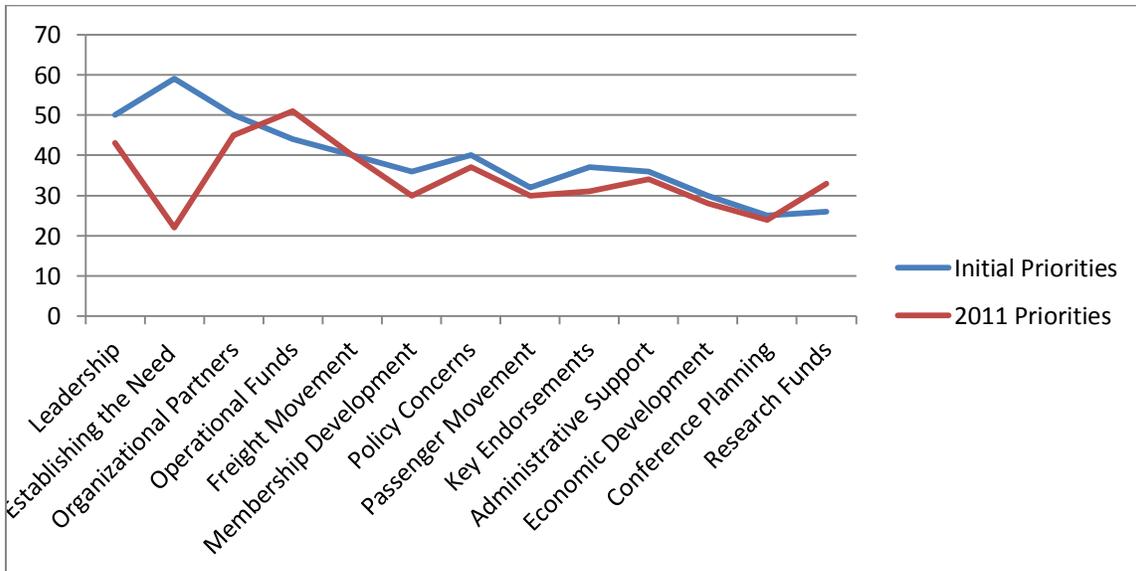
Organizational characteristics and priorities were the focus of survey questions eight, ten and eleven, to provide information for describing these characteristics and how they have changed over time. Using a list of thirteen objectives based on information from the literature and field observations, members were asked to prioritize the coalition's objectives according to what they were when they joined the organization (question eight) and again as they see them now (question ten). A seven point Likert scale was used to rate the priorities from Less Important = 1 to Most Essential = 7. Therefore the items were weighted according to the amount of importance each participant assigned to them. The total score for each item was compared with the other items to determine their ranking. Among the comparisons are the responses of the overall coalition membership along with those of the founding members and those of the coalition's funders. These are not mutually exclusive groups of respondents since some members fit in multiple categories.

The coalition priorities are presented in Figure 6, which represents the overall coalition’s selections, while Figure 7 indicates the perspectives of the founding members. Figure 8 identifies the viewpoints of the members identified in survey questions twelve and fourteen as coalition funders.

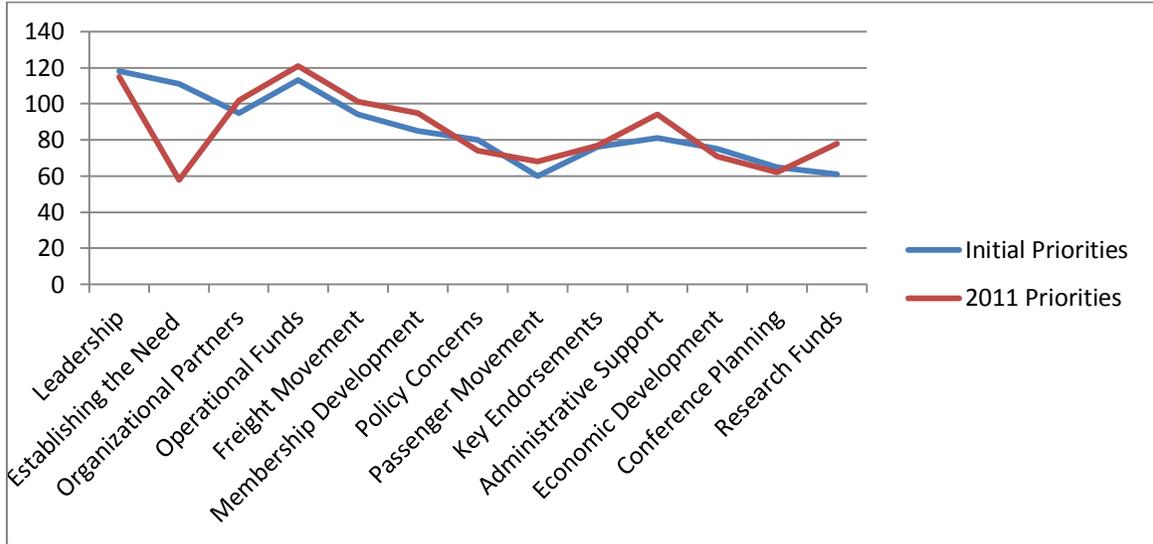
**Figure 6: Membership Ranking of Coalition Priorities (N=48)**



**Figure 7: Founders’ Ranking of Coalition Priorities (N= 20)**



**Figure 8: Funders' Ranking of Priorities (N=29)**



Beginning with the ranking of the initial priorities, the comparison process revealed that the Membership and Funders agreed on Leadership (L) as the top priority but the Founders saw Establishing the Need (ETN) for the Coalition as 15.25% more important than L. The Membership put ETN in second but the Funders placed Operational Funds (OF) as a secondary priority with ETN coming in third. Still, with the exception of the Founders giving a slight edge to Policy Concerns over Membership Development for the sixth spot, all three groups agreed on the top six priorities, albeit in slightly different orders.

The least important concerns also provide some meaningful implications. First of all, the Funders ranked Passenger Movement as their lowest priority and put research only slightly more than a percentage point ahead of it. The Founders also put research next to last among priorities, just ahead of Conference Planning in the final position. The membership as a whole also identified Research Funds as their lowest priority, right behind Conference Planning. In looking at the change over time, the largest difference is

found in the ranking of ETN as the least important concern by all three groups of respondents in their 2011 rankings. Likewise there is unanimous agreement on Operational Funding being the top 2011 priority. Freight movement is a very close second on the Membership list, while the Founders point to Organizational Partners as the new number 2 priority. Funders maintain leadership as the second most important.

In an effort to more clearly describe member perceptions regarding organizational priorities, responses to survey questions eight and ten were examined by conference year for major changes in opinion. In 2007, synonymous here with the founders, the biggest change is the 62.7% decrease assigned to ETN. This is a clear indication that members perceived the question of need to be a resolved issue, and no longer in question. There was a 26.9% increase assigned to the importance of securing Research Funding (RF) and approximately a 16% drop in the importance of L, Membership Development (MD) and Securing Key Endorsements (SKE). OP also saw a 16% increase in importance.

For the 2008 Conference year, changes of note were also related to ETN (>25.7%), RF (<40%) and OP (>22%), with Policy Concerns (PC) also gaining 27.5% in perceived importance. The biggest change in the 2009 Conference year was the 25.7% increase related to the importance of Freight Movement (FM). Passenger Movement (PM) and Economic Development (EC) saw increases of 20.5%. Most of the 2010 Conference year participants did not offer answers to question ten, per the instruction of question nine. Because they were not in the organization more than twelve months the likelihood of them having significantly changed perspectives was not considered significant. Once again, the responses indicate areas of significant stability and evidence that some priorities are shifting.

## Initial Descriptive Themes and Conceptual Implications

For a conceptual perspective of the coalition’s characteristics and priorities, the next step is to develop descriptive themes based on what the surveys reveal about coalition operations and objectives. These themes will be presented in light of their relevance to the four characteristics categories of Competency, Commitments, Diversity and Sustainability. Table 6 lists 15 theme statements derived from the surveys. Each is accompanied by key words describing variables involved in the indicated dynamics and the characteristic concepts implied in each.

**Table 6: Coalition Themes, Variables and Concepts**

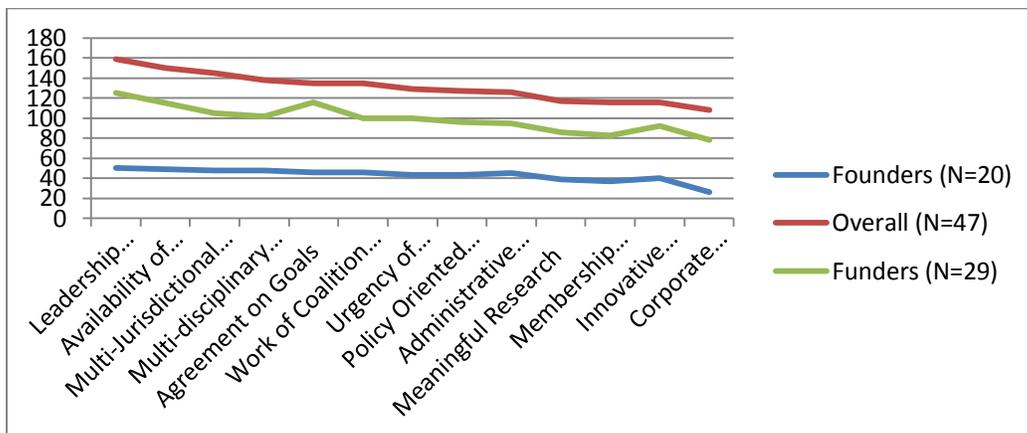
Themes	Variables	Concepts
Over 400 members and steady growth since 2007	Membership	Diversity Sustainability
Jurisdictionally six states and dozens of regions	Jurisdictions	Diversity
Strong leadership in Virginia and Pennsylvania	Membership	Competency Commitment
77% of members providing substantive support	Resources	Sustainability Commitment
60% of members have administrative expertise	Membership Expertise	Competency
82% of funders are regional planners and DOTs	Planners Funders Jurisdictions	Competency Commitment Sustainability
Average transportation experience is 22 years	Expertise	Competency
22% members have less than 10 years of experience	Expertise	Diversity
50% of the steering committee are elected officials	Leadership Politics	Diversity Commitments
Top priority for Founders was Establishing the Need for a coalition	Founders Priorities Corridor needs	Sustainability Commitment
2011 members identified leadership as top priority	Members Leadership	Competency Commitments
2010 members increased the rating for research funding by 26.9%	Research Funds	Competency Sustainability
The priority of addressing policy concerns increased by 27.5% in the 2008 conference year	Policy Concern	Competency
2009 conference year priorities increased 25.7% for	Rail	Competency

Freight Movement and 20.5% for Passenger Movement and Economic Development.	Economics Freight	Sustainability Commitments
70% of founders are regional planning experts	Planning Expertise Jurisdictions	Competency

### Rating Key Organizational Characteristics

The members were asked to rate the organizational characteristics provided in question 11, for a description based on coalition priorities ranking. The characteristics considered most beneficial were Leadership Effectiveness (159 points), Availability of Resources (150 points), Multi-jurisdictional Endorsements (145 points) and Multi-disciplinary Perspectives (138 points). The next tier of characteristics included Agreement on Goals (135), Work of Coalition Committees (135), Urgency of Corridor Concerns (129), Policy Oriented Objectives (127), Administrative Support (126), Meaningful Research (117), Membership Expertise (116), and Innovative Possibilities (116). One noteworthy variation by comparison with the Funders is the rating of Agreement on Goals as second rather than sixth most beneficial. These rankings are illustrated in Figure 9.

**Figure 9: Comparison of Organizational Characteristics (N=47)**

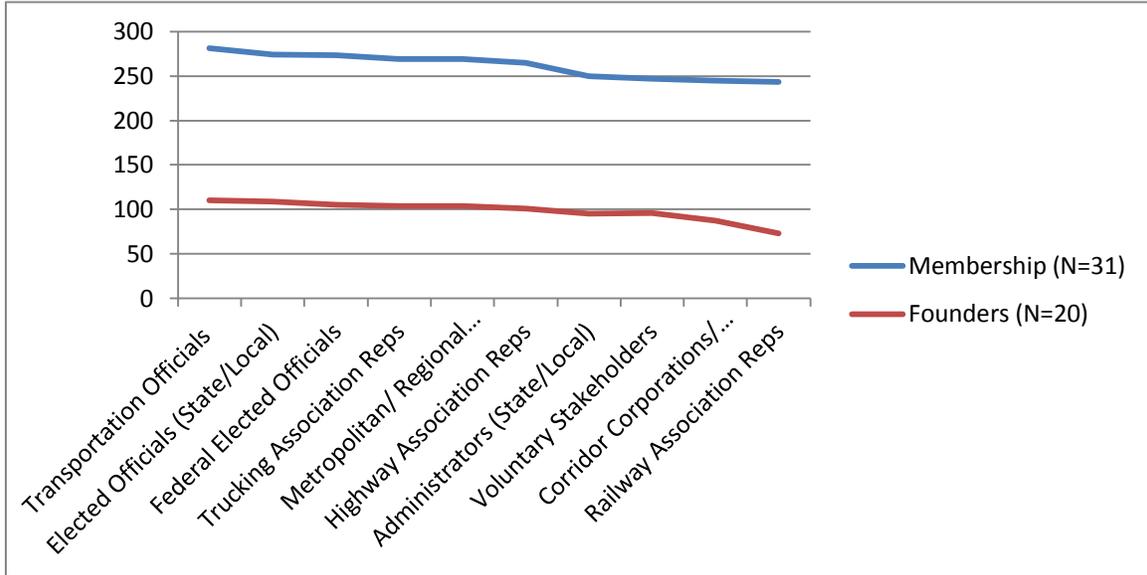


Placing Leadership Effectiveness first might imply competency is a top priority. Similarly, the Availability of Resources suggests the importance of sustainability. The next two highest rated characteristics, Multi-jurisdictional and Multi-disciplinary Perspectives may be considered examples of diversity, while Agreement on Goals and the Work of Coalition Committees may be commitment indicators. Corridor Concerns are conceptually matters of diversity and Policy Oriented Objectives are a matter of competency. Administrative Support and Meaningful Research suggests competency, while Membership Expertise and Innovative Possibilities refers again to diversity. Finally, Corporate Partners may be viewed as commitments. I offer these characteristic connections as examples with the understanding that it is not uncommon for one theme or development to have multiple characteristics implications.

### **Objectives, Roles and Relationships**

The value members assigned to the roles of various stakeholders in relation to coalition effectiveness are illustrated in Figure 10. State transportation agency officials are clearly the first choice with state and local elected officials edging out federal elected officials for second most beneficial. Trucking association representatives tied with Metropolitan and Regional Planners to round out the top five. Not surprisingly, Highway association representatives lead the second group, followed by local and state administrative officials. Among the three least beneficial groups of stakeholders, volunteers were first, followed by I-81 Corridor corporations and business. Railway association representatives finished with the lowest beneficial to the coalition rating.

**Figure 10: Prioritizing Stakeholder Partnerships (N=51)**



With nearly half of the membership identifying themselves as state level transportation representatives, the priorities in Figure 10 are understandable. First of all, departments of transportation (DOTs) are viewed as the most beneficial stakeholders. However, the fact that representatives of railway associations were rated last probably means the high rating given to state transportation agencies may not necessarily reflect views about Departments of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT). The relatively low prioritization of non-transportation agency officials is somewhat remarkable. Another noteworthy rating is the priority given to state and federal elected officials, which suggests the importance of vertical power for leveraging resources, and their ability to rally constituent support.

The priority assigned to Trucking and Highway Associations is also significant given the low number of members identifying themselves as non-governmental agency representatives. This may be an indicator that many participants have voluntary affiliations with these associations or that transportation agency officials work closely

with association representatives. If the latter is true, Railway associations are notably not as strongly represented since they rank with I-81 Corridor businesses, next to last, ahead of other volunteer organizations. It also seems that regional planners are rated somewhat low considering the evidence that planners are the dominant area of expertise for coalition members. Conceptually, the ranking of stakeholder importance relates to all four conceptual areas of the coalition's performance characteristics.

### **Impacts of Characteristics on Effectiveness**

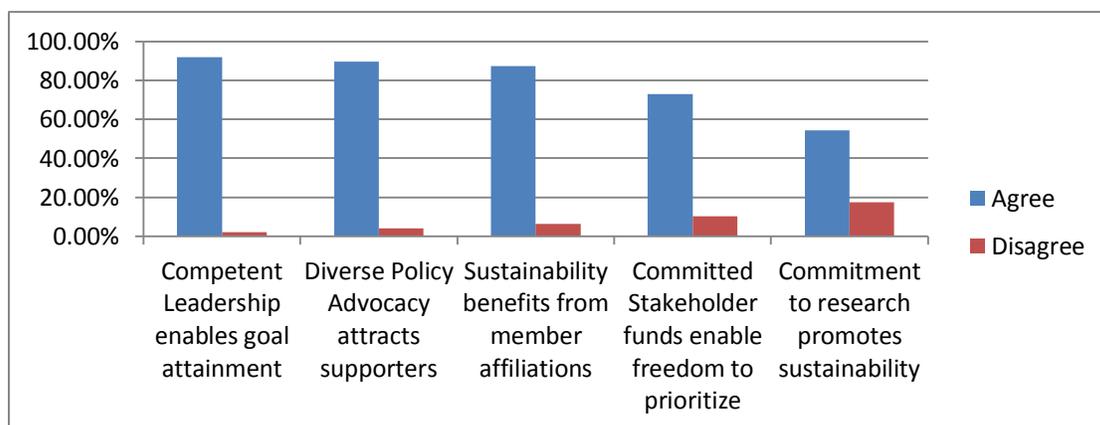
Questions 20 through 23 asked members for their opinions of specific propositions describing the impact of certain coalition characteristics. The first of these proposed that the coalition's leadership style significantly contributed to the organization's ability to achieve its objectives. Of the N=48 respondents who completed this question, 71.4% agreed or strongly agreed that the coalition's leadership style significantly improved its ability to achieve objectives. Another 20.4% indicated they somewhat agree, meaning a full 91.8% saw the leadership style as very important to the coalition's effectiveness. Only 2% disagreed and 6.1% selected "not observed".

Next, 72.9% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the professional affiliations of coalition members contribute significantly to the organization's growth and sustainability. An additional 14.6% somewhat agreed, while one group of 6.3% disagreed and another did not observe. Members were also asked to consider the proposition that the coalition's commitment to policy concerns contributed significantly to its ability to attract supporters. With 62.5% of 46 respondents in agreement and 27.1% somewhat in agreement, a total of 89.6% saw the coalition's approach to policy concerns as a significant recruiting tool. Only 4.2% disagreed with the idea. Finally, the most

disputed proposition was the call for opinions on the notion that the coalition’s ability to secure stakeholder funding contributed significantly to its freedom to determine organizational priorities. Those who disagreed or somewhat disagreed represented 10.4% of respondents, while those in some level of agreement totaled 72.9%.

The participants indicated beliefs that the coalition had a very high level of leadership and goal attainment competency. They also indicated a fairly high (87.5%) level of confidence in the growth and sustainability of the coalition, perhaps because of their supportive professional affiliations. This response also relates to the idea of organizational diversity, given the members’ acknowledgement of the importance of a wide range of participants. Likewise, the final question speaks to the matter of maintaining the freedom to honor commitments to the coalition and the broader community. Figure 11 illustrates these perceptions, which have been organized under the four characteristics categories. The final indicator, from survey question 25 is both a competency and commitments indicator. It shows 54.3% believe the coalition’s commitment to research excellence contributes to organizational sustainability, 17.4% disagree with this perspective.

**Figure 11: Effectiveness Perceptions (N=48)**



## **Effectiveness and Benefits of the VTTI MOU**

The final survey question seeks to describe the coalition in light of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Virginia Tech's Transportation Institute, (VTTI). First of all, 46.1% of the 52 who participated skipped this question and an additional 17.4% stated in their response that they were unaware of the intent or effectiveness of the VTTI MOU. Practically speaking the MOU represents a five year arrangement between the coalition and one of the premier transportation research and testing institutions in the United States. In terms of administrative support, VTTI houses the coalition's executive officer and staff to handle administrative and fiscal coalition affairs. The arrangement also includes research support and a matching funding process for funds raised by the coalition. This means the VTTI MOU conceptually facilitates leadership, policy, operational and research competency, as well as participant and innovative diversity, along with fiscal sustainability and collaborative commitments.

For those 51.9% N=52 who responded to the VTTI question, 21.5% described the new partnership in terms that recognize its contribution to coalition sustainability. Some of these sighted funding arrangement while others focused on the professional and organizational connections that could lead to new collaboration. Those who cited the leadership value of the MOU represented 14.8% of the respondents. The next most frequently cited value was competency at 11.5%, primarily referring to research. Diversity and Commitment were cited 5.8% each.

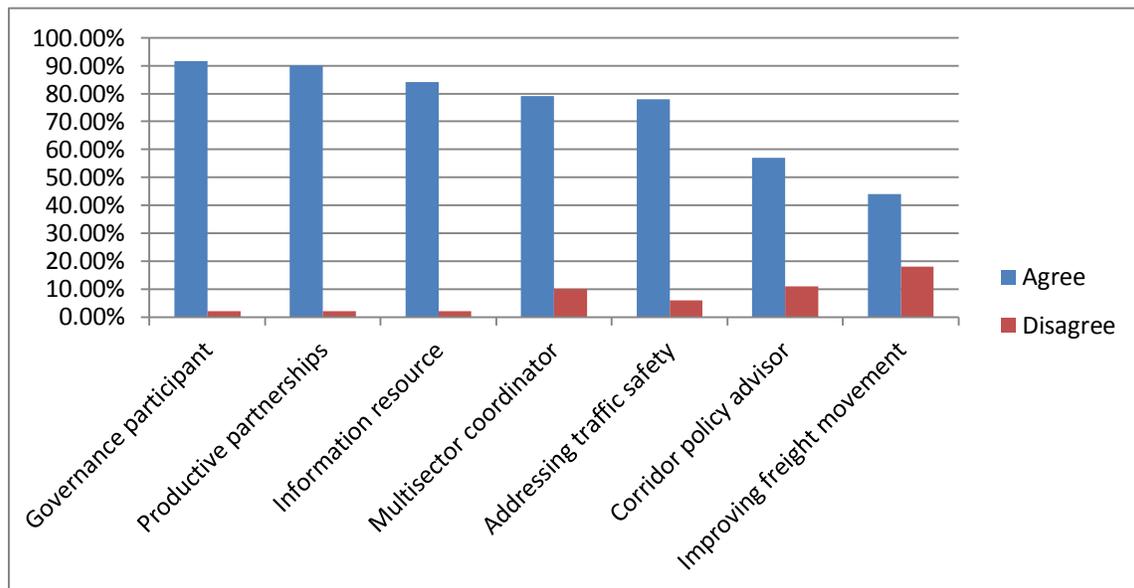
Many of these pointed to the administrative support aspects of the partnership in making their case, which also alludes to matters of competency. The next highest indicated concept was competency, where members looked primarily at the research and

information sharing benefits of being in partnership with VTTI, as well as the stability benefits of the arrangement. Leadership received the next highest response rating followed by commitments and diversity. The leadership votes looked at establishing priorities and guidelines for the coalition as well as serving as a point of focus for participants and partners. The diversity votes described the arrangement as beneficial in attracting new partners and the commitment votes looked at funding possibilities.

**Effectiveness in Potential Governance Roles**

A search for the implications of the coalition’s characteristics as they pertain to its governance possibilities was pursued in question 24 of the survey. Using a Likert scale to record responses, members were asked to rate the coalition’s ability to positively affect circumstances related to six transportation and administrative roles and situations. Using a degrees-of-agreement ranking method was the basis for Figure 12.

**Figure 12: Potential Effectiveness in Governance Roles (N=48)**



In Figure 12 the situation with the highest level of agreement pertained to the coalition’s ability to build productive partnerships among stakeholders. Serving as a

resource for professional information sharing was the second highest rated situation. Thirdly, the coalition was said to have proven its ability to improve multi-sector coordination among corridor organizations. The fourth highest rating came in response to a statement about complex traffic safety concerns. The lowest two response levels came with regards to offering innovative advice to policy makers and resolving complex freight movement concerns. These are yet more examples of leadership competency and sustainability. Finally in question 26, coalition members show 91.7% support for the coalition becoming a governance partner in the corridor and 2.1% disagreement on the proposition.

### **Survey Highlights**

1. Founders were from Virginia (6), Pennsylvania (4), Maryland (3), Tennessee (3), West Virginia (2), New York (1), District of Columbia (1)
2. Funders were from Virginia (8), Pennsylvania (6), Tennessee (6), Maryland (4), West Virginia (4), District of Columbia (1)
3. Planners (70%), Administrators (50%) and Volunteer organizations (30%) were key areas of membership expertise.
4. Average years of experience in transportation 22
5. Safety expertise was high among the founders
6. Elected officials, Regional Planners and DOT representatives are primary stakeholders in the coalition.
7. Establishing the Need for a corridor coalition was a top coalition priority along with Competent Leadership, Committed Partners, a Sustainable Funding source, and Innovative freight movement solutions.
8. A significant shift of priorities largely addressed by the VTTI agreement has involved the desire for funds to gather and disseminate research information
9. Variables related to the challenges of the coalition building concepts and agenda were: membership, jurisdictional diversity, expertise diversity, committed funders, leadership, corridor concerns, economics, freight movement, rail options, policy concerns, research and planning.
10. Organizationally the coalition has been most effective in areas of leadership, securing available resources, attracting jurisdictionally and disciplinarily diverse and committed stakeholders, building consensus regarding objectives and priorities.
11. While all stakeholders were viewed as critical for their support, ranking their importance showed DOTs first, elected officials second, then trucking/highway associations, and regional planners

## Interview Evidence

While the survey data broadly describe the coalition membership characteristics and those of the organization in a static sense, the interview data provide a more in depth description of how those characteristics influence coalition dynamics. In order to obtain this more interactive perspective, a responsive interviewing approach was chosen for a participant's perspective on what the coalition is doing and how (Rubin & Rubin 2006 pg. 207). Of the ten elite interviews conducted with coalition leaders, half were conducted in person at the 2011 conference and half over the phone within three weeks after the conference. Although four of the interviews lasted less than twenty minutes the overall average length was 26 minutes.

The interview transcripts contained over 230 descriptive and explanatory comments about the coalition. These were consolidated into 11 descriptive themes and explanatory perception statements, organized and listed according to which occurred most frequently (see Table 7). The themes column includes abbreviated participant statements, describing their observations of what is happening within the coalition. The perspectives column summarizes participant opinions about what the associated themes imply about the coalition. For example, the first theme, which appeared 19 times, reports that the coalition is *addressing freight movement concerns related to I-81 connections with other corridors*. The associated perception, which occurred 15 times, indicates that members viewed the *expansion talks as being wrought with some very significant challenges*.

Thus the number of occurrences for each descriptive statement and for each associated perception is combined for a tally. The tally is then used for ranking the

statement pairs according to frequency and thereby providing a different perspective on coalition priorities, objectives and decision making. (See Table 7)

**Table 7: Ranking Interview Themes & Perceptions**  
(N= Occurrences)

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Perceptions</b>
<b>34</b> <i>Addressing Freight Movement Connects I-81 to Other Corridors (19)</i>	<i>Expansion Talks Reveal Significant Challenges (15)</i>
<b>34</b> <i>Coalition Organizational Procedures are Unclear (13)</i>	<i>Continuing to Evolve Organizationally (21)</i>
<b>31</b> <i>Strategic and Tactical Planning Processes are Needed (16)</i>	<i>Advise/ Inform Multi-level Decision Makers, the Public &amp; Partners (15)</i>
<b>28</b> <i>Pursue Public and Private Funding (4)</i>	<i>This Innovative Model seems Adaptable and Sustainable (24)</i>
<b>25</b> <i>Federal Funding options are Challenging (3)</i>	<i>Stakeholder Funding improves Competitiveness &amp; Sustainability (22)</i>
<b>21</b> <i>VTI Arrangement Offers Many Benefits (12)</i>	<i>Coalition will have to make some Procedural Accommodations (9)</i>
<b>19</b> <i>Membership continues to increase (5)</i>	<i>Coalition Exhibits Positive Leadership &amp; Adaptability (14)</i>
<b>18</b> <i>Training First Responders adds Value (13)</i>	<i>Incident Management meets Public &amp; Private Needs (5)</i>
<b>11</b> <i>DOT Plays a Major Role in Coalition Leadership (7)</i>	<i>Managing Professional Conflicts is challenging (4)</i>
<b>8</b> <i>Participation in corridor projects draws mixed reviews (3)</i>	<i>Project decisions are more political and governance related (5)</i>
<b>5</b> <i>Rail Options are Often Discussed (2)</i>	<i>Rail Options Represent Resources, Versatility &amp; Diversity (3)</i>

To better understand what is being expressed in these statements, samples of the comments included will be presented in quotation marks, since they are essentially verbatim from the transcripts. These samples will help clarify the comments and their implications, thus leading to greater awareness of the dynamics and a richer description of the coalition.

### **Focusing on Freight Movement**

The apparent emphasis on freight movement is expressed in comments such as “I-95 does training and research, I-81 focuses on freight”, “Freight is the main concern, not

passenger movement” (Interview 5) and “we need to know if there is a natural freight movement logic to expanding” (Interview 7). Other comments reference I-40 and I-75 as part of the source of freight traffic for I-81 and discuss NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) for its impact on the corridor. The training of Mexican drivers, efforts to find parking for trucks and interest in the Panama Canal’s future impact on the corridor also were part of the comments pertaining to this statement. Likewise, comments like “We have our hands full with I-81, I’m not in favor of expanding” (Interview 9) reflect some challenges related to this focus on freight. The comments about expanding the coalition to Memphis and perhaps beyond clearly indicate that a great deal of energy was spent on this discussion. It was almost exclusively about freight movement.

*Conceptually, the perception statements in this section highlight the theme; there is a need for **competency** related to problems pertaining to freight movement.*

### **Organizational Concerns**

Just as the freight movement topic was much discussed, so was the matter of how the coalition is changing organizationally. Among the events precipitating this interest were the leadership changes. To begin with, Commissioner Rick Rovegno, of Carlisle, Pennsylvania, the very highly regarded founding chair, seen by many as the driving force behind much of the coalition’s progress, suddenly resigned. The steering committee decided to turn the position over to Debbie Bowden of the Maryland DOT. Likewise, the leadership impact of the 2011 VTTI Memorandum is yet to be seen but the search has begun for a new executive director. Both changes meant at least some uncertainty about priorities, funding, decision making and the overall character of the coalition going forward.

The comments associated with this theme and its implications include “we need a better work plan” and “the coalition is not bureaucratic ... but well managed for not having a major donor” (Interview 2). “Developing and following a concise mission and vision statement is essential” (Interview 3), “Uncertain about the new executive director vision and direction”, “this is a long term commitment filled with uncertainty” (Interview 4). Also, “the chair is not the head of her organization”, “it’s a two year commitment” “the steering committee will select someone else from its members (Interview 5) and “changing chairpersons has been a smooth transition...going from a volunteer to a paid director is more profound” (Interview 8). Others shared feelings about not being included in certain decision processes and indicated that the coalition has no by laws or procedures for including the membership in decision making. *Given the focus on better planning, leadership transitions and the new VTTI arrangement, these perceptions focus on how coalition commitments impact its effectiveness.*

### **Strategic and Tactical Planning**

Comments in this area highlight the coalition’s role as a leader in corridor planning processes, with particular attention given to big picture strategic planning as well as local level tactical planning. The strategic approach positions the coalition as an advisor to state, regional and federal officials, while the tactical perspective involves serving as advocates for localities in prioritizing programs and projects. The comments include “the coalition may advise state and federal planners” and “stakeholders may contribute to roadway solutions” (Interview 1). Similarly, “the coalition’s focus is planning support” and “working on a meeting with chief planners from corridor states” and “coordination of non-highway multimodal plans “(Interview 5). Finally, “need to get

the website set up as a planning tool for state DOTs and MPOs” (Interview 7) and “the coalition should have an advocacy role” (Interview 8).

The strategic and tactical planning objectives seem to be even more explicitly embraced than the freight movement agenda. This is probably in large part because so many of the members and leaders in the coalition are planners, making this an uncontested position. The idea of being an expert advisor on one hand and a community advocate on the other also seems to pose some interesting challenges and opportunities. It may be as planners that the coalition’s political relationship challenges will be most rewarding and create value to draw other supporters, especially if it is the only entity speaking for the entire corridor. *Conceptually these comments show appreciation for competency in the effort to demonstrate expertise in transportation planning and advocacy. With this comes the theme that competency can be leveraged to support sustainability.*

### **Public and Private Funding**

One of the I-81 Corridor Coalition’s distinctive characteristics is its model of stakeholder-based funding. However, with the VTTI Memorandum funds and the changes to federal laws related to corridor funding, the discussion involves including private donors in the funding strategy. Pros and cons of this approach were apparent in the comments associated with this theme.

Among the comments for this theme are “funding is a priority concern” (Interview 2), “stakeholders are not beholding to any one agency” (Interview 3), “Stakeholders have freedom rather than compliance concerns” (Interview 4), and “the I-81 model for funding has benefits” (Interview 5). Also, “the coalition currently has one

funded project” and “the steering committee has decided to pursue private donors” (Interview 5), Other comments include “we need to make the coalition attractive to funders by getting FHWA and USDOT funds” (Interview 6), and “showing value to private partners will encourage them to give \$5000 yearly for improving traffic flow and safety” (Interview 7).

Other comments express the belief that the I-81 coalition was prepared to compete for planning dollars but that the federal government should supply funds for corridor projects. Thoughts of competing with I-95 met with mixed responses because such a competition would force Virginia and Maryland DOTs to choose the I-95 corridor coalition. In this sense the inclusion of an I-81 interest represents a form of diversity that apparently poses a challenge for some, as it seems to threaten the sustainability of the I-95. *Finally, competency, commitments, diversity and sustainability appear to be the concepts involved in the theme of demonstrating value as a means of attracting funds from a variety of partners.*

### **Federal Funding Challenges**

The concerns about competing for federal funds represented a theme of its own, with the new rules about competing and the uncertainty about going up against large, mega-corridors. Some saw the I-81 as having some advantages over the I-95 because “I-81 has a rural personality which is a culture of working together, instead of being competitive like the I-95 culture” (Interview 8). Another thought “for FHWA appeal safety programs like driver training, and school programs could be started” (Interview 6). The implication here is that providing valuable service to the community would make the I-81 appealing to federal funders. This perspective may have been in part in light of the

comment that “without a federal transportation plan all decisions are made by states ... and even the \$75 million (that was I-95 Corridor of the Future) will be allocated by the DOT” (Interview 5).

Comments about the importance of “being able to leverage funds” (Interview 3) in order to attract federal dollars also seemed to view the I-81 stakeholder-supported model as favorable and conducive to *sustainability* objectives. The inclusion of private donors would make it even more so. Still some believed the coalition needed to develop more I-95 characteristics to compete with other mega-corridors, which is in part why the expansion thoughts had appeal. Others pointed to the VTTI arrangement as the type of move that would demonstrate the coalition’s ability to collaborate and position it as a source of quality transportation research information. *The concern about being able to compete relates directly to competency objectives, where thoughts of expansion and inclusion represent a form of interest diversity.*

### **Benefits of VTTI Arrangement**

The impact of the VTTI arrangement represented a theme of its own. For some the key benefit is the research role of the institution (Interview 1), and for others it is “shifting administrative responsibility to VTTI increased the coalition’s capacity” to respond to a range of challenges (Interview 4). Some looked at the memorandum and concluded that “VTTI seemed good for the I-81 credibility”; however in some regards “VTTI seems to be taking over the coalition ... I expected it to be more like I-95 with staff working from home to keep overhead low” (Interview 6). Still, overall “the VTTI decision was a big step forward” (Interview 9), which “represents new opportunities and expanded focus” for the coalition (Interview 8).

The tone of the responses suggested anticipation and uncertainty, some acknowledged not being sure about some of the details of the arrangement. Their main focus related to the role of the executive director as someone who would answer to the steering committee rather than giving guidance to the coalition. *Conceptually this theme reflects new funding **commitments** that contribute to **sustainability** efforts and new research expertise that supports **competency** concerns. The idea of **diversity** may be implied in the comments about expanded focus and access to a broader array potential partners and opportunities.*

### **Membership Development**

One of the more telling comments pertaining to the membership development theme was “participation increased after the 2008 election resolved lack of support from the VA Secretary of Transportation” (Interview 1). Another comment “diversity of members is a great strength” (Interview 3) expressed a sentiment that is echoed in the observation that “one focus is adding positive people for their perspective” (Interview 8). This positive tone is also expressed in “the I-95 training was inspiring and good for membership development” (Interview 4). Respondent 5 further expressed the character of the coalition membership and the tone of the culture is “the corridor was all voluntary for three years before soliciting funds”.

Finally, understanding membership development in the coalition includes being aware of the leader’s role. For example “the coalition needs a champion with passion for the work, remembering some people have died” (Interview 7) is a reference to a story shared by the chairperson about his passion to improve traffic safety. Speaking of this passion, other comments noted “the previous chair did a great job, this was his brain child

and his energy got us this far” and I’m “not familiar with the new chair but if she has those traits we’ll be fine” (Interview 10). *Again, the positive tone and confidence in the coalition’s membership indicates **commitment and sustainability** as well as confidence and **competency**.* Likewise, having a **diverse** membership is acknowledged as one of the coalition’s strengths.

### **First Responder Training**

In light of the traffic safety emphasis noted previously, it is understandable that one comment on this theme states “incident management is an objective” (Interview 1) of the coalition. In addition “quick clearance training and 511 assistance are two examples” of ways to provide value to supporters and the community. Also, we “need to create three Traffic Incident Management Teams ... and to facilitate the creation of a corridor wide uniform 511 system” (Interview 7). Ultimately, “safety and incident management are priorities” (Interview 9) and “need more first responders in leadership ... because incident management training is powerful ... and as a result of their work there are ... emerging new I-26 response teams” (Interview 3).

The messages these comments convey clearly point to incident management and first responder training as signature efforts for this coalition. In fact, the I-26 response team comment is an indication of the coalition’s incident management value being felt beyond the corridor because through I-81 training, safety is being improved in I-26. The recommendation that the trainers be represented on the steering committee indicates how highly regarded they are for their service to the coalition and for being models of coalition values. *Conceptually, these are matters of **competency, commitment and sustainability**.*

## **DOT's Leadership Role**

The role of DOTs in the coalition is uniquely complicated. In many ways “stakeholders are building strong relationships with DOTs” (Interview 4) but there are challenges such as “DOTs may be in conflict with private donors” (Interview 3). “DOTs in Virginia and Pennsylvania have made five year VTTI funding commitments” (Interview 3) and “even the \$75 million will be allocated by the USDOT” (Interview 5). So there is a “need to make the coalition attractive to funders by getting FHWA and USDOT funding” (Interview 6), at the same time the steering committee has a DOT representative from each member state. The members embrace a “need to get the website set up as a planning tool for state DOTs and MPOs” (Interview 7) while at the same time celebrating “stakeholders have freedom rather than compliance concerns” (Interview 4). Each MPO has a DOT representative, and DOT members have led the way on many innovative public engagement mechanisms. This coalition acknowledges “stakeholders are more diverse and not government representatives like I-95” (Interview 4).

The primary points for this theme relate first of all to DOTs as government agencies engaged in initiatives aimed at improving transportation planning and program outcomes. The fact that the DOT has not been known for sharing its financial decision making authority, also remind us of the pending conflict DOTs may have if the coalition accepts funds from private donors or competes with the I-95 corridor. While they participate in coalition matters as advisory members, DOT representatives must be vigilant about conflicts of interest and ethical obstacles. *The evidence is clear that competency and sustainability are among its primary concerns with diversity and commitments as key supportive values.*

## **Coalition's Role in Corridor Projects**

The opinions about the coalition's role in projects vary. Some say "the coalition has been policy oriented but a project focus could emerge and cause tension, because projects have economic impacts with winners and losers. When projects are involved things get complicated and more join the conversation" (Interview 4). Another put it this way, "the coalition should stay away from capital projects and resource decisions because "there can be no governance role without an overseeing authority" (Interview 5). The counter position is "doing projects to add value would be good for the coalition" (Interview 6), or "we could be a go to entity for corporations like Norfolk Southern as they work on a \$3 billion project or we could partner with the Allentown Distribution Center" (Interview 7).

This next series of comments provides a final thought on the matter. "Jurisdictions don't have as much power" to advocate for corridor initiatives. "Advocacy is a primary role but so is resource management, no more funding roads or bridges to nowhere if we speak with one voice". "We need to establish mutually supportive relationships with decision makers" (Interview 9).

Getting involved in projects is clearly an unsettled matter for the coalition with interests on both sides of the topic. For some it would come naturally as an advocate for things beneficial to corridor communities. Others see it as the kind of move that would position the coalition in the midst of power struggles which could threaten key relationships. There does seem to be some precedent here in that the corridors of the future encourage collaborations that leverage non-public dollars for innovative projects that contribute to economic development, mobility and safety. *Again the concept of*

*building key relationship **commitments** and following through on projects to improve the corridor is a type of **competency and sustainability**.*

### **Rail Options Conversation**

Similar to the projects conversation, discussions about how the coalition will pursue rail options continue to evolve. Like all of the themes discussed here, rail themes also intersect with other themes. One example comes from a comment that discussed freight traffic in Tennessee “Tennessee bottlenecks truck traffic and needs a solution.” We need to consider rail options” (Interview 3). Another said “Rail Solutions went from being antagonists to partners when they hosted the coalition conference in 2009” (Interview 4). Also, “we need to work on coordination of non-highway, multi-modal plans” (Interview 5).

The Rail Solutions comment is a reminder of the diverse interests represented in this coalition and how the leadership has effectively managed some early conflict about coalition priorities. However, as indicated in the comments, more follow through required to prevent this from becoming a point of contention again. As far as the idea of promoting and facilitating multi- modal options, such success would no doubt lead to more commitments of support from political partners and private donors.

The result would then show exceptional **competency, diversity, commitment and sustainability**.

### **Summary of Descriptions from the Interviews**

While the survey information summarized above presents some detail about the I-81 Corridor Coalition stakeholders, the picture of what they do is a generalization. The interview data puts these details in context for a description that begins to also explain the

challenges and opportunities before them. This is evident in the summary statements below.

### **Integrated Highlights**

1. **Freight movement** has emerged as a primary coalition concern. Some view it as an opportunity to contribute greatly to corridor safety and economic development. It may also help establish the coalition nationally as an expert in this matter. It is conceptually a matter of competency with the potential to attract funding commitments from diverse partners for sustainability.
2. **Organizational concerns** pertain primarily to work plan development, transitioning the new leadership and membership access to decision making. Conceptually these are matters of organizational politics that illustrate the relationship between commitments and competency.
3. **Strategic and tactical planning** refers to corridor wide ideological objectives and local project level objectives. This involves playing two roles; governance participant and community advocate. Both are competency related and may impact efforts to attract sustainability funds.
4. **Public and private funding** discussions highlight another of the coalition's unique qualities. Since it has no federal funding at this time finding ways to include stakeholders from every sector is important. Conceptually this is about commitments and sustainability.
5. **Federal funding challenges** looks at rule changes related to federal funds and considers ways to become more competitive. New community projects and talks of expanding to Memphis were in part viewed as ways to increased scope and potential collaborators. Consider diversity, commitments and sustainability.
6. **The VTTI agreement** involves leadership, administration, research, identity and more. Commitments, diversity, sustainability and competency are implied.
7. **Membership development** discussions include acknowledgement of how politics and relationships influence participation and support. Involves commitments and sustainability
8. **First responder training** is about safety guidelines and training. It is essentially about governance participation, commitments, competency and sustainable resources.
9. **DOT's leadership role** was a discussion about managing the informal stakeholder relationships and the more formal funder relationship. Again, these

are matters of governance and of civic engagement. Involves commitments and sustainability

**10. The Coalition's role in corridor projects** is similar to the former conversation. Projects involve significant capital and difficult choices. They can cause friction among stakeholders. Commitments, competency and sustainability

**11. Rail options** are being discussed more recently as the need for multi-modal solutions are viewed as a key approach to freight movement concerns. Commitments, diversity and competency

### **Conceptual Summary**

Just as the conceptual lens was used to organize the survey information and add clarity to the coalition's membership characteristics, it also helped clarify the dynamics. Likewise, where the survey data identified membership perceptions statistically, the interviews offer insight into various individual member perceptions on a range of specific topics. It is also apparent that when the interview information is viewed conceptually, two concepts focus primarily on coalition conditions while the other two emphasize broader contextual conditions. Competency and sustainability stress the coalition's ability to perform tasks at a high level and to maintain its operations over time, despite challenging changes and opportunities. However, the concepts of diversity and commitments not only refer to stakeholder interest and relationships but also characterize coalition project and program objectives.

One impact of having multiple data sources and multiple applications of the conceptual lens is the opportunity to gain depth as well as breadth of understanding in the analysis. Another impact is the need to move beyond basic categorical organization to a more integrated presentation of the data. Here, the method for presenting the integrated data will include constructing conceptual narratives to describe the coalition and its

dynamics using the conceptual lenses. The following emerging conceptual narratives illustrate this approach.

### **Summary of Emerging Conceptual Descriptions**

***Sustainability:*** The coalition uses a distinctively voluntary approach to funding, based primarily on stakeholder contributions. One reason for this is the ambiguous nature of policies and programs pertaining to federal transportation dollars. In response, the coalition has been inspired to become more competitive with other corridor coalitions by seeking to build collaborative partnerships like those involved in expanding the coalition to Memphis. Another response has been an effort to inspire additional stakeholder funding through value added programs and projects that benefit local communities and businesses. The VTTI agreement and its five year funding commitment represent a significant added value that will help stabilize the coalition while it works on initiatives like partnerships with railway stakeholders. Likewise, if the coalition takes on substantive roles in corridor projects the stakeholder support for its services would contribute to its sustainability, and possibly position it for federal funding.

***Competency:*** Surveyed coalition members believe they have been most effective in areas of competent leadership, securing available resources, attracting jurisdictionally and disciplinarily diverse and committed stakeholders, as well as building consensus regarding objectives and priorities. However, there is a perceived need for better coordinated strategic plans that address the broader needs of the corridor and assist with the managing of projects and programs on the local community level. Likewise, with leadership changes and procedural uncertainty, some suggest that how the coalition

continues to instill confidence and create opportunities for inclusion of a diverse range of membership perspectives is part of the organization's competency challenge.

Three ways the coalition appears to be responding to these challenges are clear. To begin with, the First Responder Training efforts of the coalition represent immediate value to the community and credibility for the coalition as a competent leader in traffic safety. This also helps the coalition with its goal to become established as a leader in the field of freight movement. In this regard the VTTI agreement helps by positioning the coalition as a premier transportation information resource. By building a reputation for excellence in transportation safety and freight movement the coalition positions itself for high quality collaborative agreements with railway officials looking to partner with corridor representatives.

***Diversity:*** Having over 400 public and private professionals from the six member states represents a wide range of interests and expertise. They are comprised primarily of planners and administrators with a significant level of safety expertise evident among founding members. Elected officials, regional planners and DOT representatives may be considered primary stakeholders in the coalition, with most of them reporting over 20 years of experience in transportation. Representatives from highway and trucking associations may be viewed as important stakeholders and rail representatives also appear to be gaining acceptance and voice in the coalition. With volunteers representing various interests at about 30% of the members and 15% having less than 10 years involvement in transportation, there is significant diversity among coalition members. Another significant diversity indicator is the selection of two women to succeed the chairman and executive director. As in other instances, the VTTI agreement gives the coalition

exposure to a range of transportation related stakeholders for membership development and deliberative innovations.

**Commitments:** According to survey respondents, Virginia and Pennsylvania have the largest statewide number of stakeholders and donors. Notes also indicate that Pennsylvania provided the coalition with its first two conferences and the first chairman, whose office covered the coalition's administrative costs. The other member states also have noteworthy contributions. West Virginia has been a leader in financial support and awarded the coalition its first funded research project, while Maryland has hosted two conferences and provided the second chairperson for the coalition. Tennessee has the third highest number of participants and through the First Responder training has begun to organize the I-40 responders. Despite state restrictions on travel and budgets, New York continues to participate on conference committees and has provided representatives to serve on the steering committee.

Following the example of a strong core of active founding members, the coalition members appear to be very committed to its success. As indicated in the survey, the coalition as an organization is committed to competent leadership, building quality relationships with supporters, securing funds and finding innovative freight movement strategies. Particular attention is also being given to the freight movement agenda as the coalition embraces the challenge of becoming known for excellence pertaining to freight movement. With this commitment comes the recognition of how important traffic safety is, another area where the coalition desires to be a leader in excellence. This also relates to the coalition's commitment to becoming an information resource for stakeholders in search of corridor related practices and resources.

This particular commitment calls attention to DOT commitments to the coalition. Although they are supportive both financially and professionally, there is some question how DOT governance responsibilities related to I-81 versus the I-95 may affect the relationship. Largely because the I-81 coalition is not funded by federal dollars, it maintains a strong commitment to its members and receives guidance from the stakeholder leadership. Therefore, there may be times when the pursuits of the I-81 corridor coalition represent a conflict for DOT governance partners. This is another reason why the VTTI commitment is important, as it provides some stability and freedom to develop other funding options.

## Chapter V

### Understanding the Evolution of the Coalition

This chapter provides descriptive and explanatory evidence to answer the second research question; *how have the coalition's characteristics and operations evolved from its 2007 founding up to its 2011 Annual Conference?* As indicated in chapters two and three, I use an events and developments approach to understanding the coalition's evolution as a type of responsiveness or adaptation. This approach is well suited for the I-81 Corridor Coalition analysis because as an emerging voluntary association (Hirst 2001), decision making processes are not always transparent. Since the coalition is still emerging, there are very few standard operating procedures for assessing membership preferences and directing organizational decision making. Instead these dynamics, which are fundamental to understanding the coalition's evolution, are largely driven by influential events, developments and relationships.

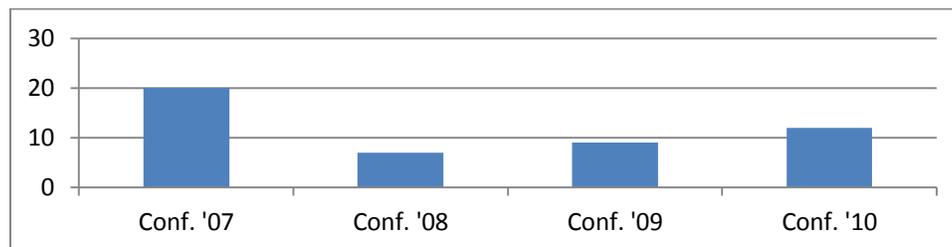
Moving from a static description of internal coalition characteristics to a dynamic contextual description requires a responsiveness indicator process. In this chapter the description of the coalition's evolution begins with looking at membership changes over time followed by a description of conference presentations, also provided chronologically. While the conferences represent major events with potential to influence coalition decision making, each presentation also represents a potentially influential event. Listing the events of the annual conferences from 2008 until 2011, with corresponding themes and implications will serve as data for developing the coalition's evolutionary story. An analysis method based on Bryer's (2006) trust based responsiveness decision making types will be employed. The concepts of Weir et al.'s

(2009) virtuous cycle responsiveness and Callahan's (2007) conflict resolution will also be included to the analysis methodology. This will permit recognition of the coalition's pattern of responsiveness in relation to opportunities and challenges.

### Membership Changes Over Time

Figure 13 compares membership characteristics based on the conference year they joined. Since the coalition conferences have been held in the fall, the survey respondents who joined from July of the conference year until June of the following year were considered part of that conference year. The conference year with the largest percentage of members joining (41.6%) was 2007. In 2008 14.58% of the respondent membership joined, while 2009 had 18.75% and 2010 added 25%.

**Figure 13: Membership by Conference Year (N=48)**

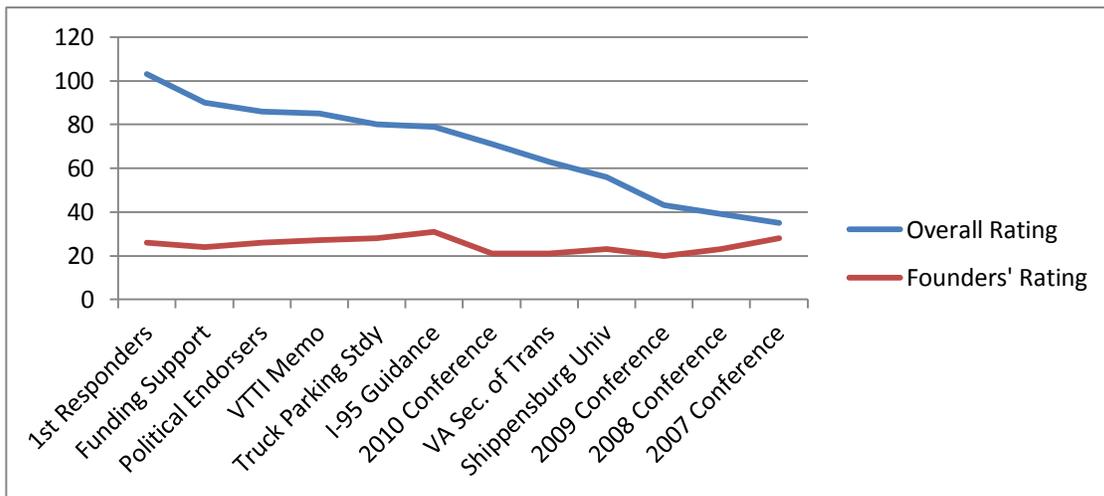


The effectiveness of the 2007 conference is evident in the coalition related behavior of the founders and in the information gathered from subsequent conferences. Beginning with their participatory support of this research, the founders represent a core of members committed to the establishment and sustainability of this coalition. It is also apparent from Figure 19 that the 2010 conference had the second highest percentage of new members, and that it represented four years of continued and increasing coalition growth.

Looking next at how the founders indicated their perspectives begins with their rating of events and developments impacting coalition growth and sustainability. The follow up question to this is how the founder’s ratings compare with the ratings given by the non-founding membership? The benefit of comparing and contrasting the responses of these two groups pertains to understanding their roles in coalition responsiveness and decision making. Another benefit is identifying changes over time, particularly changes in perspectives related to significant coalition priorities, events and developments.

Figure 14 is based on responses of overall membership and founders. The founders’ responses are separated to clarify what the early perceptions were and then were put in the context of the overall membership. The numbers to the left of the figure are the compilation of the weighted response ratings given to each event (Essential = 4 to Minor Significance = 1).

**Figure 14: Rating Events: Founders vs. Members**



As illustrated in Figure 14, the founders identified guidance from the I-95 coalition as the most beneficial event, with the second most helpful rating to the 2007

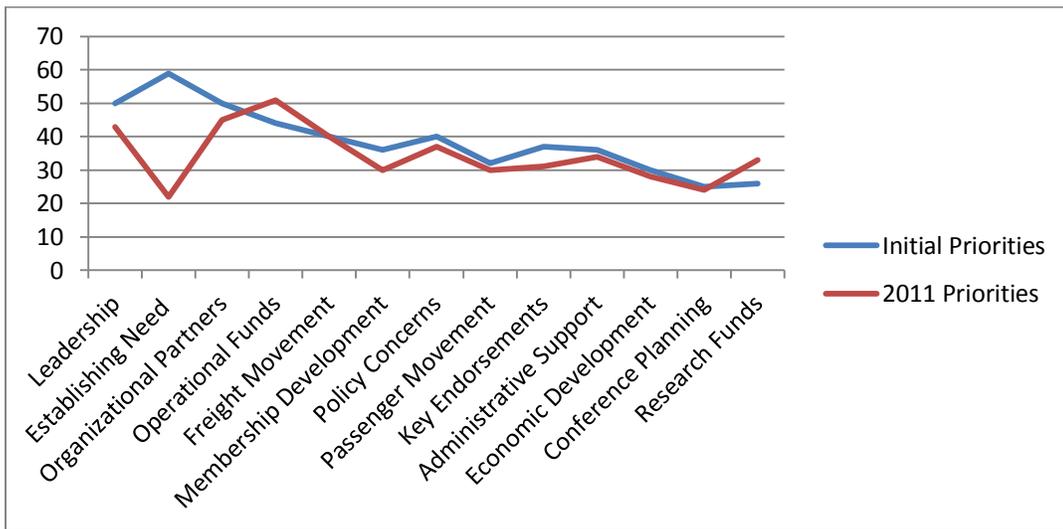
Conference and the Truck Parking Study. The membership placed First Responder Training as the most beneficial, with Funding Support second and Political Endorsements a close third. There are striking differences of perspective apparent in these rankings but their implications are not so immediately apparent. It may be worth noting, as the conference presentations will show, the I-95 support that was ranked number one by the founders actually occurred before the First Responder Training. In fact, the First Responder Training was a signature contribution or responsive outcome of the collaboration with I-95 Coalition officials.

Similarly, the Founders' appreciation for the importance of the 2007 Conference and the Truck Parking Study may be informative when viewed through the conceptual lens of this research. For example, the 2007 Conference may have multiple benefits, including the sustainability and diversity value of membership development and the competency characteristic of the Truck Parking Study. By comparison the Funding Support choice of the members is clearly a matter of sustainability and Political Endorsements are examples of commitments. In fact, the First Responder Training and I-95 Coalition support both represent commitments. With regards to First Responder Training there is evidence of coalition commitment to stakeholders and I-95 Support shows commitment of stakeholders to the I-81 Coalition.

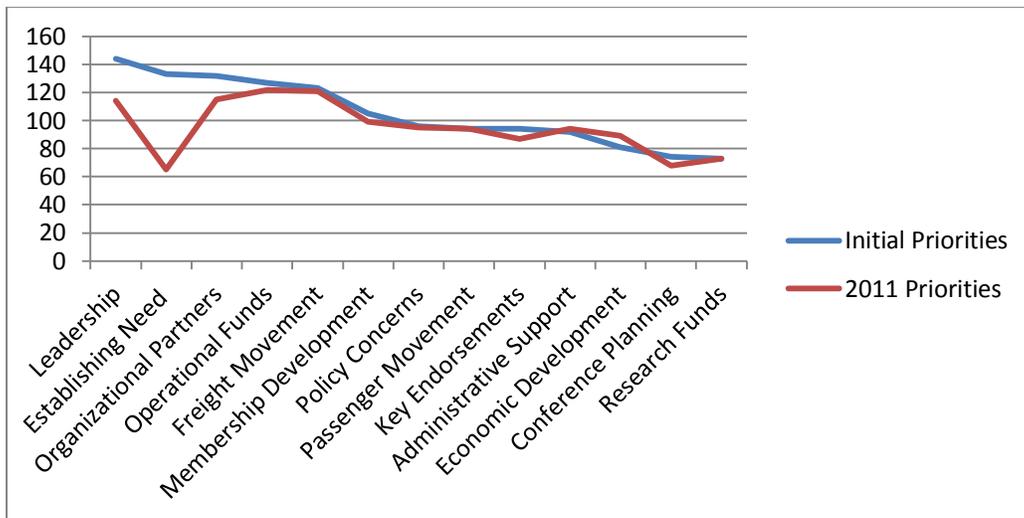
Having the I-95 Support ranked by the Founders as the most influential development also coincides with the founders' top priority (see Figure 14). Establishing the Need for a Coalition was the top priority of the founders when they joined. However, over time their reported top priority changed so that by 2011, like the general membership and the overall 2011 Conference year respondents, the top priority was

Leadership. Figure 15 shows how their initial priorities compared with their 2011 rankings. Likewise, Figure 16 shows initial and 2011 membership rankings. Once again the numbers on the left of the figure represent the sum of the weighted responses each member assigned to the events. The initial priorities are indicated in Question #8 responses while the current priorities appear in Question # 10.

**Figure 15: Founders' Ranking of Coalition Priorities (N=20)**



**Figure 16: Members' Ranking of Coalition Priorities (N=46)**



A number of noteworthy contrasts and highlights from the priority rankings charts pertain to change over time. To begin with, both the founders and overall membership initially gave the lowest rankings to research and conference planning. Characteristically speaking, these two are indicators of all four concepts. Research represents matters of commitment to competency and innovative diversity for sustainable outcomes, while the conferences have been essential to membership development and information sharing that promotes diversity, commitments, donor sustainability and organizational competency. However, given the high events and developments ranking given to the 2007 Conference, Truck Parking Study, and VTTI Memorandum, it would be inconsistent to conclude there was a lack of appreciation for research and the annual conferences.

What is more likely is that these rankings are consistent, as suggested by ranking leadership as the top initial priority, mainly for quality administrative and information sharing processes. Likewise, these indicators are even more noteworthy because virtually every member of the coalition is a leader in their own organizations. Therefore, this framing of the rankings might imply there was an initial tendency among founders and the membership to trust the leaders with operations, while making mission and vision more of a stakeholder priority. However, as indicated by the current priority rankings, over time the priority of leadership gave way to some new priorities. For the membership, Operational Funds, Freight Movement and Organizational Partners became greater priorities and for the founders Operational Funds and Organizational Partners topped leadership. This change shows an increasing sense of stakeholder ownership of operational and sustainability concerns. The high freight movement ranking may support

this interpretation since adding value to freight movement could be a means of gaining support for the coalition.

### **Evolution of the Annual Conferences**

The annual conferences are used below to help organize chronologically the events and developments information from the surveys, interviews and field notes. Based on the conference year and the order of presentation plus disclosures from conference discussions, relevant connections will also be noted when one is influenced by another. This information will be expressed in terms of themes that describe what is happening in the coalition building process. Then the associated themes will be categorized in terms of their relevance to the narrative of evolution. The strategic organizing concepts of *competency, diversity, sustainability and commitment*, will provide a means of putting the descriptive themes in the context of coalition responsiveness.

The annual conferences are viewed as significant events associated with a number of relevant developments. They also are a means of putting the evidence in order to support the construction of an evolutionary description. The conference sequence also provides the opportunity to observe the events in the context of other influential dynamics pertaining to coalition actions. With the exception of the inaugural 2007 conference, I was present at each of the other four conferences and took copious notes during the 2009 through 2011 events. Since my notes for 2008 are less substantial, I use the conference presentation power points located on the coalition website to supplement the description of what occurred. No apparent 2007 conference information is available on the website.

### **2008 Conference Evolutionary Events, Dynamics and Perceptions**

It is worth noting that the first I-81 Corridor Coalition Conference event was held in Carlisle Pennsylvania in October 2007. That was one year after the U. S. DOT first announced the Corridors of the Future Program (CFP). While little is available on the content of the first conference, when considered in light of the presentations of the second conference, it seems this coalition’s initial meeting was at least in part a response to the 2006 announcement of the CFP. This was expressed by some 2008 conference attendees, speaking conversationally, giving perspectives on why the I-81 coalition had difficulty gaining support. It was believed that elected officials and possibly some DOT officials in states containing portions of both the I-81 and the I-95 corridors saw the two as competing initiatives, and preferred to support the I-95.

In the tables below, each presentation represents a conference event that is paired with the primary themes expressed in the presentation. The primary themes describe the presenter’s perspectives and recommendations regarding the coalition’s contextual circumstances. Their perceptions offer a broad interpretation of what is implied by these perspectives when considered in light of the broader thematic and conceptual evidence.

**Table 8: 2008 Conference Events, Themes and Perceptions**

<b>Event/ Presenter</b>	<b>Primary Themes</b>	<b>Perceptions</b>
<i>USDOT</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Corridors of the Future Program (CFP) shift in federal agenda</li> <li>- Role of corridors in commerce</li> <li>- GAO reauthorization</li> <li>- Congestion, safety, environment</li> <li>- Global competitiveness</li> <li>- freight and national interest</li> <li>- USDOT funding coalitions</li> <li>- Pursuing public/ private funds</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Establishing the I-81 coalition</li> <li>- Making I-81 competitive</li> <li>- National agenda for corridors</li> </ul>
<i>Center for Transportation Analysis</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Profiled I-81 human, rail and military resources</li> <li>- I-81 &amp; I-40 freight connections-</li> <li>- Competitive benefits of</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Research based appeal on the need for an I-81 coalition</li> <li>- Value of coalition to corridor residents, traffic, economy</li> </ul>

	Organizing	
<b><i>I-95 Corridor Coalition</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Guidance for operations and organization</li> <li>- Suggested programs; Policy &amp; planning, Travel information, Incident Mgt., Commercial Vehicle Ops., Intermodal, Safety, Electronic Payments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I-95 Corridor Coalition seen as best practice model</li> <li>- I-95 officials prepared to support I-81</li> </ul>
<b><i>Pennsylvania State Police</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Police perspective on I-81 traffic and safety</li> <li>- Details on drug traffic concerns and procedures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- State police as stakeholders in the corridor</li> <li>- State police ready to work with I-81 corridor coalition</li> </ul>

Table 9 clarifies the roles of the DOT, CFP and the I-95 Corridor Coalitions in the founding of the I-81 Corridor Coalition. As indicated, each presentation is considered a separate event with themes and implications that may be associated with other events to influence coalition action. By leading off with a USDOT representative to offer what amounted to the keynote address, talking about the CFP and saying without a doubt the CFP was important to early coalition decision making. Seven primary themes could be taken from the presentation, all to encourage the development of the I-81 Corridor Coalition. Perceptions conveyed by the presentation included 1. There is a national agenda trending towards using coalitions to address corridor concerns and 2. If the I-81 Corridor Coalition addresses the types of concerns on the national agenda it can compete with other corridors in the CFP.

Subsequent presentations also conveyed the message that corridor coalitions were viewed as a best approach to addressing corridor concerns and there is an effort to support the coordination of coalitions addressing national transportation related concerns. With the USDOT and Center for Transportation Analysis making the case for the necessity of the coalition, it was up to the I-95 Corridor Coalition and the Pennsylvania

State Police to describe how it could be done. The I-95 Coalition offered organizational tips for managing various program and policy operations while the state police described operations in relation to enforcement of drug trafficking laws. Both offered to work with the I-81 to meet the challenges of organizing and making a difference in the corridor. Conceptually speaking, the 2008 Conference was about establishing the motivation to proceed even without the funding of the CFP. It helped identify different areas where the coalition would need to develop competency and who their committed partners would be in this venture.

Figure 17 below illustrates the main theme of the conference surrounded by messages to describe key decisions and developments from the non-presentation conference communication. The developments highlighted in the figure also convey the meta-theme, which is a building block of the evolutionary story.

**Figure 17: 2008 Conference Implications and Developments**



Some noteworthy decisions were made during and shortly after the 2008 conference, as indicated in Figure 17. First the coalition made arrangements with Shippensburg University to develop a website and to perform administrative duties. Along with handling correspondence a major part of the administrative duty involved managing the coalition's finances. It was at the 2008 conference that the coalition chairman asked members to show their commitment by making financial donations to the coalition. Also at the 2008 conference some basic organizational plans were developed for freight movement, environmental concerns, and local economy working committees.

These decisions were made by the leadership after general discussion rather than by the membership at large. One additional decision, actually made on the floor of the conference, involved identifying a host and site for the 2009 conference. RailSolutions, a volunteer association based in Roanoke Virginia answered the call and was identified as the host for the 2009 annual conference. Finally, shortly after the conference the coalition began to conduct First Responder Training with the assistance of the I-95 Corridor Coalition leadership.

The website, administrative services, stakeholder donations, working committees, and incident management training, were the five responses of this conference. Conceptually they demonstrate a non CFP plan for sustainability through the support of diverse stakeholders and a strategy for addressing incident management competency. The website, organizational plans and 2009 conference hosting also indicate commitments to addressing a variety of corridor concerns and membership development. Together these developments portray the 2008 conference as influential in the establishment of the coalition.

## 2009 Conference Evolutionary Events, Dynamics and Perceptions

The primary focus of the 2009 conference was to follow through on the efforts of the 2008 conference. During his comments the coalition chairman alluded to the fact that previous efforts to establish an I-81 corridor coalition failed because they lacked follow through. Developmentally speaking, following through meant actually getting the website developed, getting donations from stakeholders, conducting incident management training, having RailSolutions host the conference, getting the Virginia Secretary of Transportation to present at the conference and receiving reports from the working committees. The implications of the follow through were that the membership is committed to the concerns of the coalition and corridor community.

**Table 9: 2009 Conference Events, Themes and Perceptions**

<b>Events/ Presenters</b>	<b>Primary Themes</b>	<b>Perceptions</b>
<i>Elected Officials (5)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- NAFTA traffic increases means look at rail options</li> <li>- Legislative efforts for rail</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Elected officials ask I-81 coalition to pursue rail</li> <li>- Ready to partner for rail</li> </ul>
<i>SHENAIR Regional Commission</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Partnerships with VT, JMU, UVA, NOAA</li> <li>- Networking I-81 and I-66</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Regional planners eager to collaborate</li> </ul>
<i>I-95 Operations Manager</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Over 1500 multidisciplinary responders trained</li> <li>- Joint Agency Disaster Response Scenarios</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- First responder and disaster response training essential</li> <li>- I-95 priorities evolving</li> </ul>
<i>USDOT</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-National concern about bottlenecks in mega-regions</li> <li>- GAO reauthorization focus; performance accountability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- National corridor agenda focus on better policy and collaboration</li> </ul>
<i>New America Foundation/ RailSolutions</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Steel Wheel Interstate</li> <li>- Switzerland's departure from long haul trucking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Framing rail options over highway options</li> </ul>
<i>Austria</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Intermodal Europe trucks use trains for 20% of route</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Recommending highway and rail collaborations</li> </ul>
<i>Norfolk Southern (NS)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Tiger grants for collaborators</li> <li>- Recommend diversification (Education, freight, disaster planning, national security)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I-81 Coalition as viable multimodal partner</li> </ul>

<b><i>I-81 Corridor Coalition Chairman</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Previous I-81 coalition lacked follow through and failed</li> <li>-Website and Carlisle conferences were important</li> <li>- Donor letters to stakeholders</li> <li>- Next steps, build structure, secure staff and funds</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- This is not the first I-81 coalition effort</li> <li>-Focus on website and sustainability</li> <li>-Relying on federal funding could be problematic</li> </ul>
<b><i>Committee Reports/Freight, Environment, Local Government</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Benefits/ limitations of diversion</li> <li>-Recruiting MPOs and RPOs</li> <li>-Air quality projects</li> <li>-I-95 had no funds for 3 years</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Diversion research indicates rail options can only handle 20% of traffic</li> <li>- Partnerships with regional Planners</li> </ul>
<b><i>VA Secretary of Transportation</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I-81 has global scope, including Mexico and Canada</li> <li>- 29 colleges and universities make I-81 education corridor</li> <li>- 2014 Panama Canal expansion will impact VA</li> <li>- \$2.1 billion in Tiger Grants, I-81 is encouraged to apply</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Valuable I-81 connections include higher education, railway and I-95 coalition</li> <li>- Collaboration as the key to federal funds</li> </ul>

Table 11 includes examples follow through examples and conceptual factors in the evolution of the coalition. The diversity of presenters included having five elected officials and the politically appointed Virginia Secretary of Transportation. Diversity also was apparent by the inclusion of non-government officials such as representatives from RailSolutions and the New America Foundation. The speaker from Norfolk Southern Railroad also represented diversity, both of ideas and the inclusion of corporations. In conversations, members commented on the progress represented in the conference handout, which showed the follow through work since the 2008 conference. It included a mission and vision statement, as well as a statement outlining the purpose of the coalition. The latter being part of an integrated planning and decision making process in the interest of freight movement, infrastructure and economic development, environmental and traffic safety, land use and security.

The presence of the Virginia Secretary of Transportation was described by the chairman as a step towards recognizing the coalition as a legitimate representative of the corridor, a matter which seemed in question at the beginning of the 2008 event. Likewise, with such a strong DOT pro-highway presence in the leadership, giving RailSolutions an opportunity to present its agenda was also a show of inclusion and of moving beyond potential tension. The budget process showed the FHWA providing approval of the steering committee’s five year financial plan and Shippensburg University serving as administrator for that budget. A list of 35 financially supportive organizations and the working group reports illustrated commitments to safety and air quality as well as recruiting MPOs and RPOs as members and donors. Figure 18 below shows the major themes of the 2009 conference.

**Figure 18: 2009 Conference Implications and Developments**



While the follow through impact of the 2009 Conference primarily referred to demonstrating the coalition’s stability, there were other potential developments

introduced in the various conference presentations. The USDOT, Virginia Secretary of Transportation and Norfolk Southern presentations encouraged collaboration as a path to federal Tiger Grant funds. Consistent with the call for collaboration was the call to diversify through intermodal partnerships, developing the education corridor resources and expanding freight movement efforts beyond the I-81 corridor. Consequently, the follow through theme not only describes the coalition's 2009 efforts but also the efforts of the stakeholder presenters who called for follow through on new opportunities. Whereas the 2008 conference presentations encouraged participants to establish the coalition, 2009 participants expressed confidence that the newly formed coalition could be helpful to a range of efforts. Together with the recommendations from the work committees, the message to the coalition was a call to follow up and represent the corridor in multiple local, regional and national governance matters.

This pattern of building on progress and following through on objectives is consistent with the virtuous cycle concept of letting one good thing lead to another (Weir et al. 2005). Generally speaking, building on the commitment to establish the coalition followed up with a commitment to cultivate stakeholder relationships and to demonstrate competency. By looking at the conference messages and decision making the continuity between dialogue and actions forms a clear narrative of responsiveness.

### **2010 Conference: Evolutionary Events, Dynamics and Perceptions**

In 2010 the conference was hosted by Washington County Maryland and held in Hagerstown. Thematically, it showed the progression from the 2008 establishment and the very substantial 2009 follow through, reflecting a significant amount of stakeholder confidence in the coalition. The conference presentations clearly conveyed this sense of

hope in the collaborative opportunities they described and by their recommendations. As with the 2009 event, the possibilities expressed by senior elected officials and transportation authorities contributed to the impression that the coalition was considered a “difference maker” in the corridor.

**Table 10: 2010 Conference Events, Themes and Perceptions**

<b>Event/ Presenter</b>	<b>Primary Themes</b>	<b>Perceptions</b>
<i>Committee Reports &amp; Commissioner Updates</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Vision for showing value; air quality map, truck parking study</li> <li>- VA Sec of Transportation sanctioned body comments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Forming diverse stakeholder based identity</li> <li>- Transportation officials call for coalition to provide authoritative guidance</li> </ul>
<i>Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Overcoming highway related isolation</li> <li>- Multistate/ federally funded collaborations</li> <li>- Coalition as advocate, investor, decision maker</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Collaborative resource sharing opportunities</li> <li>- Networking for economic development</li> <li>- ARC funded research</li> </ul>
<i>Norfolk Southern</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Intermodal Crescent Corridor collaborative strategies</li> <li>- Underutilized rail options</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I-81 as viable partner for freight movement initiatives</li> <li>- Opportunity for Tiger Grant II funds</li> </ul>
<i>Bowman Trucks &amp; AASHTO</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Safety, environmental, cost benefits of trucks</li> <li>- 1 billion tons of diverted freight equals 1%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Partnership options with highway and railway</li> <li>- Coalition as mediator for highway and railway</li> </ul>
<i>Reports from Freight, Environment, and Economic Development/ Land-use</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- State based truck parking with ITS ideas for drivers</li> <li>- Website ideas and links</li> <li>- Ideas for participation in land use planning</li> <li>- Consider I-40 extension</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Public/private truck parking collaborations</li> <li>- Pursue MPO funding</li> <li>- Corridor needs advocate in land use planning</li> <li>- Research expansion ideas</li> </ul>
<i>Hagerstown/Eastern Panhandle Long Range Plan</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- MPO and DOT project partnerships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Maryland modeling collaborative planning</li> </ul>
<i>Incident Management/ 1<sup>st</sup> Responder Training Update</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Set up regional committees for regular meetings</li> <li>- IT info sharing like 511</li> <li>- Reviewing policies for regulatory consistency</li> <li>- Exploring partnerships for Tamarack type truck stops</li> <li>- Multidisciplinary network</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Providing regulatory guidance</li> <li>- Border concerns involve governance</li> <li>- Large projects involve public funding decisions</li> <li>- Information technology efforts add value</li> </ul>

<b><i>MD Asst. Sec. Transportation</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- State profile of highway, freight and passenger rail</li> <li>- New statewide freight plan</li> <li>- \$1.745 million for upgrade devices and research</li> <li>- Statewide 511 awarded</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Transportation officials legitimize coalition's role in the corridor</li> </ul>
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Among the early comments that set the tone for this conference was the commissioner's opening updates statement about how being stakeholder funded represented a distinction between the I-81 and the I-95 corridor coalitions. One significant aspect of this difference is that it means looking beyond the I-95 model to the needs of the I-81 and the collaborative opportunities available. Table 11: 2010 Conference Events and Dynamics includes a number of examples of how this conference might be characterized as the event where stakeholders expanded the vision. For example, updates from some of the coalition's most senior supporters reflected their efforts to secure federal funding and their request for coalition support.

The newly appointed Virginia Secretary of Transportation conveyed a request that the coalition organize a truck issues group, conduct a traffic study, provide guidance for incident management and give input for state and corridor plans. He also expressed an opinion that there is a need for a sanctioned body to represent the corridor and do the work that the coalition is doing. Along with this push for recognition was the report that U.S. Senators Arlen Specter from Pennsylvania was addressing congress for federal corridor funding. The chairman also sent letters requesting funds and endorsements to every elected official along the corridor. Records of how they responded were not made available.

The Appalachian Research Commission (ARC) presenter expressed their views on the coalition's potential as a research partner addressing economic development in the corridor. Under the Development Act of 1965, through their work in West Virginia with the Appalachian Development Highway System (ADHS), the coalition was recruited to join a study to help corridor residents overcome the isolation often caused by highway systems. Likewise, the Freight Movement Committee on behalf of stakeholder members reported its view that the I-81 should explore connecting with Interstate-40 to address pending increases in freight traffic. There were also appeals to work with MPOs and other planners so the corridor could be represented in land use decision making.

The incident management initiatives reported having formed area committees and providing training and oversight along with policy reviews across jurisdictions. A particular point of the effort to make policies uniform was that besides reaching the Canadian border in the north, drivers from Mexico to the south also bear licensing and training consideration. These examples of reaching beyond the geography of the I-81 corridor are also evident in the appeals from Norfolk Southern for collaboration to secure funding for rail improvements related to freight from the south. To some the reason the I-81 corridor coalition's role is expected to be different from the role of the I-95 is not only because of the funding model but also because of the needs of rural versus urban communities.

The distinctiveness of the I-81 Corridor Coalition in relation to the I-95 is both the role and number of stakeholders. At the time of the 2010 conference the I-95 membership numbers were low, primarily consisting of actual staff members responsible for heading the work groups. However, by 2013 the I-95 Coalition actually adopted an I-

81 type of membership support program with four types of membership and associated fees and privileges. The implication is clear, the I-81 stakeholder directed model has an appeal that increases sustainability, diversity, commitments and competency. With each conference event the evidence became undeniable, the stakeholder directed approach is a model that promises to have the capacity for a wide variety of programs and project engagement, with broad base support. With the number of conference attendees and supportive attention from so many elected and agency officials as well as corporate partners it also showed potential for leveraging funds for transportation initiatives.

In a sense the stakeholder directed model is itself a form of responsiveness. The idea of stakeholders having a voice in the development of coalition priorities is a form of adapting to changes and opportunities. It was no small thing to see the role RailSolutions played in the previous conference and to see rail and highway officials acknowledge the need to work together. These were only some of the examples conference participants and stakeholders observed of how the coalition was responding to the needs of the corridor. While most participants were decision makers in their own agencies, jurisdictions and policy arenas, there was a pervasive sense of trust in the way the coalition was being led (see Figure 19).

**Figure 19: 2010 Conference Implications and Developments**



Again, the theme represents the overall implications of the conference as it pertains to the coalition’s evolutionary developments reflected in the textual highlights. It helps to remember the perception of trust in the leadership that empowered the stakeholders to influence the vision. This trust is evident in the governance officials pursuing funds for the coalition and calling for a body sanctioned to do what the coalition is doing. The ARC’s appeal for collaboration and funded research agreements also reflects this trust in the leadership that enabled an expansion of the vision. The incident management trainers expanded their efforts in response to the discretion this trust afforded them. The call for coalition participation in land use planning and networking with the I-40 are also examples of stakeholders having confidence in the leadership’s competency and commitment to corridor solutions.

**2011 Conference Evolutionary Events, Dynamics and Perceptions**

The 2011 annual conference of the Interstate 81 Corridor Coalition was held in Blacksburg, Virginia. It included an orientation walk-through of the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute (VTTI), and a tour of its state-of-the-art Smart Road testing

facility. Attendance was record breaking. There was a great deal of anticipation about the coalition's general progress as well as the new Memorandum of Understanding with VTTI. In the context of the themes and progression of previous conferences, Getting Established and Following Through led to a Stakeholder Driven Expansion of the Vision. Thus, the VTTI deal set the tone for the conference, highlights of which are in Table 11.

**Table 11: 2011 Conference Events, Themes and Perceptions**

<b>Event/ Presenter</b>	<b>Primary Themes</b>	<b>Perceptions</b>
<i>Coalition Chairman</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- VTTI deal modeled on Univ. of MD deal with I-95</li> <li>- Safety and freight movement are priorities</li> </ul>	VTTI deal show's role of higher education in this associational model
<i>Elected and Transportation Officials (3)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Noted funding challenges</li> <li>- Comments about VA joining after 2009 election and Star Solutions</li> <li>- Note disaster response and interstate commerce roles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Officials believe in collaborative role of coalition</li> <li>- Officials believe in coalition's national and governance roles</li> </ul>
<i>AASHTO Keynote</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Pro VTTI and donors</li> <li>- Collaborate with other coalitions for federal funds</li> <li>- Expand to Memphis</li> <li>- Become education corridor</li> <li>- Partner with Norfolk S.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Highway professionals excited about coalition possibilities</li> <li>- Encouraging expanded vision; feds, education, freight, rail, MPOs</li> </ul>
<i>Website / Incident Management / Environmental/ Freight updates</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Need website content</li> <li>- National Unified Goal</li> <li>- 1<sup>st</sup> Responder data base</li> <li>- Higher Ed. environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Continued demonstration of value to the corridor and nation</li> <li>- Research based strategies</li> </ul>
<i>FHWA</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Research increases value</li> <li>- Development unifying multijurisdictional plan</li> <li>- EU and functional decision making</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Federal officials advise evidence based decision making governance role</li> <li>- Multijurisdictional plan for national value</li> </ul>
<i>Federal Railroad Association / Norfolk Southern</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Intermodal corridors as new planning paradigm to include air, transit and intercity passenger</li> <li>- Expand to Texas for freight</li> <li>- Six corridor strategy for billions of rail dollars</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rail executives view coalition as a valuable potential partner</li> <li>- National rail strategy partners motivated and committed to collaborative funding</li> </ul>
<i>Maryland DOT/ new</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Next steps focus on</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- New leadership with</li> </ul>

<i>Coalition Chairperson</i>	partnering with private entities, for sustainability and work plan development - Conference attendance very promising	stability and value agenda
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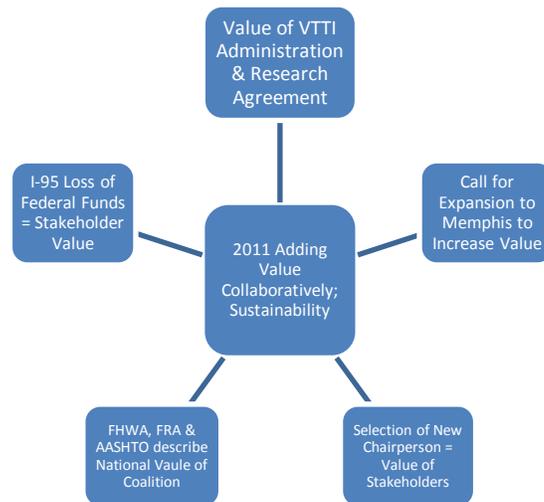
Coalition chairman Rick Rovengno’s opening remarks included acknowledgement of the value of the VTTI arrangement. He described its value by comparing it to the successfully established I-95 coalition’s arrangement with the University of Maryland. Later, as indicated above, Mr. John Horsley, a spokesperson from the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) cited the VTTI deal for its value to the sustainability of the coalition. Going so far as to suggest that it helped make the I-81 funding structure more stable than the I-95 model, he also cited the University of Wisconsin arrangement with the coalition for the mid-west states. With a more national perspective Horsley also described a number of other ways the coalition would demonstrate its value to the corridor and the nation. Some of them included collaborating with corridor MPOs and building partnerships with the corridor’s educators of 135,000 students. Examples of such collaborations with the MPOs of the corridor and students at Shippensburg University and Virginia Tech have already begun.

Also shown in Table 11 are examples of the Federal Railroad Association (FRA) and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) recommendations that, along with the AASHTO comments, describe the coalition in a broader national context. The FHWA described the research based decision-making role the coalition might play in multijurisdictional freight movement projects. This example went so far as to suggest the coalition might develop a unifying vision and a multijurisdictional, non-political plan for

the corridor. Similarly, FRA ideas involved participating in policy decisions for an intermodal corridor that may see the I-81 collaboratively expanded as far south as Texas. Secretary of Transportation Sean Connaughton again expressed his beliefs about the value of the coalition, recommending collaborations with Norfolk Southern for multimodal projects and with member states for disaster response.

The conference might be best described by its theme “Adding Value Collaboratively.” As shown in Figure 20

**Figure 20: 2011 Conference Implications and Developments**



With the VTTI value added was the primary focus of the conference, much of the discussion referred to the collaborative possibilities available to the coalition, given its newly acquired credentials. These new possibilities underscored the coalition’s value regionally and nationally not only as an advocate for various interests but as a policy and project decision maker. These perceptions are illustrated in Figure 19. Noteworthy among these examples was the selection of Debbie Bowden as the new coalition chairperson.

In light of the leadership implications underscoring the 2010 conference and references to stakeholder confidence in the leadership, the value of this decision may be seen in several ways. Not only do the stakeholders trust the leaders but the leaders have a shared trust with the stakeholders. It suggests a great deal of confidence in the organizational stability and commitment of its members. The decision further has the added value of demonstrating the coalition’s commitment to inclusion and the building of trust among corridor constituents. This dynamic may also reflect the hope of substantive participation, which is a fundamental expectation of a stakeholder directed coalition.

**Implications of the Coalition’s Evolution**

As suggested in the literature review the intent of this portion of the research is to provide more depth of understanding pertaining how the coalition is evolving. This involves identifying events and developments highlighted in the surveys, interviews and conferences that represent indicators of coalition evolution. Essentially, this step involves integrating the event and developments-based themes and concepts information from the various data sources provided, with the appropriate responsiveness – coordination indicators. Table 12 shows how the information may be organized for assessment.

**Table 12: Responsiveness Assessment Method**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Event/ Development</b>	<b>Intent/ Themes</b>
<b>2008</b>	Carlisle Conference Hosting	Innovation & Collaboration
<b>2008</b>	Shippensburg Univ. Support	Innovation & Collaboration
<b>2008</b>	Begin Donor Funding	Innovation & Collaboration
<b>2008</b>	Political Endorsers	Compliance & Conflict Avoidance
<b>2008</b>	Organization of Committees	Innovation & Coordination
<b>2009</b>	Conference hosted by RailSolutions	Conflict Avoidance Collaboration
<b>2009</b>	I-95 Coalition Guidance	Innovation & Collaboration

<b>2009</b>	1st Responder Trng.	Innovation & Collaboration
<b>2009</b>	Truck Parking Study	Flexibility & Competitiveness
<b>2009</b>	VA Secretary of Transportation Presentation	Compliance & Conflict Avoidance
<b>2010</b>	Hagerstown Conference Hosting	Innovation & Collaboration
<b>2010</b>	ARC Research Agreement	Flexibility & Competitiveness
<b>2011</b>	VTTI Conference Hosting	Innovation & Collaborative
<b>2011</b>	VTTI Memorandum	Flexibility & Competitiveness, Innovation
<b>2011</b>	Decision to Pursue Private Donors	Flexibility & Competitiveness
<b>2011</b>	New Coalition Chairperson	Compliance & Conflict Avoidance

For this assessment the date column in Table 14 contains the conference year as a means to develop a time-oriented assessment. The events and developments are taken from the surveys, interviews and conference field notes. For a thematic description of the coalition’s intent, the relevant Bryer’s (2006) responsiveness objectives have been assigned. Thus, while information explaining how each decision was made is not available, by identifying the resultant types of consequences, it is possible to draw some conclusions about the coalition’s responsiveness over time.

**Highlights of 2008 Responsiveness Assessment**

In the 2008 conference the decision to secure administrative services and website development from Shippensburg University was an event with evolutionary relevance since it was the start of the administrative structure. This move demonstrated a commitment to establishing the coalition as a competent representative and information resource for the corridor, and it positioned the organization to receive stakeholder donations. Financial accountability measures and website transparency both reflect a level of competency and a commitment to building trust among members and partners. In the context of corridor coalitions these moves also represent some of the first signs of

commitments to sustainability through a diverse base of financial donors. Responsively speaking these efforts made the coalition more competitive, demonstrated innovative adaptive problem solving and the ability to collaborate effectively.

Similarly, the call for donor support and the decision to allow RailSolutions to host the 2009 conference show an appreciation for the value of a diverse stakeholder base and represent innovative collaboration skills. It is also important to note that as railway advocates there were times when the RailSolutions agenda was different from the general coalition priorities. Working together to host the conference, Rail Solutions and coalition leadership also demonstrate the ability to manage conflict and adversity. No doubt the efforts of the coalition chairman and his county commissioner staff were essential to the getting established process. The organizing of coalition work groups and the support of elected officials were the final highlights of the 2008 conference year. These also provided further evidence of the getting established theme.

### **Highlights of 2009 Responsiveness Assessment**

The 2009 conference year featured a number of follow through events and developments. The actual hosting of the conference by RailSolutions, the I-95 assistance with 1st Responder Training, the committee report on the progress of the Truck Parking Study, and the participation of the Virginia Secretary of Transportation, were all in response to initiatives and agreements made in the prior conference year. Besides representing commitment to the coalition these efforts also show conflict management and research competency. New presenters, including elected officials, articulated a vision for the coalition which emphasized engagement with railway partners for multimodal options. With as much focus on passenger as freight movement, the

presenters clearly encouraged innovation for solutions beyond the highway.

Responsively speaking, the coalition leadership took advantage of opportunities to demonstrate flexibility and inclusivity. Conceptually, these efforts exhibit diversity and commitment to stakeholders in the corridor.

In terms of the organization's evolution there are some virtuous cycle dynamics evident in moving beyond the CFP focus of 2008, without missing the opportunity to get I-95 help with First Responder Training. This capitalizing on success is also apparent in the fact that Virginia's Secretary of Transportation was a presenter. Given that the gubernatorial election was just weeks away, the secretary's presence did not appear to be about future collaboration with him. Instead it seemed to represent a collaborative mindset focused on future relations with transportation officials in Virginia and others who respect the legitimization implied by his participation. Even the implication associated with allowing RailSolutions to be the host and represent the coalition to leaders in the community may be characterized as an example of Callahan's (2007) conflict resolution as well as a virtuous cycle process, because allowing members with competing perspectives to provide leadership demonstrates successful inclusion of diverse perspectives. Likewise, the efforts of RailSolutions leaders were no doubt instrumental in recruiting the many rail advocates present and contributing to an atmosphere of stakeholder empowerment.

### **Highlights of 2010 Responsiveness Assessment**

In 2010 the pro-stakeholder atmosphere contributed to events and decisions that could be characterized thematically as a stakeholder driven expansion of the vision. Examples of the expansion include working with the Appalachian Research Center

(ARC) on a funded economic development research project to address highway related isolation. Another example is the expanded scope of the Incident Management training program which not only added policy review and updates to its focus but also organized first responders in the I-40 corridor to start their own incident management coalition. Besides these actual developments there were a number of recommended steps worth including.

Elected and appointed governance officials expressed a desire to see a sanctioned organization that does what this coalition is doing. The implication here is that coalition supporters saw the need for a multijurisdictional entity with authority to represent the interest of the entire corridor and saw the I-81 Corridor Coalition well suited for that role. The list of possibilities for the I-81 also included the development of a corridor wide land use plan and inclusion in land use decision making policy developments. There was also a call for expansion to the south for collaboration with the I-40 corridor for a collaborative freight movement partnership. As stakeholders shared these possibilities the implication that the coalition could meet these needs represented a positive view of competency and commitment.

In terms of the responsiveness assessment, the ARC collaboration represented flexibility and an innovative sustainability move that also demonstrated positive coordination and competency. This move also added diversity to the coalition's partnerships since it represented an economic development initiative rather than safety or traffic flow. Likewise, the expanded incident management effort was also an example of positive coordination for the sake of compliance and competency. By facilitating the

organization of first responders along the I-40 the coalition demonstrated an even broader vision of commitments and sense of duty to work for safety beyond the I-81.

### **Highlights of 2011 Responsiveness Assessment**

Given the expansion of the 2010 conference it is not surprising that the 2011 conference theme underscores the added value coalition actions produced. The obvious value added from this conference starts with the VTTI agreement, a move that demonstrates commitment to competency, sustainability and diversity. Another primary point of discussion at this conference was the impact of the I-95 corridor coalition losing its federal funding guarantee. After deliberating about the broad as well as I-81 specific implications, the steering committee announced that it would expand its donor appeals to private corporations, consequently increasing coalition diversity, improving sustainability and attracting more committed partners.

Some of the added value observed at the conference was in the presentations, where national leaders of various transportation associations described the possibilities and roles for the coalition. From providing a corridor wide land use and project plan to playing a decision making role on a body established to make policy and planning decision, the expectations were broad and lofty. That is one of the reasons that the decision of the chairperson to step down so someone else could lead, spoke volumes about the commitment to trust based collaborations. It may be the ultimate virtuous cycle move. To capitalize on stakeholder trust by resisting the urge to hold onto power and instead sharing it calls to mind the responsiveness literature about power, conflicts and decision-making. In this sense, consistent with the survey evidence and the theme of the

2008 conference, goal attainment appears to have been the priority over controlling resources (Callahan 2007, Hatch 2003).

The apparent ability to put trust in collaborative relationships and to foster a corridor wide sense of accountability for relevant policies, projects and programs may be the coalition's greatest asset. These observations also correlate with the literature with regards to the top five variables influencing responsiveness (Hatch 2001). With the first variable, organizational culture, part of the story indicates an atmosphere of commitment to the mission and trust in the leadership. Leadership as the second variable also seems to show commitment to developing the coalition's competency, diversity and sustainability. Although there are few rules, the structure took a major step forward with the VTTI deal. Likewise, the evidence of dependency on stakeholders has been made very clear in the donor based approach to funding and sustainability. Finally, partly because the I-81 Corridor Coalition is not part of the CFP or any other funding program the external control over the association is informal and limited.

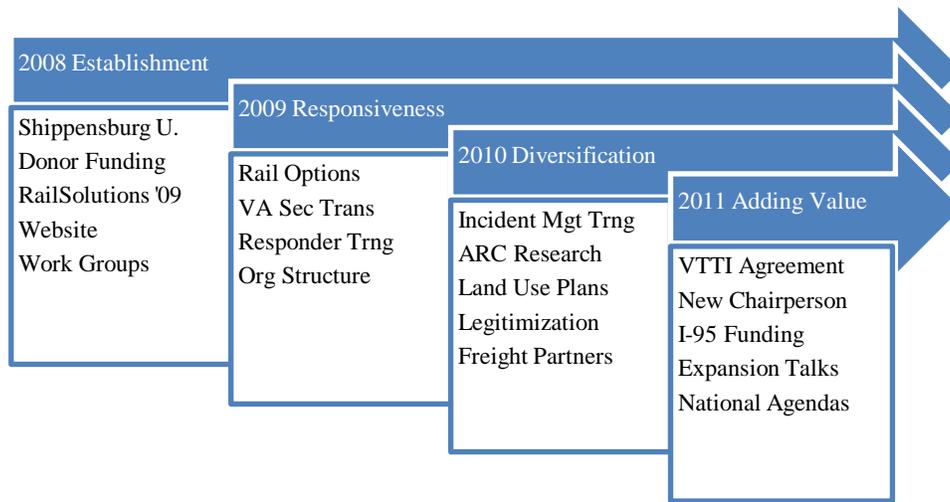
### **Summary**

Understanding the evolution of the I-81 Corridor Coalition's involves appreciating the complexity of the integration of its various characteristics and objectives. The coalition began as a type of grassroots movement because it has not always enjoyed broad based support from top ranked federal government authorities. While it has in some regards behaved like a grassroots initiative, intended to address corridor traffic and safety concerns, it has become primarily an association of public officials, with an expanded vision that includes the economy and environment. Now, seeing the progress it has made in growth of the number of stakeholders and the demonstration of competency

in a variety of areas, some conference presenters describe the coalition as having a potential role in the national corridor agenda represented in the CFP.

As Figure 18 suggests the coalition overcame early barriers and failed organizational attempts to get established in stages. For example, administratively it was initially dependent upon the office of the Commissioner of Carlisle, Pennsylvania, but in 2008 established a good next step partnership with Shippensburg University. This represented greater capacity and competency for a larger mission, because of the commitment of its stakeholder partners. As the partnership commitments grew, so did the vision and donors supported the evident competency and vision. With the consistent progress shown each conference year, the ultimate statement of stability and capability was the VTTI Memorandum of Agreement. Figure 20 shows this progression.

**Figure 21: Highlights of the Coalition’s Evolution**



This multifaceted process of building a diverse base of stakeholder donors involved various trust building developments. The pattern of following through on productive efforts to add value to the coalition and the corridor may be described as virtuous cycle patterns of responsiveness. One example of this trust building and power

sharing was the process of hiring an executive director as a senior administrator. Another was the confidence in the stakeholders that was demonstrated in the change of chairpersons.

In light of the coalition's progress in these various areas, understanding the value the coalition adds to the corridor and the broader transportation agenda is still being discovered. The efforts of national transportation officials as well as highway, railway and environmental leaders seemed to frame the coalition as a policy leader and decision maker on behalf of the corridor.

## Chapter VI

### Governance Implications of the Coalition's Evolution

Answering the final research question “*based upon the coalition’s characteristics and evolution, what may be implied about the coalition’s role in transportation corridor governance?*” requires the respondents’ perceptions about corridor coalitions in governance. The integrated evidence from the surveys, interviews and conference notes describe the governance themes. Next, I examine themes for evidence of their compatibility with the concept of governance as indicated both here and in the literature on stakeholder participation in governance. Finally, the analysis will include observations related to the compatibility of a role in governance and the coalition’s priorities related to the organizational concepts of sustainability, diversity, competency and commitment.

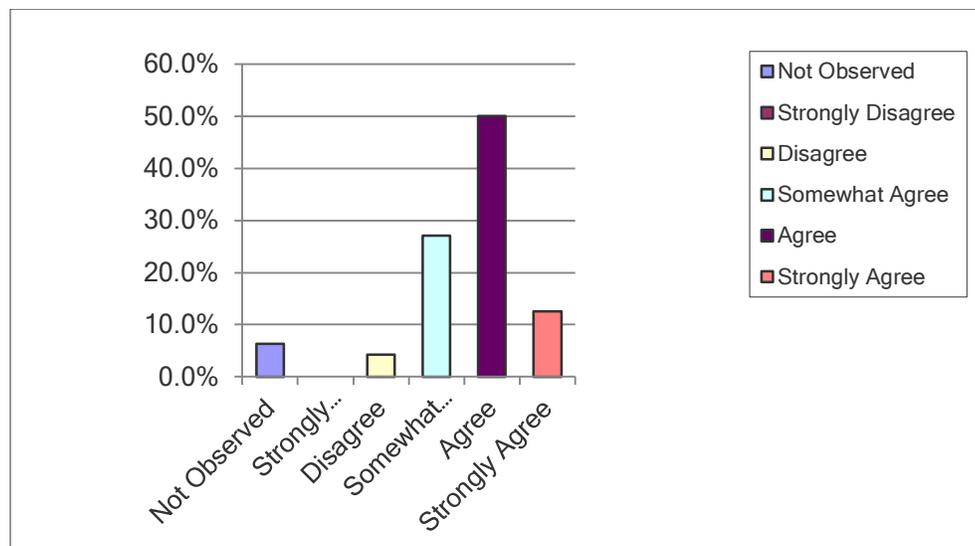
Summarizing the statements of respondents into succinct descriptions of how they saw the coalition from a governance perspective requires nuance. Governance as a concept is so imprecise and subject to being understood differently by practitioners and theorists (Frederickson & Smith, 2003). As indicated earlier, for this dissertation governance is *where government agencies at various jurisdictional levels interact (agency participation) in constitutionally legitimate vertical and horizontal relationships with public and private stakeholders (legitimized stakeholder relationships) to provide responsive, deliberative, consensus oriented (participatory decision-making) guidance that shapes policies for social and economic outcomes (policy and /or economic impacts)*. Thus the key components for assessing governance according to the definition

used here include: Agency participation, Legitimized stakeholder relationships, Participatory decision-making, and Policy and / or economic impacts.

### Evidence of Governance Implications in the Surveys

For evidence of member perceptions about coalition effectiveness in areas pertinent to participation in governance, information from survey questions 22, 24 and 26 is provided for analysis. These questions include policy concerns, multi-sector coordination efforts and complex corridor wide problem solving. Figure 22 contains data from responses to question 22; close to 90% of respondents believe to some extent that governance participation through policy advocacy should be a coalition objective. The high level of agreement implies a significant number of stakeholders join the coalition because of their expectation that the coalition will be engaged in governance.

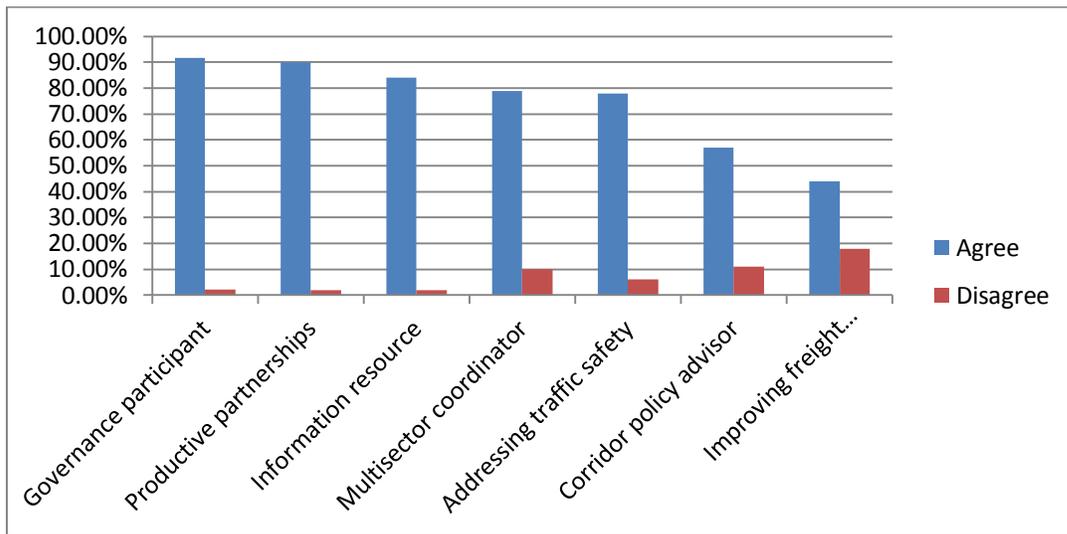
**Figure 22: Importance of Policy Advocacy (N=48)**



Details of membership perceptions regarding the I-81 Coalition’s demonstrated ability to participate effectively in governance appear in Figure 23, followed by Figure 24 which shows respondent views about the coalition’s general participation in governance.

The evidence is consistent with the policy advocacy response, showing most respondents (91.7%) believe the coalition should have some sort of role as a governance participant. There is also a high percentage (79%) who consider the coalition to be adept at multi-sector coordination, and 57% express confidence in its ability to serve as an advisor on corridor policy.

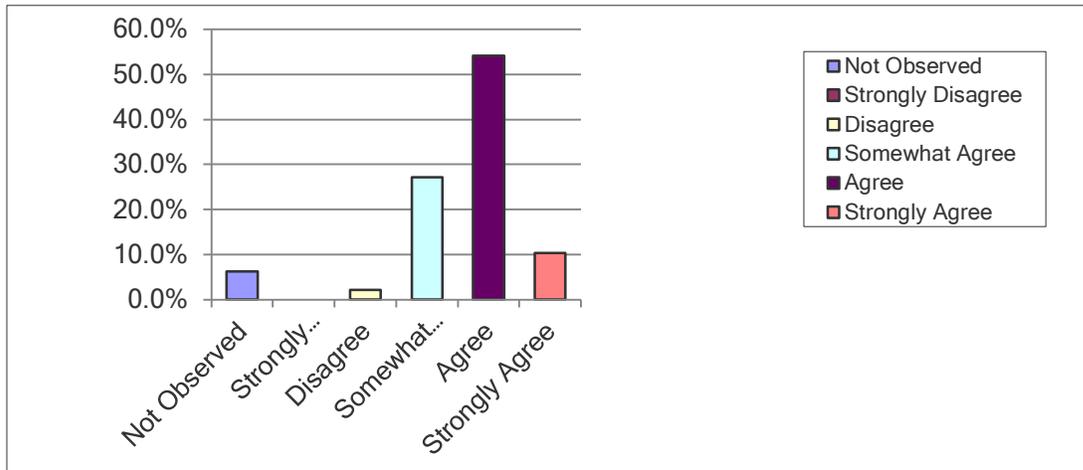
**Figure 23: Potential Governance Effectiveness (N=48)**



The rating of the other governance indicators in this question (see Figure 23) and the prior evidence pertaining to coalition objectives and competencies also offer some interesting possibilities. With some members' strong backgrounds in planning and the expressed focus on freight movement, the coalition's apparent role as a potential planner for the coordination of corridor projects and programs is not surprising. Another survey response consistent with observed coalition dynamics is the 84% rating of the coalition's ability to serve as a source of information for the corridor. Many of these responses may indicate how the coalition is perceived in light of its efforts related to First Responder

Training. These are strong indications that the coalition members expect to find opportunity to serve as a governance partner addressing the concerns of the corridor.

**Figure 24: Establishing Role as a Transportation Governance Partner (N=48)**



One additional source of insight from the surveys into member perceptions related to the coalition’s governance possibilities comes from question #27. In this, the only short answer question in the survey, participants were asked, “In your opinion, how does the VTTI Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) contribute to the coalition’s ability to achieve its objectives?” Of the 25 responses, the seven presented below are verbatim statements that focus on the perceived impact of the MOU on the coalition’s potential role in governance.

1. Improves legitimacy and offers a more stable foundation
2. Become a transportation org with national connections
3. Provides advice on possible policy solutions...making coalition members aware of current activities in the highway world that may provide opportunities to improve the corridor
4. Providing emphasis on multi-modal corridor transportation solutions
5. Provides a central point of focus for all participants along the corridor
6. Clearly defines authority and relevancy of coalition objectives
7. Partnership with movers and shakers of local and regional government

Consequently, part of the coalition's governance narrative derived from the survey responses, includes:

1. The coalition's members and stakeholder partners show a strong commitment to serving the I-81 Corridor as an engaged governance partner (Sustainability).
2. The coalition's members and stakeholder partners demonstrated a high degree of competency in traffic flow and safety policies and procedures (Competency).
3. Finally, coalition stakeholder and partners are prepared to provide expertise for solutions that require diverse multi-sector, multi-disciplinary partnerships (Diversity).

Each of the above statements may be described as an example of a governance component, serving as evidence relevant to the characteristic concepts. In the first statement, the willingness of coalition participants to serve as governance partners may be viewed as an example of the legitimized stakeholder relationships component. Conceptually, these relationships are a key means of collaboration sustainability. The second statement clearly describes the coalition's ability to impact policy implementation related to traffic flow and modifications of first responder procedures. Conceptually, these are matters of competency. In governance terms, they are examples of the policy or economic impacts. The final statement relates to diversity, evidenced by the various areas of expertise, jurisdictions and interest exemplified by stakeholder participants. As a component of governance this may be viewed as the capacity for participatory decision making.

### **Evidence of the Governance Implications in the Interviews**

One of the benefits of having interview data to compare with the survey data is the power and clarity of near verbatim responses. These responses are even more

meaningful for this third research question because the interview respondents were steering committee members, reporting the perceptions of some of the coalition decision makers, who help shape the coalition’s agenda and set priorities. Their perspectives may therefore be somewhat more predictive of what the coalition may do. An added value of having such responses from steering committee members is the opportunity to identify the contextual variables influencing their responses and thus their broader implications.

To facilitate the construction of a contextually authentic description of the coalition’s governance possibilities, interview statements from each of the 10 respondents are provided to describe coalition governance related objectives. Then each statement is identified according to the components exemplified. Table 13 contains the summarized objective statements along with the component of governance implications.

**Table 13: Interview Statements and Governance Implications**

<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Components</b>
To build partnerships, secure public funds and address concerns such as planning, infrastructure, safety, traffic flow, high speed rail and drivers education	Legitimized Relationships Policy/ Economic Impacts Agency Participation Participatory Decision Making
To influence public and government with research	Policy/ Economic Impacts
To access public and private funds to build partnerships and directly address concerns such as traffic, planning, incident management and rail projects	Legitimized Relationships Policy/Economic Impacts Agency Participation Participatory Decision Making
To be like I-95 and be advisor to government officials	Policy/ Economic Impacts
To grow the coalition and compete with I-95 for funds and to be a corridor advocate	Legitimized Relationships Policy/ Economic Impacts Agency Participation Participatory Decision Making
To build public/ private partnerships in order to facilitate multi-jurisdictional contingency planning and incident management training	Legitimized Relationships Agency Participation Policy/Economic Impacts Participatory Decision Making
To become a regional advocate for I-81 corridor concerns and gain influence over corridor related	Agency Participation Policy/Economic Impacts

budgeting and planning decisions	Participatory Decision Making
To develop partnerships and capacity for consensus building to influence research based policy and project decision making	Legitimized Relationships Policy/ Economic Impacts Participatory Decision Making Agency Participation
To compete for federal funds to serve as an authority for planning and integrating corridor concerns	Legitimized Relationships Agency Participation Policy/Economic Impacts
To recruit public and private stakeholders for coalition membership as a means of funding efforts to influence corridor decision making by engaging state planners	Legitimized Relationships Policy/Economic Impacts Agency Participation Participatory Decision Making

Six of the 10 objective statements in Table 14 describe coalition goals and activities that relate to all four governance components. From the interview evidence there is a high level of commitment to influencing policy and economic outcomes by collaboratively engaging agency officials. For greater depth of analysis, the governance possibilities data from the interviews may also be presented in terms of themes. The implied governance themes, apparent in the interviews, indicate that the majority of interviewed coalition leaders report that they want to:

1. Build the coalition’s membership network of public and private stakeholders
  2. Raise funding to permit the coalition’s continued organizational autonomy
  3. Become a recognized representative for corridor wide training and decision making
  4. Play a decision making role in relevant corridor policies, projects and programs
- Similarly, a minority portion of the interviewed leaders indicated a desire to
5. Play a non-decision making advisory role for government officials
  6. Limit advocacy efforts to policies and programs rather than project decisions
  7. Play an influential role in government and public affairs through research
  8. Influence corridor decision making by engaging state planners

**Summarizing the Governance Implications in the Interviews**

Integrating the interview evidence for a summary of the implied governance narrative involves looking at specific evidence of the four governance components of

Agency Participation, Legitimized Stakeholder Relationships, Participatory Decision Making, and Policy/Economic Impacts.

**Agency Participation** may be the most obviously present component in the coalition because of the extensive involvement of the DOTs in coalition leadership and membership. To begin with, the new chairwoman works for the DOT in Maryland and DOTs from every corridor state have pledged various amounts of multiyear financial support for the coalition. Likewise, because the DOTs hold a seat on every MPO, the coalition's stakeholder funding model adds another layer to the formalization of the relationship with the department. The Incident Management Training Team efforts also involve partnerships with the U. S. Justice Department through state troopers and the Federal Highway Association, to maintain a high level of incident response competency.

**Legitimized Stakeholder Relationships** are apparent on various levels. First of all the outgoing chairman of the coalition is an elected official. Also, as indicated by the diversity of presenters at the annual conferences, the I-81 Corridor Coalition has been nurturing relationships with a broad array of stakeholders. United States senators, congresspersons and state secretaries of transportation in the corridor states have provided various types of endorsements and levels of support. With various state and local elected officials participating as coalition members, the legitimacy of the coalition's relationships with government officials is evolving. It is just as apparent that the coalition is in partnership with various private, non-profit and corporate partners.

**Policy/Economic Impacts** are best noted in the Incident Management and First Responder training efforts. The VTTI MOU as well as the many funding and support commitments also represent the coalition's impact on corridor planning and policy

affairs. Another example of such impacts is the evident diversity of attendees and presenters at the annual conferences. Finally, the truck parking studies and ARC-funded research also have some demonstrated impacts; Virginia Secretary of Transportation noted some of these in his 2010 conference comments.

**Participatory Decision Making** is the component of governance that may be the most elusive. The best evidence of such a process may be the informal interactions observed and reported at the annual conferences. However, as relationships with state and regional transportation planners continue to grow, this practice is also expected to increase.

**Evidence of Governance Possibilities at the Conferences**

Identifying the governance narrative apparent in the conferences begins with a year by year identification of relevant statements about to the coalition’s potential role in governance. Then as with the interviews statements are analyzed to determine what they imply about the governance components. In this instance the level of analysis is the conference year rather than the individual interviewees or presenters.

**Table 14: Conference Statements and Implications**

Stated Objectives	Components
<p><b>2008</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>USDOT</b> providing seed money for coalitions in corridors like I-81 for national commerce agenda</li> <li>- Research suggests the I-81 corridor conditions impact competitiveness, national security and 1.7 million residents</li> <li>- Information sharing enhances competency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agency Participation, Legitimized Relationships</li> <li>Policy/Economic Impacts</li> <li>Policy/ Economic Impacts</li> </ul>
<p><b>2009</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Elected officials’</b> legislative rail agenda</li> <li>- <b>USDOT</b> acknowledges federal focus on corridor legislation began in 2000</li> <li>- Local government committee is recruiting elected officials and regional planners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Legitimized Relationships</li> <li>Agency Participation</li> <li>Legitimized Relationships</li> <li>Legitimized Relationships</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Norfolk Southern applauds coalition efforts</li> <li>- <b>VA Sec. Transportation</b> noted options for coalition incl. \$2.1 billion in Tiger Grants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Legitimized Relationships</li> <li>Legitimized Relationships</li> </ul>
<p><b>2010</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Norfolk Southern</b> and <b>CSX</b> present plans for collaboration on major projects</li> <li>- <b>AASHTO</b> discussed funding stream and benefit of rail collaborations</li> <li>- Incident management report includes efforts to update and unify standards nationwide</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Legitimized Relationships</li> <li>Legitimized Relationships</li> <li>Policy/Economic Impacts</li> <li>Agency Participation</li> <li>Participatory Decision Making</li> </ul>
<p><b>2011</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>VA Sec. Transportation</b> emphasizes multi-jurisdictional collaborations, recognized corridor authority, VA Governor’s support, political partnerships for participatory access</li> <li>- <b>AASHTO</b> discusses benefits of VTTI, being stakeholder directed, collaboration with other coalitions, participation in national agenda</li> <li>- <b>FHA</b> encouraged showing value to funders, defined governance as ability to act, freedom to choose and funding authority</li> <li>- <b>FRA</b> promoting Tiger Grant collaboration and national strategic agenda</li> <li>- <b>Norfolk Southern</b> six corridor strategy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Agency Participation</li> <li>Participatory Decision Making</li> <li>Policy/Economic Impacts</li> <li>Legitimized Relationships</li> <li>-Legitimized Relationships</li> <li>Participatory Decision Making</li> <li>Political/Economic Impacts</li> <li>-Legitimized Relationships</li> <li>Agency Participation</li> <li>Legitimized Relationships</li> <li>Legitimized Relationships</li> </ul>

As Table 14 indicates, a number of statements highlight noteworthy objectives and implications. For example, a significant observation from the 2008 conference provides context for the investigation into the coalition’s potential governance role. Beginning with the USDOT presentation, the coalition’s stated potential as a governance participant was based on collaboration opportunities in the emerging national corridor agenda. The key aspects of the message focused on the federal government’s use of competitive funding options to inspire corridor stakeholders to organize, leverage funds, plan projects and demonstrate collaborative problem solving competency. National security, freight movement, economic development and safety were among the particular areas of focus.

Thus, from a governance components perspective, agency participation implies collaboration with state DOTs to legitimize coalition participation in governance on the regional and national levels. One might infer the reason corridor coalitions are being engaged for national governance participation is because current corridor governance efforts are hindered by jurisdictional politics. As stated also in the interviews, there are no corridor wide authorities to direct planning and development.

With regards to establishing a legitimate participatory relationship, the Corridors of the Future program was one example of how the coalition could demonstrate value and gain participatory access. This conference also inspired the plan to begin First Responder Training as another means of gaining access by demonstrating value and competency. Besides competency, the other developmental concepts supported by the 2008 conference objectives were the call for commitment to a broader agenda, sustainability through competition for funding and a diversity of initiatives and partners. As these relate to the other governance components, all four are addressed in this approach to addressing corridor concerns.

In 2009 the USDOT again provided most of the conference governance statements, joined this time by elected and senior administrative officials and corporate railway executives. First there was the acknowledgement that the national corridor agenda approach began in 2000, which means a fairly new approach might have been emerging. This was followed by the recommendation that the coalition identify collaborative partners that can enhance its competitive chances for Tiger Grant funding. Project and program ideas were also offered, with elected officials identifying recent or pending railway legislation ideas and rail executives presenting strategic plans.

Two governance components apparent in these statements came from the recommendations to pursue federal funding to gain relationship legitimacy and agency involvement. Developmentally speaking, these objectives are consistent with the sustainability funding, partnership and project commitments, diversity of collaborations and the pursuit of opportunities to demonstrate performance competency. Another significant statement, from the report of the coalition's local government committee, was the news that local elected officials and regional planners were being recruited as coalition members. These efforts suggest the coalition intended to establish its awareness and credibility pertaining to planning and governance.

The 2010 conference statements offered no new messages but did include a new presenter, an AASHTO official. The Norfolk Southern and CSX executives were back, indicating a high regard for the coalition and its potential as a collaborative partner. In this regard the governance statement was most about strategies for demonstrating the ability of the coalition to collaborate responsively to facilitate problem solving. The coalition's governance possibilities appears to be strengthened by the fact that so many significantly high ranking officials continue to offer strategies and options for resources and collaborative opportunities, the coalition's governance possibility implications are strong.

Finally, in the 2011 conference, the theme of high profile presenters continued with the appearance of the new Virginia Secretary of Transportation. Likewise the national theme continued with the return of AASHTO and the appearance of the FHWA and the FRA. Norfolk Southern also appeared for the second year in a row, reinforcing

the image of a powerful collection of collaborators. This image was not only apparent by the identity of the participants, it also was articulated.

With greetings from Virginia's Secretary of Transportation emphasized the need for a legitimate corridor authority capable of multi-jurisdictional collaboration. He also applauded the coalition's pursuit of political partnerships as a means of gaining access to participatory planning and decision making. AASHTO discussed the benefits of the VTTI deal and the coalition's funding arrangement with stakeholders in an appeal for collaboration with other coalitions participating in the national corridor agenda. The national strategy also was a key point in the FRA presentation and alluded to in the Norfolk Southern message. The FHWA actually offered a definition of governance based upon ability to act, freedom to choose and funding authority in an effort to clarify why the coalition should pursue partnerships that position it for funding and success opportunities.

Using the governance components to assess the implications of the 2011 conference statements shows the agency involvement component being satisfied by the USDOT work with the coalition. The conference statements also show that various national transportation-specific associations and corporations have encouraged the coalition to pursue formalization of its relationship with the USDOT, to legitimize its governance participation. These same associations and corporations represent some of those already involved in the participatory decision making processes. Finally, the coalition's demonstration of the ability to affect outcomes, such as the First Responder Training, was part of the reason conference presenters offered strategies for adding value through competitive funding collaborations.

## **Summarizing the Governance Implications**

Understanding the overall implications of the coalition's governance possibilities begins with revisiting the evidence found in the previous chapter pertaining to the evolution of the coalition. Specifically, looking at the chairman's comments during the 2009 conference where he shared his belief that previous I-81 Coalition efforts had failed due to lack of follow through. The governance implication here calls attention to the sustainability importance of following through to build stakeholder relationships. Likewise, the competency message is clear; success comes from demonstrating the ability to impact corridor policy and economic concerns through efforts like the First Responder Incident Management Training.

Although the merits of these conclusions are credible and well supported by the responsiveness evidence, new insight appears when the governance lens is used to examine the characteristics and evolution of the coalition. This is evident in the perspective that shows the Corridors of the Future Program (CFP) as a national initiative to identify and groom innovative and inclusive collaborative corridor coalitions. This makes the governance evolution of the I-81 Corridor Coalition understandable as the emergence of a regional corridor governance participant.

Reconsidering the timing and agenda of the USDOT Corridors of the Future Program (CFP) adds depth to this narrative. Since the CFP represents a new federal initiative to promote the development of collaborative corridor coalitions into new multi-state, mega-regional governance partners, the issue of governance intent is apparent external to the coalition. From a context perspective, the I-81 coalition has good potential for governance participation because of the CFP timing and follow-through in

building stakeholder relationships capable of addressing corridor concerns. Another important consideration involves the timing of governance-related contextual dynamics and the benefit of using a responsiveness method of analysis. Since the responsiveness approach highlights the importance of significant events and developments, the CFP is a development that was taken into consideration in coalition decision making and may have influenced how transportation officials responded to the coalition's efforts.

By the time the 2008 I-81 Corridor Coalition Conference met, the I-95 Coalition had recently been awarded CFP funding. However, with a Virginia gubernatorial election upcoming in 2009, no new commitments of corridor coalition support were being made. Nevertheless, because coalition leadership made the decision in 2008 to move forward with funding commitments from stakeholders rather than a government program, the 2009 I-81 Coalition Conference was able to showcase a coalition with significant governance potential. By then it had demonstrated its ability to leverage funds, improve incident management, gain stakeholder commitments and build relationships for legitimate participatory decision making. With support from regional planners, state DOTs and elected officials at every level, the coalition was by 2009 a promising entity for partnership in corridor governance.

As these promising attributes continued to be apparent to stakeholders and agency representatives, the coalition's continued growth and the ability to embrace more challenging opportunities is demonstrated. Most noteworthy among the highlights of this evolution were the website development by Shippensburg University and the MOU with VTTI. Likewise, subsequent support of the coalition was in part a response to its

commitment to addressing corridor incident management concerns, its innovative funding model and its broad base of diverse stakeholders.

Viewed in light of the four governance components, the I-81 Coalition demonstrated early in its formation the ability to engage agency representatives, develop constitutionally legitimate collaborative relationships, contribute to participative decision making and effectively address corridor concerns. Finally, one possible implication, the coalition's "role in governance" story is closely related to changes in the national transportation agenda.

Although the surveys showed members highly motivated to see the coalition play a significant role in governance, they also indicate confusion about just what that role may be. These inconsistencies were also apparent among the leaders as indicated by the differences of perspectives in the steering committee interview responses. Because the conference presentations describe these new governance roles as components in a new federal governance agenda, it is not surprising that there was uncertainty about what those roles look like. It helps that the CFP funding criteria, much like the SAFETY-LU list of standards, provides insight into the types of governance outcomes being pursued through transportation legislation and programs. Nevertheless, even though the I-81 Coalition has demonstrated the ability to serve in these capacities, there is very limited evidence of any coalition actually fulfilling these broad governance duties.

## Chapter VII

### Implications of the I-81 Case Study

In this dissertation I set out to describe and clarify the implications for research and practice, of the I-81 Corridor Coalition as a multi-state, stakeholder-directed collaborative transportation corridor initiative. My motivation for this research was partly to better understand the governance implications of the attention corridor coalitions have received from state and federal transportation officials. I further wanted to better understand the I-81 Corridor Coalition as an example of a distinctive type of collaborative initiative, with the ability to gain substantive support from elite stakeholders representing multiple states, disciplines and sectors of society. Because empirical evidence to describe transportation corridor coalitions is scarce, I saw this as an opportunity to contribute to that particular scholarship. However, this is also an effort to offer information regarding the emergence of a distinctive multi-state, stakeholder directed collaborative initiative, with public and private sector donor participants, representing multiple disciplinary and policy arenas.

As noted throughout the dissertation, this study focused on three questions. The first research question was *what are the membership and contextual characteristics of the I-81 Corridor Coalition*. The implications include the need for better understanding of corridor coalition characteristics, in relation to membership attributes, governance-related objectives and the dynamics internal to the coalition. The second research question asks *how did the coalition's characteristics and operations evolve from its 2007 founding up to its 2011 Annual Conference?* This question focused on the coalition's evolution as a form of responsiveness to significant events and developments

over time. The final research question draws conclusions based on the evidence gathered in the previous two, asking, *based upon the coalition's characteristics and evolution, what may be implied about the coalition's role in transportation corridor governance?*

Ultimately, answering these three questions provided broader insight into collaborative engagement initiatives that may be applied to a variety of contexts. This research offers perspectives on the relevance of having a multi-state scope and a stakeholder-directed agenda in a transportation corridor based coalition building initiative. The findings could be useful to transportation planners, governance theorists, and volunteer association practitioners who are interested in coalition building as a means of addressing complex problems.

### **Overview of the Highlights and Implications**

Information about stakeholder areas of expertise, objectives and types of commitments to the coalition provided some answers to research question one. The evidence also supports perceptions about the importance of having participants with authority to act and illustrates the diversity of objectives, disciplines, jurisdictions, interests and perspectives. The interviews and conference notes confirmed the findings on participant characteristics, interests and commitments.

Also, in addressing question one, some specific implications for transportation planners came from having so many state and regional planners committed to supporting the I-81 Corridor Coalition. The importance of having diversity among participants and represented communities is a recurring theme, particularly important in understanding how Department of Transportation representatives have participated in coalition activities

and the relevance of these efforts to collaborative transportation planning and governance.

In answering the second research question, useful information in collaborative engagement came from the conference notes and the evolutionary coalition story. The responsiveness dynamics suggest progress can be made when a committed core group of stakeholders establishes a coalition; growth follows when they began to respond effectively to concerns. This creates opportunity for increased confidence and diversification of interests, which should be followed by demonstrations of “value added” benefits actions for constituents. The interview evidence also supports this virtuous cycle and supports theory building that suggests collaborative efforts become more stable and sustainable when appropriate types of responsiveness are developed. Research question two also provided a vehicle for identifying themes and collaborative dynamics by focusing on the significant events that influenced decision making.

For research question three, the definition of governance was used to identify four components of the governance process. These included agency participation, legitimized stakeholder partnerships, policy/economic impacts and participatory decision making. I noted similarity between the components of governance and the concepts in coalition building, where agency participation relates to commitment in coalition building, legitimized stakeholder participation relates to sustainability, policy and economic impacts relates to competency and participatory decision making relates to diversity. Further research may contribute to scholarship in governance characteristics and practices if future studies can illuminate meaningful relationships among these four components of governance and the four coalition building characteristics.

In continuing to address question three, information from the surveys, interviews and conferences identified statements that represented the perspectives of coalition members regarding the coalition's role in governance. These statements or themes were scrutinized using the four components of governance, participatory decision making, agency participation, legitimized stakeholder relationships, and policy and economic impacts, to see how the perceptions of respondents about the coalition's possible role in governance matched the components in the definition of governance. One significant consideration for posing the question in terms of governance is the addition of a different level of analysis for question three in comparison to questions one and two. The first two questions focus on the characteristics of the I-81 Coalition while the third question puts the coalition in a broader, nationwide transportation context for determining its possible governance attributes.

Further, along with the implications for DOT-related planning, this study noted some collaborative governance implications apparent in the USDOT Corridors of the Future initiatives. When considered with the significant number of elected officials who participated and demonstrated commitments to the coalition, the Corridors initiatives add a degree of legitimacy to coalition efforts. Two other recurring themes central to understanding the governance implications of these relationships are the First Responder and Incident Management training initiatives and the newly formed partnership with the policy influencing research of VTTI. These efforts are examples of coalition competency, which is to say the ability to organize public and private stakeholders to affect policy documents and economic outcomes.

It is also important that in this case study, the keys to productive collaborative initiatives with the capacity to partner in governance are sustainable partnerships, policy and economic competency, collaborative commitment from government agencies, and diversity of participants and interests. The I-81 Corridor Coalition could use this information as a means to maintain balance and effectiveness by continuing to strategically invest in partnerships and support programs and projects with the ability to foster and reinforce these particular attributes. This research implies that the I-81 coalition is already participating in governance and would be well advised to be more explicit about its intent to continue to play a role in governance. To expand the scope of this would mean becoming an advocate of various programs and projects and would require leadership to build consensus for specific initiatives. Like the evolutionary pattern described in relation to the conference highlights, it would be important not only to advocate for corridor concerns but also to show progress in those areas.

Finally, for those who prefer to limit the Coalition's government involvement, there is value in understanding the Coalition's implications for voluntary associations. Of particular significance is that the stakeholders in this initiative are also financial donors, or sponsors, who like members of voluntary associations, provide funds to sustain coalition efforts. These matters of sustainability are also recurring and critical given the diverse interests represented by the coalition. Besides collaborating to address traffic, safety, research and intermodal concerns, the respondents and the I-81 coalition website include environmental concerns and the development of higher education as well as economic development among their objectives.

Table 15 concludes with a summary of some of the highlights of the research findings.

**Table 15: Highlights of Case Study Findings**

Question One / Coalition Characteristics	Question Two / Evolutionary Responsiveness	Question Three / Governance Possibilities
<b><i>Donor-based Funding;</i></b> Complementary Characteristics Concept	<b><i>Getting Established;</i></b> VTTI Administrative Expertise and Research Resources	<b><i>National Corridor Agenda;</i></b> CFP and Opportunities to Improve Transportation Outcomes
<b><i>Value Added;</i></b> First Responder Training, Annual Conferences, Website, Email Information Sharing	<b><i>Expanding the Vision;</i></b> Membership and scope to include for-profit entities and other corridors	<b><i>Governance Components;</i></b> Agency Partners; Legitimized Relationships

Examining question one yielded the identification of four literature-based concepts pertaining to coalition building: sustainability, commitment, competency and diversity. These were consistently useful for categorizing the various attributes of the coalition, including the objectives implied by coalition activities. In Table 15 these four characteristics are referred to under question one as the Complementary Characteristics Concept. They are indicated as a top characteristics finding as indicated by the Donor-Based Funding model. Given the goal of question one was to identify membership and coalition characteristics, donor-based funding is a coalition characteristic that involves diversity, commitment, and sustainability in the effort to insure coalition competency. These concepts were helpful as a framework for observing and describing the collaborative capabilities of partners for planning, governance and civic engagement.

The second characteristics item in Table 15 is also a coalition based observation. Value Added is probably one of the Coalition’s most important membership development strategies. By demonstrating competency in areas of concern to corridor constituents, the

I-81 has been able to appeal to a wide array of participants. Providing more descriptive information about these participants was a particularly valuable contribution of this portion of the research.

For question two, Table 15 highlights Getting Established and Expanding the Vision. The administrative and research expertise gained from the VTTI MOU represents coalition evolution in response to a number of factors. Stakeholder support, desire for funding stability, and the need to demonstrate administrative competency are among those contributing factors. Like the VTTI MOU, Expanding the Vision was a development apparent at the 2011 Annual Conference. It was exemplified by the discussion and subsequent agreement to allow for-profit entities to join and make donations to the Coalition. That conference also heard reports of the Coalition's first responder trainers having begun an Interstate 40 coalition and training of first responders. Added to this discussion was an agreement to explore the feasibility of expanding the coalition to include I-40 in order to include freight movers coming to I-81 through Tennessee. Discussions of expanded involvement beyond I-81 continue to be apparent with each year of the coalition.

Finally, the question three highlights in Table 15 are National Corridor Agenda and governance components. The first is represented primarily by the Corridors of the Future Program (CFP) and other invitations for collaboration. The example of governance components lists agency partners and legitimized relationships. Among the agencies working with the coalition were the US and state DOTs, as well as state troopers and local law enforcement representatives of the Department of Justice. Collaborating

with these agencies also represent possible roles in governance for the coalition.

### **Strengths and Limitations of the Methodology**

This research called for a methodology for gathering descriptive data with explanatory value and the ability to identify changes over time. I found a mixed method case study approach using surveys, interviews and field notes had the ability to pursue in depth information while providing flexibility in questioning, and the stability of context-based, time oriented arrangement of the data. The surveys were designed to provide descriptive information about coalition member characteristics pertaining to experience, objectives and perspectives on the Coalition. Interviews sought to add depth and reliability of the recorded perceptions pertaining to the coalition's growth and responsiveness. Documenting the perceptions of coalition members with regards to specific events and developments helped maintain the contextual focus and relevance of the research process. As participants discussed various coalition experiences, contextual dynamics were clarified and relationships among coalition characteristics, events and decision making verified.

The data obtained from annual conferences field notes served two objectives, to provide chronology for question two data, and to provide descriptive information on the Coalition's broader transportation and planning arenas. This latter evidence was particularly valuable because much of it came from government and other transportation officials making presentations at the conferences. Some of them were not necessarily considered members of the Coalition, meaning their comments represented an additional source of information about the coalition's characteristics and responsiveness to

significant events. These perspectives also proved especially valuable in examining the Coalition's role in governance.

The benefits of this approach begin with allowing me to group participants for the sake of comparing and contrasting their responses. I was then able to use the data to illustrate patterns and identify trends to help guide the interviewing focus and the chronological organization of data for analysis. The interviews provided insight into how the coalition leaders viewed various developments, decisions and plans. They were also conducive to identifying descriptive themes for clarification of coalition dynamics related to a variety of topics. Likewise, descriptive information obtained from the conference notes was also helpful in establishing chronology for the evolutionary analysis and for clarifying themes and context for the governance narrative.

Having three different data sources made it possible to triangulate much of the evidence for verification of perceptions and themes. It also gave depth to the analysis which was helpful since the hermeneutic process of integrating the evidence involved tedious repetition and awareness of relevant details. Using the responsiveness approach for identifying characteristics and themes to describe behavior and concepts was helpful. This was especially true with the surveys where participants were not consistent about completing the entire survey. With so many skipped questions, trying to do a strictly statistical analysis posed several problems and limited the types of comparative analysis for descriptive clarification that could be done. An events-based, participant perceptions approach to telling the coalition's story, allowed freedom of discovery while maintaining transparency and contextual integrity.

There were limitations to the methods used, however. This research was very time consuming. The process of becoming a member of the coalition and attending four annual conferences could be difficult for some to replicate. In some regards this represented an ethnographic challenge in the research method.

As indicated the research was somewhat hindered by the number of respondents who did not complete their surveys or only had limited time to complete the interview process. While any participation in the research was appreciated, especially given that practically all who participated are leaders in their individual organizations, future efforts could benefit from safeguards to reduce incomplete data collection. As for the surveys, it would have been better to create the survey so some questions could not be skipped. Some interviewees allotted only a small amount of time for the interview, one remedy could be advance agreement on a predetermined time commitment. There were those who seemed cautious about having comments on the record; this made taking care to avoid creating controversy in the questioning a priority and resulted in some difficulty posing more probing questions. The respondents' hesitancy influenced the decision to strictly guard participant identities, or avoid attributing comments too directly, even for those who did not take the survey or participate in the interviews.

### **Need for Further Research**

Further research on corridor coalitions could yield more insight. Looking first to the research opportunities in collaborative transportation corridor planning, there are several possibilities. One thing that was not very clear from the case study evidence is how the specific metropolitan, regional and district planning organizations have responded to the Coalition. More specifically, how have they individually responded to

calls for funding, and what specific initiatives have they expressed to see the coalition advance? Similarly, as the Coalition continues to evolve and move beyond getting established, how has it responded to the expectations of the various regional planning entities along the corridor? It would be worthwhile to research how the I-81 coalition has responded to calls for participation in federal transportation corridor governance initiatives, and the factors that have been influential in the decision making process.

In the area of voluntary associations, there are opportunities for further research to get a better understanding of how the coalition has been received. The first thing to determine would be the voluntary associations on record as participants in the I-81 Corridor Coalition and the interests they pursue through the coalition. It also would be helpful to profile those associations to assess their competency, commitments, diversity and sustainability characteristics. With this consideration of non-governmental coalition participants, it would also be interesting to see how many are for profit entities and on which issues they seek coalition support.

Research opportunities related to governance theory are several. First of all, what roles do public agencies other than the USDOT, such as the Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT) play in coalition activities and what are the implications of those efforts? Also, what evidence is there in other governance arenas to substantiate or refute the four component framework for authentic governance? This represents an opportunity to look at governance broadly in any given arena, for evidence of the presence of these components. Such a process would likely include looking at programs that receive government funding, the competency questions connected with those agreements and the decision making processes related to those processes.

## **Some Contributions of the Study**

Despite the need for further research, this dissertation accomplished several objectives. The research demonstrated an approach to gaining descriptive information and participant perspectives for explanatory insight into the attributes and objectives of corridor coalitions. It also has provided some helpful approaches for future studies, namely the governance components and characteristics lens for analyzing the coalition's attributes relative to the evolution of the voluntary associations interested in a participatory role in governance. It should be remembered that the success of the coalition was also largely determined by the timing of federal policy initiatives, a matter clarified by this responsiveness approach.

Another potential contribution of this research could be in relation to network governance and analysis scholarship. Since the use of case study methods, with surveys, interviews and data bases have been similarly used to describe and explain the nature of networks (Provan, Islett & Milward, 2004), and coalition building, some comparisons may be made among the two pertaining to coalition building and network evolution and management. One consideration may be to examine the similarities and differences between networks and coalitions, including the language and frameworks used in each approach. Another point of focus might be strengths and limitations of each for mobilizing stakeholders, leveraging resources, influencing policy and economic outcome and partnerships with government agencies. An analysis that would clarify the differences between coalitions and networks might lead to discoveries also helpful to transportation planners, voluntary associations and governance theorists.

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## Appendix A

### Interstate 81 Corridor Coalition Information Survey

*This survey is part of a dissertation project focusing on the I-81 Corridor Coalition as a transportation corridor case study. The primary objectives of the research are to understand how the coalition has evolved over time and what factors have influenced its development. As indicated in the cover letter, participant responses will be kept anonymous in the reporting process and treated as confidential during the analysis process. A summary of the survey findings will be made available to the coalition leadership and may be presented at the 2011 annual conference. No participants will be identified in the summary or presentation. This research is being conducted with the approval of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. The Primary Investigator is Dr. Larkin Dudley ([dudleyl@vt.edu](mailto:dudleyl@vt.edu)) and the IRB Chairperson is Dr. David Moore, ([moored@vt.edu](mailto:moored@vt.edu)). My name is Glenn Orr and I am available at [gorr05@vt.edu](mailto:gorr05@vt.edu). Thank you for participating.*

#### **Membership (Please check the number for the response(s) that best fits your answer)**

1. The jurisdictional authority of my primary organization is? (Check all that apply)
  1. Federal \_\_\_\_\_
  2. State \_\_\_\_\_
  3. Regional \_\_\_\_\_
  4. Local \_\_\_\_\_
  5. Non-governmental \_\_\_\_\_
  6. Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. The state(s)/ area where your primary organization is headquartered is? (Check all that apply)
  1. TN \_\_\_\_\_
  2. MD \_\_\_\_\_
  3. NY \_\_\_\_\_
  4. PA \_\_\_\_\_
  5. VA \_\_\_\_\_
  6. D.C. \_\_\_\_\_
  7. WV \_\_\_\_\_
  8. Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. The year/months you began to participate in coalition activities was?
  1. 2007 Jan - Jun \_\_\_\_\_
  2. 2007 Jul - Dec \_\_\_\_\_
  3. 2008 Jan - Jun \_\_\_\_\_
  4. 2008 Jul - Dec \_\_\_\_\_
  5. 2009 Jan - Jun \_\_\_\_\_
  6. 2009 Jul - Dec \_\_\_\_\_
  7. 2010 Jan-Jun \_\_\_\_\_
  8. 2010 Jul-Dec \_\_\_\_\_
  9. 2011 Jan-Jun \_\_\_\_\_
  
4. The organizations you are a member of include? (Check all that apply)
  1. \_\_\_\_\_ Metropolitan Planning Organization

2. \_\_\_\_\_ Regional Planning Organization
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Planning District Commission
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Council of Government
5. \_\_\_\_\_ Transportation Planning Board
6. \_\_\_\_\_ City/ Town Council
7. \_\_\_\_\_ State Dept. of Transportation
8. \_\_\_\_\_ U.S. Dept. of Transportation
9. \_\_\_\_\_ Higher Education/ Research
10. \_\_\_\_\_ Environmental Planning Org.
11. \_\_\_\_\_ Economic Development Org.
12. \_\_\_\_\_ Other

5. Your areas of professional experience include? (Check all that apply)

- |                           |                           |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. _____ Highway          | 9. _____ Administration   |
| 2. _____ Planning         | 10. _____ Research        |
| 3. _____ Construction     | 11. _____ Environment     |
| 4. _____ Freight Mvmt.    | 12. _____ Training        |
| 5. _____ Railway          | 13. _____ Railway         |
| 6. _____ Economic Devlpmt | 14. _____ Passenger Mvmt. |
| 7. _____ Safety           | 15. _____ Legislation     |
| 8. _____ Project Mgt      | 16. _____ Other           |

6. Your years of experience in transportation related work is? (Check the answer that fits best)

- |                |                  |                |
|----------------|------------------|----------------|
| 1. _____ 0 - 3 | 4. _____ 11 -15  | 5. _____ 26-30 |
| 2. _____ 4-6   | 5. _____ 16 - 20 | 4. _____ 30+   |
| 3. _____ 7 -10 | 6. _____ 21-25.  |                |

**Sustainability Factors;** Rate the following events/ developments according to the role each of them has played in the coalition's growth and development. Use the space below for comments or explanations.

<b>Event and Developments/ How significant to the coalition's growth &amp; sustainability were each of the following?</b>	No Significance	Minor Significance	Significant	Very Significant	Essential
Check the number that <b>Best</b> fits your opinion	1	2	3	4	5
7. 2007 Coalition Conference	1	2	3	4	5
8. 2008 Coalition Conference	1	2	3	4	5
9. 2009 Coalition Conference	1	2	3	4	5
10. 2010 Coalition Conference	1	2	3	4	5
11. Shippensburg University Assistance	1	2	3	4	5
12. I-95 Coalition Collaborations	1	2	3	4	5
13. VTTI Memorandum of Understanding	1	2	3	4	5
14. VA Sec. of Transportation Consultation	1	2	3	4	5
15. Truck Parking Study	1	2	3	4	5
16. First Responder Training	1	2	3	4	5
17. Funding Support (Specify Below)	1	2	3	4	5
18. Key Political Endorsements (Specify Below)	1	2	3	4	5
19. Other (Specify Below)	1	2	3	4	5

Comments for questions 7-19

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20. What were the I-81 Coalition's top 7 priorities when you began to participate in the group? Please rank them from "1" (for most important) through "7" (for progressively less important).

- |   |                              |
|---|------------------------------|
| 1. ____ Establishing need for coalition | 9. ____ Conference Planning  |
| 2. ____ Pursuit of Research Funds       | 10. ____ Passenger Movement  |
| 3. ____ Administrative Support          | 11. ____ Leadership          |
| 4. ____ Membership Development          | 12. ____ Conference Planning |
| 5. ____ Securing Key Endorsements       | 13. ____ Freight Movement    |

- 6. \_\_\_\_ Locating Operational Funds
- 7. \_\_\_\_ Building Org Partnerships
- 8. \_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_
- 14. \_\_\_\_ Addressing Policy Concerns
- 15. \_\_\_\_ Economic Development

Additional Comments; \_\_\_\_\_

21. Please select 7 of the organizational concerns listed below and order them according to how you perceive their relative contributions to the I-81 Corridor Coalition's growth and sustainability during the initiative's life. (Please use "1" for most beneficial and up to "7" for progressively less so)

22.

- 1. \_\_\_\_ Shared Goals
- 2. \_\_\_\_ Membership Expertise
- 3. \_\_\_\_ Leadership Effectiveness
- 4. \_\_\_\_ Availability of Resources
- 5. \_\_\_\_ Administrative Support
- 6. \_\_\_\_ Innovative Possibilities
- 7. \_\_\_\_ Committee Process
- 8. \_\_\_\_ Policy Oriented Objectives
- 9. \_\_\_\_ Multi-disciplinary Perspectives
- 10. \_\_\_\_ Multi-jurisdictional Endorsements
- 11. \_\_\_\_ Urgency of Corridor Concerns
- 12. \_\_\_\_ Meaningful Research
- 13. \_\_\_\_ Corporate Partnerships
- 14. \_\_\_\_ Other (Explain below)

Additional comments \_\_\_\_\_

**Commitments** Please check either "Yes" or "No" for questions 22-25 and use the comments column below to provide additional observations or explanations. Please base your responses on the organization that is primarily related to your participation in the coalition.

#	Question	Yes	No	Comments
	<i>Has your organization:</i>			
23.	Included the coalition in its budget for multi-year support?			
24.	Offered a written endorsement of the coalition's efforts?			
25.	Provided the coalition with one or more donations of funds or services?			
26.	Expressed a commitment to a particular coalition project or program?			

Please check the response number that BEST describes your view	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
<b><i>In order for the coalition to be effective it is critical to have commitments of support from the following:</i></b>	1	2	3	4	5	6
27. Transportation agency officials (i.e. DOT, DRPT)	1	2	3	4	5	6
28. I-81 Corridor businesses and corporations	1	2	3	4	5	6
29. State, local and federal elected officials	1	2	3	4	5	6
30. Volunteer organizations, and citizen stakeholders	1	2	3	4	5	6
31. Representatives from rail and trucking associations	1	2	3	4	5	6
32. Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) and Regional Transportation Planning Organizations	1	2	3	4	5	6
33. Local and state government administrative officials	1	2	3	4	5	6

Additional comments related to questions 26 through 32 \_\_\_\_\_

**Functional Attributes**

34. Using the number “1” for most often and “3” for least often, please rank how often the coalition leadership has used the following leadership styles:

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. The coalition’s leadership style operates according to established guidelines and procedures. Members may be consulted regarding pending decisions but responsibility for acting rest with the leadership.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. The coalition’s leadership style is entrepreneurial and innovative initiative is encouraged in decision making. Discretionary authority is commonly assumed as means of achieving objectives.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. The coalition’s leadership style is collaborative and decisions are generally made by consensus. Members are kept informed of changing situations to encourage discussion and inclusion are kept informed of changing situations to encourage discussion and inclusion.

Comments or additional thoughts about the above questions: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Observation / Judgment Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Check the response number that <b>BEST</b> describes your viewpoint.	1	2	3	4	5	6
35. The coalition’s leadership style has contributed significantly to its ability to achieve its objectives.	1	2	3	4	5	6
36. The professional affiliations of coalition members have contributed significantly to the Corridor group’s growth.	1	2	3	4	5	6
37. The coalition’s commitment to addressing policy concerns has contributed significantly to its ability to attract supporters.	1	2	3	4	5	6
38. The coalition’s ability to secure stakeholder funding has contributed significantly to its freedom to set organizational priorities.	1	2	3	4	5	6
39. The coalition’s commitment to research excellence contributes significantly to its growth and sustainability.	1	2	3	4	5	6
40. The coalition has demonstrated the ability to manage disagreement related to contentious corridor concerns.	1	2	3	4	5	6
41. Coalition members demonstrate support for efforts to establish the organization’s viability as a regional transportation governance entity.	1	2	3	4	5	6

42. What characteristics would you say make the I-81 Corridor Coalition appealing to stakeholders?

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43. What role in transportation governance, if any, do you see for the coalition?

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**If you have any other comments about the coalition’s development you wish to share, please include them in the space below.**

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**Thank You for your participation!**

## Appendix B

### Understanding Stakeholder Directed, Multi-State Transportation Corridor Coalition Building: An Interstate 81 Case Study

#### **(1<sup>st</sup> Committee Member)**

(Interview Questions for Dissertation Research Project)

1. How does the I-81 Corridor Coalition as it is today compare with what you hoped for when you became involved with the organization? (Follow up concerns; how have your issue concerns and the involvement of members changed?)
2. This coalition is considered stakeholder directed because its founding and development have not been based on policy implementation or objectives established by funders. What pros or cons do you see associated with the coalition being stakeholder rather than otherwise directed? (Do you agree with the characterization or is the coalition otherwise directed?)
3. Please discuss the coalition's interest in transportation planning, public management and policy development as they pertain to the corridor. Please discuss these governance roles in terms of the coalition's vision and mission. (F/U examples – how important to the coalition's development have objectives related to safety training, highway construction, multi-modalism, environmental protection, freight and passenger movement, economic development and truck parking study, VTTI memorandum of agreement been?)
4. What are the pros and cons of having so many jurisdictions represented in the membership of this coalition?
5. What threats to the coalition's survivability have you observed and how has the coalition's leadership addressed them? (Please discuss your relevant observations and concerns related to these threats at that time.)
6. What would you say to stakeholders along other transportation corridors who are interested in organizing for better governance?