SUMMARY RECORD

ITF Transport Satellite Account Working Group

17 April 2019 OECD, Paris

Chaired by Ms. Patricia HU
Director of the US Bureau of Transportation Statistics

1. Welcome and objectives of the meeting

Ms. Hu, who chaired the workshop, welcomed all 27 participants and briefly presented the agenda items. Ms. Hu recalled discussions at the previous meetings regarding the role and the importance of TrSA. The aim of this working group is to produce information and guidelines to help countries build comparable TrSAs. Ms. Hu explained that the group needs to set an international conceptual framework or scope that defines the core information to build harmonised TrSAs. To prepare such a framework, action items will be defined during the discussion to create a concrete and practical work plan to prepare for the next meeting.

2. Background information

M. Kauppila, Head of the ITF Quantitative Policy Analysis and Foresight, reminded the audience of the work previously done, and that more and more countries are expressing their interest in building TrSAs: USA and France have been producing regularly TrSA, Canada and Australia started recently to produce their TrSA, while New Zealand is currently working on developing one. Other countries are also interested, but the lack of resources or knowledge on developing TrSAs has initiated interest for ITF guidance. In this project the role of the ITF is to be a platform to discuss common challenges, provide guidance to build TrSAs and design a framework to ensure benchmarking of results.

Some countries provided "read ahead" material on how to define TrSA. However, the discussion showed a need for a common message on why TrSA is important. It was suggested to have a support document to help the discussion and convince decision makers on the benefits of TrSA. This document should clearly identify the types of questions that can be answered by TrSA. Examples given during the workshop include: assessing the cost of private car use, the contribution of the transport sector to GDP, the transportation services used by each economic sector and the transportation cost to produce one dollar of sector output. Additionally, Ms. Hu mentioned that TrSA is used in the US for a publication "industry snapshot", which can also be used as a reference for the potential benefit/information gained from developing TrSA.

Action Item: Ms. Hu asked the ITF to draft a short document to promote TrSA, explaining why it is important to develop TrSA and list some of the questions that TrSA can help answer. M. Kauppila suggested the creation of a 4 pages leaflet "All what you wanted to know about TrSA but never dared to ask". The ultimate goal of the leaflet would be to explain the purpose, the meaning and the value added of TrSA, and provide material to convince decision makers why developing TrSA is critical for transport planning. The leaflet would also identify the main steps on how to build TrSA, what is required and give an indication on the resources needed for that.

3. Defining the scope of TrSA

TrSAs have the potential to answer a large range of questions; the key is to clearly define the priority questions first and then develop methods to set up TrSA in a way that will allow the information of interest to be extracted / estimated. Countries that have developed TrSA already have a defined scope. Our goal here is to use work that has been done by others and create an ideal scope that is well defined and that covers all of the main subjects that could potentially be of interest to those developing or seeking to develop TrSA. The idea is not to set up TrSA in a way for which countries need to populate *all* categories, but rather to give countries a common view on the areas of interest from which they can choose the most relevant information to gather in their TrSA based on the most urgent national policy needs. As policy needs evolve, so too will TrSA, which can be grown and developed to eventually cover all categories outlined in the reference document. This will ensure a common set of objectives and harmonised definitions, while also allowing countries to invest their time and money in their priority issues. M. Van de Ven pointed out five key areas that are relevant to cover with a breakdown by transport mode: **(1) transport activity, (2) infrastructure, (3) environmental impact of transport, (4) government finance, and (5) employment**. Each country can include in its scope one or more of these points depending on what is the ultimate goal of their TrSA and what are the questions they are trying to answer.

Action Item: Ms. Hu asked the ITF to draft a document on TrSA common scope based on the 5 categories mentioned above, and to set the priorities that are relevant to be examined within each category according to the policy questions we are trying to answer.

4. Agreeing on harmonised coverage

M. Van de Ven explained that the data source basis for TrSA is good Supply and Use tables (S/U) from the System of National Accounts. About 60 countries worldwide have S/U tables and in the EU region they are mandatory. However, even if they are well harmonised, there are data quality differences in National Accounts between countries. Nevertheless, S/U can constantly be improved to be adapted to country needs and that is good news for TrSA.

In a 'tour de table' to know what the immediate needs are for countries to start TrSA, the most common answers were the need for: guidance and support to communicate well and convince decision makers (use of a leaflet was mentioned many times), a manual with concrete examples on how to create and benefit from TrSA, and more financial and human resources to complete such a project.

The discussion also provided an idea of the resources needed to start TrSA. On average, building TrSA requires 2 people working for one year full-time and roughly 200 000 US$. It is clear that costs would be reduced if a country already has a well-designed statistical system and detailed S/U tables.

The final recommendation for the group from M. Van de Ven, was to start by defining a conceptual framework which would correspond to the ideal we want and then to analyse step by step what can be achieved internationally and in a harmonised way.

Action Item: Ms. Hu asked the ITF to draft a document listing the elements we want to include in the harmonisation process. The draft should include 3-4 prioritisations areas for each of the 5 main categories discussed under item 3. It was suggested to develop this draft document in a small group, including countries currently building TrSA, and then to distribute it to the entire TrSA group for comments. Countries would then be free to choose the categories they want to prioritise, according to their own policy.

5. Improvements and enhancements to existing TrSA

Ms. Hu raised the question on timeliness since most existing TrSA refer to data which is at least three years old. However, some countries noted that three years was a good balance between the user needs and the additional efforts for more timely data. It was also mentioned that timeliness depends on the question we are trying to answer and sometimes a three years lag is largely acceptable since data does not change drastically. Recent rises in innovations such as shared mobility or online shopping could have an impact and require more timely data but that information could be estimated and does not necessarily have to be collected.

M. Lapointe also suggested linking TrSA to performance indicators such as t-km, p-km, and costs per t-km or per p-km to better access the transport services provided, their productivity and efficiency.

Action Item: Ms. Hu asked the ITF to draft a document with examples on how new data sources have been used in countries which developed TrSA.

6. Structure of the manual

The discussion showed that there is a need to include in the manual concrete examples of S/U tables and what others have done, the resources needed and how new data sources could be used to enhance TrSA data. For example, there could be linkages created with other satellite accounts such as environment or tourism to see how TrSA fits within the global family of SA.

Additionally, it would be helpful if the manual could come up with a suggestion on how TrSA can be used by the private sector, as this would help to build a case and support the development of TrSA. The USA private sector isn't using the TrSA report; however, Tourism Satellite Accounts have succeeded in this. In Australia, industry pushed for TrSA to measure the importance of the transport sector.

Here is a suggested structure for the manual:
- Question that TrSA can answer (public and private sector)
- Benefits for transport planning with concrete examples
- Definition of the scope
- Elements that need to be harmonised
- Methodology to get the required information
- Data needs and use of new/other data sources
- Resource requirements
- Possible extension of TrSA and linkages with other satellite accounts

7. Promoting and communicating

The leaflet will be key to promoting TrSA and ensuring the support needed for countries to develop TrSA. In addition, the ITF's Corporate Partnership Board could be involved, to connect further with the private sector on the potential benefits of TrSA. It was also suggested to use the Community of National Accounts to validate the methodological guideline document. M. Van de Ven could help in contacting them and this would give the manual worldwide visibility. The ITF will also discuss with its Communication team the best way to disseminate the leaflet message. Lastly, lessons learned from other satellite accounts, such as the Tourism Satellite Account, could help guide the communication campaign.

8. Conclusion and next steps

The next steps will be the production of the leaflet and a draft of the scope for the 5 mentioned categories broken down by mode to the granularity that we would like to have in an ideal TrSA. These would be presented shortly and discussed within a year's time.