

## Edward J. Christopher

*Federal Highway Administration*

A self-described career public-sector transportation planner and an expert in data collection, travel survey techniques, transportation system demand management, and program evaluation, Ed Christopher believes that “transportation planning is a behavioral science in which transportation professionals are continually learning about society and human behavior in the context of trying to shape the future.”

As the metropolitan planning specialist at the Federal Highway Administration’s (FHWA’s) Resource Center in Olympia Fields, Illinois, Christopher is a leader in the development of customized census data products for the transportation community. He contributed to the creation of the 1990 and 2000 Census Transportation Planning Packages, which produced high-quality census datasets for easy access and use by the transportation research community.



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“Technicians, project managers, politicians, and the public raise questions on all transportation projects,” Christopher explains. “To answer these questions responsibly, planners must have access to quality data. Data collection and technical advances to aid data collection, information dissemination products, and improved data analysis techniques are critical to overcoming project hurdles and providing answers to problems.”

Christopher began his work in the planning field in 1979, during his graduate studies. He took a position as a research analyst for the Chicago Area Transportation Study (CATS). His many accomplishments at CATS include publication of more than 60 reports and papers, the design and execution of many large-scale surveys—including a travel survey of 20,000 households; a household-based, long-distance travel survey; origin and destination studies; and a contracted external travel survey. In 1998, Christopher took a leave of absence from CATS and began work with the U.S. Department of Transportation’s (DOT’s) Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS).

As a BTS transportation industry analyst, Christopher worked on data collection issues related to state and metropolitan planning and went on to win the U.S. DOT Secretary’s Award for his

contribution to *The Changing Face of Transportation*, a 350-page compendium detailing transportation-related accomplishments in the United States for the 25 years prior to 2001 and outlining the challenges facing the transportation system in the future.

An advocate for transportation research, Christopher maintains that research in the United States is suffering from the reduction of data programs—such as the Vehicle Inventory and Use Survey and the National Household Travel Survey—as well as from a reduction in program funding.

In his current position at FHWA, Christopher is working with the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials to secure approximately \$6 million in funding for a comprehensive package of Census Transportation Products that will include training courses, technical assistance, research and data from the Census Bureau’s American Community Survey, and publication of many technical articles and papers.

“On the national level, the demand for highly detailed transportation data is increasing,” Christopher observes. “Unfortunately, this demand is being accompanied by a reduction in data program funding and a dilution of data collection methodologies. As researchers, we must continue to develop a variety of data-synthesizing and

-transferring techniques, and we must work to ensure data quality, quantity, and availability, as well as funding.”

Christopher is a member of many professional transportation organizations and has served on many TRB committees. He chairs the Urban Transportation Data and Information Systems Committee and is a past member of the Statewide Transportation and Information Systems Committee, the Committee on National Transportation Data Requirements and Programs, and the Data and Information Systems Section. He also served as an officer for the Association for Commuter Transportation from 1984 to 1991; as director of the association’s Illinois Chapter, from 1981 to 1986; as an officer of the Association of Ridesharing Professionals, from 1980 to 1986; and was recently elected to a 2-year term on the Association of Public Data Users’ board of directors.

Christopher received an associate’s degree in science from Moraine Valley Community College, Palos Hills, Illinois, in 1974; a bachelor’s degree in liberal arts and sciences from the University of Illinois, Chicago Circle, in 1977; and a master’s degree in urban planning and policy from the University of Illinois, Chicago, in 1983.