The Role of Peer Review Panels in High Speed Rail Studies

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Peer Review

• Widely used in all areas of science, technology and engineering.

• Long history of peer reviews for
  – Paper review
  – Solicited project proposals
  – National Research Council Reports

• Peer Review Panel
  – Group review replaces set of individual reviews
History of HSR Peer Review Panels- 1

• Guidelines for Revenue and Ridership Forecasting for High Speed Rail, High Speed Rail Association, September 1986
  – Review by outside experts and decision makers at several stages in the work to include
    • Workplan
    • Results of Market Research
    • Sensitivity tests for important variables
    • Applicability of models to the corridor
    • Results of the models and consensus on “most probably forecast.”
History of HSR Peer Review Panels - 2

• Federal Register, September 15, 2003, OMB Notice and Request for Comments
• A “peer review,” ... is a scientifically rigorous review and critique of a study’s methods, results, and findings by others in the field with requisite training and expertise.
History of HSR Peer Review Panels- 3

• Peer Review in Environmental Technology Development Programs, National Research Council, 1998

• A peer review is a documented, critical review performed by peers who are independent of the work being reviewed.

• Critical elements of a peer review: expert, independent, external and technical.
Members of Peer Review Panels

• Recognized experts in the field.
• Independent of the authority and the study team with no direct stake in the outcome.
• Have relevant scientific training, experience and documented contributions to the field.
Authority of Peer Review Panels in HSR Studies

• Reports directly to the director of the authority commissioning the study.
• Reviews all major stages of the work.
• Authorized to critique all aspects of study and to recommend changes in the approach as well as results.
• Undertake a scientifically rigorous review and critique of methods, execution, results and reports.
Objectives for the Panel

• Ensure integrity of work done and results obtained.

• Provide guidance to
  – Improve the quality of the forecasts,
  – Clarify sensitivity to key variables and
  – Provide realistic risk assessment.

• Document results of the review and the basis therefore.