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Transit Asset Management
Staying on Track with TAM: FTA Updates, Upcoming Deadlines, and Resources Webinar Transcript

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Presented by

Mshadoni Smith, Tom Coleman
Office of Budget and Policy
Federal Transit Administration
U.S. Department of Transportation

Good afternoon and welcome to the TAM webinar, Staying on Track with TAM. We're going to go over some updates, upcoming deadlines and resources.

Before we get started, I just wanted to welcome you all to our web series. Usually we do this where we showcase some providers, some aspect of TAM and how they are implementing it, the obstacles, challenges and unique ways they've overcome it, but periodically we like to provide an FTA perspective on where we are in TAM implementation. It's just going to be us FTA folks today but we are planning our next TAM webinar series as we speak. We don't have a date yet, but you will get information on that.

I just want to let you know we're in a new platform. We've done Adobe Connect before and if you participated in our round tables this summer; you're familiar with this MSTeams Live format, and thank you for joining us again. For those of you that may not be as familiar, the communication method is primarily through the Q&A box. You can see in your -- I guess I will call it your control panel. It has your video screen, your microphone, something that looks like a question mark in a box and that's where you can submit your questions.

You can submit your questions throughout the presentation today and we'll get to them as time allows at the end.

You also have the ability to turn on closed captioning. I will caution you that it is an AI closed captioning, which means that it may not be 100% one-to-one, but it is easier to follow along for those of you that are multitasking, which I'm sure no one is doing.

Also, we plan to post this recording to our TAM webpage after we finish today. With that, I'm going to go ahead and get started.

Let me introduce your speakers for today. Myself, Mshadoni Smith, I am the Chief of the Analysis Division. The Analysis Division covers the National Transit Database, the Bi-annual Condition and Performance Report to Congress, and the Transit Asset Management Program.

Also, we're going to have a special guest speaker, Mr. Tom Coleman. He's the new NTD, National Transit Database Program Manager, so we're really looking forward to his participation today.

Today's agenda we're going to cover just a couple of things. This is more like a check-in on some of the highlighted TAM program updates; go over a little bit of NTD reporting highlights and updates. I want to bring to you some of the new resources that we've

developed and posted on our webpage; make sure that you're aware that it's there for your use, and then, as I mentioned, we'll go over some questions.

The highlighted program updates. I receive questions periodically from recipients, so do TAM points of contact in the regions, and this is a question that's come up recently about the TAM Plan Horizon Updates and Amendments. TAM Plans must be updated in their entirety at least every four years. The first plans were completed October 2018, which means that an update is expected October 2022. However, you may update sooner if significant, unexpected changes occur to your asset inventory, your condition assessments or your investment priorities. We're all in an unexpected situation given the pandemic where there's service changes, definitely ridership changes, and funding changes, to be honest. So, this is definitely a time to consider has it really changed the TAM context and do you want to revisit your TAM Plan to address the real needs that you have right now, and in the future in terms of where you want to be maintaining your assets.

You also may update it sooner depending on how you want to align with other internal or regional planning processes. Potentially there are new priorities in your region and you want to update your plan to be in alignment with where your region is going.

Another area that has kind of raised a few questions is about the Facility Condition Assessments. As you know, agencies must update -- excuse me, must submit their Facility Condition Assessments to the NTD every year. There is a phase-in of the number of condition assessments that must be reported every year, 25 percent every year for the horizon of the TAM Plan, which is four years. The report year was 25 percent. The second report year which just passed was 50 percent. So by Report Year '19, you should have reported 50 percent of your condition assessments. That leads you to believe that this year you should report 75 percent of your condition assessments, however, we are creating an adjustment where you are not required to report 75 percent, only 50 percent of your condition assessments to the NTD this year. However, 100 percent still must be reported by the expected completion year of your TAM Plan.

If you want further guidance on condition assessments, you can go to this URL and our Facility Condition Assessment Guide Book.

This is just a graphical representation of what the NT Reporting of TAM Data continues into this report year. Currently, in Report Year '20, you'll be reporting your updated asset inventory as it applies, reporting your condition data, targets, and narrative reports. This is your third year of asset inventories and target reporting so it should be becoming a little bit more routine, although this year is nothing routine at all, but the process of reporting it should be a little bit more expected. Your narrative report, this is your chance to provide context for your numerical report.

Now I want to talk about a couple of updated tools that we have available for your TAM Plan. The TAMplate 2.0 is in development. The TAMplate, as you remember, last year we rolled it out. It's an online webtool, a web form that assists in developing your TAM Plan. It's for any level of TAM Plan. You can have small system, large system, group plan, whatever, and it does replace the Small Provider Excel template. Unfortunately, we are no longer able to provide technical assistance for the small provider tool, but it is still available for those of you that have used it and enjoy it, and don't want to transfer over to the TAMplate. However, the TAMplate automatically populates your TAM data from the NTD, so that becomes a little bit of a time-saving. If you are reporting to the NTD, you can click a button that will automatically populate your asset inventories into the TAMplate and you just fill out the additional TAM Plan requirement areas and it can be saved and printed out.

Last year when we rolled it out we got a lot of feedback on some of the improvements that you guys would like to see to that TAMplate and we are working on developing those for a TAMplate 2.0.

Another tool that we recently posted to the webpage is the Self-Assessment Tool. Now, this has been a long time coming, but this tool is not collected by FTA. This is definitely for your own edification. You can use it to assess the quality of your TAM Plan, the completeness of your TAM Plan, and it provides you kind of a litmus test of where you are in terms of your maturity of your TAM Plan. It also gives a couple of questions in there about your TAM Program, but for the most part it is designed to cover your TAM Plan completeness. I would say take a look at it and see what you think. This graphic is pulled directly from the Self-Assessment Tool, and it gives you a sense of how the maturity levels are identified, compliant, expanded and advanced.

The long-awaited TAM Systems Handbook has finally been posted to our webpage. I want to thank all of the agencies that participated in this research project, and recommend that any of you that are interested in the system's assets, take a look at this handbook. It is not a guidance document, meaning it is not mandated, but it is a compilation of practices in place and a standardized approach to how to identify systems, classes, hierarchies in a taxonomy, and you can find it on the URL right here.

The intended audience of this handbook is those who compile the inventory, conduct asset assessments, collect performance measures or manage investment prioritization. Basically, everybody on the call.

This is kind of just the Table of Contents of the handbook. We go through six chapters. We talk about the theoretical framework. We get into a little bit more specifics about transit systems and asset inventories and hierarchies. There's an alignments chapter, Chapter 5, with the NTD, and then talking more about the performance management aspects.

![FTA logo — Federal Transit Administration]

Here is just a little preview of what you might see in the handbook. This is from our Chapter 4, Asset Hierarchies, and it's just an illustration of what findings we have from transit operators about how they classify their system assets and the classes.

All right, switching gears, we have another resource that's available on our webpage and that's our -- we call them the TAM Fact Sheets. It is directly derived from the NTD data products. The Report Year '18 Fact Sheet is available and the Report Year '19 is under development. We'll have two cycles of data from NTD for the '19 Fact Sheets, and the fact sheets are identified in terms of an overview, which kind of gives you a cross-section of these are the tidbits of information that were most salient or that raised to the level of highlighting, and then we also have asset specific category sheets where we go and drill into a lot more detail for each asset category. The graphic here is taken directly from one of the fact sheets and it just gives you a representation of the vehicle breakdown for service vehicles. You can find the Overview Fact Sheet at the URL below.

Now I'm going to turn it over to my colleague Tom Coleman and he is going to talk to you about the Entity Group Plan Summary Tool.

>>Tom Coleman:
Thank you, Mshadoni. I'm really excited to be here. Hi everyone. My name is Tom Coleman and I am the new National Transit Database Program Manager. Today I'll be presenting on the Group Plan Summary Tool, formerly known as the Urbanized Area Summary Tool. This year will be the first year where we are changing the name of this file or tool, but there's some new functionality that I'm really excited to share with you today. Moving forward we'll refer to this tool or file as the Group Plan Summary Tool, but again, to avoid confusion, previously it was the Urbanized Area Summary Tool.

The new tool should be available in November 2020, so please don't go searching right now for the 2019 Group Plan Summary Tool on the NTD data page yet, but we're almost there. Next month. Today, I'll be demoing the new tool, which isn't yet public, but it will be very soon and I'm really excited to show you the new functionality.

Next.

Where do I find this tool? This tool can be found at the URL at the bottom of the page in the red square shown here, or by googling NTD Data Reports. You can click Assets, circled in red on the left here, and then type in Urbanized Area which refers to the tool's old name. Then you type in Urbanized Area and you'll see here the 2018 Urbanized Area Summary Tool, and again, the future for the new tool it will be Group Plan Summary Tool.

A little bit about the file. It's actually a macro enabled Excel file, which means it's interactive; it's designed around clicks to give you insights. This design is exactly the kind

of -- whether you like this design, we're hoping to get your feedback on it, but this is the type of file we have. They're called data tables. Let me just show you how to interact with it next.

Now that you've downloaded the Group Plan Summary Tool, or the 2018 Urbanized Area Summary Tool, how do you use it? Well, for any data product we like to ask ourselves who is the intended audience? The purpose and scope of the file is to simplify analysis for metropolitan planning organizations, MPOs, group plan sponsors, and other transit planning agencies involved in transit asset management. A Group TAM Plan Sponsor is generally the State DOT or a direct or designated 5310 or 5307 subrecipient. It's also because this is a macro-enabled Excel file, we ask that you kind of follow these buttons, actually, shown here. At the top, you'll see three buttons, one left, middle and right. This is on the very first tab called the Instructions tab. The three big bubbles will actually take you to different parts of the file depending on the business question you might be asking, and here we've zoomed in on the one on the far left. It's called 'I want to see data about all participants in a particular Group TAM Plan,' so let's take a look at what clicking that does.

But first, I'll talk a little bit about the functionality of all three of these buttons.

Next.

Each button corresponds to, again, a business question, and we're hoping that we've geared it with more of a user interface user experience in mind. For instance, if you're a metropolitan planning organization, these are three different kind of use cases or business cases you might be interested in. The first one I talked about was if you want to see all the participants in a group plan, a Group TAM Plan. Some of the new functionality if you click that button is we've added a 2018 Performance Target as a column, which shows the prior year. Again, this will be 2019 when we publish in November, and so you'll have both 2019 and the 2018 to do a year-over-year comparison. We've also added a Primary Urbanized Area flag.

Second, if you click 'I want to see data from a custom designed group of agencies,' you'll be able to see individual agencies, so it's not just the Group Plan, but actual individual agency functionality we've also given you.

Then, third, if you want to see all agencies that serve a particular Urbanized Area, let's say you're an MPO in a large, medium or small, you can actually click the Urbanized Area or search for the one that you'd like to compare against and it will have those similar benchmarks such as performance targets. In some there's three options, but I also drill in a little more and I'll actually show you one of them.

Next.

If you click View by Group Plan -- that's the first button that I first showed you -- this is what you'll be taken to. You'll be taken to a sheet that will allow you to actually pick or search for a particular Group TAM Plan, and it allows you to view by group plan. Here I am showing you Colorado Department of Transportation, and in NTD speak it's the R01 and it has both 2018 and 2019 performance targets. These are a hot button topic. This is the first year we're kind of providing these in an easy-to-see format and it shows year-over-year. Here, when we're looking at Colorado, you'll see, for instance, the percentage of revenue vehicles that exceeded their useful life benchmark. The RY2018 Performance Target was 18.8 percent. In RY19, our new data, it's 26 percent. Some of the targets may change in different directions. For instance, they may decrease if new vehicles were purchased for revenue service as these would change the percentage of vehicles exceeding their useful life balance. Obviously, if you purchase new vehicles the exceedance would probably go down, but again, it could depend on the fleet, but this at least allows you to see a clean year-over-year by different assets for that entire group plan and their useful life benchmark.

We hope this kind of functionality as shown here for Colorado will be really useful to you.

Next.

And next.

That's really all I have to show to you. I just wanted to highlight a little bit and summarize the functionality of our new Group Plan Summary Tool. The new tool, again, will be available in November of 2020 on the NTD website, so don't go searching for it yet, but hopefully I've gotten you excited.

And, I'm new. I would really love your feedback on this tool and I've actually provided hopefully an easy way for you to provide that feedback. The NTD Operations Team will actually read all of your feedback if you email here and include UZA Data Table in the subject line. That will help us make sure that we kind of sort the data so that the feedback on this specific tool will be put together in a way we can kind of see as a whole and see all your comments.

We're taking your comments very seriously and taking even a look at potentially improvements to other user interfaces and user designs for other files, but this one in particular, if you have feedback we'd love to see it.

With that, I will turn it back over to Mshadoni.

>>Mshadoni Smith:

Thanks, Tom. I'm looking forward to that new tool, but I also want to highlight some resources that are available for NTD training and resources. There is full reporting through NTI resource at this location. That URL looks weird to me but, okay, I think that's it. You can also find it directly at NTI. Then there is recordings on our FTA webpage of previous presentations and webinars; you can find there under the NTD webpage. And we recently had an NTI webinar which has been posted on YouTube that is talking about the NTD submissions. I think it was all of the AIM data, actually, but I'd have to verify that.

Let's talk a little bit more about the new resources that are available through TAM.

One of the resources that I did want to highlight and hopefully many of you are already familiar with, periodically we evaluate the TAM webpage and identify how we can make it more interactive, intuitive and useful. The last large overhaul we did was after the rule became final, and we just wanted to kind of streamline how you found resources. This one, we are trying to make it a little bit easier to kind of dig deep in the webpage because we've been posting stuff steadily for several years now so you may have saved a page, but if you're trying as a new person to TAM, or maybe if you accidentally wiped out your bookmarks, trying to find a specific resource can be a challenge. So, we created this resource table which makes it a little bit easier to search in the TAM webpage so that you can identify or that you can find what you're looking for. You can search by keyword, author, dates, and the list that comes up automatically when you go to the resource table is the newest resources. So, please take a look at that and hopefully that will be helpful.

Some other resources that were recently posted are recordings and presentations from our first virtual roundtable in July. It was a very successful virtual roundtable. It had been planned to be an in-person roundtable but we adjusted, and I think we had some really good presentations. If you missed it, I would really encourage you to take a look at the recording and those presentations.

We've also posted a couple of reports. I mentioned in the prior section about the TAM Systems Handbook, but we also have a couple of research syntheses that we posted.

One of the research syntheses is the investment prioritization state of the practice. This is our effort to provide more technical assistance on all aspects of the TAM Plan requirements, and investment prioritization is one of the four TAM Plan elements required by all TAM Plans, so we wanted to do kind of a culling -- culling is not the right word. We wanted to do a synthesis -- I was trying to find another word but synthesis is the right word -- of all of the information that is currently available. We just looked at what is out there, we pulled it together and we packaged it so that you don't have to go looking for it all over the place, and provided this document on investment prioritization that you could take a look at, and I encourage you to do so.

We did a similar thing with the Decision Support Tool, using real world applications and noteworthy practices.

Of course, I always say the very best resource is the Regional TAM Points of Contact, and here they are, identified here, for all 10 regions. These folks are involved with the development of the TAM Program and have been for years. They are really subject matter experts and if they can't answer your question they know how to get the answer to your question. You can also email us at the TAM email, TAM@dot.gov and someone will respond. That mailbox is looked at periodically and someone will respond to your request there. Always, our TAM webpage, I do direct you there. We post things all the time on the webpage, new resources, and now that we have that new search tool -- and now that you have that new search tool, it makes it a little bit easier to find what you are looking for. I encourage you to make use of all of these resources as you are moving forward.

Now we're going to move into the questions section. Let's see what we have.

Anna, do you want to read the published questions.

>>Speaker:
Sure. One moment. Is there a PDF sample of a completed TAMplate available?

>>Mshadoni Smith:
I believe there is an example that is on the TAMplate webpage. If not, we can post one there, but I believe that there is already an example there.

>>Speaker:
All right. What is the expected release date of TAMplate 2.0?

>>Mshadoni Smith:
Well, we're just kicking off the project, so we might have a little bit of a delay in getting it -- not a delay. It's not a delay. It's just that the project just started, so I don't have a completion date yet. We're still trying to scope all of the upgrades for the TAMplate 2.0. I just wanted to let you know that that is an effort that we are undertaking in order to better meet the needs of the community.

>>Speaker:
All right, can you show us what the submission of a TAM Plan through the FTA NTD site would look like?

>>Mshadoni Smith:
I may be misunderstanding the question, and I'm actually trying to find it in the list, but there is no TAM Plan submission through the NTD or any other venue. Your TAM Plan is self-certified and it can be requested in your tri-annual oversight review, but it does not

submit to FTA so I can't share with you what a TAM Plan submission looks like. If you would like to clarify your question, please feel free to do so.

>>Speaker:
What is the first year for generating the TAM Narrative Report?

>>Mshadoni Smith:
The first year was Report Year '19. Tom, do you want to mention anything about -- do you want to add anything to that?

>>Tom Coleman:
Hi Msh. I think yes, last year was the first year. My understanding was that we kind of collected that. I think we're still in the process of figuring out how the best way to kind of analyze those, but we're excited to have that new data and as part of our annual process we're still kind of figuring out how we're handling that, but yes, we're excited to continue collecting that moving forward and last year was the first year.

>>Speaker:
All right, does any report need to be submitted to FTA or simply shared with the local MPO?

>>Mshadoni Smith:
The rule requires that you share your TAM data or your supporting information for your TAM Plan with your MPO and that may include your narrative report, but the TAM Plan does not submit to FTA but the narrative report is submit to the NTD.

I hope I have sufficiently confused you with that answer. I kind of went in a circle. I apologize for that. Let me try and clarify.

The NTD collects your data report which includes your asset inventories, your targets and your condition assessments, as well as your narrative report.

What you share with your MPO or your planning partner is the information that you used to develop your TAM Plan which might also include the information you submit to the NTD.

I hope that's clear as mud. Please ask another question if I messed that up too much.

>>Speaker:
All right. The next question I think I'll read and I actually had a little bit of back and forth with the poster and we clarified it, but the question was can you share the changes that were included in the handbook compared to the previous version? On a little more digging we've clarified that the systems handbook that Msh was referring to previously is a

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new publication that is not an update to the TAM Guide. The TAM Guide is still its own document and then this new Systems Handbook is an additional resource. That is new. It's not the second iteration of a previous document.

Msh, do you want to add anything else on that, or shall we move to the next one?

>>Mshadoni Smith:
No, we can move to the next one. You covered that. You clarified that.

>>Speaker:
Great. Is there any way to see other agency's TAM Plans to use as examples?

>>Mshadoni Smith:
We have, I believe we still have a peer library on the TAM webpage where you can submit documents or materials to share amongst the industry. It is completely voluntary. We do not have a cross-section of plans, however -- we don't have them but I believe APDA and ASHDL (ph) have posted a handful of TAM Plans. Anna, do you know where those links are located for the APDA and ASHDL TAM Plan examples?

>>Speaker:
I will post the ASHDL one in the chat, but I can only do so much multitasking at once. I'll post that when I get a chance. The APDA one, I may need to dig a little more to find, but we can share those. There may actually be a link to those from the FTA TAM website. I can double-check that in a moment as well.

>>Mshadoni Smith:
I believe that there is but I cannot remember exactly where it's located. But to answer your question, there are TAM Plans that you can use as an example or that you can view as an example, but FTA does not have a stable of TAM Plans that we make available to anyone. TAM Plans are not submit to FTA so it's all a voluntary process.

>>Speaker:
I will post that link in a moment.

The next question I think will be more for Tom. How can it populate TAM data if the data is due October 31? For the Group Plan Summary, isn't what we want to compare performance versus targets as opposed to targets from two different years?

>>Mshadoni Smith:
Can I jump in there really quick, Tom, before you really clarify the technical aspect of this? I just want to make sure that it is talking about the Group Plan Summary and not the TAMplate. I do want to be clear that any publication of NTD data is after it is officially published by NTD, so TAM does not get any previews to the NTD data. There won't be

any before -- there won't be any previews of that data. I just want to make sure that that is clear. And Tom, please do answer the technical aspect.

>>Tom Coleman:
Sure. I'm just going to rephrase the question as I understand it, Anna, or we can do follow-up if I didn't.

My understanding is -- well, first, let me just clarify the temporal scope of the tool I just showed you, the Group Plan Summary Tool. That tool's scope is fiscal year 2019, so that actually covers different periods of time, 12 months for each agency depending on which type of agency you're in. What it does is it's a snapshot but, you're right, there is a lag. But the point of I think the tool and providing that snapshot between years was there were targets for 2018 and fiscal year 2018 and 2019, and you are now able to see changes between those years and do aggregations by individual agency group plans and UZA, which we think it a huge improvement. You're right though, there is a lag.

I don't know if that exactly answered your question but I think the spirit of it was how are you able to provide fresh data that might be useful to you and the answer is the NTD is actually like a really processed data system and so we take a lot of time. It takes us a significant amount of time to process the data and the lag is unfortunately like about a year, so that's as fresh as it will be and that will be in November of this year we'll publish fiscal year 2019 data.

>>Speaker:
Okay. Thank you both to Richard and Crystal for sending me the links to the ASHDL and APDA sites in real-time while we are going through this.

All right, what are transit agencies expected to submit to FTA through NTD?

>>Mshadoni Smith:
I went over this, but Tom, go ahead, Tom.

>>Tom Coleman:
I am just going to -- I am literally quoting Msh because I'm taking notes right now. I believe -- because I'm new too -- I mean so the NTD collects asset data such as asset inventories, types of assets and [inaudible]. I think this captures it. The NTD does not capture the full TAM Plan, and so in that regard, I guess in your mind you have to separate kind of the larger picture, I think, of the TAM Program and your TAM Plans from kind of the data fields that the NTD requires, which is sort of like a subset I think of your plan.

Msh, do you have anything to add? Or maybe I got some stuff wrong?

>>Mshadoni Smith:
No. I would just -- oh, okay. We had a slide on this in the presentation but it is the asset inventory updates, your state of good repair targets, your condition assessments and your narrative report. Those are the four aspects of TAM requirements that you report to the NTD. There are additional NTD requirements that you also report to the NTD, unless you fall into the asset-only reporter category.

>>Speaker:
All right, approximately how many transit agencies must comply with TAM?

>>Mshadoni Smith:
That's an interesting question. I am not sure there are any that don't comply TAM. TAM covers all recipients of Chapter 53. Those that have closed door 5310 service are not required to do a TAM Plan. Those that don't operate transit service are not required to do a TAM Plan, for instance, Chapter 53 recipients that are just planning or research recipients. But any transit operator that owns operates or manages capital -- public transportation is required to do a TAM Plan.

Are you looking for an actual number? If so, I will just -- I don't know off the top of my head, but there are estimates in the Final Rule preamble that you could take a look at.

>>Speaker:
Thank you. I think there are a number of questions related to NTD reporting, some of which may also be covered in the recent NTI webinar from I think that was about two weeks ago covering NTD reporting, so I will recommend to people to check that out and I believe the recording for that is on the FTA TAM webpage. I can double-check that in a moment and share the link.

Another question, are your NTD target figures supposed to -- I'm going to say supposed to be the assets that have actually reached useful life, or what you know your agency has funding to replace?

>>Mshadoni Smith:
Let me jump in there first. I don't know if I can see this question right now but I'm going to -- Anna, where is that question? Condition assessment information? No, no, no.

>>Speaker:
Scroll up. It's in the Q&A pod in the published questions about two-thirds of the way down.

>>Mshadoni Smith:
Are your entity target figures supposed to -- assets that have reached useful life?

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Let me clarify that the TAM state of good repair targets are estimates of the useful life benchmark. How many assets are over the useful life benchmark or the ULB, not the useful life which is used to determine your FTA participation in grant -- eligibility for replacement grants. Those are two separate things. They sound alike; they're two separate things.

The ULB is considered to be a max service estimate and it is customizable. There are defaults that are available on the TAM webpage by asset category, and those are the defaults that will be available in the NTD when you are submitting your fleet information. However, there is the option to customize it based on your agency's expectation of useful life benchmark or the ULB.

How you determine what that ULB is an agency determination. Tom, I'm going to let you take a stab at answering this as well, because I'm not sure from an NTD perspective what direction on ULB reporting you may want to share with this question.

>>Tom Coleman:
I think you covered it, Msh. I think ULB is a TAM kind of figure that -- it's a benchmark. I think I view the NTD, especially with the products we're producing, is trying to just be able to like aggregate and maybe share best practices or at least kind of show snapshots from across the country in different ways that might be useful, but ultimately, I think the NTD houses a number of program-specific data, one of which is TAM, so to the extent that we collect ULB, it's consistent with I think the TAM rule and benchmark. Thank you for highlighting the specifics, the B in ULB.

>>Mshadoni Smith:
I'm used to highlighting the B in the ULB. I've been doing this for about five years now.

When we came up with that determination in writing the Final Rule, it was intentional but the confusion was not intentional. We wanted to make sure that it was -- it related to what we anticipated being agencies' projections for the lifecycle or the replacement cycle, rather, of their assets, but it has caused a whole lot of confusion in that it is so closely in terminology to useful life, but it's very different in terms of application. Whereas useful life is more of a minimum age and for a vehicle's mileage that you need to attain in order to be eligible. Whereas useful life benchmark is a maximum age that you anticipate any type of asset before you put it in for replacement in your priorities.

Anna, do you want to go to the next question?

>>Speaker:
Sure. Asking for clarification about where condition assessment data is recorded in NTD? Chris is saying I have only seen the ULB calculations but this may be different because we are not full reporters.

>>Mshadoni Smith:
Tom can chime in but when we talk about condition assessment information in the NTD for the AIM, or the Asset Inventory Module, which is the information that's collected relative to the TAM requirements, we are referencing the useful life benchmark calculations and the facility condition assessments.

Tom, do you want to give him maybe a little bit more clarification on where exactly those are located in the NTD?

>>Tom Coleman:
Yes. There was actually a slide on this, Msh. I love turning people to like a single source and for consistency. This is actually I think Slide 16. You don't have to turn to it necessarily.

I think in that same search tool I showed on Slide 16, there's a bunch of files. I think the NTD in total with our data products and condition assessment, and Msh, there's a number of fields, a number of kind of data points that we collect that are related to condition assessment. How they appear will depend on the file, but I guess the four broad categories of files -- I've shown you one data table today. Another one is the database files. I think the database files has as close to like raw data and the NTD currently produces and we're kind of thinking about whether that's the right format. In those database files as shown on Slide 16, if you search for, for instance, just type in database, it should populate for 2018 -- because that's the most current year we have available today -- a number of files, and then within those I believe there's a number of asset related database files that would have condition assessment data, depending on kind of there isn't one -- I like to put this out there too. There isn't a one-to-one with the files and the forms that you fill out. If you're filling out an A90 or an A30, there is no single file called A30, 'Oh, let's see all agencies and what they filled in for the A30.' NTD processes the data into files that reflect across like a theme, and the database files, there's about 30 of them, they each have a different theme. The ones with condition assessment would be the asset files. There's actually service vehicle inventory. There's revenue vehicle inventory. Those are just a couple of the files. There's a number, and you can actually toggle on that NTD data products page 'Asset' and get a subset of files that way.

I guess that will just depend on you. If you're looking for a single file for a form you filled out though, it won't be there. That's not how the NTD produces its annual data products.

>>Mshadoni Smith:
Thanks, Tom.

>>Speaker:

All right. Sorry, one moment. All right, so we have a question asking for clarification about how will we know that the TAM Plan was completed correctly if it's not being submitted?

>>Mshadoni Smith:
I am so glad you asked. There is a TAM Plan Self-Assessment Tool that's now available on the TAM webpage, which you can utilize to do a self-check of where you're TAM Plan is. The FTA oversight process does -- I think we call it a comprehensive review now, but it's also -- it's been known as the triannual review where we verify compliance with our regulations and that's another opportunity where you can get feedback on the compliance of your TAM Plan. But I would recommend that you take a look at that self-assessment tool because you can do that at any time and the results, not only can you track the compliance of your plan, you could track your progress over time. You can see maybe today you're compliant, maybe tomorrow you're advanced, or maybe in different parts of the TAM Plan or different requirement areas you are in different levels of maturity and that could maybe identify where you want to add more resources or more effort or put more training or however you want to monitor and maintain your TAM Plan and your TAM Program.

I feel like I planted that question because you just -- that went right into something that I wanted to highlight, so thank you.

Anna, I think we missed one question here. I'm going to go back really quick. Someone asked -- and maybe be already answered this and I apologize if it's a repeat, but if the TAM Plan is not submit to FTA, how do -- oh, that is the same question. I apologize.

>>Speaker:
That's the one we just …

>>Mshadoni Smith:
I just answered something else.

>>Speaker:
I think you just wrote on the wrong one. The next one says, just to clarify, the small providers are still able to use the TAM Plan template. I am assuming that this is referring to the Excel file. If you are already using the Excel file, are comfortable with it, that you're welcome to still use that rather than switching over to that web-based TAMplate.

>>Mshadoni Smith:
Yes, but I do want to clarify that there is no technical support for the small provider Excel tool any longer. We are shifting all of our support, IT support to the TAMplate, so while it's still accessible, it will be up to you to fix any bugs that may come up on the macros or to understand the mechanics of the Excel tool to be self-sufficient.

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>>Speaker:
Great, thank you. When will the A form blank templates be available for NTD reporting? Will the templates be expanded to include the A10 and A90, which I have not seen previously posted?

>>Mshadoni Smith:
That's all Tom. I'm going to let you go ahead and answer that one.

>>Tom Coleman:
Sorry. Was it the A90 and the A10? Is that the question? When will those be published? Maybe I misheard?

>>Speaker:
Yes. When will those be available?

>>Mshadoni Smith:
The blank form templates.

>>Tom Coleman:
The blank form -- they should -- we're talking about fiscal year '20. The new templates for the A10 and A90 should both be available on the NTD website, if not already, I mean, Anna, is there any way -- I can go look right now for the link, or we can follow-up.

>>Speaker:
Okay. You can follow-up on that.

Next, I posted a link to NTI's YouTube channel where they have a recording of the October 6 webinar on NTD and TAM, and so I encourage people to check that out.

Next question, with the introduction of the new Systems Handbook, is the A20 NTD submission likely to change to reflect the best practices documents in the handbook? If so, what would be the anticipated timeline for this change?

>>Mshadoni Smith:
The short answer is no. The long answer is I don't know. The Systems Handbook is not a required practice. It is a compilation of practices that are happening across the country. The NTD is unlikely to change based on best practices or noteworthy practices. That would need to be mandate by Congress and that would require -- you would know well in advance if we were going to change it to address what was in the systems document. So, short answer, no; long answer, I don't know.

>>Speaker:

Thank you.

>>Mshadoni Smith:
We have about five minutes left. I see we have, it looks like one, two, three more questions. I think we can probably get to them, but I apologize if I give shorter answers but I just want to address everything that folks have brought up.

>>Speaker:
All right. If you already have a TAM, do we need to include in the next submission the progress of our last -- I'm assuming our last plan or last year, as well as setting the new ULBs for vehicles we have since awarded.

>>Mshadoni Smith:
The short answer is that seems like a good idea. Well, no. The short answer is yes. The longer answer is that seems like a good idea. Your previous TAM took into account the context in which you created your priorities. Your next TAM, you'll want to see what the changes are from the last time you addressed that context.

As far as your ULBs, I would imagine that is an ongoing process to refine what that replacement cycles are for your vehicles. You may have better knowledge of what to expect or what that cycle would be, so I'm going to say those all seem like a good idea. That would make your TAM Plan more complete.

All right, I'm going to just answer -- I'm just going to ask the question myself, sorry Anna.

We have inspected all facilities in same year. Do we need to update SGR each year to the next TAM?

I don't know if I understand what this question means, so I'm going to answer what I think it means.

If you've done all of your facility condition assessments for all of your facilities and you've reported them all to your -- to the NTD, and you're setting targets based on those condition assessments, will you need to update them every year?

Yes, you will need to report your target every year. If it is the same target, you will still need to report it every year. I would recommend you consider the context because your target is not just about the condition. Your target is also about the priorities or the funding that you have available, and those things may fluctuate, whereas your condition assessment may not.

Then, your condition assessment ages. Right? It's not valid indefinitely. You will need to do an assessment again, so you want to take into account the progression of the condition of your facility every year as you're setting your targets.

This might be the last question. Is a good way to know you're on track with setting targets to subtract your performance measure from 100, and the remainder will be your target percentage?

Hmm, I think a good way to know if you're on track is to assess if you are where you plan to be in your TAM Plan. I'm going to kind of like go off-book here and say that this -- what you're trying to get is like a rule of thumb, how can I quickly identify if I'm on track? But that's not necessarily the purpose of TAM. TAM is supposed to have you look at the context in which you're operating. Has your service changed? Have your needs changed? Have your finances changed? Then, address, am I still on track to providing the service that I intended? Are my assets still meeting the needs that I intended?

I don't have a shortcut for how to determine that rule of thumb. If you're asking moreso about the calculation of your target, I believe part of that was addressed in the NTI webinar a couple of weeks ago, and there's also a training course. I think we still have that training course that does the performance measure calculations and there are fact sheets that can help you identify how to calculate your targets.

I'm sorry I don't have a better answer for that question.

With one minute left, I think -- oh, okay. We have one more question. What is FTA's expectation based on the following?

I could tell you right now, I don't have any expectations, so that's the answer. Or, it depends. Condition ratings may be decreasing but there is less funding available for maintenance and/or upgrades in the current economy. I understand. Our agency has significantly less funds this year than we have in the past. This is an issue that I think we're all facing, or that you all are facing. Not necessarily to the same degree, but everyone is facing issues of funding shortfalls and how do we address this?

FTA has no expectation when it comes to how you plan to address it. I am actually curious how you're addressing it.

The TAM Program, again, we like to get feedback directly from operators. Let us know what you need. Let us know how you're doing, and let us know how you're adjusting so that we can adjust with you. Are there resources that you need that will better help you to address these shortfalls, or how to prioritize some issues that you may be having?

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I know that is a somewhat trite answer to a very serious concern, and I don't intend to diminish the situation that you're in, but we don't have any expectations. That would be my answer.

I think that is all of the questions that we have published, and I invite you, the last question asker to contact me directly so we could have an offline discussion about that because I am very curious. And I actually invite all of you that are participating today to share with us through our TAM email or the webpage or whatever format you have available to share with us some of your experiences. I'm also very curious how you are planning for recovery. This is a difficult time and it's going to take a lot to kind of figure out how we get back on track.

I want to thank you for your time this afternoon. I've gone two minutes over and I am going to sign off. Thank you to Tom, Anna and the Volpe team for supporting this webinar. Again, thank you for your time this afternoon.