

David B. Clarke

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When David Clarke was appointed the fourth permanent director of the Center for Transportation Research (CTR) at the University of Tennessee (UT), Knoxville, in 2008, he already had a long relationship with the university, where he had earned a bachelor's degree, master's degree, and Ph.D. in civil engineering. As CTR director, Clarke guides the activities of the university's hub of transportation-related research, technology transfer, and continuing education. Among his accomplishments are stabilizing the center's finances and reducing its contract backlog; implementing a strategic planning process; and developing faculty fellow, visiting scholar, and continuing education programs.

"I have always had an interest in freight transportation, particularly railways," Clarke comments. "I was fortunate to attend a university that permitted me to craft a curriculum combining



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both business and engineering classes relevant to my interests." As a graduate student, Clarke served as research assistant at UT Knoxville and at Oak Ridge National Laboratory.

After working as an engineer and program manager at Bechtel Power Corporation and at Science Applications International Corporation, Clarke returned to academia in 1990 as assistant director of UT's Transportation Center, supporting research collaboration with Oak Ridge and managing transportation and logistics modeling, database design and construction, software development, and data collection efforts. He also led the center's freight and intermodal transportation activities and developed an intermodal management system for the Tennessee Department of Transportation.

In 1998, Clarke was hired by Clemson University in South Carolina to rebuild the Civil Engineering Department's transportation program. He returned to Tennessee in 2004 and since then has served as director of the Tennessee Local Technical Assistance Program, providing technical assistance, training, and technology transfer to county and municipal transportation agencies throughout the state. He is a Professional Engineer in Tennessee and South Carolina.

Some of Clarke's notable projects include the initial feasibility

study for the Heartland Corridor Rail project, a public-private partnership between Norfolk Southern, the Federal Highway Administration, and three states, which opened for service in 2010. Along with colleague Mark Burton, Clarke inspected the routes between Columbus, Ohio, and Radford, Virginia, assessing clearance needs for the new double-stack rail movements. He also was the chief engineer who restored the 42-mile former CSX Old Line Railroad in southeast Tennessee to short-line service. "I assessed track and bridge rehabilitation needs, helped oversee contractor work during the rehabilitation, assisted with operations planning, and just had a great time," he recalls.

Clarke values his work developing and teaching rail courses for college students, faculty, and industry professionals throughout the United States, as well as in Asia and Latin America. He serves as the lead for rail research and education activities with the National University Rail Center, or NURail, the first rail-focused University Transportation Center. He was part of the team that formed NURail.

"Exposure to research is an invaluable experience for students," Clarke muses. "Even if a student has no plans to pursue a career in formal research, the ability to apply the research process is hugely advantageous. As a young engineer, I quickly found out that very few of my assignments had textbook solutions."

Clark attended his first TRB Annual Meeting in the 1970s as a graduate student and joined the Standing Committee on Freight Rail Transportation in 1991. "I attended every freight- and rail-focused session—which, in that era, were all too few," Clarke notes. "It has been wonderful to see the event grow in the intervening years."

Clarke also is a member of the Standing Committees on Freight Transportation Economics and Regulation and on Railroad Operating Technologies, and is chair of the Subcommittee on Rail Capacity. Clarke chaired the Standing Committee on Freight Rail Transportation and recently was named an emeritus member.

"It was a real honor to chair the committee, and through it I was able to work with many tremendous people," Clark observes. "We expanded the committee's scope from local railroads to freight railroads at all levels." Under his leadership, the committee also sponsored and cosponsored Annual Meeting sessions and workshops and, in 2007, organized the first SummeRail midyear committee meeting. At SummeRail, attendees gather for two days of railroad site tours, inspection trips, and presentations from industry and government speakers.

Along with his TRB service, Clarke is a member of the American Society of Civil Engineers and of its Transportation and Development Institute Rail Transportation Committee. He also serves on the American Railway Engineering and Maintenance-of-Way Association, the American Public Works Association, and the Lexington Group in Transportation History.