

Transportation and Ethics



DR. JILL HOUGH, PROGRAM DIRECTOR

**SMALL URBAN & RURAL TRANSIT CENTER
UPPER GREAT PLAINS TRANSPORTATION INSTITUTE
NORTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY**

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Just a Few Questions



- When do we take an elderly driver's keys away from him/her?
- Is it o.k. for a person with poor vision to memorize the visual exam to keep their license?
- Do we try to create the greatest level of mobility for all? What does this look like? What does this do to our society?



What is Ethics



- Ethics refers to standards of behavior that tell us how human beings ought to act in the many situations in which they find themselves as friends, parents, children, citizens, businesspeople, teachers, professionals.....
- Difference between good and bad
- Difference between right and wrong



What Ethics is NOT



- Feelings
- Religion
- Following the law
- Following culturally accepted norms
- Science



“Establishing and maintaining strong moral standards in the workplace are essential to building public trust and delivering the transportation program effectively.”

- Jim Crumpacker - Author of “Fostering a Culture of Ethics”

Growing Trend of Ethical Violations



- **Do ethical violations occur in the work place?**
 - What about the financial crisis? Ethics violations?
 - Ethics Resource Center report published in January 2008 revealed that 52 percent of Federal, 57 percent of State, and 63 percent of local government respondents witnessed violations of ethical standards, policies or law in their workplaces.
- **Do ethical violations occur on college campuses?**
 - Duke University study and Rutgers study revealed more MBA students cheating.
 - Concern for future generations.

Simple Example



- Taking extra long lunch – what does this cost a company? Seems harmless?
- Organization with 5,000 people
- Earn on average \$50,000/year
- Return from lunch break 15-30 minutes late once per month
- Financial impact = \$360,000 to \$720,000 per year or the loss equal to 7.5 to 15 full-time employees.
- Is this harmless? Is this ethical?

Transportation Ethics Violation Example



USDOT

- Forfeited home of university professor who embezzled nearly \$1 million in Federal Highway Administration Cooperative Agreements Funds.

Why is Ethics Important in Transportation?



- **We work with a public good and need to manage resources accordingly.**
 - Former Federal Government Employee Comment, “People should manage the funds like it was their money. If they did that there would be less waste.”
- **Wrong ethical choices in transportation can be paramount because of the lack of fiscal resources available to meet the growing demands.**

Ethical Standards



- **How do we develop our ethics?**
 - Family
 - Friends/peers
 - Education

- **How do we apply ethics to situations?**
 - Let's take a look at some standards and tests that exist.



What Standards/ Tests Exist?



- Not exhaustive.....
- Global - Caux Round Table - www.cauxroundtable.org
- Smell Test
- Rights Approach
 - Rights
 - Exceptions
 - Choices
- Justice Test
- Common Good Test
- Character/Virtue Test

Caux Round Table



- **Caux Round Table - www.cauxroundtable.org**
 - Moral Capitalism for a Better World
- **Look at government, business, and responsible globalization.**
- **Principles are rooted in three ethical foundations**
 - responsible stewardship;
 - living and working for mutual advantage; and
 - the respect and protection of human dignity.

Smell Test



- Ask yourself, “What if I read about this on the front page of the newspaper or in a blog?”
- Some may ask, “what would mom think?”
- Strengths:
 - focuses on what other ethical people in society think;
 - recognizes morality is about what other people think too;
 - enlists emotion of shame which can be a powerful motivator.



Smell Test Continued



- **Weakness: Only as good as the society we live in.**
 - Like living with a bad smell – may lose ability to notice the unethical behavior.
- Tells us an action is an ethical issue, but doesn't show why it is right or wrong.
- “Quick and dirty” test, but often have to move beyond it.



Rights Approach



- **Three Tests**
- **Rights – Ask yourself, “Are we respecting human rights?”** the rights test it is not helpful in ordinary circumstances.
- **Exception – Ask yourself, “What if everyone did it?”**
 - Consider the action – not telling the truth, breaking a promise
 - Strength - reminds us not to give ourselves advantages.
 - Weakness – extremists may agree to a world that others would find unacceptable.

Rights Approach – Choice Test



- Ask yourself, “Are the people affected able to make their own choices?”
 - Am I giving others freedom to choose what they value?
 - Am I giving others the information necessary to know what they value in this situation?
- **Strengths:** Can determine people’s values through surveys and focus groups, etc.
- **Weakness:** May be a fine line between persuasion and coercion.

Justice Test



- Ask yourself, “Is this a fair distribution of benefits and burdens?”
- Aristotle more than 2000 years ago said, “equals should be treated equally and unequals unequally.”
- What are reasons for inequality?
 - Effort
 - Accomplishment
 - Contribution
 - Need
 - Seniority
 - Contract
 - Relationship

Justice Test Continued

- **Strengths:** Fairness one of most fundamental ethical instincts in humans (and in animals).
- **Weaknesses:** Test open to disagreement because there is no single criterion for fair distribution.



Common Good Test



- Ask yourself, “Are we looking out for the common good?”
- Very important in transportation
 - Can’t just look to the individual good because we live in a community.
 - Mobility is important for everyone.
- Strengths:
 - Provides reality check for individuals and organizations.
- Weaknesses:
 - A lot of disagreement on what constitutes the common good.

Character or Virtue Test



- Ask yourself, “Does this action represent the kind of person I am or want to be? Does it represent my organization’s reputation or vision?”
 - Want to have virtues or habits of acting a certain way
- **Strengths**
 - Think about what is good
 - Not just a matter of following ethical rules, but are habits of acting in a certain way that society thinks good people act.
- **Weaknesses**
 - Psychological research shows most people do not act in consistent way across different situations. E.g., act generously because of good smells or less generously because of noise.

“We share a responsibility for creating the external world by projecting either a spirit of light or a spirit of shadow on that which is other than us. We project either a spirit of hope or a spirit of despair...We have a choice about what we are going to project, and in that choice we help create the world that is.”

-PARKER PALMER

Ask Yourself...



- **Did I do more good than harm today?**
- **Did I treat people with dignity and respect today?**
- **Was I fair and just today?**
- **Was my community better because I was in it?**
- **Was I better because I was in my community?**

Resources



- Caux Round Table - <http://www.cauxroundtable.org>
- Santa Clara University - Mark Kula Center for Applied Ethics www.scu.edu/ethics
- “Fostering a Culture of Ethics.” *Public Roads*. www.tfhrc.gov/pubrds/09janfeb/05
- “The Ethical Mind.” *Harvard Business Review*. March 2007.