The Charleston ADVISOR

Critical Reviews of Web Products for Information Professionals

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About the Author

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▼ ADVISOR REVIEWS—STANDARD REVIEW

TranStats: The Intermodal Transportation Database

Date of Review: November 25, 2003

Composite Score: ★★★★ 3/4

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Pricing Options

Access to TranStats: The Intermodal Transportation Database is available free-of-charge.

Product Description

Launched in September 2002, TranStats: The Intermodal Transportation Database is a "new [Web portal] … for transportation researchers and analysts, aimed at providing 'one stop shopping' for transportation data" (Figure 1). Although aimed at governmental and non-governmental transportation specialists, planners, and consultants, TranStats will also be of value to government documents librarians and other information specialists, and the worldwide transportation community and educated public. TranStats offers a variety of searching and browsing options, as well as manipulation and display features and functionalities for a broad range of source data.

GENERAL CONTENT

As of mid-November 2003, 26 associations and government agencies participated as data providers for TranStats, and include:

- American Automobile Association (AAA)
- American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO)
- American Public Transportation Association (APTA)
- Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA)
- Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)
- Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS)
- Energy Information Administration (EIA)
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)
- Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
- Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA)
- Federal Railroad Administration (FRA)
- Federal Transit Administration (FTA)
- International Trade Administration (ITA)
- Maritime Administration (MARAD)
- National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA)
- National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB)
- Office of the Secretary of Transportation (OST)
- Research and Special Programs Administration (RSPA)
- Saint Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation (SLSDC)
- Texas Transportation Institute (TTI)
- Transportation Research Board (TRB)
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)
- U.S. Census Bureau (Census)
- U.S. Coast Guard (USCG)
- University of Michigan Transportation Research Institute (UMTRI)

A pull-down menu on the TranStats main page (Quick Links) provides an indirect link to the home page of each data provider (Figure 1, lower left-hand corner). In addition, a link to a separate page (See a complete list …) provides an alphabetized list of these sources by organizational acronym (e.g., AAA, AASHTO, APTA), the formal name of each (e.g., American Automobile Association), and a hotlink to the database(s) provided by each source (Databases).

As of mid-November 2003, access was provided to a collection of more than 100 transportation-related databases covering every mode of transportation <http://www.transtats.bts.gov/datasummary.pdf> (Figure 2). Among the noteworthy databases incorporated within TranStats are:

- Airline On-Time Performance Data (BTS)
- American Travel Survey (BTS)
- Automobile Driving Costs (AAA)

Figure 1. **TranStats is the "intermodal transportation" portal to major U.S. transportation statistical databases and files.**

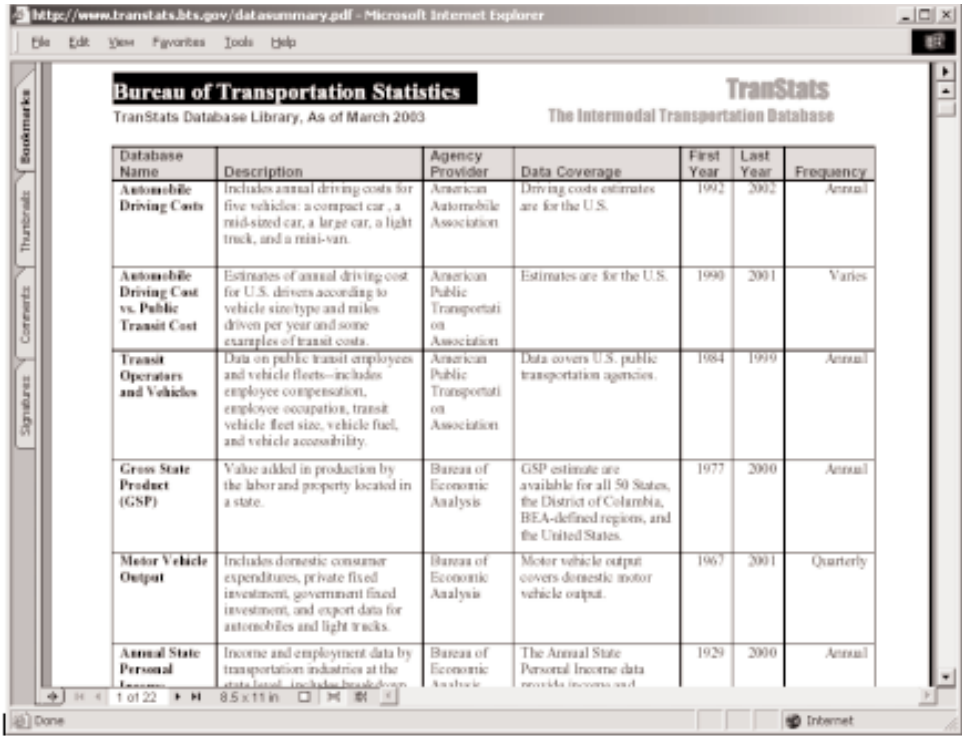

Figure 2. **As of November 2003, the TranStats service provided access to source data from more than 100 databases.**

Large Air Carrier Statistics (BTS)

Licensed Drivers (FHWA)

Motor Carrier Financial & operating Information (BTS)

Transit Operators and Vehicles (APTA)

Transportation Annual Survey (Census)

U.S. Retail Gasoline Prices (EIA)

Vehicle Inventory and Use Survey (Census)

In addition to transportation-related sources, TranStats provides access and has incorporated a number of databases and files of a general nature or indirectly related transportation issues, for example, Census Population Estimates, Consumer Price Index (CPI), Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by Industry, Producer Price Index (PPI)).

BROWSING

Data Library

Users can browse the TranStats "Data Library"—its collection of databases and files—using one of three options: Explore by Mode, Explore by Subject, or Explore by Agency (Figure 1). The Explore by Mode option allows the user to browse a directory of databases categorized by major transportation mode (e.g., Aviation, Rail, Maritime, etc.—see Figure 3). Explore by Subject permits the user to browse by broad topic (e.g., Safety, Energy, Freight Transport, etc.). In addition, the Data Library can be browsed by organization—Explore by Agency (e.g., BTS, FAA, FHWA).

An Example: Browsing by Mode (Aviation)

From within a directory listing, the user can choose an aspect of interest by selecting a particular category from a pull-down menu. For example, after displaying a listing of resources categorized by mode of transportation (Aviation), the user has the option of filtering the listing by a particular subject (Filter Subject) by selecting the topic of interest from the menu (e.g., Economic/Financial, Safety, Travel/Tourism). (See Figure 3, right-hand side.)

For each database listed in the directory, the database name, a brief description, and link to a profile are provided. Each database name is hotlinked to its respec-

tive component Data Tables. In addition, the user can display relevant Summary Tables or an associated TranStats Glossary by selecting from the appropriate tab found to the left of the filter pull-down menu (see Figure 3). The Summary Tables provides an alphabetized listing of National Transportation Statistics relevant to the context of the topic (see Table 1), with each entry hotlinked to an associated page within the U.S. Bureau of Transportation Statistics Web site <http://www.bts.gov/>. The Glossary provides an alphabetized list of terms and phrases relevant to the specific Data Library coverage.

PROFILE

A profile provides:

- an overview of the database;
- a note on coverage;
- first and last years of data availability and frequency of publication;
- a list and description of associated data tables available within the database;
- Summary Tables;
- Related Links;
- Terms and Definitions; and
- Data Source and Contacts (see Figures 4 and 5).

In addition, the profile page provides a link to a directory of the component tables that comprise a particular database (Figure 4, upper right-hand corner—Data Tables). A Data Table page provides a listing of component tables, a brief description of individual tables, links to profiles of each table, as well as a link to a Download page (for example, Figure 6). The Download page (Figure 7) provides an alphabetical listing of available fields (Field Names) that comprise a table (e.g., AccrInterest), and a Description that provides the full field name (e.g., Accrued Interest), an associated field number (21250) and number base (000), and where available, a Support Table that allows the user to access a Look Up table of relevant information for a field (Get Lookup Table) (Figure 7, entry for Carrier). For example, A Lookup of Carrier Code displays a listing of airline carrier codes in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, if the software is loaded. A Download page allows user to choose variables of interest and download the data for subsequent analysis using any database, spreadsheet, or statistical package, including Microsoft Excel 2000, Microsoft Access, SAS software, SPSS, Cognos, and a custom Web portal interface using ASP, Java, and XML technologies <http://www.sybase.com/detail/1,6904,1023503,00.html>.

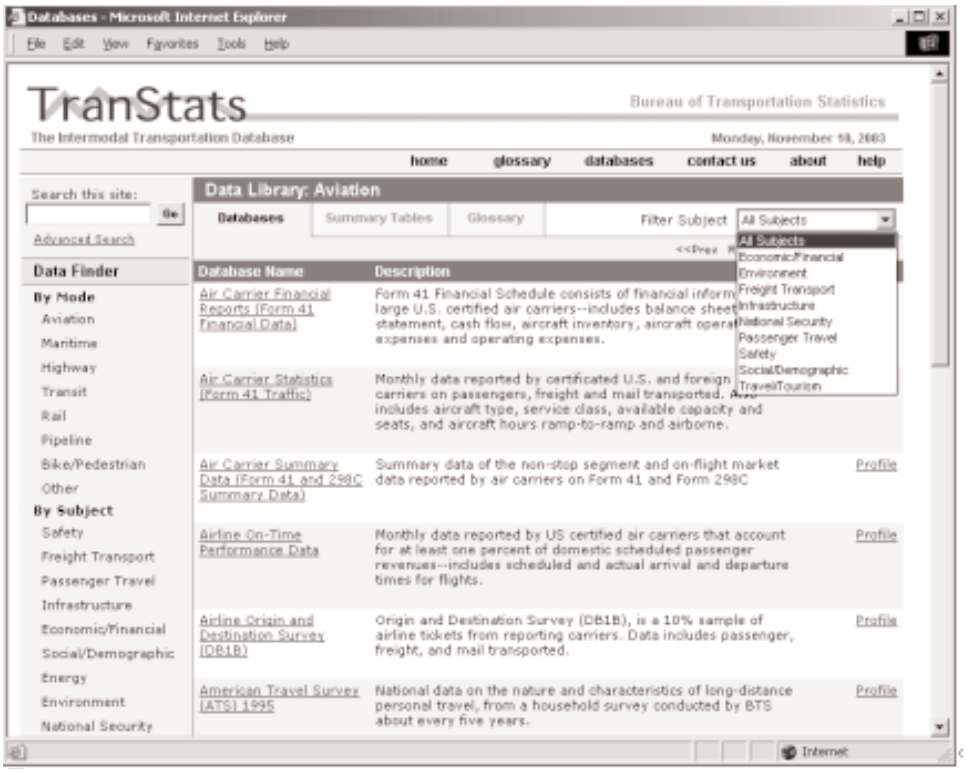

Figure 3. **Among other options, users can browse the TranStats collection of databases and files ("Data Library") by mode of transportation (e.g., "Aviation").**

Air Carrier Profile
Air Passenger Travel Arrivals in the United States from Selected Foreign Countries
Air Passenger Travel Departures from the United States to Selected Foreign Countries
Air Pollution Trends in Selected Metropolitan Statistical Areas
Areas in Nonattainment of National Ambient Air Quality Standards for Criteria Pollutants
Bus Profile
Contributions to Gross Domestic Product (GDP): Selected Industries (Chained 1996 $ billions)
Contributions to Gross Domestic Product (GDP): Selected Industries (Current $ billions)
Employment in Transportation Occupations

Table 1. **A Summary Table displaying a partial list of National Transportation Statistics available for the Aviation Data Library in TranStats.**

The user can Select All Fields or selectively choose those of interest to download (Figure 7). Upon clicking the Download button, the user is prompted with a pop-up window noting that the file is compressed (.zip format) and that it can be opened or saved. Once uncompressed, fields are automatically displayed in a Microsoft Excel file (in the comma delimited file format (.cvs)), if the user has the Microsoft Excel software loaded. Prior to downloading the user can choose to display the percentage of data missing for an individual field (% Missing in Table) in a separate column (%Missing), and/or choose to include available documentation (Documentation) and/or a listing of terms and their definitions (Terms) in the downloaded files. Using various pull-down menus the user can filter data geographically (if applicable), by year, and/or by quarter (Figure 7).

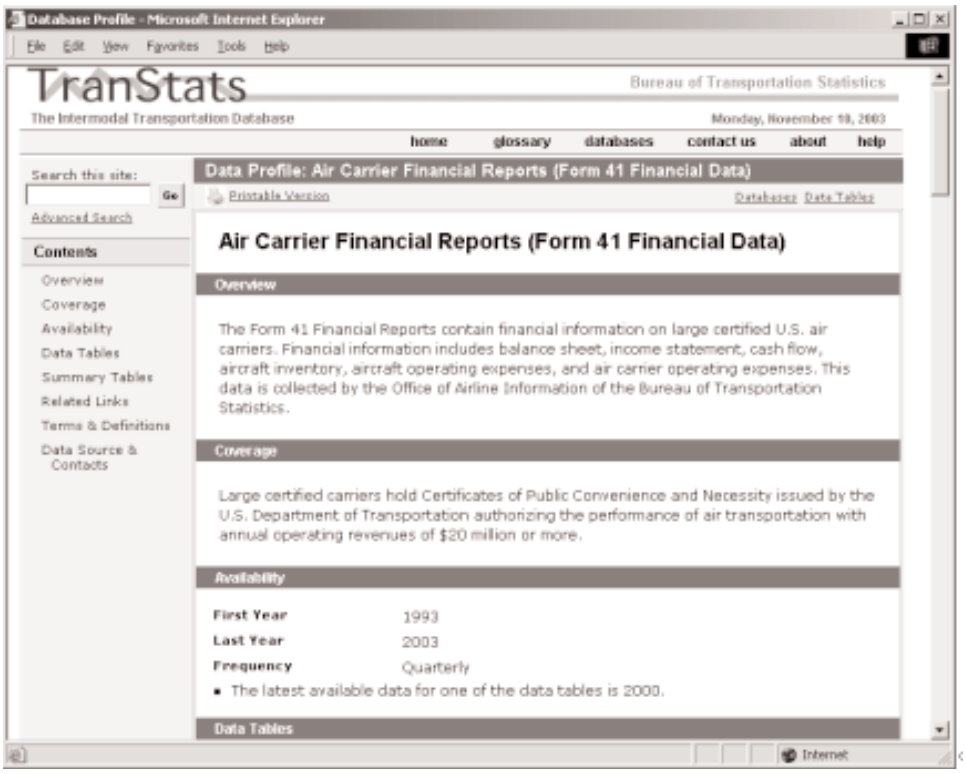

Figure 4. **A TranStats "profile" provides a database overview, a note on coverage, and availability.**

Figure 5. **The profile also provides links to Summary Tables, Related Links, and a glossary of relevant Terms and Definitions.**

DATA TOOLS

Within the Download page, the user can apply a variety of Data Tools to data by selecting from available options—Analysis, Table Profile, Table Contents, Data Tables, Database Profile, Databases, and Terms and Definitions (Figure 7, left side).

Analysis

Upon clicking the Analysis option the user is provided with access to several specific data display options (Analysis Type), notably Table, Chart, Map, Crosstabs, Time Series, and Terms and Definitions. The Table option displays data in a simple table format, while the Chart presents data as a simple horizontal bar chart (Figure 8). Where applicable, users can also display data in Map, Crosstabs, and Time Series formats. Some display formats permit additional display options and functionalities (Figure 8, left side). In addition, the user can display data in a variety of Analysis Summary formats, notably, Top N, Bottom N, Value, Percent of Total, Sort Descending, and Sort Ascending. By selecting from pull-down menus found over the data displays, data can be filtered in a number of ways (i.e., Filter Categories, Filter Variables, Filter Statistics, and Filter Years).

Table Profile

The Table Profile option includes the name of the table (e.g., Schedule B-1), a concise description of the file, the number of records (e.g., 2,558), number of fields (e.g., 77), first year of available data (e.g., 1993), last year of available data (e.g., 2003), frequency of publication (Quarterly), and month of latest update (e.g., June). In addition, there is a glossary of terms with their associated definitions below the main table profile.

Table Contents

The Table Contents provides an identical listing of field names as those found in the Download page (Figure 7) and a hotlink to an Analysis functionality page for each field.

Data Tables and Other Options

As previously described, a Data Table provides a listing of component tables for a file, a brief description of individual tables, and links to profiles of each table and an associated Download page.

Article continues on page 35

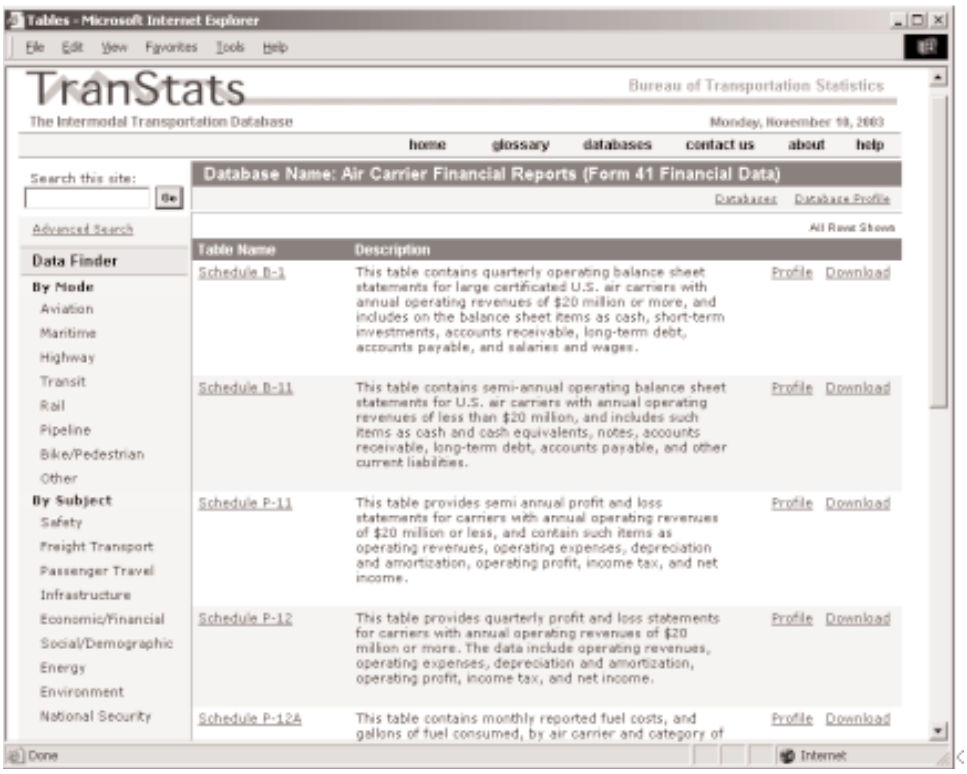

Figure 6. **A Data Table page provides a listing of component tables, a brief description of individual tables, links to Profiles of each table, as well as a link to a Download page.**

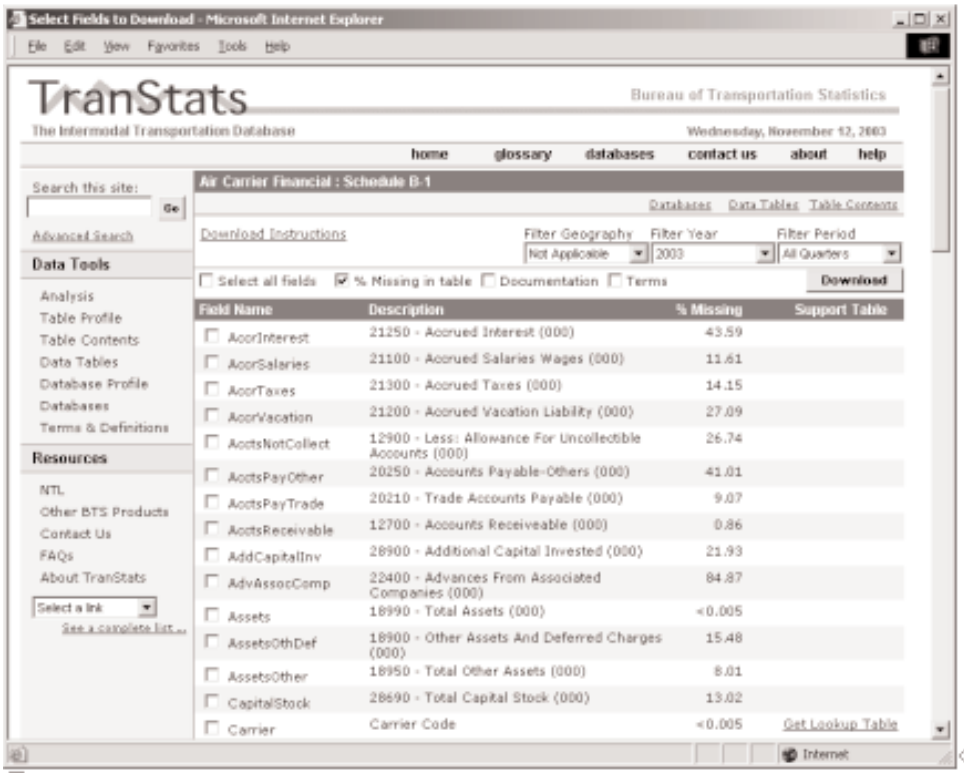

Figure 7. **Among other components, the TranStats Download page provides an alphabetical listing of available fields that comprise a table.**

As noted, a Database Profile provides a brief description of a database along with a summary of its coverage, availability, and other content and features (for example, see Figure 4 and 5), while Databases provides access to a directory of databases within a category of a particular section of the TranStats Data Library (Figure 3).

Resources

Beneath the Data Tools group is a Resources list that provides links to the National Transportation Library home page (NTL) <http://ntl.bts.gov/>, to the U.S. Bureau of Transportation home page (Other BTS Products) <http://www.bts.gov/>, to the TranStats FAQ, and an overall description of the TranStats service (About TranStats). In addition, a pull-down menu (Select a Link) offers easy access to each of the home pages of the government agencies and other organizations that have provided data for the TranStats service; a link to an alphabetized list is also provided (See a complete list …).

Data Tools and access to Resources are also provided from other TranStats pages (see, for example, Figure 7).

SEARCHING

To complement its extensive browsing features and functionalities, TranStats also offers a basic and Advanced Search. The basic search (Search This Site:) allows the user to perform a free-text search of database, table, or data descriptions or annotations. Although all search terms are searched as an implied Boolean AND, formal use of common or advanced Boolean operators (AND, OR, NOT) is not functional. The Advanced Search allows the user to search TranStats descriptions and annotations by one or more key words. Such terms can be combined in one of two Boolean operations by accepting the default ("Match: 'All Word(s)'") [AND], or by selecting the alternative ("Match: 'Any Word(s)'") [OR]. The user can request that the Exact Word(s) be matched by clicking the radio button associated with that option. The search can be modified by transportation mode, subject, agency, and/or year by selecting from available options in the associated pull-down menu for each aspect (Figure 10). In both the basic and Advanced Search options, the keyword

search is made in field descriptions or annotations that contain the full term (e.g., bus) as well as those that contain the term as a partial element (e.g., business).

To optimize search results, users should download, consult, and use the Transportation Research Thesaurus (TRT) to identify standard terms and phrases. Covering all modes and aspects of transportation, the TRT is a tool developed to improve the indexing and retrieval of transportation information materials

The TRT was developed cooperatively by state departments of transportation to provide a common and consistent language between producers and users of the Transportation Research Information Services (TRIS) Database produced by the Transportation Research Board (TRB), a division of the National Research Council <http://trb.org>. TRIS is published on the Web as TRIS Online <http://ntl.bts.gov/tris/> by the National Transportation Library <http://www.ntl.bts.gov>. The TRT is also used by state departments of transportation and other transportation libraries including the National Transportation Library.

The TRT and its associated viewer software allow users to access terminology through Alphabetical, Hierarchical, or Keyword Out of Context displays. The full display shows "family" relationship of terms including SN (Scope Notes), UF (Used For), BT (Broader Term), NT (Narrower Term), and RT (Related Term). A current and previous version of TRT and its software can be downloaded free-of-charge <http://www4.trb.org/trb/tris.nsf/Web/trt>.

SEARCH RESULTS

The results of a basic or advanced search are displayed in the identical format as found in a standard browse display: database name and description with a hotlink to the database profile (see Figure 11). Unlike the browse display (Figure 3), database names are not displayed in alphabetical order and the ability to filter a set is not provided. As in browse display, individual database names are hotlinked to their respective component Data Tables and users can retrieve Summary Tables as well as the associated Glossary by selecting the associated tab of interest above the database listing. In this context, however, only the

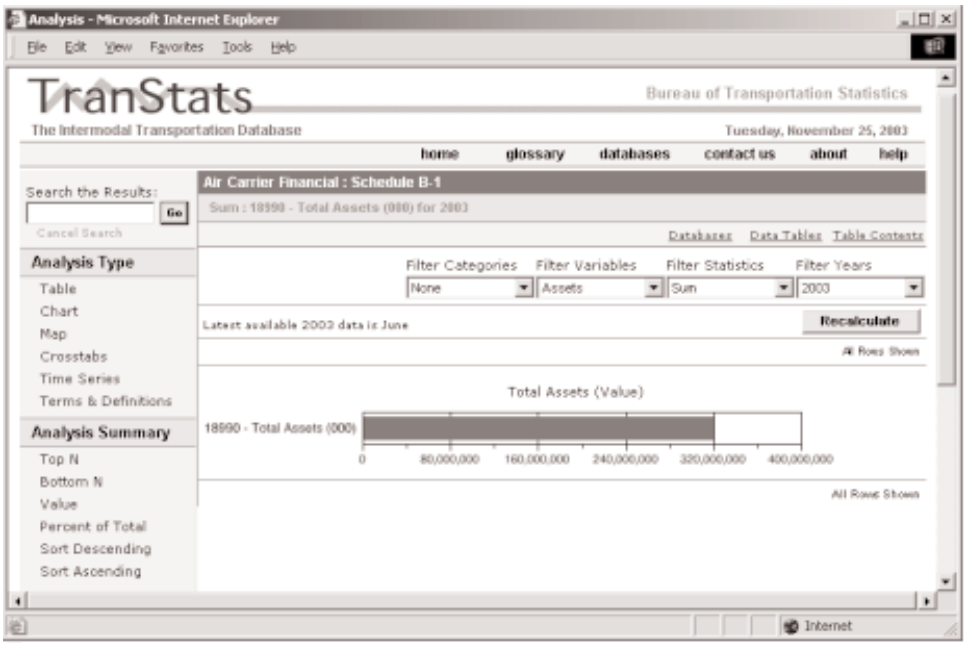

Figure 8. **In TranStats, users can display data in a variety of formats by selecting an option from Analysis Type category.**

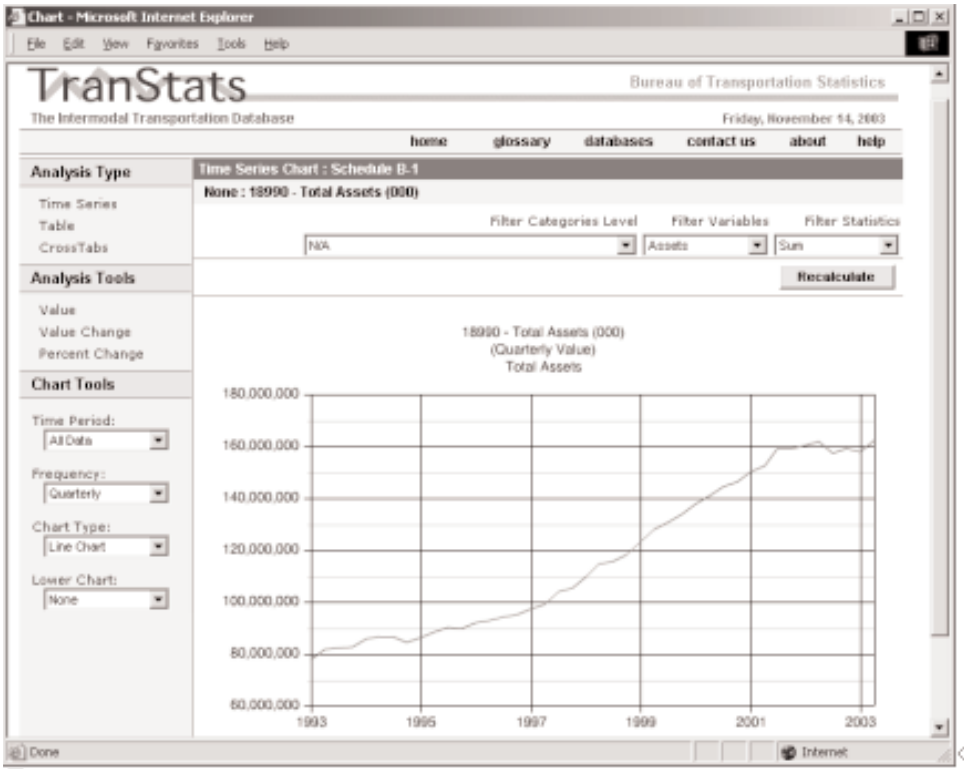

Figure 9. **Data can be displayed in alternative formats (e.g., Chart) and further manipulated using tools specific to individual display options.**

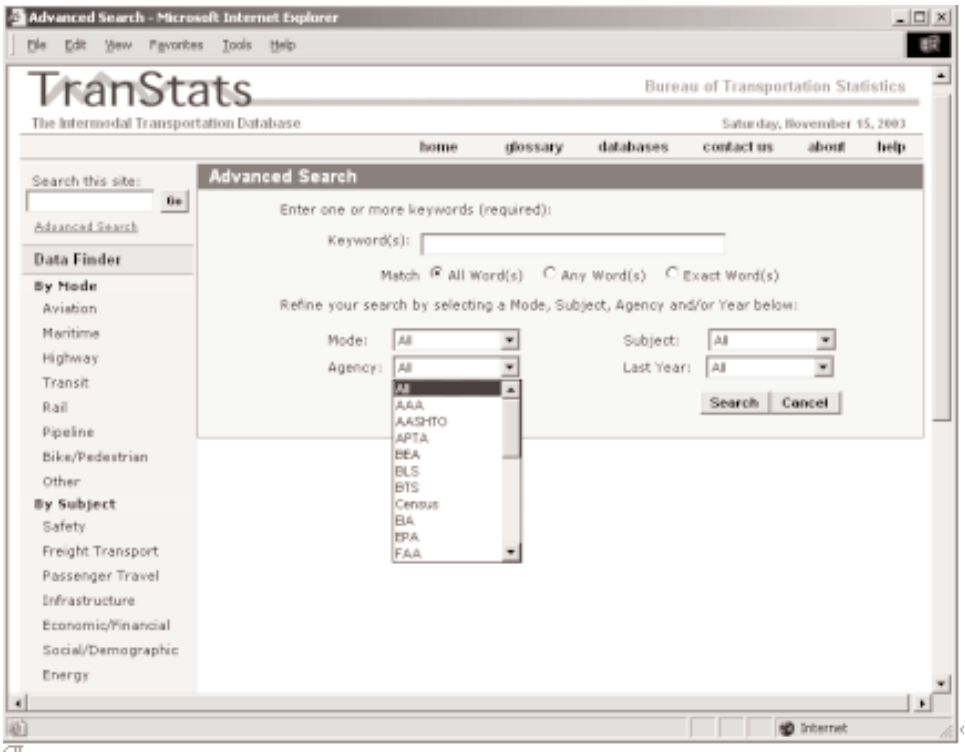

Figure 10. **In the Advanced Search option, users can limit a query to transportation Mode, and/or, Subject, and/or Agency, and/or Time Period.**

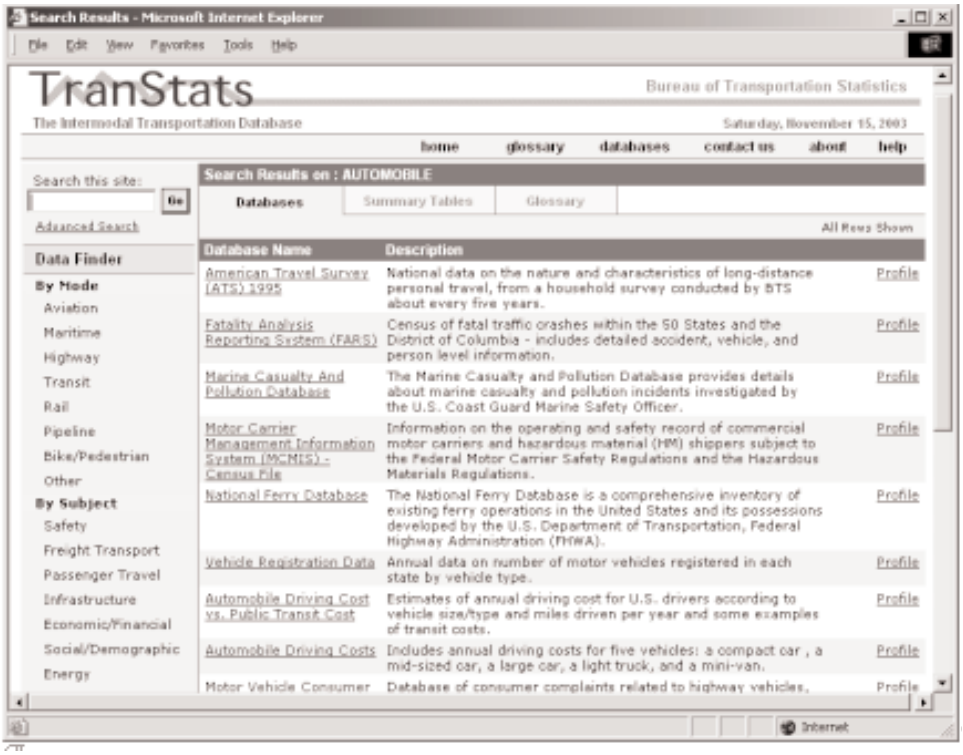

Figure 11. **Search results from a basic or advanced search are displayed in the identical format as found in a standard TranStats Data Library browse display: database name and description with a hotlink to the database Profile.**

Summary Tables and Glossary terms relevant to the search query can be retrieved and displayed.

The search results page, as well as the browse display, offer a Data Finder, various navigation aids that provide ready access to the major browse options—transportation mode (By Mode) and topic (By Subject) (Figures 3 and 11). Upon selection of one of the available options in either category, the system reverts to the standard browse mode, displaying a directory of relevant databases, a brief description, and links to individual profiles. If any entry is selected from the Data Finder, a pull-down menu appears to the right of the Glossary tab, where none had existed previously. When a transportation mode option is selected (e.g., Aviation), a pull-down menu with the option Filter Subject label will appear along with the menu box; when a subject aspect is selected (e.g., Safety), the label and box will change accordingly to offer the option to Filter Mode).

MAPPING CENTER

In addition to various browse and search options, the TranStats Service offers an Mapping Center that "provides mapping and data download applications … [one] can use to geographically analyze and retrieve data in the TranStats Data Library and provides access, through a map based download interface, to all transportation geospatial data collected and maintained by the USDOT [U.S Department of Transportation]" <www.transtats.bts.gov/mappingcenter.asp>.

The Mapping Center offers the following Data Download Applications and Mapping Applications:

- The National Transportation Atlas Databases (NTAD)

NTAD "is a set of transportation-related geospatial data for the United States released annually. The data consist of transportation networks, transportation facilities, and other spatial data used as geographic reference."

- GDT Dynamap 1000 v 8.0

GDT Dynamap 1000 v 8.0 "is a vector based, geographic database of streets released in year 2000. In this dataset streets are represented as line segments and each segment has associated data

such as street name, Census codes and Federal Information Processing Standards (FIPS) codes."

- Federal Highway Administration National Highway System

The National Highway mapping application allows users to create and view customized maps of the Federal National Highway System (Figure 12).

- Federal Railroad Administration Grade Crossing Accidents

This application allows users to map fatal and nonfatal grade crossing accidents. From the map, detailed accident reports can be viewed. In addition users can aggregate and map the number of accidents by state or county.

- Highway Performance Monitoring System

Data from the Highway Performance Monitoring System can be mapped and viewed using this application.

- Office of Airline Information Market Share

Using this application, users can query and map:

  - route maps between airports,
  - routes within a given distance of any airport,
  - all routes which a given airline has a selected market share, and
  - number of travelers arriving in a specified Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSA) or state from any airport, MSA, or state.

- State and Local Government Transportation Revenues and Expenditure

This mapping application creates and displays maps for state and local government transportation-related revenues and expenditures by mode, namely, highways, air, transit, and water for 1977–1999.

- Strategic Highway Network (STRAHNET)

"STRAHNET is a system of public highways that is a key deterrent in United States strategic policy. It provides defense access, continuity, and emergency capabilities for movements of personnel and equipment in both peace and war."

- U.S. Metropolitan Planning Area Boundaries

"The U.S. Metropolitan Planning Area (MPO) Database is a geographic database of MPO boundaries. The data contains information about the location, identification, and areas of MPOs and is intended for use primarily with national planning applications."

- Vehicle Miles Traveled

"The Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) application creates maps for the United States showing the Vehicle Miles Traveled or Vehicle Miles per capita for each year from 1991 to 1998. In addition, it allows users to view bar charts for each state's Vehicle Miles Traveled and Vehicle Miles per Capita for the years 1991 to 1998."

Each mapping application has excellent, well-written map-specific assistance features and functionalities (Help) that guide the user in creating a mapping query and navigating the associated displays.

SOLUTIONS

In addition to providing access to the Mapping Center, the TranStats Solutions directory located on the site's home page offers access to What's New and Coming Soon sections. The former provides information about updates to data tables, while the latter "announces the top-priority features and databases to be added to the site."

The home page also provides access to a full glossary of terms and phrases <http://www.transtats.bts.gov/glossary.asp> used in the TranStats collection. In addition, it also highlights broad interest content in two features: In Focus and At a Glance. The current In Focus features Transportation Indicators, while At a Glance includes charts and tables that profile Airport Congestion, Highway Traffic Safety, and Recreational Boating (Figure 1) with featured entries hotlinked to more comprehensive TranStats source displays and data (Figure 13).

TECHNICAL BACKGROUND

TranStats requires the following to retrieve, display, or manipulate some information sources:

- Adobe Reader is needed to view Portable Document Files (.pdf);
- Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel and Microsoft PowerPoint viewers are needed to view Word document files (.doc), Excel worksheet (.xls), and PowerPoint presentations (.ppt); and
- WinZip is needed to unzip zipped files (.zip).

The mapping applications available from this site require browsers with [JavaScript] … and frames enabled. They are best viewed with Microsoft Internet Explorer, versions 5 and higher, Netscape Navigator 7.0 or higher, or Mozilla 1.0 or higher <www.transtats.bts.gov/mappingcenter.asp>. TranStats uses PopChart 5.0 to deliver interactive charts and graphs from any of its databases and Web application servers. When a database is queried, the resulting charts and graphs are generated dynamically on-the-fly. In addition, PopChart allows users to drill-down to view the details of data sets <http://www.corda.com/company/resources/case_study/transtats.pdf>.

TransStats is powered by iForce Solution for Economical Data Management, based upon the Sybase Adaptive Server IQ enterprise analytical engine and Sun Fire V880 server from Sun Microsystems Inc. <http://www.sybase.com/detail/1,6904,1023503,00.html>.

Critical Evaluation

GENERAL

The Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) was enacted on June 9, 1998 as Public Law 105-178. TEA-21 authorizes the Federal surface transportation programs for highways, highway safety, and transit for the 6-year period 1998–2003. The TEA 21 Restoration Act, enacted July 22, 1998, provided technical corrections to the original law <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/tea21/index.htm>. Under provisions of the law, the Director of the U.S. Bureau of Transportation Statistics was directed to "establish and maintain a transportation data base for all modes of transportation" that would contain among other data "information on the volumes and patterns of movement of people, including local, interregional, and international movements, by all modes of transportation (including bicycle and pedestrian modes) and intermodal combinations …" <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/tea21/h2400-v.htm>.

Source data for the TranStats portal service is delivered in a wide variety of formats—from Borland dBASE and comma-delimited ASCII, to Microsoft Access and Microsoft Excel, to relational databases such as those of Oracle and others, as well as means, notably CD-ROM and File Transfer Protocol (FTP) <http://www.gcn.com/21_34/news/20657-1.html>. The TranStats team is to be highly commended for integrating such a variety of disparate data formats and sources within a unified portal.

The TranStats developers are also to be commended for providing a uniform interface that allows users to readily access, retrieve, and manipulate the variety of TranStats data. The range of interactive, real-time

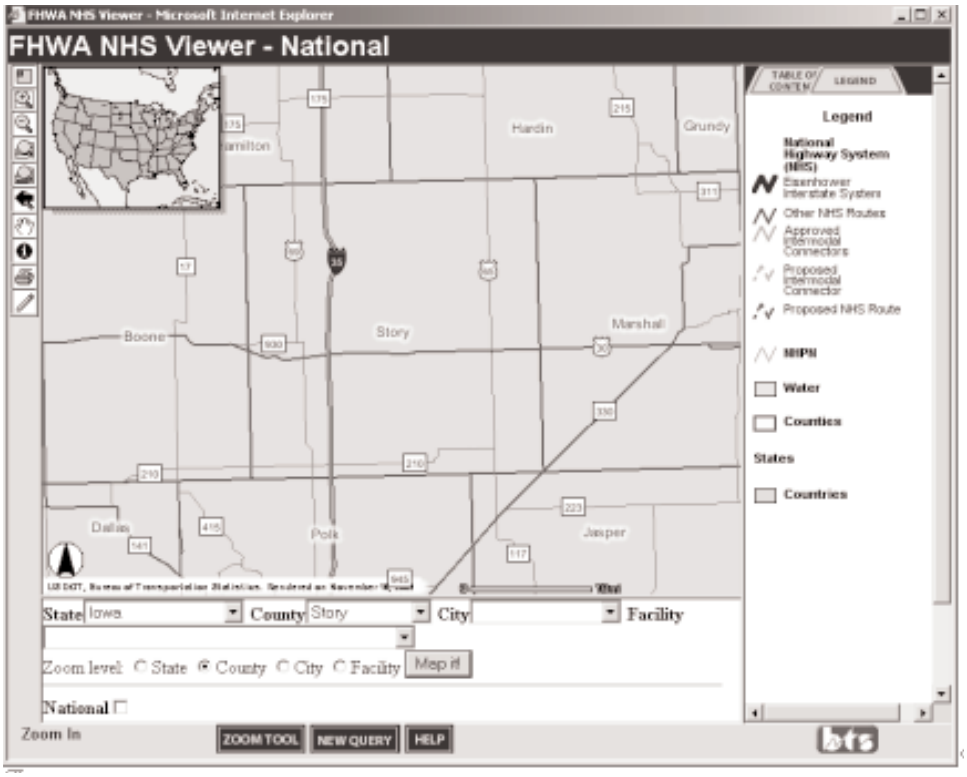

Figure 12. **Among several auxiliary features, TranStats includes a Mapping Center that provides mapping and data download applications which can be used to geographically analyze and retrieve data in the TranStats Data Library.**

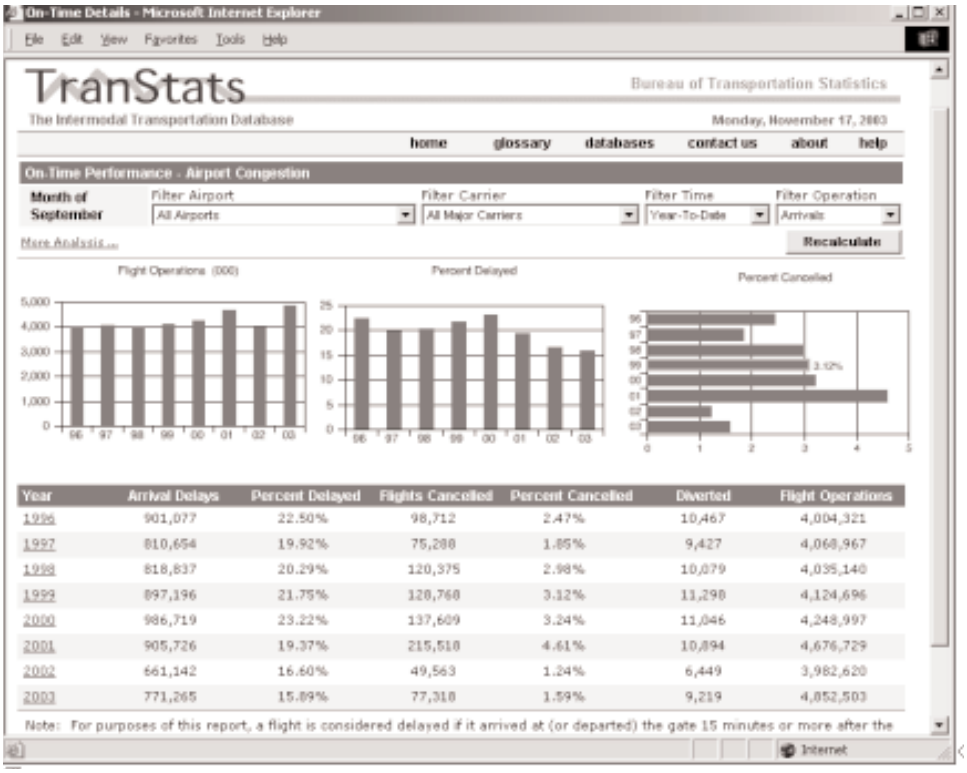

Figure 13. **Highlighted statistical features on the TranStats home page (e.g., "Airport Congestion" shown in Figure 1 under At a Glance) are hotlinked to their respective sources.**

analysis types (table, chart, map, crosstabs, and time series) and summary options (Top N, Bottom N, Value, Percent of Total, Sort Descending, and Sort Ascending) are particularly noteworthy.

USER ASSISTANCE

TranStats is a highly sophisticated information service. While well structured and organized, its complexity can easily overwhelm the novice user. Although its page-sensitive Help screens provide background information about particular features or functionalities and instruction on their use (see, for example, Figure 14), a central, searchable Help function, which outlines the components and topics of the TranStats portal and its most important search, display, and manipulation options, would also be beneficial.

While some FAQ are available on the site <http://itdb.bts.gov/faq.asp>, the scope of information is limited, with a focus more on trouble-shooting than on the essentials of the service.

Serious consideration should be given to providing a full tutorial that would offer users an overview of the nature, structure, and content of TranStats. A Getting Started feature available in an earlier version of the service (Butler, 2002) provided new users with a basic introduction to the portal and should be reimplemented.

BROWSING

As noted, users can explore the TranStats portal by transportation mode, by subject, or by government agency. To assist users, it would be beneficial if the entries in each of these categories were in alphabetical order, and not arbitrarily arranged, as is currently the case (Figure 1). In addition, a mouse rollover feature that provides a brief scope note for each entry, or the full name of the government agency associated with each agency initialism, would also be useful.

SEARCHING

As previously noted, the TRT and its associated viewer software allow users to access terminology through Alphabetical, Hierarchical, or Keyword Out of Context displays. The full display also shows family relationship of terms including broader, narrower, and related terms. An online version of the thesaurus that would allow users to browse termi-

nology and link to associated TRIS records is currently in development by the National Transportation Library and is scheduled for release by mid-2004. Once implemented and tested in TRIS, an online browsable TRT should be integrated within TranStats to facilitate access and use of its collections and resources.

SEARCH RESULTS

As noted, database names are alphabetized in browsing a TranStats Data Library, but not in a TranStats search (see Figure 11). While one might conclude that the nonalphabetized listing indicates that results are displayed in relevancy order, this is not explicitly stated. To enable users to scan search results more easily, it would also be beneficial to highlight search terms (or phrases) with either boldface or color.

OTHER

In February 2003, TranStats was recognized as one of five Federal agency programs selected as winners of the Excellence.Gov awards sponsored by the E-Government Shared Interest Group (SIG) of the Industry Advisory Council's (IAC) <http://www.iaconline.org/sigs/sig_egov.html>, in partnership with E-Gov <http://www.e-gov.com> and the Federal CIO Council <http://www.cio.gov>. "TranStats was selected for demonstrating both excellence in E-Government innovation and best practices for other government agencies."

In April 2003, TranStats received recognition as the "Best e-Business Solution" by a panel of 15 executives and members of the media and analyst community at the inaugural iForce Partner Excellence Awards ceremony co-sponsored by Sun Microsystems <http://www.sun.com> and Computerworld <http://www.computerworld.com>. The TranStats implementation was recognized for providing "fast, accurate and reliable access to data and solutions" <http://sssug.cascadiasoftware.com/May2003.pdf>.

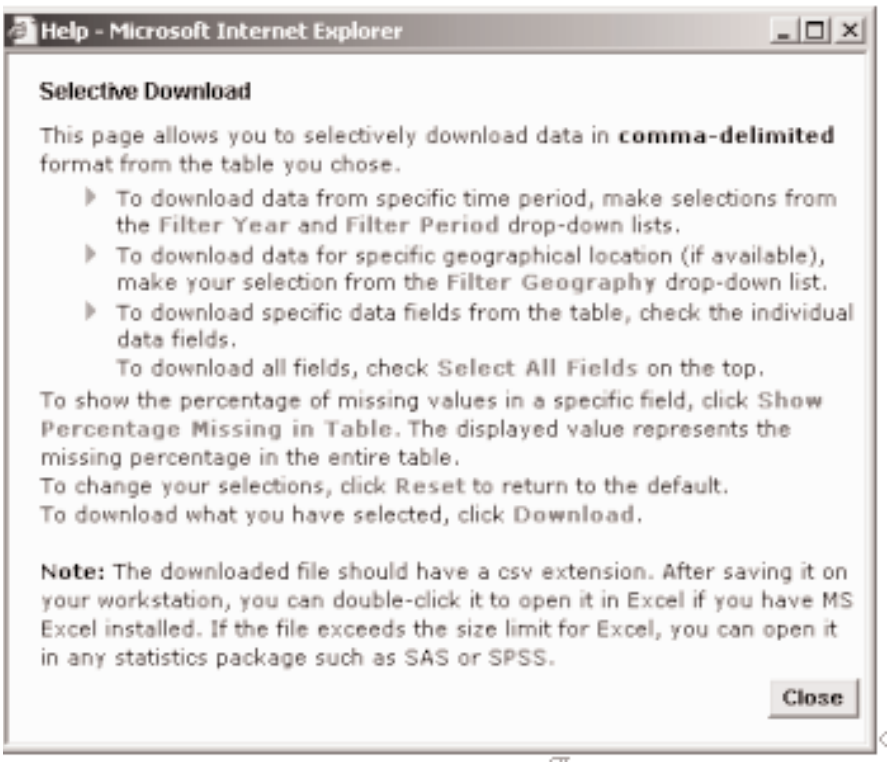

Figure 14. **TranStats includes extensive page-sensitive Help screens that provide background information about particular features or functionalities as well as instruction on their use.**

Contract Provisions

A contract is not required to use TranStats: The Intermodal Transportation Database.

Disclaimer: The TranStats Web site "and the information it contains are provided as a public service by the Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS). This system is monitored to ensure proper operation, to verify the functioning of applicable security features, and for comparable purposes. Anyone using this system expressly consents to such monitoring. Unauthorized attempts to modify any information stored on this system, to defeat or circumvent security features, or to utilize this system for other than its intended purposes are prohibited and may result in criminal prosecution."

Restrictions of Liability: The U.S. Bureau of Transportation Statistics "makes no claims, promises or guarantees about the accuracy, completeness, or adequacy of the contents of [the] TranStats Web site and expressly disclaims liability for errors and omissions in the contents of this Web site. No warranty of any kind, implied, expressed or statutory, including but not limited to the warranties of non-infringement of third party rights, title, merchantability, fitness for a particular purpose and freedom from computer virus, is given with respect to the contents of this Web site or its hyperlinks to other Internet resources. Reference in … [the TranStats Web site] to any specific commercial products, processes, or services, or the use of any trade, firm or corporation name is for the information and convenience of the public, and does not constitute endorsement, recommendation, or favoring by [the U.S. Bureau of Transportation Statistics] BTS."

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Authentication

The TranStats Web site does not collect personal information about visitor use, unless a user explicitly provides this data. However, certain site-access information is automatically captured and stored, including:

- Internet Protocol (IP) address of the domain from which science.gov is accessed;
- type of browser and operating system used;
- date and time of access;

TranStats Review Scores Composite: ★★★★ 3/4

The maximum number of stars in each category is 5.

Content: ★★★★★

The TranStats team is to be highly commended for integrating a variety of disparate data formats and sources within a unified portal and providing a common interface that allows users to readily access, retrieve, and manipulate the variety of TranStats data. The range of interactive, real-time analysis types and summary options are particularly noteworthy.

Searchability: ★★★★ 1/2

TranStats is a highly sophisticated information service. While well structured and organized, its complexity can easily overwhelm the novice user.

Pricing Options: N/A

TranStats: The Intermodal Transportation Database is free-of-charge and open to the public

Contract Options: N/A

A contract is not required to use TranStats: The Intermodal Transportation Database.

- accessed Web pages; and
- referring Web site, if TranStats was accessed from a linked site.

Information is collected by the U.S. Bureau of Transportation Statistics to document the number and type of visitors to the TranStats site and to provide data that will assist in making the site more useful to visitors.

Author's Selected References

Butler, Jeff. "TranStats: The Intermodal Transportation Database." Presentation at the Traffic Records Forum 2002: The 28th International Forum on Traffic Records and Highway Information Systems, Association of Transportation Safety Information Professionals, August 7, 2002, Orlando, Florida < http://www.atsip.org/forum2002/Sessions/41/s41_butlerTranStatsNEW.ppt>.

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About the Author

Gerry McKiernan currently serves as a Science and Technology Librarian and Bibliographer at Iowa State University (ISU) with specialization in selected fields of Engineering. Previously, Gerry served as the Coordinator of the Science and Technology Section of the ISU Reference and Instructional Services Department at Iowa State and as an Information Services Librarian and Reference Librarian with specialization in the life and physical sciences. Before joining ISU in April 1987, Gerry served as the Museum Librarian of the Carnegie Museum of Natural History in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and as an Assistant Librarian with the Library of the New York Botanical Garden in the Bronx, New York, his hometown.

Gerry is a member of the editorial board of *Science and Technology Libraries,* for which he writes an original column titled "SCI-5," and is also a contributing editor for *Library Hi Tech News,* for which he writes an original column titled "eProfiles." He has been the contributing editor for the "News from the Field" column for the *Journal of Internet Cataloging* since 1997, and a member of the editorial board of *The Serials Librarian* since Fall 2002. He is the Curator of CyberStacks <http://www.public.iastate.edu/~CYBERSTACKS/>, a virtual science and technology reference collection, and compiler of several Web registries and clearinghouses. Among his more recent projects are All That JAS: Journal Abbreviation Sources <http://www.public.iastate.edu/~CYBERSTACKS/JAS.htm>, IDEAL: A Registry of Emerging Innovative Augmented Digital Library Services <http://www.public.iastate.edu/~CYBERSTACKS/IDEALS.htm> and LiveRef: A Registry of Real-Time Digital Reference Services <http://www.public.iastate.edu/~CYBERSTACKS/Liveref.htm>. His current interests include scholar-based innovations in publishing <http://www.public.iastate.edu/~gerrymck/ScholarBased.ppt> and alternative peer review practices and philosophies <http://www.public.iastate.edu/~gerrymck/APR-1.ppt>. ■

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