Difference Between Advisory, Non-Executive and Executive Roads Boards

(Prepared by Ian G. Heggie, latest revision March 1999)

**Advisory boards** generally advise the Minister on various matters pertaining to management [and financing] of roads. The board thus directs its advice to the Minister who is not obliged to accept it. However, boards with influential members can have considerable influence and Ministers are often reluctant to ignore the advice offered by the board for fear of repercussions from the organizations represented on the board. The Japan Road Council is reasonably influential and, on occasions, has had an important impact on policy (e.g., when it “saved” the road fund during the 1980s). The English Highways Agency Advisory Board does not appear to be particularly effective. However, since its workings are covered by the Official Secrets Act, it does not provide the public with much information about what it does. The Zambia National Roads Board has been surprisingly effective within a very difficult country context. Although constituted as an advisory board, the minister has regularly delegated tasks to the Board which it manages in a de facto executive manner.

**Non-executive boards** are made up of part-time members, including a chairman. They are the typical boards which manage most commercial companies. The board usually appoints the Chief Executive (CEO), sets policy and oversees its implementation. Day-to-day management is delegated to the CEO who may also be a member of the board.

**Executive boards** consist of full-time staff. They normally consist of the heads of major departments and are chaired by the CEO. The Highways Agency in England has both an advisory board and an executive board.