

2026 ITE SoCal Traffic Bowl - Guidelines



Event Information

Sunday, October 24, 2026

11:00 am – 2:00 pm

On the campus of the University of California, Irvine

Cross-Cultural Center – Dr. White Room

106 Gateway, Irvine, CA 92697

For questions, please contact the ITE SoCal Student Liaison Chairs:

Emilio J. Murga – EMurga@willdan.com

Denny Quach – DQuach@iteris.com

Lilly Diaz – LDiaz@hrgreen.com

Student Teams and Participants

- Each team shall consist of 3 participants plus 1 alternate
- Participants **must** be full-time students at the same university they are representing
 - Graduates from the most recent academic year may participate with the approval of the student chapter advisor and the competition staff
- Participants must be current members of International ITE
- Participants must be members of their university's chartered ITE student chapter
- Participants **must not** be or have been registered or licensed as a professional engineer
 - Participants with EIT certification are still eligible
- All eligibility is subject to review by the competition staff

Competition Category and Clue Resources

The competition will include categories and clues with relevance to traffic and transportation knowledge commensurate and reflective of the knowledge base of university students.

The categories and clues will typically include topics in the subject areas of ITE, transportation engineering and planning, general transportation knowledge, rules of the road, current events in surface transportation, as well as popular culture topics (such as movies, music, sports, etc.) and general knowledge that are related to transportation planning and engineering. Clues may also employ fundamental knowledge from postsecondary course work, such as basic math and science principles.

Informational or reference sources for clues and responses (answers and questions) for the Traffic Bowl competition will include, but are not limited to, the following reference documents or sources:

1. ITE Traffic Engineering Handbook, Digital Edition. (Available with ITE membership user ID and password to access at ITE Traffic Engineering Handbook, Digital Edition - Institute of Transportation Engineers)

2. Transportation Planning Handbook, 4th Edition (Available for purchase of hardcover book through ITE Bookstore at Transportation Planning Handbook details or as a PDF or e-book through other vendors, such as Transportation Planning Handbook 4th Edition – PDF/EPUB Version Downloadable - Enjoy Store)
3. The Transportation Planning Process Briefing Book Key Issues for Transportation Decisionmakers, Officials, and Staff, FHWA-HEP-18-015 (Available online or as a free PDF download at The Transportation Planning Process Briefing Book: Key Issues for Transportation Decisionmakers, Officials, and Staff)
4. Road Safety Fundamentals: Concepts, Strategies, and Practices that Reduce Fatalities and Injuries on the Road, Report No: FHWA-SA-18-003, November 2017. (Available online or as a free PDF download at Road Safety Fundamentals | FHWA (dot.gov))
5. USDOT Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD-US), 11th Edition, December 2023. (Available online or free PDF downloads at MUTCD 11th Edition - FHWA MUTCD)
6. Highway Capacity Manual, 7th Edition: A Guide for Multimodal Mobility Analysis (Available for purchase of hardcover book at <https://nap.nationalacademies.org/catalog/26432/highway-capacitymanual-7th-edition-a-guide-for-multimodal-mobility>)(HCQS Committee - HCM)
7. ITE Website, www.ite.org – clues will be drawn primarily from material on ITE leadership, governance, and structure; current activities and events; history of meetings, officers, and awards; and information on ITE publications.

COMPETITION STRUCTURE

Competition Rounds:

- Preliminary Rounds
 - Each of the preliminary rounds will feature a maximum of 3 teams selected at random. Depending on the total number of teams competing, 2 preliminary rounds may be necessary.
- Final Round
 - The winners from each of the preliminary rounds will proceed to the final round, as well as the team with highest score that did not win a previous round. The teams will compete in a manner similar to the preliminary round, however this final round will also feature a Writing Category and a Final Clue after all the 25 clues have been attempted. The team with the highest score at end of the final round will be declared the ITE SoCal Student Traffic Bowl Champion.

A typical round will consist of the following format:

- Introduction of teams and team members
- Reveal the Categories for the Clue Board
 - All 25 clues across five various categories will be attempted by the teams. Each clue in each category will be assigned point values (i.e., 100, 200, 300, 400 or 500).

- **Gameplay for the Writing Category format will be for one of the five categories. Remaining categories will still be answered via the standard “Buzz-In” format. The Writing Category will only be for the Final Round.**
- Break (1-2 minutes)
- Final Clue (Final Round only)
 - Each team will wager points for one final clue and will have 60 seconds to record their answer.
- Tiebreaker (if necessary):
 - If there is a tie after the final clue, one more clue will be presented to the teams with the tied score. Each team will wager points for the clue and will have 30 seconds to record the answer. This will continue until there is a winner.

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

The winner of the competition will take home the Traffic Bowl Trophy. The awards for 1st and 2nd place will be given at the May Student Night Meeting. ITE SoCal shall maintain a historical record of the district traffic bowl winners. A press release by ITE SoCal will be issued announcing the results of the competition. The release will be sent to the winning school for their use.

GENERAL RULES OF THE GAME

1. All responses should be phrased in the form of question.
2. Prior to the start of each round, the first team to select the first category and point value will be chosen at random.
3. The clues will be displayed on the screen and read out loud by the emcee. The teams will have approximately 10 seconds to buzz in after the clue has been read but must wait until the emcee has read the entire clue statement before buzzing in.
4. The emcee will call on the team that buzzed in first, at which time the team will have 10 seconds to provide a response. The team may confer with each other but must start their response prior to the expiration of the 10 second time limit.
5. If the response from the first team is incorrect, the other teams will have 10 seconds to buzz in. The emcee will call on the team that buzzed in, at which time the team will have 10 seconds to provide a response.
6. If this response from the second team is incorrect, the emcee will provide the remaining team with the opportunity to provide a response. If the remaining team accepts the opportunity to provide a response, they will have 10 seconds to provide a response.
7. The first team that responds correctly will be awarded the point value of the clue to be added to their score. The team that responds correctly will control the board and select the category and value of the next clue.

8. The value of the clue will be deducted from each team that provides an incorrect response for that clue.
9. If no team responds or responds correctly, the team that chose the previous clue will retain control of the board and select the category and value of the next clue.
10. Randomly throughout the course of a game, 1 or 2 Daily Double displays may appear. The team that selected that clue will be the only team allowed to respond to the clue and shall place a wager of any amount up to their current cumulative score or 500 points, whichever is greater. They will have 10 seconds to provide a response and if correct, the points they wagered will be added to their score. If their response is incorrect, the points they wagered will be deducted from their current score.
11. In the event that after all 25 questions in the five categories have been attempted, only one team has a non-negative score, they will be declared the winner of that round. In the event that more than one team has a positive score, a final clue will be provided only to the teams with a non-negative score. Before the final clue is given, the category of the final clue will be revealed and the teams will be asked to wager any amount up to their score. Once the final clue has been completely read out loud by the emcee, each team will have 10 seconds to write down their answers on a paper and hand it to the emcee. The judges will determine the answers that will be accepted as correct answers. The wagered amount will be awarded to the final score of each team that provides the correct answer and the wagered amount will be deducted from the final score of each team that provides the incorrect answer. If there is a tie after the final question, another question will be presented to the teams with the tied score. Each team will wager points for the question and will have 10 seconds to record the answer. This will continue until there is a winner.
12. In the event that no team has a positive score at the end of the round, the teams will not wager points for the final clue. All teams will have the opportunity to answer the final clue. Once the final clue has been completely read out loud by the emcee, each team will have 10 seconds to write down their answers on a paper and hand it to the emcee. The judges will determine the responses that will be accepted as correct. The team with a correct response whose cumulative score is closest to zero will be declared the winner. If no team responds correctly, a second question will be given by the emcee, using this same format. This will continue until there is a winner.
13. Recording of the game and the contents (clues/questions/responses/answers) by audience members by any means will not be permitted.
14. Prior to the competition, any interpretation or clarification of the contest rules shall be submitted to the Student Chapter Liaison. During the competition, any challenge of the rules shall be the responsibility of the Judges to rule and make a final decision. Their decision shall be final and shall stand without recourse.

NEW for 2026: Writing Category Gameplay

- 1. One category will be designated as the Writing Category before the start of gameplay by competition staff, using a random process. The category will remain confidential until they are revealed during competition.**
- 2. When a team selects a clue within the Writing Category, a signal will be given and the emcee shall notify participants that it is the Writing Category, where the below game rules shall apply. All teams will participate, removing the use of the buzzer during this category, and write in their responses by employing the provided writing material and utensil.**
- 3. Questions and responses start with the “100” point clue, and will proceed in up in order, until all the clues for that specific category are completed.**
- 4. When the category is called by the emcee, teams may set up the writing materials in their preferred fashion. Once the emcee is ready to read the clue, the writing utensil should be visible to the staff and away from the writing material. Once the emcee has completed reading all context to the clue, teams will provide their response per General Rule 1 on their provided writing material within 10 seconds.**
- 5. After the provided 10 seconds, the emcee will clearly announce, “pens down”, verify all response attempts have been neutralized, and ask all teams to reveal their answers simultaneously. No verbal clarification/explanation to supplement responses will be allowed or considered.**
- 6. Judges will be provided with each team’s response first. They must listen to all responses before announcing the correct response to the clue.**
- 7. Teams with the correct response to the clue will have the corresponding point value added to their current score. Teams with incorrect responses will NOT face score deductions.**
- 8. If a Daily Double is found in the category, ALL teams will be eligible to place a wager based on their current score on a separate piece of paper before the emcee reveals and announces the clue. Wagers shall be submitted and gameplay of the clue will follow.**
 - a. Teams with correct responses will have the wagered amount added to their score. Teams that wager 500 or less points that submit an incorrect or blank response will not lose points. However, teams who do submit a wager of more than 500 points under the same conditions will have their wager amount deducted from their current score.**
- 9. The team who had originally selected the Written Category retains control of the board and will be able to select the next desired category and clue.**

EQUIPMENT

The equipment for the Traffic Bowl will consist of the following:

1. Signaling push buttons will be provided to each participant. The control device will have the capability to determine which team pressed their push buttons first and lock out the other team buttons until the system is reset. It will also have a feature to disable the buttons from registering a response until the entire clue statement has been read by the emcee.
2. **One set of a writing utensil (ex. dry-erase marker) and writing material (ex. whiteboard) will be provided to the team for use of the Writing Category questions. Materials shall not be touched or utilized unless explicitly told or when the category is announced. Utensils and materials shall be appropriately tested and provided beforehand to prevent any disability to teams attempting to answer. If issues arise with writing equipment, staff will investigate and a new set of utensil & material may be provided.**
3. A countdown timer will be used to show the teams the time remaining to give their response after being called on by the emcee.
4. At least 1 projector and screen will be used to display the clues to the teams. The clues on the screen will be easily visible for all teams.

COMPETITION STAFF

The competition staff will consist of the competition committee, master of ceremonies (emcee), judging panel, timekeeper, and score keeper. Descriptions of their roles are as follows:

Competition committee

The competition committee will be responsible for the preparation and set-up of the games and the registration of the teams.

Master of Ceremonies

The competition's clues and correct responses will be read by the master of ceremonies (emcee), who will also serve to control the flow of the game.

Judges

Judges shall rule on correctness of the responses. The judges will be responsible for signaling if a correct or incorrect response to the answer given by the team. The decision by the judges shall be final and shall stand without recourse. Judges will also be responsible for ruling on irregularities or issues that evolve during the course of play that are not specifically addressed within the rules.

Timekeeper

The timekeeper will be responsible for keeping track of the time to signal in after a question is given, and the time after a team has to respond after being recognized by the emcee. The clock for the response (answer) rule shall start after the student team, who has signaled, is recognized by the emcee. A buzzer or horn should be used to signal that time has expired for either time period.

Score Keeper

The score keeper will be responsible for operating the visual display of the clues and correct responses, and visibly displaying the scores of all teams. The score keeper must also keep a running tally of the scores and answers “offline.” They will also be responsible for recording the Final Clue wager by each team and will give each team a wager card on which to write the amount to be wagered against their current score. The score keeper operating the visual display will also be responsible for reminding the emcee of the display of a Daily Double.

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Team Entry Form

Please return to Emilio J. Murga by Thursday, October 22, 2026, at EMurga@Willdan.com

Student Chapter University: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Advisor Name: _____

Advisor Email: _____

Student Chapter representative, please read the following statement and sign below:

I have read and understand the rules and regulations of the ITE SoCal Student Traffic Bowl. Our chapter understands that during the competition, any challenge of the rules shall be the responsibility of the Judges to rule and make a final decision. Their decision shall be final and shall stand without recourse.

Name of Student Chapter Representative: _____

Student Chapter Representative Signature: _____

Student Chapter Representative Email: _____

Student Chapter Representative Phone: _____

Traffic Bowl Team Members*:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Alternate**:

*Each team member shall meet the eligibility criteria of the Competition Rules and Instructions.

**If one of the team members is unable to participate, the team may substitute an alternate who meets the eligibility requirements.

Number of Expected Attendees: _____