



Environmental Mitigation

The federal Transportation Enhancements (TE) program funds 12 different types of transportation-related activities. Activity 11, known in law as “Environmental Mitigation to address water pollution due to highway runoff or reduce vehicle-caused wildlife mortality while maintaining habitat connectivity,” allows communities to decrease the negative impacts of roads on the natural environment, such as water pollution and wildlife habitat fragmentation. Projects funded in this category seek to reduce these environmental impacts by controlling surface runoff and improving wildlife habitat connectivity with wildlife passages. Since the TE program began in 1992, approximately 1 percent of available TE funds have been programmed for “Environmental mitigation” projects.

Eligible Projects

Working within Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) guidelines, each state Department of Transportation (DOT) determines the eligibility of TE projects for funding. Examples of projects that may be considered eligible include:

- ▶ Projects that address water pollution due to highway runoff:
 - Wetlands acquisition and restoration;
 - Detention and sediment basins;
 - Water pollution studies;
 - Channel stabilization, storm drain stenciling and river clean-ups;
- ▶Wildlife under or overpasses, including bridge extensions to provide or improve wildlife passage and habitat connectivity;
- ▶Monitoring and data collection on habitat fragmentation and vehicle-caused wildlife mortality.

Examples of Successful Projects

Bartlett Brook Stormwater Treatment System, Vermont. Rainwater runoff from US Route 7 in South Burlington pollutes local streams that feed into Lake Champlain. The city of South Burlington and the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources constructed a stormwater treatment system along Bartlett Brook to control the pollution. A \$112,600 TE award help finance the system, which includes a restored stream channel and constructed wetland. Contact: City of South Burlington Planning Department, 802-846-4106.



Restoration of Bartlett Brook

Wildlife Warning Reflectors, Georgia. Numerous vehicle-deer collisions in western Georgia led officials in Catoosa County to implement a system of wildlife warning reflectors along local roads. With the help of \$85,000 in TE funds, the county installed several thousand "Strieter-Lite" reflectors designed to make deer freeze in place before approaching the roadway. The reflectors will help reduce wildlife mortality and save motorists thousands of dollars in collision costs. Contact: Catoosa Economic Development Authority, 706-935-3110.



Strieter-Lite reflectors line local road

Visit <http://www.enhancements.org/library/index.asp> for additional project examples.

Federal Guidance



Projects that use TE funds must qualify as one or more of the 12 designated activities and relate to surface transportation in order to meet basic federal eligibility requirements. The FHWA TE Guidance requires the following for environmental mitigation projects:

- ▶ Projects must go above and beyond environmental mitigation required in law for federal-aid highway projects.
- ▶ Projects may target wildlife not listed as threatened or endangered species.

In some cases where it is not feasible to construct wildlife crossings, it may be possible to develop new habitat resources or to improve existing habitat resources to support additional population. Visit www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/TE for a full copy of the Guidance.

Financing TE Projects



Most states require TE project sponsors to provide at least 20 percent of project costs, also referred to as “matching funds.” In many states, the value of donated property, materials, and services; the labor of state and local government employees; and the costs of preliminary engineering may count towards the matching requirement. Federal, non-DOT funds can often be used as matching funds. Check with your state TE manager whether these “innovative financing options” are available in your state. Additional funds for this activity may come from a variety of sources such as local and state governments, foundations, nonprofit organizations, businesses, or other federal programs. Visit www.enhancements.org/fundingsources.asp for links to specific grant programs.

Related Resources



- ▶ FHWA water quality and Critter Crossings Web sites: www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/natural.htm
- ▶ The Center for Transportation and the Environment (North Carolina State University): www.itre.ncsu.edu/cte or 919-515-8893
- ▶ Defender's of Wildlife Habitat and Highways Campaign: www.defenders.org/habitat/highways/new/congress.html or 202-682-9400
- ▶ Western Transportation Institute, Montana State University Animal-vehicle collision reference database: www.coe.montana.edu/wti
- ▶ USDA forest service, Wildlife Crossings Toolkit: www.wildlifecrossings.info/beta2.htm

To Get Started



Inquiries about the TE application process should be directed to the TE manger at your state DOT. Visit www.enhancements.org/contacts.asp for TE manager contact information.