



TRANSPORTATION
ENHANCEMENTS

FACT
SHEET

ACTIVITY
4

Scenic or Historic Highway Programs

The federal Transportation Enhancements (TE) program funds 12 different types of transportation-related activities. Through activity 4, known in law as “Scenic or historic highway programs, including tourist and welcome center facilities,” communities develop the scenic and historic character of highways. These programs make the travel experience educational and attract tourists to local roads. Since the TE program began in 1992, approximately 5 percent of available TE funds have been programmed for scenic and historic highway program 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 eligible include:

- Construction or restoration of tourist and welcome centers related to scenic or historic highway programs, including interior fixtures and parking areas;
- Purchase and installation of items which support or interpret the scenic or historic highway program or site such as brochure racks, maps, or kiosks;
- Construction of turnouts and overlooks;
- Design, fabrication, and installation of designation signs, markers, and interpretive displays.



The Missouri-Yellowstone River
Confluence Center



The White Rock Overlook

Examples of Successful Projects

Missouri-Yellowstone River Confluence Center, North Dakota. Located at the confluence of two mighty rivers, the Confluence Center provides the same magnificent view that the Lewis and Clark expedition enjoyed when they visited in the 1800s. Visitors learn about the expedition, view transportation artifacts, and enjoy a transportation exhibit entitled “Trails, Tracks, Rivers and Roads”. A \$1,000,000 TE award helped finance the project. Contact: North Dakota State Historical Society, 701-328-2666.

White Rock Overlook, Michigan. Early European settlers used the “White Rock” in Lake Huron to mark the boundary of their first land purchase from native peoples. Today, travelers on Route M-25 enjoy views of the rock and learn about regional history at the White Rock overlook, constructed with the help of \$184,888 in TE funds. Contact: Cass City Transportation Service Center, Michigan DOT 989-872-3007.

Visit www.enhancements.org/examples.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 stipulates that in order to be eligible, “the tourist or welcome center (whether a new facility or existing facility) does not have to be on a designated scenic or historic byway, but there must be a clear link to scenic or historic sites.” In determining the historic value of a particular site, project sponsors should have documented evidence of consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) or similar authority.

Both new and existing centers are eligible for TE funds. A tourist or welcome center should be publicly owned and open to the public; proposals for privately owned facilities to be used as a tourist or welcome center will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis through the state DOT and the FHWA division office. TE funds may not be used for the construction or restoration of rest areas not related to scenic or historic sites or road lanes. Additionally, tourist and welcome center funds cannot be used for marketing or promotion not related to the scenic or historic highway program, nor can they be used for the staffing, operating, or maintenance costs of the facility. 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 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 Historic Preservation and Archaeology Program: Offers resources related to historic preservation and historic roads: <http://environment.fhwa.dot.gov/histpres/>
- Scenic America: www.scenic.org or 202-638-0550
- Advisory Council on Historic Preservation: www.achp.gov or 202-606-8503
- Historic Roads: www.historicroads.org

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.