

# TE Corner



Sponsored by the Federal Highway Administration and Rails-to-Trails Conservancy  
THE NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION ENHANCEMENTS CLEARINGHOUSE NEWSLETTER

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## Louisiana Enhancement Project is a Finalist for 2009 AASHTO People's Choice Award

The project's archaeological component became a local attraction during the project. Below right, a pipe bowl with a Masonic emblem recovered during construction.



At right, the restored Front Street in Natchitoches preserves local character while providing a safe, stable roadbed and ADA-compliant pedestrian facilities.



Some challenges to building and maintaining transportation infrastructure are routinely avoided as much as possible. Building on environmentally sensitive land or in a historic area can cause negative impacts, slow down or stall a project, or drive up costs.

The need to resurface crumbling Front Street in Natchitoches, Louisiana was a "perfect storm" of such issues. As the oldest permanent settlement in the entire Louisiana Purchase, pre-dating even New Orleans, Natchitoches had a lot of history to contend with. The 105-year old Front Street ran through two historic districts and was paved with antique bricks. Local

business owners feared that any construction work on the street would result in lost business and interfere with deliveries, as well as the town's annual street festival. To top it off, the area is prone to hurricanes.

This is a familiar story: the state Department of Transportation is required to conform to state and federal road standards, but local groups feel imposed upon and sidelined by the process. This can result in local hostility towards a project or the DOT.

That's not what happened in Natchitoches.

"We made the decision that if we're going to do it, let's do it right," said Valerie Horton, Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD)'s

Transportation Enhancement Manager. In the best spirit of the TE program, the project was able to install a concrete and sand foundation for the street, upgrade the city's drainage system, restore and reuse over 200,000 of the original paving bricks, and recover numerous significant archaeological artifacts. All this was accomplished within the original contract time, including extensive communication and outreach to the local community.

Following numerous state and federal awards and recognitions, the project is now a candidate for the 2009 AASHTO People's Choice Award. Online voting is open through October 23 at <http://www.americastransportationaward.org/Voting.aspx>.

# TE News From Washington, DC

## **TE Professional Seminar**

In August, more than 35 state and federal staff convened in Washington, DC for the 7th Transportation Enhancements (TE) Professional Seminar. The Seminar was hosted by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy as part of its efforts to promote best practices in the TE program, the top source of federal funds for rail-trails and other bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

“With 12 types of TE activities and the flexibility in program administration, there’s a real need for regular information exchange between state TE managers and the Federal Highway Administration,” said Tracy Hadden Loh, coordinator of RTC’s National Transportation Enhancements Clearinghouse. “The TE Professional Seminar provides state managers with the opportunity to voice problems and share ideas and solutions.”

The participants – representing 29 states and the District of Columbia – attended sessions on the impending reauthorization of the transportation bill, federal TE guidelines, and ways to improve and expand their states’ TE programs. The keynote speech was given by the new deputy administrator of the Federal Highway Administration, Greg Nadeau. His presence and re-



marks emphasized the current leadership’s strong support for the TE program and the projects it helps fund. Mr. Nadeau was presented with a poster of the Lewiston-Auburn Railroad Bridge in Mr. Nadeau’s hometown. It was converted for use by pedestrians and cyclists with TE funds back in 1994, demonstrating once more that the TE program has touched almost every community in America.

## **Senate Votes on TE**

On September 16, 2009, Senators Coburn (R-OK) and McCain (R-AZ) introduced an amendment to the Transportation, Housing and Urban Development Appropriations Bill (H.R. 3288) to eliminate the mandatory TE set-aside from Surface Transportation Program funds for fiscal year 2010. The amendment was defeated by a vote of 59 to 39. Senators Boxer (D-CA) and Murray (D-WA) spoke on the Senate floor against the amendment during debate.

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