

CONNECTIONS

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THE NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION ENHANCEMENTS CLEARINGHOUSE NEWSLETTER

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Congress Passes New Transportation Act

Transportation Enhancements Program Renewed

August 10th, 2005 marked the end of Congress' two-year effort to reauthorize the surface transportation legislation that funds the Transportation Enhancements (TE) program along with highway and transit infrastructure. The new authorizing legislation, entitled SAFETEA-LU (Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users) will provide \$286.5 billion to the states over five years (FY 2005-2009).

The TE program emerged from the reauthorization process virtually unchanged. It will receive approximately \$3.5 billion, or 1.2 percent of the total authorization, an amount consistent with previous funding levels. The few changes include a new requirement that TE apportionments for each fiscal year meet or surpass 2005 funding levels; new provisions that allow states to assume some responsibilities for environmental streamlining; and slight modifications to the definitions of two of the TE activities. These are: (changes shown in italics) "Acquisition of scenic easements and scenic or historic sites, *including historic battlefields;*" and "*Inventory, control and removal of outdoor advertising.*"

Although funding for the TE program did not change significantly in the new bill, funding for TE-type activities did increase through the creation of two new programs, the Safe Routes to School Program and the Nonmotorized Transportation Pilot Program. The Safe Routes to School Program, an initiative aimed at improving safety for children walking and bicycling to school, will be funded at \$612 million over the life of the bill. The Nonmotorized Transportation Pilot Program, funded at \$25 million annually over four years, will assist several localities in completing seamless transportation networks connecting trails, bicycle lanes, sidewalks, and mass transit.

In addition to these new programs, several pre-existing programs continue to provide funding for TE-type activities such as bicycle and pedestrian facilities and trails. These include the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program, the Recreational Trails Program, and the Surface Transportation Program. However, the Transportation Enhancements program remains the largest dedicated source of federal transportation funds for bicycle and pedestrian facilities, trails, historic preservation, landscaping and scenic beautification, and many other improvements to travel networks across America. The enactment of SAFETEA-LU guarantees at least five more years for this unique program.



... **T**HE TRANSPORTATION ENHANCEMENTS PROGRAM REMAINS THE LARGEST DEDICATED SOURCE OF FEDERAL TRANSPORTATION FUNDS FOR BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN FACILITIES, TRAILS, HISTORIC PRESERVATION, LANDSCAPING AND SCENIC BEAUTIFICATION AND MANY OTHER IMPROVEMENTS TO TRAVEL NETWORKS ACROSS AMERICA. THE PASSAGE OF SAFETEA-LU GUARANTEES AT LEAST FIVE MORE YEARS FOR THIS UNIQUE PROGRAM.

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Transportation Enhancements Professionals Convene in Minneapolis

Minneapolis, Minnesota set the stage for the fifth biennial Transportation Enhancements (TE) Professionals Seminar. Representatives from state departments of transportation (DOTs) and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) headquarters and division offices gathered on July 26 and 27, 2005 to meet their counterparts in other states and exchange ideas regarding TE program administration. The National Transportation Enhancements Clearinghouse (NTEC) and the FHWA collaborated to sponsor this seminar, which provides professional development opportunities to TE professionals across the United States.

The seminar kicked off with a rousing question and answer session led by Christopher Douwes of FHWA headquarters. Several of these Q&A's are listed on page 3. State DOT and FHWA representatives discussed differences among state TE programs, clarified questions concerning eligibility, and discussed future guidance for the TE program. Following this opening plenary, participants broke into smaller group "breakout sessions." These sessions addressed issues pertaining to TE program administration, including streamlining the application process; innovative financing; communication with sponsors; right-of-way acquisition; and environmental review.

In the afternoon, attendees were treated to a tour of the historic Stone Arch pedestrian and bicycle bridge and the adjacent Mill Ruins Park. Rachel Ramadhani of the Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Department led the way across the bridge and discussed Minneapolis' history while bicyclists

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and walkers made their way past the group. She explained the important role the TE program has played in preserving historic transportation assets in Minnesota. Both the Stone Arch Bridge and the Mill Ruins Park were preserved with TE funds, and both exemplify aspects of Minneapolis' industrial past while creating new bicycle and pedestrian linkages in the city.

After crossing the bridge, seminar participants made their way to the Mill City Museum, located just above the Mill Ruins Park. There they took a short ride on the "Flour Tower," an eight-story trip through Minneapolis' history as a center of flour milling, which was followed by a reception held in the museum's main gallery. The Mill City Museum, Mill Ruins Park, and Stone Arch Bridge form the core of Minneapolis' central riverfront district, a former industrial area that has been redeveloped into parkland, residential and commercial uses with billions of dollars in private investments.

On the second day of the seminar, attendees participated in two more rounds of breakout sessions and a plenary discussion of TE spending. Several attendees also presented outstanding projects from their states during a "TE Tour" of projects around the country.

At the conclusion of the day, many participants said they enjoyed the seminar and benefited from the opportunity to share strategies and information with other TE professionals. Seminar proceedings and powerpoint presentations will be available later this fall on the NTEC Web site at www.enhancements.org/seminar/proceedings.asp.

JIM HORN



TE Questions & Answers From TE Seminar

FHWA staff led a TE question and answer discussion at the TE Professionals Seminar on July 26, 2005. Following is a sampling of the topics discussed. For more information on these and other questions, please contact your State TE Coordinator, your FHWA Division Office or NTEC. The remainder of these questions and answers can be found at www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/te/qa_state0705.htm

Q. Whether a project is considered transportation or recreational can be confusing. To address this issue for bicycle and pedestrian facilities, we consider aspects of connectivity; access to businesses, schools and other buildings; and going from point A to point B. Can you clarify the fine line for these facilities between transportation and recreation?

A. There is a restriction in 23 U.S.C. 217(i) that a bicycle project must be principally for transportation, rather than recreation, purposes. However, the restriction is only for *bicycle* projects, not for pedestrian projects or multiple use trail projects. A facility serves a transportation purpose when it is used to get people from Point A to Point B, and could likely substitute for motor vehicle trips. Transportation includes going from home to work, home to school, home to shopping, home to a social or recreational activity, work to shopping, school to shopping, one social or recreational activity to another social or recreational activity, etc. Recreation trips also may occur on the same facility.

A facility is a recreation facility when the primary purpose is to use the facility itself. For example, a backcountry hiking trail is a recreational facility usually not eligible for TE funds.

Q. Are murals on walls of pedestrian underpasses and/or retaining walls eligible for TE funding? What are the conditions or limitations? Does this type of project qualify under “landscaping or other scenic beautification?”

A. *Landscaping or other scenic beautification* is eligible. Many places already have funded murals on highway underpasses, sound walls, and other locations. The murals have been effective in reducing graffiti, and can be a wise investment of funds to reduce highway maintenance costs. Please make sure that murals are unlikely to distract highway drivers: we don't want drivers to suddenly slow down to view murals, and cause highway crashes.

Q. Under eligible activity #4, local agencies can build visitor and welcome centers. Are there any furnishings or other amenities allowed when constructing the visitor/welcome center, and if so, what?

A. A visitor or welcome center for a scenic or historic highway must have some level of furnishings and amenities to function. The State should determine what level of furnishings and amenities are necessary, and at what point they become superfluous. The National Scenic Byways Program guidance is general: it covers broad goals rather than listing

specific eligible items. Parking, restrooms, maintenance rooms, information desks, etc., are necessary. If the visitor or welcome center is for a particular jurisdiction or an area (as well as a scenic or historic highway), then TE eligibility would be limited to the portion of the facilities and furnishings associated with the scenic or historic highway program(s).

Q. Are public universities qualified to use TE funds for pedestrian and bicycle facilities on campus?

A. Universities, either public or private, may be TE project locations, provided the general public has open access to use the pedestrian and/or bicycle facilities. The facilities should connect the campus to the surrounding community. If the facilities are internal within the campus, then they should have convenient connections to pedestrian and bicycle facilities integrating the campus with the surrounding community.

Universities may be project sponsors. They must use cost principles from OMB Circular A-21.

Q. Would an irrigation system for landscaping and hanging planters be eligible? The irrigation system for the hanging planters will be routed to the baskets but it will be integrated into the poles.

A. Yes, an irrigation system is allowed if part of an approved landscaping project using TE funds. However, is this a best use of TE funds? TE projects should be environmentally sustainable and strive for minimal maintenance requirements. If a project requires irrigation, then perhaps it is not suitable for the local environment.

Q. Bicycle and pedestrian facilities must be hard-surfaced in Tennessee. Can such a facility be made as a boardwalk, even if it is not located in a wetland area, solely for purpose of looks?

A. There is no Federal requirement for a hard surface on TE-funded trails. The guideline is for a firm and stable surface. A boardwalk easily can be firm and stable. See the Access Board's Outdoor Developed Areas Report at www.access-board.gov/outdoor/outdoor-rec-rpt.htm, especially the sections on Trail Technical Provisions (16.2), surface (16.2.1), and boardwalks (16.2.3). The primary concern with boardwalks is to minimize openings. There is also concern with slip resistance, especially if the surface gets mildew, lichens, moss, etc.

Q. Is the replacement of existing pedestrian signals with LED countdown signals at intersections eligible? The potential sponsor cites safety for pedestrians as a justification to replace the existing signals.

A. Yes, replacing existing pedestrian signals with LED countdown signals is eligible as a pedestrian facility. Changing pedestrian signals may trigger a requirement for installing an Accessible Pedestrian Signal.

SOUTH BRISTOL, NEW YORK

Travelers rambling through the popular wine country of upstate New York can now pull over and drink in a breathtaking view in a new roadside park along County Road 12, located in the once little-known town of South Bristol. Drivers formerly created a traffic hazard by pulling onto the shoulder in order to enjoy the view. Now, travelers can pull into a beautiful park equipped with benches and green space, and safely enjoy the splendor the overlook offers. An \$80,165 Transportation Enhancement award helped to fund the project, which was conducted by the South Bristol Highway Department under the direction of the Highway Superintendent. [*The Democrat & Chronicle*, 6/24/05]

RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA

A trail of Civil War markers have begun springing up in North Carolina from the Piedmont to the coast. The first two of these educational markers were unveiled across from the Capitol in Raleigh in June. The signs demonstrate North Carolina's Civil War history, and will benefit residents and cultural tourists alike. New signs are planned to complete the trail. The project is being financed with a \$1.1 million Transportation Enhancements award and \$275,000 in matching funds from local communities who agreed to maintain the markers. [*The News & Observer*, 7/22/05]

BLACKFOOT, IDAHO

Two popular destinations in Blackfoot, Idaho that were formerly separated by the Snake River, are now connected by a 10-mile trail. Bicyclists, pedestrians and joggers can now travel between Jensen's Grove and Rose Pond along a pleasant 10-foot wide trail that runs along the Snake River, near a wildlife viewing area, and next to wetlands. The trail includes a pedestrian pathway across the river. The recreational path was conceived by the Greater Blackfoot Area Greenbelt Committee. Constructing it was a collaboration of the committee, the city of Blackfoot, Bingham County, and private supporters and businesses. A \$362,300 Transportation Enhancements award helped to fund the trail. [*Idaho State Journal*, 8/19/05]

NEW HOPE, PENNSYLVANIA

Renovation of the only working lock on the historic Delaware Canal, formerly used for mule-drawn barges hauling coal and lumber, was celebrated in July. More than \$1 million in Transportation Enhancements funds and additional funds from the Historic Delaware Canal Improvement Corporation and Growing Greener financed the repairs. The restoration will fuel tourism for the Delaware Canal State Park, where the lock is located. [*Pennsylvania DCNR News Release*, 6/17/05]

RESOURCES

The **National Center for Bicycling and Walking** recently developed a resource kit with extensive information about their upcoming Walkable Community Workshops, to take place in spring 2006. The kit includes information regarding the training course for local coordinators, a CD containing sample news items and more. Kits can be obtained for free by visiting www.bikewalk.org/WCW/request.html.

In July, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC) Northeast Regional Office released *Rail-Trail Maintenance and Operation: Ensuring the Future of Your Trail — A Survey of 100 Rail-Trails*. RTC staff surveyed trail managers of more than 100 open rail-trails in the northeast on a wide variety of trail maintenance and operations issues. The report summarizes the results of the survey as they relate to administration, liability, trail surfacing, vegetation and drainage, trailheads and amenities, access control, and more. Four appendices provide example trail maintenance schedules and budgets and survey participant contact information. Access the report online at www.trailsandgreenways.org/resources/highlights/online/default.asp



Neighborhood Schools & Sidewalk Connections: What Are the Impacts on Travel Mode Choice and Vehicle Emissions? was recently published by the Transportation Research Board in the March-April 2005 edition of TR News. The report examines various factors surrounding the increase in school building and renovations. The authors look at the impact of school location, the

built environment around the school, the presence of sidewalks and student mode of travel, as well as quantity of emissions. You can find the paper at www.trb.org/publications/trnews/trnews237environment.pdf.

Paul Osborne of the University of Colorado at Boulder recently published a report in Children, Youth and Environments entitled *Safe Routes for Children: What They Want and What Works*. This paper summarizes recent trends in children's travel, health and social behavior, drawing on examples of safe school routes from the United States, the United Kingdom and from Denmark. The author offers success stories as lessons to communities looking to develop safer routes. Read this paper at www.colorado.edu/journals/cye/15_1/f1_SafeRoutes.pdf.

The Application Process: Faster Doesn't Always Mean Better

At this year's Transportation Enhancements (TE) Seminar in Minneapolis, discussions regarding the application process yielded a common theme: an administratively "quick and easy" application process for TE awards does not quite add up to increased effectiveness. A quick application process can actually be a detriment to TE. What can be done to improve the process? At *Building On Our Success*, TE managers explained how their state addressed common problems associated with the application process. Following are several strategies, and tips for potential sponsors.

The Two-Step Solution

Several presenters discussed the benefits of a two-step application process. Note that incorporating two phases into the application does generally create a longer process, requiring staff to review and respond to each initial application and secondary application. However the extra work may well be worth the resulting benefits to the long term viability of the TE program. The first step generally requires a letter of intent and will focus on eligibility. Oregon's TE Manager Patricia Fisher explained how this discourages ineligible projects, focuses applications on TE qualifications, and reduces the initial effort by applicants. Those initial applicants who are ready and qualified to move on to "phase two" will receive an invitation to apply in full. As a result, more feasible projects are chosen, increasing the overall number of successfully completed TE projects.

A Decentralized TE Staff

A decentralized TE program staff was emphasized by several TE managers. Regional staff, closely linked with the communities that TE projects would affect, take on some of the application process duties, helping to lighten the central office's load. Local staff can take the lead on workshops for their particular regions, collect applications from their locale and select those that go on to the central office, and conduct field reviews of potential projects.

Workshops

Several seminar participants hailed the benefits of the TE application workshop. Workshops can be held in various regions to benefit more of the public and educate applicants on how to correctly apply for a TE award. While workshops may initially create more work for TE staff, they greatly benefit applicants and result in sounder applications.

Community Involvement

Delaware's TE Manager Jeff Niezgodka explained the importance of community involvement. He recommends creating working groups in local communities during applications to assure that the needs and demands of the residents directly affected by the proposed project are being addressed.

This process encourages public outreach and involvement and promotes better reception of projects and the funds going towards them.

Electronic applications

Electronic applications can be distributed to the public at large with one simple step: posting it online. One helpful aspect to these applications is that one can require that all necessary information is filled out before it is submitted. This allows TE staff to spend time only on completed applications, and also forces potential sponsors to gather all needed information.

Deadlines are key

Of course, it is always important to set deadlines, and then stick to them!

WHAT PROJECT APPLICANTS CAN DO

Project applicants can do a lot to make life easier for state DOT TE managers. Here are a few tips:

- Carefully review eligibility restrictions to make sure the proposed project is eligible for TE funds. TE managers are usually overworked and have little time to weed out inappropriate applications.
- Meet with TE managers or attend a workshop to discuss requirements and project feasibility. TE managers repeatedly say that they can immediately tell the difference in quality between applications from those who have attended trainings and those who have not.
- If possible, secure right-of-way before applying for TE funds. TE managers will feel more confident about a proposed project if right-of-way has already been acquired.
- If possible, secure cash match for a project. Although many states offer flexibility in meeting the 20 percent match requirement, most states prefer a cash match and may give priority to projects with a cash match.
- If you receive an award, start your project right away and stay on schedule and on budget. Many TE managers report having to prompt local sponsors to take initiative on their projects. If the sponsor uses TE funds efficiently and responsibly, they are much more likely to be successful in future requests for funds.

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October 16–19, 2005 • Cleveland, Ohio
www.bywaysonline.org

TRANSPORTATION DESIGN FOR COMMUNITIES
October 20, 2005 • Atlanta, Georgia
www.coa.gatech.edu/cqgrd/

NOVEMBER

2005 URBAN LAND INSTITUTE FALL MEETING
November 1, 2005 • Los Angeles, California
www.uli.org

2005 NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON URBAN
ECOSYSTEMS
November 17, 2005 • Charlotte, North Carolina
www.americanforests.org/conference/

DECEMBER

2005 CONGRESS OF CITIES & EXPOSITION
December 6–10, 2005 • Charlotte, North Carolina
www.nlc.org/conferences_events/



NEW PUBLICATION: *Communities Benefit!*

Order your free copy of the new edition of *Communities Benefit!* — The Social and Economic Benefits of Transportation Enhancements. This full-color brochure showcases ten outstanding projects that demonstrate the power of the Transportation Enhancements program to catalyze positive social change and economic rebirth in communities

around the country. Future TE project sponsors will find the brochure a helpful tool in formulating their own project ideas and plans. Order by contacting NTEC or by visiting our Web site.

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