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THE NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION ENHANCEMENTS CLEARINGHOUSE NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 9 NUMBER 1 WINTER 2005

The Vista House:
Transportation Enhancement's Landmark in Historic Preservation

When travelers on Oregon's Historic Columbia River Highway stop at a popular comfort station to stretch their legs, they are greeted by stunning views, magnificent architecture and an intriguing lesson in history. The rest stop is the Vista House at Crown Point, recently restored with the help of Transportation Enhancements, National Scenic Byways Program, and Federal Lands Highway Program awards. Transportation Enhancements can be an excellent way to revitalize historic structures along transportation corridors. Both the highway and the house are within a National Historic District and are a National Landmark. Sitting on a 733 foot promontory above the Columbia River, the Vista House is a landmark of history, architecture and scenic beauty.

The Vista House was originally built in 1916 after the dedication of the Columbia River Highway. Samuel Lancaster was a consulting engineer for the highway and a major influence for building Vista House. He explained that the house would be "an observatory from which the view both up and down the Columbia could be viewed in silent communion with the infinite." The observatory would additionally serve as a memorial to "the trials and hardships of those who had come into the Oregon country…" and it could "serve as a comfort station for the tourist and the travelers of America's greatest highway." He suggested it be known as the Vista House.

David Sell

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VISITORS TO THE VISTA HOUSE EXPLORE EDUCATIONAL EXHIBITS AND DISPLAYS RELATING TO THE BUILDING, THE COLUMBIA RIVER HIGHWAY AND LOCAL FLORA THEY SEE ALONG THE ROAD, AND, OF COURSE, DRINK IN THE SPLENDOR OF THE SCENERY.

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Widely popular since it was built 85 years ago, Vista House deteriorated quite a bit due to extreme weather conditions of the Columbia River gorge, and the wear from a million visitors a year. In the 1940s, it became apparent that moisture was damaging the structure. In a misguided attempt to save the building, engineers of the time decided to keep water out with several structural changes. They covered the vents, overlayed the original ceramic tile with a copper roof, replaced the striking green stained glass windows with clear double-pane glass, and covered the glass in the skylights with a layer of concrete. Rather than keeping water out, the fix-ups actually prevented moisture from leaving the building. Consequently, the inside of the building began deteriorating. The original masonry and plaster crumbled and the marble tiling fell off the walls.

In the late 1990s an effort began to restore the house. Both the interior and the exterior underwent major renovations to restore the original house. The inside of the dome was painted to simulate the marble and bronze originally planned for the structure. Green opalized glass was installed in some windows and others were made clear for viewing. A new glazed green tile roof was installed over a protective dome membrane.

The improvements came about in part from a $545,000 Transportation Enhancements award. By 2003, a total of over $4 million had been raised for the restoration. Fundraising was a combined effort of both public and private groups and agencies including Friends of Vista House, Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, Oregon State Parks Trust, Oregon Department of Transportation and Western Federal Lands Highway Division, and the Federal Highway Administration. The restoration work paid off. In July 2005, the Vista House was re-opened to the public.

Visitors to the Vista House are welcomed by a knowledgeable volunteer-staffed information desk. They explore educational exhibits and displays relating to the building, the Columbia River Highway and local flora they see along the road, and, of course, drink in the splendor of the scenery. As Samuel Lancaster had envisioned, the Vista House serves "as a comfort station for the tourist and travelers of America's greatest highway." For more information, see www.oregonstateparks.org/park_150.php

David Sell

Transportation Enhancements and Safe Routes to School: What's the Difference?

With the enactment of the new transportation act SAFETEA-LU, the Transportation Enhancements (TE) program has stayed on a steady course and will continue to provide funding to help revitalize transportation in communities across the country. While SAFETEA-LU increased TE funding by an average of $100 million per year, it also introduced a new program that can be used to fund TE-type activities. The Safe Routes to School Program will "enable and encourage children, including those with disabilities, to walk and bicycle to school; to make walking and bicycling to school safe and more appealing, and to facilitate the planning, development and implementation of projects that will improve safety and reduce traffic, fuel consumption, and air pollution in the vicinity of schools," according to the language in SAFETEA-LU.

Marin Safe Routes to School

Like TE, Safe Routes encourages alternatives to motor vehicle use through the creation of facilities such as bicycle lanes, sidewalks, and pedestrian and bicycle trails. Both programs are facilitated through national clearinghouses that provide materials and guidance. The Safe Routes clearinghouse has not yet been established, but will eventually be available to provide technical assistance and develop information and educational programs. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) oversees both TE and Safe Routes. FHWA is responsible for such things as providing guidance on the law that mandates the program. The FHWA Office of Planning, Environment, and Realty oversees TE, while the FHWA Office of Safety is designated to oversee Safe Routes. At the state level, both programs are administered through state departments of transportation, with a coordinator acting as a point person for each state's program. While Safe Routes and TE share a number of similarities, it is important to recognize their differences if you plan to apply for an award to fund your project. See the table on the next page to learn several key differences.

	TRANSPORTATION ENHANCEMENTS	SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL
SAFETEA-LU Funding	$3.5 billion for the period 2005–2009	$612 million for the period 2005–2009
Distribution of Funds to states	The main source of TE funds is the 10% set aside of Surface Transportation Program (STP) funds. In addition, funds from the Equity Bonus Program added to the STP funds impact the available totals for Transportation Enhancements. If a state chooses, STP funds beyond the 10% set aside are eligible for use on TE activities. Each fiscal year, these funds are distributed to the states using a formula that reflects the number of federal-aid highway lane-miles, vehicle miles traveled, and estimated tax payments attributable to highway users in each state.	The Safe Routes program is also an "apportionment" program, with funds distributed by formula to the states each fiscal year. Unlike the TE program, however, Safe Routes funding is distributed to the states in proportion to the state's share of national middle and primary school enrollment. The law also requires that each state receive a minimum of $1,000,000 each fiscal year.
Eligibility	To be eligible for TE funds, a project must relate to surface transportation and qualify as one of the 12 eligible activities, which includes provision of bicycle and pedestrian facilities and safety programs, scenic and historic acquisitions, scenic beautification, historic preservation, rail-trails, transportation museums, and others. A TE project must be accessible to the public, and may be a "stand-alone" project or an addition to a larger statewide project. TE funds may not be used for routine maintenance or standard environmental mitigation, or for TE program administrative, research and/or training costs.	There are two categories of eligible activities under Safe Routes to School: infrastructure and noninfrastructure. Infrastructure funds can be used for the planning, design, and construction of infrastructure-related projects that will substantially improve the ability of students to walk and bicycle to school. Such improvements include enhanced sidewalk connections, traffic calming and speed reduction improvements, pedestrian and bicycle crossing improvements, on-street bicycle facilities, off-street bicycle and pedestrian facilities, secure bicycle parking facilities, and traffic diversion improvements in the vicinity of schools. Infrastructure-related projects may be carried out on any public road or any bicycle or pedestrian pathway or trail in the vicinity of schools. Noninfrastructure activities (which must be no more than 30 percent and not less than 10 percent of amount apportioned to a State for a fiscal year) are to encourage walking and bicycling to school. Noninfrastructure activities include public awareness campaigns, outreach to press and community leaders, traffic education and enforcement in the vicinity of schools, student sessions on bicycle and pedestrian safety, health, and the environment, and funding for training, volunteers, and managers of safe routes to school programs. Note that nearly all Safe Routes infrastructure projects are also eligible under STP.
How to Apply for Funds	While the application process can vary from state to state, generally applicants submit requests for funding to state departments of transportation or metropolitan planning organizations. The state then distributes project awards based on a competitive screening process. Many states reserve a portion of their TE apportionment for use on state-sponsored or statewide projects.	The application process for Safe Routes to School money will be determined by each state. Congressional report language, however, encourages states to establish criteria and competitive procedures. FHWA plans to develop Safe Routes to School program guidance by early next year that will incorporate this Congressional language and will assist the States in setting up their programs.
Federal Share	Generally, the Federal share of a TE project is 80 percent, although individual projects may have a 100 percent Federal match so long as the state's overall Federal/local share is 80/20 per fiscal year. The Federal share is higher in States with large proportions of Federal lands. (See http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/legsregs/directives/notices/n4540-12.htm)	The Federal share of the cost of a project in the Safe Routes to School program is 100 percent.

TE IN THE News

Blaine, Ohio

One of the nation's unique historic transportation treasures that had been closed for the past ten years is now restored to the delight of pedestrians and history buffs alike. The historic 1828 "S-shaped" multi-arched Blaine Bridge, the oldest span in the state of Ohio, has been refurbished and preserved through a $1.6 million Transportation Enhancements award. The bridge sits along the National Road, the first federally-funded highway in the United States. A historical park is planned for an area adjacent to the bridge. [*The Times Leader*, 9/19/05]

Smyrna, Tennessee

Six miles of trail were recently added to the Smyrna Greenway in Tennessee, creating a 15-mile trail system. The new section begins in the historical Sharp Springs Natural Area, a piece of land granted to a Revolutionary War soldier in 1776, and also the site of a Civil War hospital. The land continues to be preserved and enjoyed through the Smyrna Greenway, running from the historical site to Smyrna Town Centre. The greenway not only serves as an alternate transportation route and recreational trail, but also as an outdoor classroom. In total $1.7 million was spent on the greenway, with 80 percent coming from a Transportation Enhancements award. [*The Daily News Journal*, 10/13/05]

Davenport, Iowa

A new bridge crosses the Mississippi River between Iowa and Illinois, connecting miles of bicycle and pedestrian trail systems. The bike bridge itself is part of the 6,800 mile American Discovery Trail, planned to eventually span from California to Delaware. The new bridge, which connects to the historic Rock Island Arsenal, allows bicyclists to cross the river without worrying about motorists while at the same time providing the area with a tourist attraction. Transportation Enhancements dollars were provided by the Illinois Department of Transportation for the $1.65 million bridge, with additional funds from counties, cities, public and private foundations, organizations and corporations in both Iowa and Illinois. [*The Associated Press State & Local Wire,* 8/31/05]

Blackford, Kentucky

Neighborhoods in Webster County and Crittenden County, separated by the Tradewater River, are now connected through the restoration of an old Illinois Central Railroad bridge. The bridge, which sits on sandstone pillars built in 1886 by the Ohio Valley Railroad, has been refurbished for use by pedestrians and emergency vehicles, allowing residents to forgo the usual 16-mile trek to get around the river. Transportation Enhancements funds and services from the two counties helped to fund the $580,000 project. [*The Courier Press*, 8/22/05]

RESOURCES

The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), sponsored the 2004 Best Practices in Smart Growth and Transportation competition. The result is a showcase of ten outstanding projects from across the country, all of which serve as excellent examples of integrating smart growth principles and transportation. ***Smart Moves: Transportation Strategies for Smart Growth, 2004 Competition*** is available from environment.transportation.org/documents/2004_smart_growth_competition.pdf.

Child Pedestrians at Risk: A Ranking of U.S. Metropolitan Areas, a report published by Safe Kids Worldwide, examines and ranks the safety of U.S. metro areas for child pedestrians. It specifically looks at development and implementation of solutions at the local level. Read the report at www.usa.safekids.org.

The University of South Florida's Center for Urban Transportation recently published ***A Return on Investment Analysis of Bikes-on-Bus Programs.*** The report examines the success of bikes-on-bus programs, and makes recommendations on how to overcome limitations, including strategies such as investments in bicycle parking and bicycle-to-transit programs. Read the report at www.nctr.usf.edu/pdf/576-05.pdf.

The Active Living Network has launched ***The Active Living Storybank***, a searchable online database of communities that are boosting the health of residents by enhancing neighborhoods with trails, transit improvements and other alterations to physical space, and by changing policy and increasing public education. Featured communities provide excellent examples to advocates, community leaders and professionals among others. Search the database at www.activeliving.org.

Expanding Mobility Options for Persons with Disabilities: A Practitioner's Guide to Community-Based Transportation Planning was recently published by the Community Transportation Association of America in order to provide a model approach for development of community-based, accessible transportation. Projects in thirteen communities are featured, describing successful strategies, models and concepts from which other communities can benefit. The guide is intended to be a resource for transportation professionals, staff of human service and workforce development agencies, those serving the disability community, community activists, and all others seeking to conduct a community-based process to adequately plan for new and improved transportation options. Read the guide at www.ctaa.org

Exploring the Link between Transportation and Health

In southeastern Missouri, a poll was taken of residents who used a local pedestrian-bicycle trail. It was found that 55% of those surveyed are exercising more now than before they had access to the trail.[1] This is one example of new research showing a connection between active living infrastructure and improved health outcomes. Communities that invest in creating active transportation facilities, such as bicycle and pedestrian trails and routes that Transportation Enhancements can help to fund, provide both a pleasant and easy way to get in shape as well as an excellent new transportation route.

Bill Wright

Health Problems Plague U.S. Communities

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reported that in 1999, 61% of adults in the United States were overweight or obese. They indicate that the obesity trend cuts across all ages, racial and ethnic groups, and both genders. Obesity can lead to heart disease, cancer, stroke, and depression among other serious health problems. Obesity has economic consequences as well. A 1999 study in South Carolina found that lack of physical activity caused nearly 2,000 deaths annually and costs the state $157 million or more annually in hospital charges.[2] In 2003 health care costs directly related to obesity amounted to $75 billion, according to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).

Heightening Fitness with Transportation

To overcome the myriad of health problems associated with obesity, the U.S. Surgeon General recommends moderate physical activity for 30 minutes a day, five days a week. By incorporating pedestrian and bicycle facilities that connect people to places they want and need to go, communities are given an opportunity to improve transportation efficiency and the overall health of the community. Such facilities enable people to incorporate walking and cycling into their daily lives. A 1991 Harris Poll found that 46% of the 1,250 adults surveyed said that they would bike to work if designated trails were built.[3] Communities can provide a number of options for residents, including bicycle and pedestrian trails, bicycle racks on buses, pleasant and pedestrian-friendly sidewalks, better lighting, and bicycle lanes on roadways. These are all activities that Transportation Enhancements dollars can help to fund.

Transportation Enhancements at Work

A prime example of TE funds helping to enhance both community health and transportation is Bikestation Seattle. This program provides a hub facility for commuters that has secure bicycle parking and amenities that attract both cyclists and transit users. The Bikestation, located in a historic downtown building, conveniently links to bus lines, train service at the King Street Station, Metro's Waterfront Streetcar, a ferry terminal, and allows access to car-sharing. Additional features include indoor bicycle storage and rental, a full-service repair shop, parts and accessories sales, and Internet access to commute information. To further encourage bicycle commuting, the station teams up veteran bicycle-commuters with those just starting out. Membership is a low annual fee of $20. This makes it an accessible facility for a large portion of the population.

Several key aspects of Bikestation Seattle project provide clues for the creation of a successful transportation project that also provides health benefits. The facility should be easy to access, inexpensive or free to use, and connect people to places they need or want to get to. TE funds can help to make this happen.

1 Ross C. Brownson, "Promoting and Evaluating Walking Trails in Rural Missouri," Saint Louis University School of Public Health.

2 The Prevention Research Center at the University of South Carolina School of Public Health, Good Health: It's Your Move—Physical Activity in South Carolina, May 14, 1999, prevention.sph.sc.edu.

3 Martin Guttenplan and Robert Patten, "Off-Road but On Track," TR News, 178, May–June 1995.

NTEC Honored for Historic Preservation

The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) presented its highest award to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) for its efforts to protect historic transportation facilities around the country. Since 1992, FHWA's Transportation Enhancement program has supported more than 2,500 historic preservation and rehabilitation projects. The National Transportation Enhancements Clearinghouse and the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials were commended by ACHP for their "essential efforts supporting the preservation, enhancement, and productive use of cultural and natural resources along the Nation's surface transportation system."

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Connections is a quarterly publication of the National Transportation Enhancements Clearinghouse sponsored by the Federal Highway Administration. Submission of articles as well as letters and other comments are welcome.

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