

# CONNECTIONS

The Newsletter of the NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION ENHANCEMENTS CLEARINGHOUSE

VOLUME 1 ISSUE 4

OCTOBER 1997

## A Message from Washington . . .

by Harold Peaks

These are interesting and action packed times in Washington. While Congress is actively debating legislation that will reauthorize Federal transportation funding, we at the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) are preparing to continue our efforts to promote and facilitate effective transportation decisionmaking as well as handle any new initiatives that may emerge. The Transportation Enhancements (TE) program, in particular, is one area where Congress expects national policies and State and local priorities to be well coordinated and managed.

This issue of *Connections* focuses on the five historic preservation categories included in the list of ten Enhancements activities. While four of the five historic categories were clearly defined in the law, one category, *Historic Preservation*, was included with no elaboration, presenting a number of interpretation challenges at the outset of the Enhancements program.

Flexibility was the operative term when ISTEA was launched in 1992, and states made use of this flexibility to fund a wide variety of more than 8,000 TE projects. While a number of historic preservation projects, funded in the early years, generated a lot of attention around questions of eligibility, FHWA subsequently found that only a few of these projects failed to adequately make the transportation connection.

The initial FHWA memo of April 24, 1992, outlined guidance for determining eligibility, and identified the need for a direct linkage to transportation based on *function, impact, or proximity*. A subsequent memo of June 6, 1995 pertaining specifically to historic preservation projects, reemphasised the transportation nexus as an essential element in TE project selection.

The concept of *proximity* has been the most difficult for project sponsors and program managers to interpret. Our experience in administering the TE program has taught us that *proximity* alone is not a strong enough nexus to justify the use of TE funds for historic preservation projects.

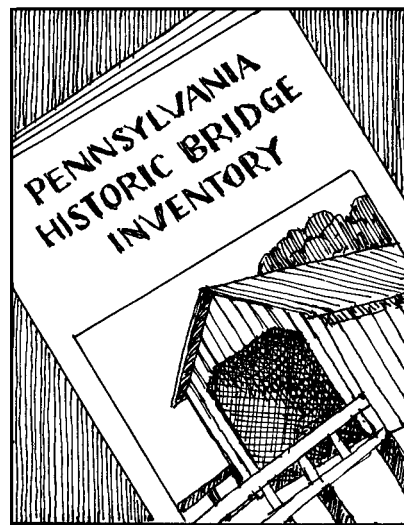
(continued on page 3)

## Historic Preservation & Enhancements: Recycling America's Transportation Past

According to Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC), over \$720 million — more than one-quarter of the \$2.1 billion programmed for TE spending — has been slated for projects involving historic preservation. More than 2,000 TE projects involve activities such as restoring train depots, preserving roadside historic and cultural amenities, renovating covered bridges, conducting arch-

eological research, and rehabilitating canal corridors.

The table on page 2 shows how historic preservation projects are distributed among seven basic facility types. A description of these historic project types, and some typical project examples are presented below.



## Historic Preservation Project Types

### Rehabilitation of Active Rail Depots & Intermodal Centers

Through the creative re-use of railroad depots and other historic transportation facilities, over \$117 million has been invested in projects that are providing functional transportation benefits and meeting the mobility demands of today. These projects include the restoration of intercity passenger rail depots and bus stations, commuter and subway rail stations, ferry terminals, and the creation of various types of new intermodal centers from the aging infrastructure of yesterday.

(continued on page 2)

...providing information services to Transportation Enhancement program professionals & project sponsors

■ Toll-free Tel: (888) 388-6832 ■ Local Tel: (202) 463-0641 ■ Fax: (202) 463-0875 ■ Email: ntec@transact.org ■ Website: <http://www.transact.org/ntec.htm>

# Historic Preservation ...

(continued from page 1)

More than 114 railroad depots that serve Amtrak have been restored under the program. From small rural stations to bustling big city stops, more than \$76 million in TE funds have made waiting for the train safe, comfortable, and more convenient for thousands of Amtrak riders.

Local public transit facilities also have had their modern utility preserved without loss of their character and charm. Examples include the Beaux Arts ferry terminal in downtown San Francisco, which has been enhanced and better connected to city bus and trolley lines, and historic station restorations in more than 10 commuter rail and public transit systems in America's largest cities, including New York City, suburban New Jersey, Philadelphia, and the San Francisco Bay Area.

period lighting, trees, and street furniture, and landscaping in historic areas.

## Historic Byways & Tourism

Over \$115 million has been programmed for historic projects related to highway travel and tourism: the *conversion of historic buildings* to comfort stations, waysides and visitor centers; *historic highway amenities* such as turnouts, historic markers and interpretive areas; and the *acquisition of historic roadside easements* for the preservation of overlook sites and viewsheds. These projects make trips more enjoyable and can provide tired travelers with a lifesaving break.

## Other Historic Transportation Facilities

TE Funds have been targeted to preserve a wide variety of historic transportation facilities, including canals, urban trolley systems, unused railroad corridors, waterfronts, railroad infrastructure, lighthouses, and airports. Over 260 historic train depots are being restored by local communities for community centers, trailhead facilities, or other public uses that help revitalize local communities.

## Community Revitalization

While many TE-funded historic preservation projects relate directly to active transportation, others — that we have grouped here as Community Revitalization — are related by proximity, impact **and** history to the modern intermodal system. These projects which have been popular with local communities bring historic resources back into public life and use, and may be critical to maintaining a community's unique identity.

Transportation-related revitalization projects may allow a village to retain a sense of place as it is being surrounded by sprawl; a blighted inner city neighborhood to engender a sense of pride among local residents; or a small town to turn an eyesore into an attractive point of interest that appears on next year's state highway map and sharpens their competitive edge for regional tourism dollars.

## Archeological Planning & Research

An additional \$18 million is being directed toward transportation-related archeological planning and research, and the acquisition of archeological sites, based on proximity and impact to the intermodal transportation system. Nearly half of this funding is being used by state departments of transportation to develop statewide geographic information systems (GIS) and other methods to locate and inventory all the state's known archeological resources.

### TE-Funded Historic Preservation Projects

(in millions)

Facility Type	Federal Funding	Number of Projects
Rehabilitation of Active Rail		
Depots/Intermodal Centers	\$117.1	177
Historic Bridges	78.5	246
Historic Streetscapes	67.0	236
Historic Byways & Tourism	118.7	360
Other Historic Transportation	231.7	581
Facilities		
Community Revitalization	89.5	311
Archaeological Planning	18.6	100

Source: Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, September 1997

## Historic Bridges

More than \$78 million in TE funds are being used to rehabilitate and inventory historic highway bridges. These rehabilitations ensure safety for users while maintaining the tradition and aesthetic qualities that are often lost in bridge replacement.

## Historic Streetscapes

Enhancements funds are also being used in over 230 communities to restore historic streets to their original state, or to enhance streetscapes in historic districts. Streetscape projects include the reconstruction of brick streets, the rehabilitation of main street promenades, the renovation of historic sidewalks, and the installation of

## Project Examples

### Enhancing Transportation, on a Large Scale...

Los Angeles, a city known for its endless stretches of freeways, has used \$24 million in TE funds to rehabilitate historic Union Station in the downtown area into a modern, intermodal transit center. Serving Amtrak, the new regional commuter rail, city and regional buses, and the future subway, local officials predict that Union Station will become one of the busiest passenger terminals in the nation.

### ...And on a Small Scale

TE projects in small towns can also bring practical transportation benefits as well. Cape May, New Jersey used \$500,000 in TE funds to renovate its historic railroad depot into an intermodal transportation center that serves bus and ferry travelers, bicycle tourists, and motorists, and houses the town's welcome center.

### Transcending Borders

The creative re-use of bridges is an increasingly common enhancement activity. The town of Roma, Texas is using \$1.2 million to rehabilitate an historic 1928 Suspension Bridge for pedestrian travel between Texas and Mexico. The Roma Suspension Bridge, listed in the National Registry, is the last of many suspension roadway bridges built across the Rio Grande in the early 20th Century. The restoration of the bridge will strengthen bi-national cooperation and heritage tourism development, thereby fostering economic revitalization in a county which has the second highest unemployment rate in the U.S.

### Enjoying History, Resting the Body and Mind

The Wolf Creek Indian Village in Bastian, Virginia, is a visitors center and interactive museum created from 800 year-old Native American artifacts excavated during the construction of Interstate 77. The value of this project, which has received more than 18,000 visitors in its first 14 months of operation, is best described by the Village director: "Facilities for resting and diverting the body and mind are necessary for maintaining good health. Such facilities help to minimize travel fatigue, which equates to fewer accidents while on the road."

### Making Main Street Walkable, Again!

Just like highways, sidewalks must be lit and well-maintained in order to bring streets back to life, create new economic opportunities, and encourage people to walk. A streetscape project in Cordell, Oklahoma, is incorporating this philosophy by using \$300,000 in TE

funds to complement the historic restorations already taking place through the Cordell Main Street program. The city is planning to incorporate new sidewalks, period lighting, benches, and landscaping into a design that will provide pedestrian accessibility and comply with the American with Disabilities Act while complementing the buildings around the square.

### Protecting Our Transportation Heritage

From the New England states of Vermont and New Hampshire to the Midwestern states of Indiana and Ohio, dozens of covered bridges are being restored to reflect their former charm as well as to provide important highway linkages. In Georgia, the state Department of Transportation is using TE funds to save all ten of the state's surviving National Register covered bridges. TE funds are being programmed in six states to inventory historic bridges, and in New Jersey, funding is being used to catalogue 85 historic stone arch bridges.

#### AHUA & RTC Release Reports on TE Program

Both the American Highway Users Alliance (AHUA) and Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC) released reports in early September evaluating the ISTEAs Enhancements program. The HUA report, *Transportation Enhancement Mandates: The Price We Pay*, and the RTC report, *ISTEA Transportation Enhancements: Six Years of Success*, reach widely differing conclusions as to the benefits and successes of the program. Copies of the publications may be obtained by contacting the respective organizations:

##### American Highway Users Alliance

202-857-1200 (phone) • GoHighway@AOL.com

##### Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

Fax: 202-331-9680 • Attn: National Policy Dept.

## Message from Washington . . .

(continued from page 1)

Flexibility remains the operative term today, and we at the FHWA, along with our agency partners at the State and local levels, must continue to ensure that a clear linkage exists between TE-funded projects and the intermodal transportation system. This connection is not just desirable, it is critical, and public accountability demands that it be made.

*Harold Peaks is the Team Leader of the Community Impacts and Transportation Enhancement Team at FHWA.*

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy  
Attn: National Transportation Enhancements Clearinghouse  
1100 Seventeenth Street, NW, 10th Floor  
Washington, DC 20036

NONPROFIT ORG.  
US POSTAGE  
PAID  
RAILS-TO-TRAILS  
CONSERVANCY  
PERMIT NO. 304

#### Transportation Enhancements Clearinghouse

- Toll-free Tel: (888) 388-6832
- In DC Area: (202) 463-0641
- Fax: (202) 463-0875
- Email: [ntec@transact.org](mailto:ntec@transact.org)
- Website: <http://www.transact.org/ntec.htm>

## Update on ISTEA Reauthorization

After weeks of constant change, the status of ISTEA reauthorization legislation reached a plateau as ISTEA expired September 30. On September 17, the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee reported to the Senate a six-year bill, *ISTEA-2*, and a week later, the House Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I) Committee reported to the House, *H.R. 2400*, which simply extends the current ISTEA programs for six months. (The T&I Committee is also preparing a six-year bill, *BESTEA*, for consideration next Spring.)

The Enhancements program has fared well with regard to basic structure and funding levels. The program has survived in both chambers' mark-ups as a set-aside of the Surface Transportation Program (STP). The Senate bill includes language which makes permanent the Alternative Share provision. In the House bill, several additional activities were attached to existing categories, and a new category, *provision of tourist and welcome centers*, was added.

In *ISTEA-2*, Enhancements is funded as an eight percent share of a much larger STP, amounting to an average of \$570 million annually in TE funding. In *BESTEA*, Enhancements remains as a ten percent share of the STP, which translates into almost \$700 million in TE funding for FY2000. (However, fifty percent of new funding, i.e. authorizations above 1996 levels, is made transferable to other ISTEA programs.)

To follow the evolving status and outcome of the two Congressional bills and their impact on the TE program, visit the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy or Surface Transportation Policy Project websites at: <http://www.railtrails.org>, and <http://www.istea.org>

## Late Breaking News *FHWA Extends Alternative Share Guidance*

In a memorandum released September 29, 1997 by Associate Administrator Thomas Ptak, FHWA is extending an innovative finance provision which allows TE projects an alternative Federal share. An April 11, 1995 memo initiated the *Alternative Share* provision, which allows States to adjust the Federal share to 100 percent when TE projects use private cash, in-kind contributions, funds from other Federal agencies, or other types of local match contributions.

This extension will remain in effect until passage of new legislation which fully reauthorizes the Federal-aid transportation programs.

Contact the Clearinghouse for a copy of the *Alternative Share Extension* memo, or for more information: 1-888-388-6832.

### Upcoming Conference

#### National Main Street Conference

May 17-20, 1998/Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania  
Sponsor: National Trust for Historic Preservation  
Contact: Melissa Stoddard, 202-588-6219.

*Connections* is a publication of the National Transportation Enhancements Clearinghouse (NTEC).

Co-editors: Robert Patten, NTEC Director  
Tim Lidiak, Program Manager

*Connections* is published bimonthly. The next issue will be distributed in December 1997. *Connections* staff welcomes submissions of articles regarding Transportation Enhancements, as well as letters and other comments.