

CONNECTIONS

The NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION ENHANCEMENTS CLEARINGHOUSE Newsletter

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Downtown is the Place for Transportation Enhancements

Countless writers have touched on the importance of place in urban design. In this context “place” is an intangible that is hard to quantify but easy to recognize because it strikes a personal chord. Place is best understood through experience because it is about experience; a good place encourages activity that builds comfort, trust and community. Building good places is a strong component in the new vision of transportation as a potential quality experience — not just a way to get from one place to someplace else. It will continue to take new and effective partnerships to construct transportation facilities which help create “place.”

Two nationwide initiatives available to implement this vision are transportation enhancement (TE) funds and the National Main Street Program. As the total funding levels authorized for TE is greater now by 42.5% — from \$2.7 billion to \$3.8 billion — state transportation agencies will continue to seek local partners to invest and leverage dollars. Helping to educate potential project sponsors is the National Main Street Center, an organizational membership program. The Center fosters local main street groups that work within their communities building local support to restore older commercial architecture as an economic development tool. Since 1994 over 200 Main Street Program affiliates report having ISTEA-funded projects.

One of the best examples of this particular partnership is located just “west of the Mississippi” from Memphis, TN. The *Broadway Revitalization* in West Memphis, AK is happening in a small city of about 30,000 in the northeastern region of the state where much of the economy is based in the interchange, switching and terminal facilities for rail, trucking and shipping. Concerned about diminishing Federal Economic Assistance Funds and the end of the federal revenue sharing program, city leaders and Main Street West Memphis, Inc. wrote an application for transportation enhancement funds to improve the major

downtown arterial, Broadway Avenue. The intent was to meet capital improvement needs and economic development goals. Professional designers were hired to team up with local business and property owners and make a 15-block streetscape improvement plan (see figure 1).

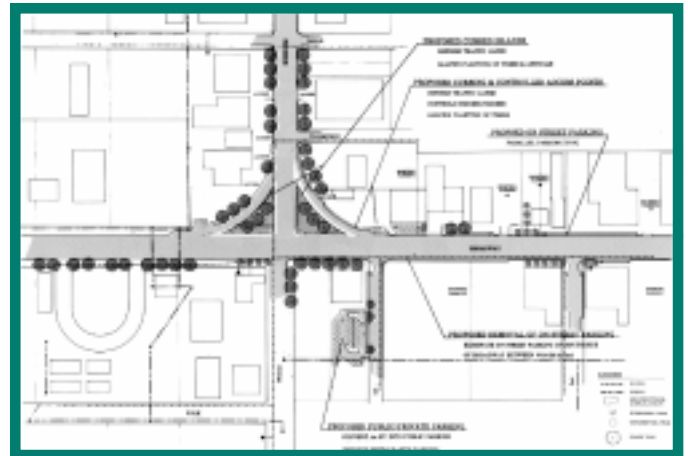


Figure 1: Proposed Broadway streetscape improvements.

As a streetscape, Broadway had potential but certain features were substandard, unsafe and isolated (see figure 2). “The vacant lots, lack of trees and unoccupied buildings had created an empty downtown core that seemed to *float in space*,” according to Nancy Lowe, the architectural design consultant. Street, sidewalk and building proportions were sized to create *enclosure*, yet did not encourage the sort of incidental socializing that prevails in comfortable public areas. While there was good *transparency* along the storefront windows, there were too few awnings for shade, and the deteriorating sidewalks were cluttered with utilities. The angled on-street parking created a buffer between sidewalks and the road and kept traffic speeds down, but the 90-degree parking angle was dangerous. Ten traffic accidents had occurred on the 700 block of Broadway in one year.

Citizens, leaders and experts started the redesign of Broadway by researching the urban history of West Memphis, surveying land uses, and envisioning a long-term

(continued on page 2)

plan for growth. “We used a Community Design Process and held a series of meetings to involve the community every step of the way, right down to the final design decisions like the location and type of trees,” said Jim Covington, the lead project consultant. In the preliminary stages, there was uncertainty, and parking was a special consideration. “To alleviate concern, the project contractor would paint off each section of area and demonstrate exactly how the pieces would fit together,” recalled Lynda Avery, former Executive Director of Main Street West Memphis, Inc. “The plan was implemented on one side of one block at a time, so the disruption to business was minimal.”

Details of the improved streetscape included: replacement of cobrahead lights with period streetlighting, 6-foot wide sidewalks with brick inlays, marked crosswalks and curb ramps as well as indigenous trees and shrubs. The angle of the parking was decreased to 30 degrees and a space for public art was constructed. As figure 3 indicates, some of the property owners have installed awnings on their buildings. Making Broadway more lively with design and landscaping treatments has had significant public safety benefits. The local MPO reported that only one accident occurred on the 700 block of Broadway in 1996. “It has helped tremendously. More people come down now, including people who wouldn’t have come here before. I could increase my business but I have about all I can do to keep up with my fishing,” said Cletus Bullman, owner of Clete’s TV at 7th and Broadway.

By late 1996, project phases I and II were complete and the City had leveraged \$105,000 for a half million dollars in capital improvements. Visible enhancement of the public streets reinforced the perception of positive change which has stimulated further reinvestment. In the project area, fifty-one retailers were open for business and



Figure 2: 800 block of Broadway before TE improvements (looking east).

because the city just didn’t have the money to do it,” said Lynda Avery.

“All this boosts the public image of West Memphis and serves to develop the economic base by attracting more businesses with the positive image of a vital downtown,” said Leigh Ann Simmons, current Executive Director of Main Street West Memphis, Inc. “We have completed 7 of the 15 blocks in the original streetscape plan and the City Design Committee is preparing a comprehensive plan to revitalize the rest of downtown. This fits in with larger goals in West Memphis — to meet steady population and economic growth projections within ten years.”



Figure 3: Broadway at 8th after TE improvements, (looking west).

A focused local resolve in West Memphis made the Main Street Program the perfect compliment to the principles of transportation equity realized by the public participation requirements for transportation enhancement projects. A revitalized Broadway shows us how transportation planning may help communities build both a stronger sense of place and improve the economic base. For more information about the National Main Street Center contact Kennedy

Smith at 202-588-6219 or visit their website at www.mainst.org/. If you are interested in specific information about the West Memphis project contact Leigh Ann Simmons at 870-735-8814. Additional audio and visual project information is provided on the *Visual Database of Transportation Enhancements*, available through NTEC (1-888-388-6832).

Making the Connection II: A Trails and Greenways Revolution Call-for-Sessions

Make the Connection II! You are invited to submit a proposal for presentation at Rails-to-Trails Conservancy's Second International Trails and Greenways Conference. We expect 1,000 trail and greenway experts and advocates will come together in Pittsburgh, June 23-26, 1999 to share ideas, reach new constituencies and build new partnerships.

The call-for-sessions is available on Rails-to-Trails Conservancy's web page at www.railtrails.org, by calling 202-974-5151 or by email at rtconf@transact.org. The deadline for proposals is October 15, 1998.

Questions About the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) Program?

At \$8.1 billion over the next six years, the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) Program will provide metropolitan areas suffering air quality problems with a source of funding to reduce emissions and particulate levels.

The Environmental and Energy Study Institute (EESI) has begun publishing a periodic newsletter about the CMAQ program and will answer questions about the program's implementation.

Contact the EESI at 202-628-1400 or by e-mail, cmq@eesi.org.

Conference Calendar

Pro Bike / Pro Walk '98
Hosted by the Bicycle Federation of America & the Campaign
to Make America Walkable
September 8th - 11th in Santa Barbara, CA
Call 202-463-6622 or E-mail Bikefed@aol.com
www.bikefed.org

Economic Development Finance
Sponsored by the Council for Urban Economic Development
September 10th - 12th in San Diego, CA
Call 202-223-4735
<http://cued.org>

RailVolution
Building Livable Communities
September 12th - 16th in Portland, OR
Call (800)788-7077
www.convene@aol.com

Transportation, Wetlands & the Natural
Environment
Hosted by the Center for Transportation
& the Environment (CTE)
September 16th - 18th in New Bern, NC
Call 919-515-7990
<http://itre.ncsu.edu/itre/cte/conferences/connections98.html>

Public Market Conference
Hosted by Project for Public Spaces
September 23rd - 26th in Seattle, WA
Call David O'Neil at 215-482-5130 or E-mail markets@pps.org
www.pps.org/PublicMarkets/conf98.htm

Strategies and Tools for Renewing Cities
Hosted by Post-Urban
September 26th - 29th in Victoria, BC, Canada
Visit www.posturban.com for more information

1998 American Society of Landscape Architects
Annual Meeting and EXPO
Hosted by ASLA
October 2nd - 6th in Portland, Oregon
Call 202-898-2444
www.asla.org/meetings/port98/sched.html

Revitalizing Inner City Neighborhoods
Hosted by the University of Louisville/Sustainable Urban
Neighborhoods
October 15th - 17th in Louisville, KY
www.louisville.edu/org/sun/

National Land Trust Rally '98
Sponsored by the Land Trust Alliance
October 17th - 20th in Madison, Wisconsin
Call 202-638-4725
www.lta.org/rally

1st Railroad Station Restoration Seminar
Sponsored by the Great American Station Foundation
October 20th & 21st at Washington, DC's Union Station
Contact Bernice Lowe at 202-906-3518
www.stationfoundation.org

52nd National Preservation Conference
Hosted by the National Trust for Historic Preservation
October 20th - 25th in Savannah, GA
Call 800-944-6847 or www.nationaltrust.org

1998 National Trails Symposium
Hosted by American Trails
November 13th - 17th in Tucson, AZ
Call 520-632-1140 or E-mail AmTrails@lankaster.com
www.outdoorlink.com/amtrails

78th Annual Transportation Research Board Meeting
Hosted by the Transportation Research Board
January 10th - 14th, 1999 in Washington, DC
Call 202-334-2934
www.nas.edu/trb/calendar.html

National Transportation Enhancements Clearinghouse

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TEA-21 Outreach

The US DOT will conduct a series of TEA-21 outreach sessions to consult with its partners and customers before the implementation of the majority of TEA-21. The TEA-21 outreach sessions are scheduled to be held between now and October 8, 1998. There will be topic specific focus groups scheduled as well. Focus groups are intended to be face-to-face discussions between DOT Program Managers and their State and local partners.

The focus groups topics will include Transportation Enhancements as well as Community Preservation; Accessibility; Other Innovative Finance topics; Highway Program Streamlining; Environmental Streamlining; STP Set-asides; and Bicycle, Pedestrian, & Trails Programs.

The FHWA outreach webpage will be modified as information becomes available. For further information check the page at: www.fhwa.dot.gov/tea21/cal0898.htm or contact: Mr. Harold Peaks

Community Impacts & Transportation
Enhancements Team Leader
Environment and Planning Division
(202)-366-1598.

Connections is a bimonthly publication of the National Transportation Enhancements Clearinghouse (NTEC). Submission of articles regarding Transportation Enhancements as well as letters and other comments are welcome.

NTEC is updating its mailing list. If you are receiving duplicates or our listing of your address is incorrect, please let us know via the toll-free number, fax or in writing. Thanks.

...TEA-21 NOTES

- ◆ **OVER A MONTH AFTER PRESIDENT CLINTON** signed the Transportation Equity Act (TEA-21) into law, a technical corrections bill (the TEA-21 Restoration Act) also passed both houses and was signed by the President as part of H.R. 2676 – the I.R.S. Reform Act. In terms of the Transportation Enhancement (TE) program, the Technical Corrections Bill corrected the states' allocations.
- ◆ **COPIES OF TEA-21** and the Technical Corrections Bill may be obtained through the internet by logging on to www.fhwa.dot.gov/tea21/legis.htm and www.fhwa.dot.gov/tea21/hr2676t9.htm respectively.
- ◆ **THE ENHANCEMENTS LANGUAGE**, eligible categories, and modifications to the existing categories can be found in the text of TEA-21 by going to section 1201 of H.R. 2400, number (35).
- ◆ **CHECK YOUR STATE'S TE ALLOCATION** by visiting www.fhwa.dot.gov/tea21/subalc-3.htm
- ◆ **IF YOU ARE LOOKING FOR THE LANGUAGE** that mandates the 10% set aside in the new bill, you won't find it. Since the set-aside did not change, the language did not need to be repeated.
- ◆ **CLARIFICATION AND GUIDANCE MEMORANDA** concerning the TE program will be available in October after the FHWA team completes a series of focus group meetings and outreach sessions around the country.