

# CONNECTIONS

THE NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION ENHANCEMENTS CLEARINGHOUSE NEWSLETTER  
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## A Historic Home for Vermont Travelers and Locals

By Megan Betts, National Transportation Enhancements Clearinghouse

The restored General Benjamin Wait House, original home to the founder of Waitsfield, VT, is more than just a place for tourists on Vermont Route 100 to rest. This renovated National Register building offers visitors and the local community valuable information on the Mad River Valley and the town of Waitsfield's history. By restoring and renovating the building to be both a modern visitors' center and a community landmark, Waitsfield demonstrated how combining Transportation Enhancement (TE) funds with historic preservation contributes to communities and transportation systems.

### History of the House

General Benjamin Wait was a soldier during the French and Indian war, and was also instrumental in Vermont becoming a separate republic from New York and New Hampshire. He received a charter from the Vermont legislature to establish the Town of Waitsfield, and built his home there in 1794. General Wait's house was moved a short distance and a second story added in the 1830s. The house was privately owned for years until the town of Waitsfield purchased the house, thereby preserving it for visitors, the community, and region.

### Meeting Visitors' Needs

During peak tourist seasons, the Mad River Valley hosts up to 9,000 visitors per day, and 10,000 trips per day on Vermont Route 100. The Vermont Agency of Transportation (AOT) recognized the need for a visitors' center in the northern Green Mountains area. Waitsfield possessed not only a historic landmark in the General Wait House, but also a structure ideally located for such a visitors' center. Thus, the town decided to apply for TE funds to restore the General Wait house into a visitors' center and community landmark. It was also decided that the house would highlight the area's history and community, providing another angle to the Vermont tourism industry's focus on recreation.

In early 1996, the town began work on restoring and renovating the General Wait House into the Mad River Valley's only staffed visitors' center. The restoration included building a Vermont information kiosk, public parking, and the area's only ADA-accessible public bathrooms for visitors. Since much of Vermont's economy rests on tourism, constructing facilities for travelers in a historic structure combined needed travel amenities with promoting the history of Waitsfield and the Mad River Valley. The house was dedicated on October 3, 1997.

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**J**OANNA WHITCOMB, WHO INITIATED AND WROTE THE APPLICATION FOR TE FUNDS FOR THE GENERAL WAIT HOUSE PROJECT, SAID, "AS A PLANNER, THIS WAS ONE OF MY FAVORITE PROJECTS BECAUSE IT ACTUALLY HAPPENED... IT PROVIDES EVERYONE WITH A REAL SENSE OF COMMUNITY."

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## SUMMARY OF BENEFITS

**THE GENERAL WAIT HOUSE IS AN EXCELLENT EXAMPLE OF HOW THE PRESERVATION OF HISTORIC BUILDINGS CAN NOT ONLY ENHANCE THE TRANSPORTATION EXPERIENCE FOR TRAVELERS, BUT ALSO THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR LOCAL RESIDENTS. TOURISTS TO MAD RIVER VALLEY AND WAITSFIELD NOW HAVE MORE THAN A MUCH NEEDED FACILITY FOR REST; THEY HAVE A PLACE TO LEARN ABOUT THE HISTORY OF THE REGION AND THE COMMUNITY THEY ARE VISITING. RESIDENTS ALSO HAVE A PLACE TO CELEBRATE THEIR PAST AND PROMOTE THEIR FUTURE AS A FOCAL POINT ALONG VERMONT ROUTE 100. BY RENTING OFFICE SPACE IN THE STRUCTURE, THE TOWN PRESERVED THE OPERATION OF THE FACILITY FOR EVERYONE. IN ALL, THIS TE PROJECT SAVED A HISTORIC BUILDING FROM DISREPAIR AND HELPED BUILD A COMMUNITY LANDMARK FOR RESIDENTS AND VISITORS.**

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## Meeting the Community's Needs

Waitsfield also wanted the renovation of the General Wait House to benefit the local community. By constructing office, public meeting, and exhibition space into the house, Waitsfield also built a community focal point. Many groups access the house for their own purposes: the Valley Garden Club manages the house's grounds, students tour the house for lessons on local history, and community historical societies use the exhibit and meeting space for their events.

The town also thought to tie this project into the long-term development of Waitsfield's historic district by including the restoration into the Village Improvement Plan. The General Wait house will serve as an anchor for the development of a new municipal complex in the same part of the Waitsfield historic district.

Waitsfield also successfully designed the General Wait House to be a financially self-supporting operation. The town raised \$235,500 in local match funds to purchase the house, and combined with a \$200,000 TE award for renovation and restoration, the town insured that General Wait's house will remain a public and historic space. Renting the six offices in the building has covered all of the house's operating expenses since it opened in October 1997, demonstrating the cost-effectiveness of the entire project.

## Project Insiders Share Insights

Joanna Whitcomb, former Planner at the Mad River Valley Planning District, initiated and wrote the application for TE funds for the General Wait House project. "As a planner, this was one of my favorite projects because it actually happened... It provides everyone with a real sense of community," she commented. Ms. Whitcomb recommends that project sponsors plan ahead how they will secure the local match funding prior to project approval. In addition, she recommends sponsors appoint one person to administer the project from start to finish to centralize communication amongst the parties involved.

The Waitsfield Historical Society was primarily responsible for fundraising to contribute to the local match requirements. Jack Smith, a member of the Society, suggests that TE project sponsors talk to a professional fundraiser for their insights on who and how to approach people for money. Jean Sherman, former President of the Society, also recommends a fundraising education. "Money is the key issue, so one should learn how to do fundraising," she said.

Both Ms. Sherman and Mr. Smith acknowledged that the General Wait House project required a great deal of work, but was a very rewarding experience. Mr. Smith said that he would "do it all over again" because of the sense of satisfaction he experienced witnessing the project come to fruition.



Citizens from the town of Waitsfield gather to celebrate the dedication of the General Wait House Visitors' Center on October 3, 1997.

# FHWA Q & A on the Interim Guidance

By Florence Mills, Federal Highway Administration

In June, Harold Peaks, Acting Director of the FHWA Office of Human Environment, introduced the new FHWA Interim Guidance on Transportation Enhancement Activities: 23 U.S.C. and TEA-21 at the Transportation Enhancements (TE) Professional Seminar in Pittsburgh, PA. During the Seminar and afterwards, coordinators and stakeholders have raised questions on how to use the new Interim TE Guidance. Here are some of the more commonly asked questions and FHWA's response.

**Q.** *The Interim TE Guidance provides a lot of information but does not cover all aspects of transportation enhancements. Where should we go for FHWA policies on areas not discussed in the Guidance?*

**A.** Transportation Enhancement Activities have some special characteristics, but they are still part of the FHWA's federal-aid highway program. The Interim TE Guidance covers special characteristics and situations unique to enhancements. Otherwise, the general FHWA regulations on payment procedures, civil rights, planning, engineering and traffic operations and right-of-way and environment apply. For more information on FHWA policies as applied to transportation enhancements, we recommend discussions with the FHWA transportation enhancements coordinator in the local FHWA division office, usually located in the state capital. (If you need to know your state FHWA TE representative's contact information, just call NTEC at 1-888-388-NTEC). The FHWA regulations appear in title 23 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR). You can find the Code of Federal Regulations in any law library and 23 CFR can also be downloaded from the FHWA Web site at: <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/legsregs/legislat.html>.

**Q.** *How do the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements apply to Transportation Enhancement Activities?*

**A.** The ADA requirements apply to the whole federal-aid highway program and are not unique to transportation enhancements. In July 1999, the U.S. Department of Transportation issued an Accessibility Policy Statement pledging a fully accessible multimodal transportation system. The FHWA has specific ADA policies for statewide planning in 23 CFR 450.220(a)(4), for metropolitan planning in 23 CFR 450.316(b)(3), and for the NEPA process in 23 CFR 771.105(f). All three require application of the ADA requirements to federal-aid projects, including Transportation Enhancement Activities. Technical reports on accessible designs for pedestrian and bicycle trails are available through the FHWA division offices.

**Q.** *The Interim TE Guidance describes the new "relates to surface transportation" requirement. How will it change the TE application process?*

**A.** Congress enacted this wording in TEA-21. As the Interim TE Guidance notes, it is a more flexible standard than previous guidance on "direct link." The focus is now on a clear and credible description of how the proposed TE project relates to the surface transportation system. For example, in what way(s) is the project related to surface transportation through present or past use as a transportation resource? Is there a direct connection to a person or event nationally significant in the development of surface transportation? What is the extent of the relationship(s) to surface transportation? What groups

and individuals are affected by the relationship(s), when did the relationship(s) start and end or do the relationship(s) continue? Is a relationship substantial enough to justify the investment of transportation funds? The Interim TE Guidance states that proximity to a transportation facility alone is not sufficient to establish a relationship. Transportation enhancements coordinators should encourage applicants to carefully think through this part of their application.

**Q.** *Under TEA-21, donations of funds, materials, land or services made before a transportation enhancement project is approved can be credited towards the local match. Is there a limit as to how far in the past we can go in considering such donations? How is their value calculated? Do you have an example of how to apply these credits?*

**A.** The Interim TE Guidance, "Summary of Requirements for Matching Funds," does not specify a time limit. As a general principle, the Guidance invokes a test of reasonability, as determined in coordination with the FHWA division office, for determinations of what donated items can be used for the local match and how they are valued. Determining whether a donation can be credited may also include an evaluation of whether its original acquisition is in accord with the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Relocation Act of 1970 and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Donations must be clearly documented to support the value placed on them. See 23 U.S.C. 323(b) for valuing donations of real property, and OMB Circulars A-87, attachment B, item 11(i) and A-122,

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Attachment B, item 10 for valuing donations of services by private persons. These Office of Management and Budget (OMB) circulars are available through the FHWA division offices. The value of any donations should be reflected in the overall cost of the TE project. The FHWA Office of Finance and Budget issued a February 4, 1997 memo, Donations to Federal-aid Projects, which gives a sample calculation of donation credits. It is available through the FHWA division offices.

**5.** *Q. Some TE projects, such as restored historic facilities, may have parts of the space appropriately used for activities which are leased for a fee. Examples are restaurants in historic railroad depots or leased offices in upper levels of buildings with no appropriate public use. How should states treat fees generated by activities in spaces made available through TE funds?*

**A.** Before the TE project is approved, the sponsor, state DOT, and FHWA, if necessary, should reach a clear agreement on which areas are to be leased, what activities are appropriate, and how income generated by the facility is to be used. As the Guidance notes under the heading "Maintenance and Operations," the state is responsible for long-term maintenance and operation of TE activities. The category "Rehabilitation and operation of historic transportation buildings, structures, or facilities" is the only TE activity that specifically allows the use of federal-aid TE funds for operations. As part of their maintenance and operations responsibility, states are encouraged to develop maintenance plans for TE activities. In accordance with good business practices, these plans would include reserves for long-term maintenance and periodic repair. Part or all of the fees generated by the activity should be a component of the maintenance plan.

## TE News You Can Use

### PROJECT NOTES

#### Camden, Maine

Camden recently received two separate transportation enhancement awards for two proposed bike paths, one that winds from downtown Camden south along Union Street towards Rockport village, and the other that would connect Camden with the Camden Hills Regional High School and Rockport's recreational fields. Two shorter trails were selected rather than one longer trail to encourage people to walk or bike short distances rather than drive. Residents still must vote upon the trails, but the first steps are complete. The first trail is set to receive \$280,000 in federal and state TE funds, while the second will receive \$160,000. Both grants will become available in the fall of 2000.

#### Lewiston, New York

Center Street will finally undergo the reconstruction it was awarded through transportation enhancement funds totaling \$2.6 million. Rather than widen the road to allow for a "pedestrian-friendly streetscape" the city of Lewiston opted to remove already existing lanes. The absent lanes will allow for sidewalks and small parks along the road. After a five-year wait, the final approval was met with an "ISTEA" celebration.

#### Duluth, Georgia

The Southeast Railway Museum will receive federal funding for improvements to make it more accessible to visitors and to provide a better showcase for its well-known collection of railway memorabilia through the years. The museum will be one of the 129 projects sharing \$47 million in transportation enhancement funds.

#### Henniker, New Hampshire

How's this for innovative financing?! Henniker's Rotary Club sponsored a plastic duck race to raise money for a bike path on Old Concord Road. The ducks could be adopted for \$5 each, with the winner's owner receiving a prize that had been donated by local businesses. The Rotary Club is trying to raise \$36,000 to put towards the local match for the bike path; the duck race is one of three fund-raisers planned.

#### Put Your Project in the News!

*If you have a project that has received funding and is particularly original or newsworthy send NTEC a fax with the location of the project, a short description, and contact information at 202-466-3742 OR just give us a call at 888-388-6832 (toll-free) or 202-974-5151. We look forward to hearing about these enhancements projects!*

### CALL FOR ENTRIES

The U.S. DOT has called for entries to its Design for Transportation Excellence 2000 National Awards Program. Awards will be given in the categories of architecture; engineering, energy conservation, technology and systems; art and graphic design; historic preservation and adaptive use; urban design, planning and landscape architecture; and, as a special emphasis, entries that "enhance livability and accessibility of communities and regions through measurable improvements in the quality of life." Entries are due November 1, 1999. For more information, call Robert Stein at 202-366-4846, or Ken Reinertson at 202-366-0582. Application forms can be downloaded from the internet at <http://ostpxweb.dot.gov>.

# Rails-to-Trails Conservancy Study Finds Geographic Diversity in TE Spending

by Robert Patten, Consultant to Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

*Editor's Note: The following article expresses the opinions of the author and the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy and does not necessarily reflect the view of the Federal Highway Administration.*

An analysis of \$1.19 billion in federal Transportation Enhancements (TE) spending found that hundreds of communities of all sizes, demographic compositions and cultural backgrounds are actively using TE funds to build trails, sidewalks and other bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

Specifically, the study looked at 4,130 bicycle and pedestrian project awards for the years 1992–1997 to examine if non-motorized transportation spending might be occurring at higher rates in cities, suburbs or rural areas. Using per capita spending for TE-funded bicycle and pedestrian projects as a measure, the study found that nationwide, small town/rural areas and central cities were receiving slightly more than their per capita share for these types of projects, and suburbs were receiving slightly less than their per capita share (see table).

The study was commissioned by the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy and carried out by James Ebenhoh, for his Masters Thesis in Public Policy and Urban Planning at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government.

While a certain measure of inequity was found, RTC policy analysts were surprised, but pleased, that it is so small. Marianne Fowler, RTC Vice President for Program and Policy said, "We expected small/town rural areas to be receiving more than their per capita share but we didn't expect that it would be at the expense of the suburbs." However, because the general per capita disparities were fairly small and per capita equity may not even be a desired goal, let alone possible given the varied structures of state TE programs, RTC looked to the study's secondary findings for the big stories.

Type of Area	% of US Population	% of TE Bike/Ped Project Spending	Share Difference
Central Cities	31.3%	37.2%	+ 5.9%
Small Towns/Rural	22.5%	28.1%	+ 5.6%
Suburbs	46.2%	34.7%	-11.5%

Here, the study revealed that the cities that are most aggressively using TE funds to build bicycle, pedestrian and trail systems are diverse, suggesting that bicycling and walking is for everyone, everywhere in America. However, the study also revealed that many large cities are still not implementing this new livability trend.

Of all U.S. cities over 100,000 in population, the top fifteen in per capita bicycle and pedestrian spending were as opposite as wealthy Stamford, CT and its struggling neighbor, Bridgeport; as diverse as sun-belt San Antonio, TX and rust-belt Cleveland, OH; as varied in size as tiny Rockford, IL and the nation's fifth largest city, Houston, TX. The diversity of cities using TE funds for bicycle and pedestrian improvements is further confirmation that making a community bicycling and walking friendly is no longer limited to wealthy resort communities and college towns.

However, the list of cities with very low or zero per capita spending was long. Of the 192 U.S. cities over 100,000 in population, 43 had zero per capita bicycle and pedestrian spending and 56 received less than \$2 per capita. The average for all cities over 100,000 population was \$4 per capita.

By conducting a small set of state case studies, Ebenhoh identified a number of possible reasons for this wide range of urban spending patterns, but no firm conclusions could be drawn. In a few states TE funding policies were found to be somewhat biased against central cities or certain types of bicycle and pedestrian projects; however, this was not found to be true in every state where multiple cities had low or zero per capita bicycle and pedestrian spending.

To view the full text of Ebenhoh's study, please go to [www.railtrails.org](http://www.railtrails.org).

**NTEC Notes:** NTEC would like to announce a number of recent staff changes. **Katherine Shriver**, who served as Director of NTEC, is now working as a consultant in Washington, D.C. We thank her for her dedicated service to NTEC and the TE program, and wish her the best of luck in her new pursuits! **Hugh Morris**, Research Director at Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, will serve as Acting Director of NTEC. Two staff members came to NTEC in May: **Megan Betts**, who works as NTEC Manager, and **Margaret Martin** who is the NTEC Intern.

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## Destination Preservation: Examining State TE Programs

Preservation Action, a national grassroots organization for historic preservation, has just released *Destination Preservation: Putting TEA-21 to Work for Historic Preservation*, their report of the policy research project they conducted for the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers.

The report summarizes information gathered from almost every state in a survey that "sought to document and assess each state's transportation enhancement program and how each program's structure and expectations serves to help or hinder preservation applications." The report has a Report Findings section, a Best Practices section, and a state-by-state summary of the enhancement program.

The Report Findings show many states are distributing their TE funds more equitably across TE activities as the enhancement program becomes established. In some states though, room for improvement in funding distribution remains. The best way to create a consistent and effective enhancement program is to show why these projects can be beneficial, and the Best Practices section of the report illustrates this point. Included in the appendix of the report is the June 1999 FHWA Interim Guidance on Transportation Enhancement Activities.

The Preservation Action report is available for \$25.00. To order a copy, call 202-659-0915 or email [preservationaction@worldnet.att.net](mailto:preservationaction@worldnet.att.net).

## TE Obligation Rate Down

The March 1999 Transportation Enhancements (TE) obligation rate of 58.8 percent is down more than ten percent from the obligation levels FHWA reported in May 1998, according to NTEC's *FY 1999 Interim Report* on state spending.

The *Interim Report* also finds that only one state, Missouri, has taken advantage of the TEA-21 provision allowing transfers of TE funds. Missouri transferred just over \$1 million from the TE account into the National Highway System account.

The purpose of this report is to provide a mid-year snapshot of the progress of TE spending at both the state and national levels. The report is based upon TE project programming data states submit to Rails-to-Trails Conservancy and TE obligation data provided by FHWA, and is current to March 31, 1999.

The *Interim Report* presents the reader with detailed descriptions of the data and major findings, along with 11 charts and graphs to illustrate the findings.

NTEC also expects to publish a cumulative report on FY1999 TE spending by the end of this year. For a copy of the *Interim Report*, call NTEC at 1-888-388-NTEC, or place an email order to [ntec@transact.org](mailto:ntec@transact.org).

**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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Unless otherwise stated, the contents of this newsletter reflect the views of the authors who are responsible for the opinions, findings and conclusions presented herein. The contents do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of FHWA and USDOT.