

CONNECTIONS

THE NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION ENHANCEMENTS CLEARINGHOUSE NEWSLETTER
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Ten Years of Transportation Enhancements

A Look Back As We Move Forward

December 18, 2001 marked the tenth anniversary of the signing of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) by President George Bush. This date also marked the anniversary of the inception of the Transportation Enhancements (TE) program and provided opportunity for reflection on the joys and pains of the development of a new program. Several members of the TE community share their reflections in this issue. The anniversary also energized many in the transportation community to look forward toward the continuation of the TE program through the reauthorization of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21), ISTEA's successor, in 2003.

REFLECTIONS



TE TEN YEARS: Much to Celebrate

By Harold Peaks, TE Program Manager, FHWA Office of Human Environment

The TE program of activities introduced through the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 is now celebrating its tenth year of contributions to the transportation community. How does one begin to celebrate such a significant event in the life of transportation in America? Without doubt there is much to celebrate.

Through the end of fiscal year 2001 the congress has made available more than \$5.2 billion in TE funds for addressing new and unique challenges in transportation. While not all of the available funds have been put to work yet, many supporters are convinced that the initiation and development of the TE program of activities has made contributions to enhance transportation and the travel experience that would not have existed without it.

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) recognizes that from the initiation of TE activities, there has been a mix of detractors and supporters. The program presented new challenges for state departments of transportation (DOTs) that continued to be charged with improving mobility and capacity at a time when the congress was demanding a rethinking of how limited funding could be flexed from program to program, from highways to transit, and from an emphasis on new construction to limited construction and system management. TE Federal-aid funding, through state DOTs, put TE dollars in the hands of project sponsors who often were not equipped to address the conditions at the

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“WHILE SERVING AS THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE FHWA, I SAW FIRST-HAND THE LAUNCH OF A NEW AND UNTRIED IDEA. TODAY, AS THE PRESIDENT OF AASHTO, I SEE A PROGRAM THAT HAS COME OF AGE REACHING OUT TO NEW CONSTITUENCIES THROUGHOUT AMERICA AND TRULY ENHANCING THE COMMUNITIES WE ALL SEEK TO SERVE.”

— E. DEAN CARLSON, SECRETARY, KANSAS DOT, FORMER PRESIDENT, AASHTO FROM *TEA CHALLENGE: LEADING THE WAY*

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“CLEARLY, ENHANCEMENTS PROJECTS ARE POPULAR AND IN HIGH DEMAND. MANY STATES REPORT THAT APPLICATIONS ARE MORE THAN DOUBLE THE AVAILABLE FUNDING. STATES ARE SEEKING WAYS TO STREAMLINE PROJECT REVIEWS AND APPROVALS, AND TO MAXIMIZE THE BENEFITS OF ENHANCEMENT DOLLARS BY SEEKING STRONG COMMUNITY SUPPORT. NONETHELESS, IN MANY WAYS THE 10-YEAR OLD TRANSPORTATION ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM IS STILL IN THE LEARNING CURVE. STATES HAVE A GREAT DEAL TO SHARE WITH ONE ANOTHER, AND WITH CITIZENS WHO WANT TO SEE PROJECTS REALIZED IN THEIR OWN COMMUNITIES.”

— JOHN HORSLEY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, AASHTO FROM TEA CHALLENGE: LEADING THE WAY

Today, we find the obligation rate has risen to 69.5% over the ten years of enhancement activities. TEA-21 added new opportunities to fund other categories of activities such as transportation museums, bicycle safety and education programs, tourist and welcome centers, and strategies to address wildlife habitat connectivity. The new categories have created new constituencies and a broader understanding of the vast role and influence transportation has over our daily lives and our visions for shaping our communities for the future. TE activities have proven themselves to be more than individual projects. They have fostered many community benefits, served as a catalyst for action in redeveloping struggling communities, provided education opportunities in transportation history, generated job opportunities for youth corps participants, provided traffic calming in main street America towns, and contributed to the walkability of

many communities, streets and neighborhoods. Approximately 58% of the funds expended from the \$5.2 billion opportunity have gone to funding bicycle and pedestrian and trail related facilities. Some 38% of the funds expended have aided preservation activities related to transportation. These have been significant contributions in the furtherance of community in America.

The opportunities are varied, unique and have the potential to represent economic and social cornerstones for localities that involve themselves in improving transportation for their communities. The FHWA looks forward to working with our partners, the state DOTs, and stakeholders in finding ways to improve program efficiencies and project delivery in the future. The congress has set the tone and provided the resources. We as a nation of transportation professionals, local officials, and community residents must take advantage of the opportunity to work to im-

prove mobility and community without one compromising the other.

We expect that the current economic status of the nation will bring new and interesting budget challenges to transportation in general. As such, we can expect that TE activities funding will also be challenged in that context. It is clear that the future requires constant reassessment of the value TE and other projects add to the transportation network and travel experience. As we look at smart growth issues, smart transportation decisions and strategies to improve the partnership between FHWA, state DOTs and their citizens, the consensus has been that community friendly transportation projects bring significant dividends to the local community and the region as a whole.

What citizens and public officials are demanding of transportation is often now being referred to as context sensitive solutions. That is, projects that are procedurally and physically designed to fit into the surrounding environment and demonstrate community involvement while achieving their transportation objectives. Context sensitive solutions to the nation's transportation problems, in addition to streamlining program and project delivery, are now in the forefront of the national conscience. The TE funded activities are already contributing to those two major focus areas. We are convinced that TE activities will make a positive impact on the transportation challenges ahead. As we steamroll forward toward reauthorization legislation and funding, we expect that the TE program of activities will be given significant consideration by the congress. However, even as the legislative process unfolds there remains much to be done now to take advantage of the opportunities to deliver efficient and effective transportation projects in a timely fashion. The current list of 12 TE activities includes many ready made context sensitive solutions. Our challenge is to improve on ways to use this vehicle to achieve local, regional and national transportation and community goals. We, as partners, must continue to improve upon the record of the last 10 years of TE so that we effectively prepare ourselves to meet the challenges of the next ten years. I hope we collectively look forward to the celebration.



Ten Years of Progress

By David Burwell, President, Surface Transportation Policy Project and former President Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

Ten years ago, I worked for the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC), a small non-profit hoping to preserve a few thousand miles of unused rail corridors as trails. Today RTC has over 100,000 members, boasts more than 12,000 miles of rail corridor saved, and its vision has expanded to creating inter-connected trail and greenway systems serving transportation, recreation, and quality of life goals at the metropolitan, state, and even national scale. RTC's story is representative of dozens of organizations that spent the 1990s working to make sure that transportation investments better serve community needs.

ISTEA made much of this work possible. In 1990, I was part of a group that founded a new transportation reform coalition, the Surface Transportation Policy Project (STPP), which sought to create a new vision for federal transportation policy. Our vision was surprisingly ambitious, calling for greater flexibility across programs, more funds for transit and non-motorized transportation, a special "enhancements program" to redress years of adverse community impacts from our highway program, and more coordination between transportation and land use planning.

Ten years ago, very few people envisioned that transportation was on the verge of a fundamental change. Fortunately, a few farsseeing leaders recognized that transportation needs were changing, and seized the opportunity to craft a new law to meet new challenges.

Today, transportation is undergoing a fundamental rethinking of its goals and methods, to the point where environmental social equity, and community-based development goals are beginning to drive transportation plans and programs. The ideas first set forth in ISTEA are the reason.

Communities are demanding that transportation serve community goals, with rail station restoration and main street preservation woven into capital transportation budgets. Highways are now connecting to rail stations, airports, and transit, not just other highways. Increasingly, transportation agencies are dropping old model-driven plans and meeting with local leaders saying "here is a problem, how can we help?" New, cooperative relationships are forming between regional, state, and local leaders. While much work has been done to fulfill the promise of ISTEA, much more work remains.

[Excerpted from Introduction to *Ten Years of Progress*]



Three Paths Toward the Same End

By Dan Costello, National Trust for Historic Preservation

Transportation Enhancements, context sensitive design, and public participation are three paths toward the same end. They are tools that permit state transportation agencies to design projects that people like. The National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP) believes that by traveling these three paths agencies can gain public support and make a big contribution toward reducing the time and costs of environmental reviews.

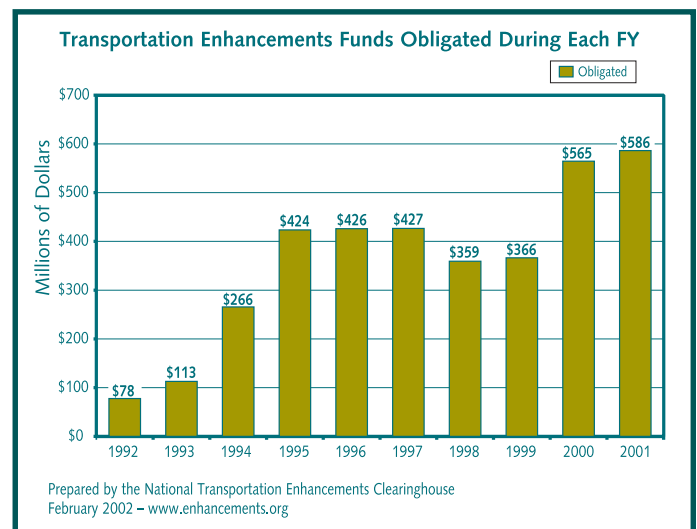
A commitment to environmental stewardship—the best answer to the problems state transportation agencies are having with environmental reviews—is really a commitment to enhancements, context sensitive design, and public participation.

Many transportation professionals understand how these three responses to public dissatisfaction with road building decisions can make things better. There were dozens of examples of new ways of doing business presented in talks, papers, and displays at the 81st Annual Transportation Research Board Meeting in Washington this past January.

The NTHP contributed to the legislative language that created the list of TE activities, and is an active promoter of context sensitive design and public participation in transportation decisions. Transportation Enhancements can help revitalize communities and restore landscapes damaged by adversely affected by transportation decisions of years gone by.

The planners designing today's projects can avoid the mistakes of the past by looking carefully at the things within landscapes and streetscapes that people value most and designing to protect and enhance those values. We are especially interested in making sure that a community's historic character and its historic resources and landscapes are no longer damaged or destroyed by context-insensitive design.

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The views expressed in these articles are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the FHWA.

The Senate Gears Up for Reauthorization

THE FIRST OF 11 HEARINGS on the reauthorization of the nation’s surface transportation program was held by the U.S. Senate’s Environment and Public Works Committee on January 24, 2002. The Committee, chaired by Senator Jim Jeffords, I-VT, has primary responsibility for the reauthorization process. The intent of the “Partners for America’s Transportation Future” hearings is an examination of what works and what doesn’t under the current program. The surface transportation program is reauthorized every six years. The committee produced ISTEA in 1991 and TEA-21 in 1997 and intends to work toward reauthorization in 2003.

In his opening remarks Senator Jeffords stated, “In TEA-21, we have inherited a transportation policy and program that is basically sound. Our task this year will be to refine and evolve the program, based on the lessons learned over the past ten years.” To that end the committee heard testimony from U.S. Secretary of Transportation Norman Y. Mineta; Governor Bob Wise of West Virginia; Mayor Peter Clavelle of Burlington,

Vermont; Mayor H. Brent Coles of Boise, Idaho; and Commissioner Chris Hart of Hillsborough County, Florida.

Addressing the importance of quality of life Secretary Mineta stated that since the enactment of TEA-21 “more than \$1.4 billion in Transportation Enhancements funds have been obligated to local communities to implement community focused, non-motorized activities that enhance transportation. Many more activities have been programmed and are awaiting implementation.”

In his testimony on behalf of the National League of Cities, Mayor Clavelle urged the continuation of programs including Transportation Enhancements that “have made a huge impact on localities and had a positive effect on quality of life.” He pointed out that Vermont has programmed 133% of available TE funds. He supported “streamlining the federal transportation project delivery process to help reduce unnecessary delays in implementation, which allow for more effective and efficient use of federal funds.”

The House Hears TEA-21 Success Stories

THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES SUBCOMMITTEE on Highways and Transit began receiving testimony in October and November 2001 in anticipation of the reauthorization of TEA-21. Testimony was given by transportation professionals from both government organizations and private industry discussing transportation successes realized under ISTEA and TEA-21. By understanding what these Acts mean to constituents and the key features that have led to successes, the subcommittee can prepare for the work ahead.

William Anker, PhD, Director of the Rhode Island Department of Transportation, spoke directly of the TE Program. In his testimony, he stated that the TE program has been “wildly successful across the country” and that the program has allowed transportation officials to “finally work with the community to solve small needs in transportation and the environment that, historically, we had not been able to do.” He said that small community projects were not taken seriously by DOTs prior to ISTEA, but “the enhancement program has provided us with an opportunity to capture those needs and allows the public, not just elected officials, to be actively engaged in transportation decisions.” Furthermore, he acknowledged that the public involvement process has led to a “deeper appreciation of what and

how we do business...there is more tolerance and more willingness to work together because people realize that a lot more is required than simple decisions.”

“Today we approach transportation problems differently than ten years ago,” declared Dr. Anker. “Projects are better thought out and examined from a business and management perspective. Our projects have greater public participation and better buy-in than ever before.” ISTEA and TEA-21 have led to “a transportation decision-making process that is more accountable to the people who are often most directly affected, and who previously had limited or no input into the process.”

In his testimony on the successes of ISTEA and TEA 21, Bradley L. Mallory, Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation and the Vice President of AASHTO, referred to transportation enhancements as a “visionary element” of the federal-aid program and that “the quality of life has improved for all citizens” because of them.

Hearings will continued to be held over the course of the upcoming year and will include dialogue with many stakeholders in the transportation community from across the nation. *Connections* will keep you abreast of reauthorization events in our upcoming issues during this exciting time.

Status of Transportation Enhancement Funds
Through the Close of FY2001 (September 30, 2001)
Includes ISTEA and TEA-21 (data provided by FHWA)

	\$ Amount	Amount % of Available
Total Available	\$5.20 Billion	100%
Obligated	\$3.61 Billion	69.5%
Reimbursed	\$2.48 Billion	47.7%

Ten Years of Progress: Building Better Communities Through Transportation, a publication of the Surface Transportation Policy Project (STPP), reports how transportation is changing communities in the U.S. through programs like Transportation Enhancements. The report gives specific examples of how intelligent transportation investments are making communities safer, providing social and economic benefits, protecting the environment, and creating equitable and livable communities. This publication is available from the STPP online at www.transact.org or by calling 202-466-2636. There is a fee for printed copies.



TEA Challenge: Leading the Way, a report of the American Association of State Highways and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), highlights four state programs and five enhancement projects honored with awards of excellence from the TEA Challenge competition in December 2000. The competition was intended to encourage states to learn from experiences of others and to adopt best practices for their enhancements programs. The publication discusses the benefits of the state enhancements programs and specific projects as well as challenges ahead. This free publication is available from AASHTO by contacting bobc@aahto.org or 202-624-8918.



An Overview of Transportation and Environmental Justice is the U.S. DOT's informational brochure explaining its efforts to include environmental justice in the transportation decision making process. The publication can be downloaded at www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/ej2000.pdf. The FHWA Environmental Justice Web site, www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/ej2.htm, contains case studies, background legislation and guidance, related courses and resources.

Federal Incentives Could Help Promote Land Use that Protects Air and Water Quality is the third in a series of General Accounting Office (GAO) studies. The report suggests ways transportation and environmental agencies can provide states and local communities with financial incentives, guidance and technical support to help them consider the effects of land use decisions on environmental quality. According to Senator Jeffords (I, VT), chair of the Environment and Public Works Committee, "Smart growth provisions could be included in the reauthorization of the nation's major transportation law (in 2003)." GAO report GAO-02-12 is available at www.gao.gov

New EPA Smart Growth Web site, www.epa.gov/smartgrowth, has been created to assist government agencies and the public support smart growth development and practices. The site provides information about smart growth policies, funding sources like TE, CMAQ, and Transit Enhancements, and related resources and publications.

Buford, Georgia

The first phase of Buford's two-mile streetscape project was completed thanks to TE funding. The project included brick accented sidewalks, historic street lighting, landscaping, and benches. Area merchants are already reporting an increase in customers. [The Atlanta Journal and Constitution]

Tunnel Hill, Georgia

Whitfield County stabilized and restored the historic Western and Atlantic Railroad Tunnel with \$950,000 in TE funds. The tunnel, which was carved out of Chetoogeta Mountain in 1849, will be a primary exhibit at a Georgia Heritage 2000 visitors center and interpretive history exhibit in Tunnel Hill, Georgia. [Chattanooga Times/Chattanooga Free Press]

Lincoln, Nebraska

Last fall, hikers, bicyclists, and city officials celebrated the opening of the Bison Trail, a 1.7-mile TE funded trail that travels under four bridges (including bypasses) to the main entrance of Pioneers Park. The park boasts its own herd of bison and elk. The Bison Trail adds to the city's system of off-road trails and travel routes. [Lincoln Journal Star]

Sand Springs, Oklahoma

The Cross Timbers Scenic Acquisition will preserve more than 1,000 acres of pristine native forest located near the Keystone Dam, thanks to a TE award for the acquisition of scenic or historic sites. The city of Sand Springs plans to contract with the Nature Conservancy to operate a nature preserve, trails, and education center. The site should open to school groups and nature lovers later this year. [Tulsa World]

Cayce, South Carolina

Nearly \$700,000 in TE funds will be used towards the construction of a winding cement boardwalk through a local park which is part of the Three Rivers Greenway. The path will be built with the natural environment in mind, traveling around obstacles rather than through them. Two pedestrian bridges and several scenic overlooks will also be built. Area students, residents, and nature lovers will use the trail upon its July completion. [The State]

West Ghent to Norfolk, Virginia

A rail trail along the Elizabeth River is expected to open later this spring. The TE funded trail will allow bicyclists and pedestrians to travel from West Ghent to downtown Norfolk without encountering congested highways or busy intersections. A grant from the National Park Service will pay for lighting, landscaping, and trail signage. [The Virginia-Pilot]

Cheyenne and Laramie County, Wyoming

The Greater Cheyenne Greenway will be lengthened on its north and south ends this spring with more than \$600,000 in funding from the state Transportation Enhancement Activities Local (TEAL) program. The walking and bicycling path will provide an alternative travel route between local communities and parks. [Wyoming Tribune-Eagle]

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SAVE THE DATE

MARCH 2002

NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON AGING AND MOBILITY

Sponsored by AZ DOT, FHWA
(AZ Division), and AARP.

March 25–27, 2002 • Scottsdale, Arizona
Telephone: Maureen DeCindis, Maricopa
Association of Governments, 602-452-5073
Email: MDeCindis@mag.maricopa.gov
Web site: www.mag.maricopa.gov

APRIL 2002

NATIONAL TOWN MEETING ON MAIN STREETS

Sponsored by the National Main Street
Center.

April 7–10, 2002 • Fort Worth, Texas
Tel: 202-588-6219
Email: townmeeting@nthp.org
Web site: www.mainstreet.org

PRESERVING THE HISTORIC ROAD IN AMERICA: THIRD BIENNIAL CONFERENCE ON HISTORIC ROADS

April 11–14, 2002 • Omaha, Nebraska
Tel: 202-588-6204
Web site: www.historicroads.org

JUNE 2002

THE TRANSPORTATION AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION CONFERENCE

Sponsored by AASHTO, FHWA, The
National Trust for Historic Preservation,
and the KY Heritage Council.

June 2–4, 2002 • Lexington, Kentucky
Tel: Dan Costello of the National Trust,
202-588-6167
Email: dan_costello@nthp.org

BICYCLE EDUCATION LEADERS CONFERENCE

Sponsored by the League of American
Bicyclists, WI DOT, and the Bicycle
Federation of Wisconsin.

June 3–5, 2002 • Madison, Wisconsin
Tel: 202-822-1333
Email: bikeleague@bikeleague.org

Three Paths...

(Continued from page 3)

Some state agencies are looking for opportunities to partner with historic preservationists, and it becomes just a matter of organizing, reaching out and grasping the opportunities presenting themselves in these states.

The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) deserves much praise for its warm embrace of the TEA Challenge and for its beautiful and informative report on this effort to find and promote the best state enhancements programs and projects. AASHTO, in a partnership with the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet, is sponsoring a first ever transportation and historic preservation conference that will bring professionals from both fields together in June of this year to discuss the many advantages of finding ways to work together.

A special word of “Thanks” is offered to the Nathan Cummings Foundation for the generous financial support that makes the National Trust’s transportation work possible.

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.

WE WOULD LIKE TO EXTEND a warm welcome to Liz Parr in her new position as Manager of the Transportation Enhancements Clearinghouse. She can be contacted at 1-888-388-6832 or eparr@transact.org.