

CONNECTIONS

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TE Funds Revitalize Urban Communities

Economic decline and dwindling populations characterize many of America's older urban communities. Since the 1950s, population decline has translated into reduced tax revenue, disinvestment in urban infrastructure, abandonment, and a host of social ills in urban neighborhoods. Although many urban economies stabilized during the economic boom of the 1990s, the trend of urban decline continues. Older urban areas, in particular, still struggle to retain population and cope with aging infrastructure.

These older communities are well positioned to benefit from the Transportation Enhancements (TE) program. The compact design of urban areas makes them particularly suited to bicycle and pedestrian travel and TE-financed improvements to pedestrian infrastructure. They are also home to many of America's most historic monuments, streets, and neighborhoods that can benefit from the historic preservation component of the TE program.

In the 1990s many urban areas made significant steps towards revitalization and economic rebirth. In several cities, Transportation Enhancements projects played an integral part in these revitalization programs. Groups in Providence, Rhode Island, Norfolk, Virginia, and Omaha, Nebraska, integrated TE funds into the improvement and refurbishment of their downtown districts. The following examples illustrate the potential of TE funds to contribute to the preservation and revitalization of older urban communities.

Providence, Rhode Island

Like many northeastern cities, Providence, Rhode Island, experienced a trend of declining property values and population after the 1960s. The neighborhood of West Broadway was no exception. What was once a lively area with beautiful Victorian homes fell into disrepair for many decades, leaving vacant properties and blighted streets. In the 1990s the West Broadway Neighborhood Association (WBNA) formed in an effort to repair and revitalize the neighborhood. They applied for TE funds to invest in Westminster



(continued on page 2)



“CONNECTION TO THE NEIGHBORHOODS IS AN IMPORTANT DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION STRATEGY AND PROVIDES AN ALTERNATIVE MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION. THE ELIZABETH RIVER TRAIL HAS HAD A POSITIVE IMPACT IN DOWNTOWN NORFOLK ON BOTH COUNTS.” — CATHY COLEMAN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE DOWNTOWN NORFOLK COUNCIL

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Street, their historic main street. The \$300,000 award they received allowed them to repair sidewalks and landscape along part of Westminster Street to visually connect it to the center of the neighborhood, a park featuring the magnificent Cranston Street Armory. The results of this small investment were dramatic. Residents of the neighborhood suddenly became more concerned about the public space and began their own street improvements by finding money for benches and flowers. On the back of this surge in neighborhood pride, the WBNA successfully procured another TE award for \$785,000 to complete the renovations along the remainder of Westminster Street and to install street lighting. The community recently received another TE award to lay down cobblestones and install a fountain in historic Decatur Square.

Omaha, Nebraska

A few decades ago, the Missouri River waterfront in Omaha, Nebraska, was in dire straits. Not only was the river itself polluted, buildings from an old lead refinery on severely polluted land marred the waterfront area. Beginning in the 1980s, however, the city of Omaha in conjunction with several other regional organizations recognized the riverfront as a major asset to the city and began an effort to redevelop the area and treat the polluted land. These extensive redevelop-



ment efforts included, for example, the refurbishment of the historic “Old Market” and the opening of the 31-acre Heartland of America Park. Since the 1990s, approximately \$3.2 million in TE funds have been invested in an extensive system of trails linking the redeveloped riverfront with Omaha’s neighborhoods and commercial districts. About \$1.5 million in TE funds will also contribute to the construction of a

brand new pedestrian bridge over the Missouri River. Nebraska’s TE manager, Jim Pearson, said, “The trail systems are part and parcel of the revitalization process in Omaha.” His sentiments have been substantiated elsewhere; in a 2000 study, University of Nebraska’s Dr. Donald Greer found Omaha’s trail system to have a significant positive impact on the local quality of life and the value of nearby homes.

Norfolk, Virginia

In the 1940s, Nathan Straus, the US Housing Authority Administrator, called Norfolk, Virginia, “The worst slum he has seen anywhere in the United States.” In spite of its status



as the largest naval base in the world and the 2nd busiest port on the East Coast, Norfolk experienced many decades of economic decline. In recent years, the Norfolk City government and a local nonprofit agency, Downtown Norfolk Council, joined forces to preserve and revitalize Norfolk’s historic downtown. Their efforts resulted in the opening of “Nauticus,” a new maritime museum, renovations of historic downtown buildings such as the Wells Theatre, and improvements to the pedestrian environment. Central among these improvements was the creation of the Elizabeth River Trail, financed with a total of \$440,000 in TE funds. Positioned along an abandoned railroad right of way, the trail provides pedestrian access to Norfolk’s vibrant downtown, local parks, and the historic Fort Norfolk that protected the area during the war of 1812. Cathy Coleman, executive director of the Downtown Norfolk Council, said, “Connection to the neighborhoods is an important downtown revitalization strategy and provides an alternative means of transportation. The Elizabeth River Trail has had a positive impact in downtown Norfolk on both counts.”

SHARE YOUR SUCCESS STORIES

If you have a TE-funded project that you think would be of interest to *Connections* readers, please send a description and contact information to NTEC@transact.org. We love photographs, especially those showing people enjoying a TE project.

Rhode Island's Plum Beach Lighthouse Shines Once More

Until recently, drivers on the Jamestown-Verrazano Bridge in southern Rhode Island enjoyed a lovely view of the Narragansett Bay — except for the rusty eyesore of an abandoned lighthouse. Today, thanks to the help of Transportation Enhancements funding and the efforts of a committed group of volunteers, the Plum Beach Lighthouse is once again a sparkling jewel in the bay.

The lighthouse, built in 1899 and operated by the US Coast Guard, aided mariners navigating their vessels toward Providence. In 1941, lighting on a new bridge between North Kingstown and Jamestown made the beacon obsolete, and the lighthouse was abandoned. Coastal birds quickly took possession of the lighthouse left exposed to the harsh New England weather. All of the doors and windows were lost and the steel structure corroded with rust.

Restoration plans were held up for years because ownership of the lighthouse was unclear, with neither the Coast Guard nor the state claiming it. A local non-profit group, Friends of the Plum Beach Lighthouse, formed in the late 1980s with the hopes of purchasing and rehabilitating the lighthouse. When the state of Rhode Island gained clear title in 1999, the Friends of the Plum Beach Lighthouse took ownership and began restoration efforts in earnest.

In conjunction with the Rhode Island Department of Transportation, the Friends of the Plum Beach Lighthouse obtained \$500,000 in Transportation Enhancements funds for the restoration of the lighthouse. Work began in June of 2003 with the removal of a half inch layer of rust and 52 tons of bird guano. Workers added reinforcing steel bands to the cylindrical caisson sunk 30 feet into the bottom of the bay, and placed 160 tons of stone on the riprap surrounding the caisson. They installed new doors and windows, repaired railings, placed new glass panels in the lantern, and repainted the exterior in the original 1899 color scheme. The Coast Guard even approved a new solar-powered blinking light for the top, returning the lighthouse to its original use as an aid to navigation as well as a historical marker of the area's rich maritime heritage.

Visit www.plumbeachlighthouse.org for more information.



Photo: Friends of Plum Beach Lighthouse

RESOURCES

The **Federal Highway Administration** split the Scenic Byways Program Web site in two in October 2003 to serve the needs of its two distinct users: the traveling public, and the byway development and support community. The Web site designed for the traveling public, www.byways.org, allows travelers to learn more about America's byways, plan a trip along a byway, and share their experience with other travelers. The second Web site, www.bywaysonline.org, provides transportation professionals with resources related to byways, such as program information, technical documents, marketing assistance, contacts, and online application materials.

The **Federal Highway Administration Office of Highway Safety** has recently produced two new documents: an informational guide entitled "Accessible Sidewalks and Street Crossings" (2003) and a brochure entitled "Providing Accessible Sidewalks and Street Crossings" (2003). These two documents summarize information found in the FHWA guide "Designing Sidewalks and Trails for Access." They focus on the emerging accessibility issues and design parameters that affect sidewalk and street crossing design and operation. Order free copies at <http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/walk/order/order3.htm>

The **Institute for Transportation Research and Education** at North Carolina State University has made the proceedings from the 2003 International Conference on Ecology and Transportation (ICOET) available online. The ICOET conference is the only inter-agency event addressing the broad range of ecological issues related to surface transportation. The 2003 conference, entitled "Making Connections," focused on the need to understand connections between our ecosystems and transportation systems, and the need to restore habitat connectivity. Full proceedings and abstracts are available at www.itre.ncsu.edu/cte/icoet/icoet2003.html

The **Environmental Protection Agency**, in conjunction with the **Local Government Commission**, produced a report entitled "Creating Great Neighborhoods: Density in Your Community" (2003). The publication highlights the success of nine community led efforts to create vibrant neighborhoods through density; provides readers with an understanding of the connections between smart growth and density; and introduces five time tested design principles to ensure that density becomes a community asset and not a liability. Download the report at www.epa.gov/livability/pdf/density.pdf

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy produced a new report, "Creating Active Communities: Ten Case Studies of Programs and Partnerships" (2004). The report discusses the national obesity epidemic and suggests that communities need to develop both the infrastructure and the incentives for citizens to increase their level of physical activity. Ten case studies illustrate how actions can be taken by government, private employers, schools and individual citizens to help the public integrate activity into both recreation and everyday routines. Download the report at www.railtrails.org

Bellows Falls, Vermont

Visitors to Vermont have a new place to refresh themselves and learn about the attractions of Vermont's Connecticut River Valley. The new Bellows Falls Connecticut River Byway Waypoint Center provides visitors services including restrooms, information about nearby towns, and exhibits chronicling the history of the local community. The Center was built on the site of a former rail yard, and designed to evoke a train station platform. Grants from the Federal Scenic Byways program and \$225,000 in TE funds financed the Center. [The Rutland Herald, 12/10/03]

Northville Township, Michigan

Bike riders in the township area can now access nine other communities on a new bike path built by Wayne County Parks. The path serves as a connector, bridging the Rogue River to link the bicycle system built by MDOT along Interstate 275, the Hines Park bikeway and the Six Mile bike path built by Northville Township. The path was built with \$104,000 in TE funds. [The Detroit News, 11/26/03]

Jasper, Tennessee

The completion of the \$440,000 downtown facelift in Jasper has merchants smiling. The renovations include new streetlights, tree-lined sidewalks and revamped storefronts. More than 400 memorial bricks were bought by residents and placed in the new sidewalks, and private donations paid for a downtown clock that plays a tune every hour. The improvements were badly needed in this rapidly growing community. [Chattanooga Times, 11/17/03]

Maxwell, Iowa

A key link in the "Heart of Iowa" Nature Trail has been completed with the construction of a new steel trail bridge over Indian Creek in Maxwell, Iowa. As part of the Nature Trail, the bridge not only links two local communities, Maxwell and Collins, it has statewide significance as well. It is part of the designated route of the American Discovery Trail across Iowa and forms the northern portion of a proposed 100+ mile loop trail north of Des Moines, a plan that will tie together several trail systems. Construction of the bridge was funded as part of a larger, multi-phase project that received approximately \$187,000 in TE funds. [The Ames Tribune, 1/16/03]

Brooklyn, New York

Residents of Brooklyn celebrated the opening of the Edinburgh Trail Bridge, a new pedestrian bridge on 85th Ave that connects with the local Edinburgh Trail. The bridge allows pedestrians to safely cross one of the busiest intersections in Brooklyn, one that proved fatal in 1999 for a young girl from the community. Nearly \$500,000 in TE funds were used to construct the bridge. [Star Tribune, 11/15/03]

Gautier, Mississippi

Gautier is now a city of trees thanks to \$48,000 in TE funds. The city recently celebrated the planting of 330 trees along Mississippi Route 57, and will have planted more than 600 trees along major corridors by the spring, including crepe myrtle, live oak, magnolia, black gum, and green ash. These trees will help beautify the city, reduce soil erosion, lessen traffic noise, and increase property values. [Sun Herald, 2/4/04]

SAVE THE DATE!
CONFERENCE CALENDAR

APRIL

NATIONAL PLANNING
CONFERENCE, CELEBRATE COMMUNITY
April 24–28, 2004 • Washington, D.C.
www.planning.org/2004conference

PRESERVING THE HISTORIC ROAD IN AMERICA
April 22–25, 2004 • Portland, Oregon
www.historicroads.org

CIVIL WAR PRESERVATION TRAUST NATIONAL CONFERENCE
April 22–25, 2004 • Nashville, Tennessee
www.civilwar.org

MAY

NATIONAL CONGRESS OF PEDESTRIAN ADVOCATES
May 6–8, 2004 • Silver Spring, Maryland
www.americawalks.org/congress

NATIONAL MAIN STREET CONFERENCE
May 9–12, 2004 • Albuquerque, New Mexico
www.mainstreet.org/conferences/NTM

OBSESITY AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT: IMPROVING PUBLIC
HEALTH THROUGH COMMUNITY DESIGN
May 24–26, 2004 • Washington, D.C.
www.niehs.nih.gov/drcpt/beoconf

JUNE

NATIONAL TRAILS DAY
June 5, 2004 • Nationwide
www.americanhiking.org

JULY

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF STATE ARTS AGENCIES CONVENTION
July 17–20, 2004 • Washington, D.C.
www.participateweb.org

SECOND TEA-21 EXTENSION SIGNED

On February 29, 2004, the President signed the second extension of TEA-21 passed by the Senate and the House of Representatives on February 27. The first extension expired at midnight on February 29. This two-month extension covers current TEA-21 programs at the levels approved in the FY 2004 budget resolution through April 30, 2004.

IN THE SENATE

The US Senate voted on February 12, 2004, to approve S. 1072, a \$318 billion surface transportation bill. The Senate's successor to TEA-21 passed by a vote of 76 to 21. In the bill, Transportation Enhancements remains a 10 percent set aside of Surface Transportation Program (STP) funds and would receive \$4.79 billion over its six-year life, up from \$3.33 billion under TEA-21. The list of 12 eligible activities remains the same.

An amendment pertaining to Transportation Enhancements, submitted by Senator Harkin of Iowa, was included as follows:

Section 133(e)(5) of title 23, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following:

“(D) PRIORITY FOR PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE FACILITY ENHANCEMENT PROJECTS.—The Secretary shall encourage States to give priority to pedestrian and bicycle facility enhancement projects that include a coordinated physical activity or healthy lifestyles program.”

The full text of the Senate's bill can be viewed on their Web site at www.senate.gov.

IN THE HOUSE

The House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee is expected to consider their \$370 billion measure, H.R. 3550, in the coming weeks. Once the full House of Representatives approves their surface transportation bill, there will be a conference committee to work out the differences between the House and Senate versions before a bill is presented to the President for signature.

FROM THE ADMINISTRATION

On February 3, 2004, US Transportation Secretary, Norman Y. Mineta, issued a statement regarding funding of surface transportation reauthorization. The statement detailed a letter delivered by Secretary Mineta and Treasury Secretary Snow to Congressional leaders reaffirming the Administration's position on appropriate funding levels. (The Administration has requested a \$256 billion, six-year bill.) The letter stated that the Cabinet would recommend that the President veto any surface transportation bill that proposed an increase in gasoline or other federal taxes, financing through bonding, or financing through the General Fund of the Treasury.

According to Secretary Mineta, “If a surface transportation reauthorization bill that breaches any of these three principles were presented to the President, his senior advisors would recommend that he veto the bill. The Administration's proposal gets the job done, without raising taxes or increasing the deficit. And both Secretary Snow and I look forward to working with Congress to pass the bill as soon as possible.”

Q&A Added to FHWA Guidance on TE**Q&A #35****Maintenance vs Major Reconstruction**

[added February 25, 2004]

TE funds may not be used for routine maintenance (except as explained in *Maintenance and Operations*). However, TE funds may be used for major resurfacing, rehabilitation, or reconstruction for trails, bridges, buildings, or other structures.

Highways, bridges, buildings, and trails all can be expected to have a useful life. While the Federal-aid highway program does not pay for routine maintenance on highways and bridges, FHWA has long recognized that major resurfacing, rehabilitation, and reconstruction projects are eligible for Federal-aid funds on highways and on bridges. Trails, bridges, buildings, or other structures potentially eligible for TE funds may be held to a similar standard.

Therefore, TE funds may be used for major resurfacing, rehabilitation, or reconstruction for trails, bridges, buildings, or other structures. This eligibility criteria holds whether or not a project has used Federal-aid funds in the past (TE or any other Federal-aid funds). This is also consistent with Q&A #13.

TE funds (or other Federal-aid funds) may not be used for routine maintenance (except as explained in *Maintenance and Operations*). Examples of routine maintenance include:

- Minor regrading of an unpaved, but otherwise stable surface, sweeping, cleaning drains, joint sealing, repairing potholes or occasional broken concrete slabs, asphalt patchwork, etc.
- Normal utility maintenance: replacing filters, heating elements, fixing routine leaks, etc.
- Replacing occasional broken roof tiles or missing, curved, or broken shingles, etc.
- Repainting, recaulking, minor patching, cleaning, etc.
- Routine outdoor maintenance: mowing; weeding; brush, debris, or snow removal, etc.

TE funds also may not be used to repair a trail, bridge, building, or other structure that used Federal-aid funds, if the purpose is to correct substandard construction: the project sponsor should seek redress by other means.

As with other projects where States have eligibility questions, States should consult with their FHWA division offices on potential project applications for an eligibility determination until the State and Division have a track record of appropriate projects.

For more information on TE Guidance visit FHWA's website (www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/te/guidance.htm).

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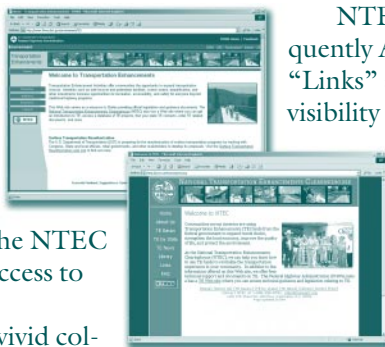
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New Look for TE Web Sites

NTEC is happy to announce the launch of a new, improved Web site at www.enhancements.org. The launch coincided with the FHWA's release of their new, complementary TE Web site, www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/TE. The FHWA site serves as the access point for guidance and legislation pertaining to TE, whereas the NTEC site provides a general introduction to TE and access to state-specific information.

NTEC spruced up the look of the site with vivid colors and images. The content has also been modified and improved. For example, there is a new link called "TE Basics" through which visitors can get acquainted with TE. This area includes information on the history of the TE program, project eligibility, funding and the application process. Under each of these topic areas, visitors can access many related documents and reports. Visitors can download or order free hard copies of many more of NTEC's documents through the "Library" as well.

Another area of NTEC's site, "TE by State," provides a great deal of state-specific information on the TE program. This page includes links to contact information for state TE managers and FHWA contacts among others, profiles of each state TE program, a database of TE projects, and detailed project case studies.



NTEC also added a new link for "FAQs" (Frequently Asked Questions), updated and improved the "Links" and "TE News" sections, and increased the visibility and accessibility of the FHWA TE Web site.

FHWA also made significant changes to both the design and content of their TE Web site. Among the revisions is a clarified explanation of "relates to surface transportation" and new examples of the 12 eligible project categories.

NTEC hopes that you'll find these changes and the site's new look appealing and easy to navigate. As always, we appreciate your comments and suggestions — write us at 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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