

FHWA's Fostering Livable Communities Newsletter

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Introduction

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Fostering Livable Communities Newsletter is intended to provide transportation professionals with real-world examples to help them improve the relationship between transportation and communities, such as providing access to good jobs, affordable housing, quality schools, and safer roads. This issue highlights tools and approaches for advancing livability, such as models for economic equity analyses and "walkability" indices. To access additional tools and resources, or to learn more about FHWA's Livability initiative, please visit FHWA's Livability website, www.fhwa.dot.gov/livability, or the Partnership for Sustainable Communities (PSC) website, www.sustainablecommunities.gov. To read past issues of the newsletter, visit www.fhwa.dot.gov/livability/newsletter/. To subscribe to the newsletter, visit GovDelivery.

Creating more livable communities through transportation choices



Advanced Tools for Regional Economic and Equity Analyses

Eric Pihl, Transportation Modeling Specialist
FHWA – Resource Center

Advanced land-use models can help agencies select projects that advance livability by enhancing regional equity, mobility, and economic goals.¹ Agencies may also use these models to evaluate alternative visions for growth and transportation investment to understand the distribution of benefits and impacts associated with each alternative for specific segments of the population.²

State and regional governments have long used methods to evaluate the equity of transportation investments, policies, and plans, but new forms of spatial economic modeling have improved upon prior travel models and better represent the interactions between the transport system and the broader spatial economic system. Where implemented, these advanced spatial economic models have demonstrated success in supporting equity evaluations that encompass a wider range of economic impacts.

The Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG) simulated the impacts of several transportation and land-use scenarios to support the region's 'Blueprint Project' – a public-participation planning process to develop a common land-use and transport vision for the region. The model compared the 'Preferred Blueprint' (high density, mixed-use, transit-oriented development) with the 'Business-As-Usual' plan – a continuation of current land-use and transportation trends resulting in lower densities. The model indicated that the 'Preferred Blueprint' would result in reduced travel and housing costs and enhanced accessibility, particularly for lower-income households, but also showed that higher-income households may be net losers due to lower preference for higher-density dwellings and increased likelihood of home ownership.³

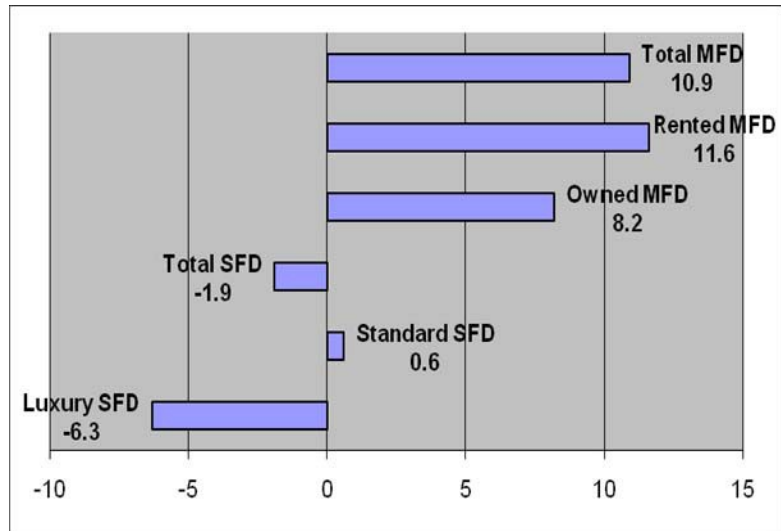


Figure 1: Percent Change in Dwelling Units by Type: "Business as Usual" vs. Preferred Alternative - SACOG (Rodier, 2010).

¹ The USDOT livability goals and objectives emphasize improved multimodal and neighborhood accessibility to support a more efficient and equitable distribution of transportation system benefits.

² The USDOT requires regional planning agencies to develop the technical capability to assess the benefits and adverse effects of transportation activities on different population groups and to use that capability to develop appropriate procedures, goals, and performance measures, ensuring that benefits and burdens are fairly distributed.

³ http://stc.ucdavis.edu/DOCS/2010/2010%20Fall/Rodier_slides_Equity-Analysis_2010-11-16.pdf



SACOG used a regional land-use and economic interaction model – the Production, Exchange, and Consumption Allocation System (PECAS) to simulate the distribution of benefits across the region. Advanced land-use models like PECAS provide valuable insight to agencies about the distribution of transportation and economic benefits to better understand the equity implications of transportation investment strategies. Important indicators may include:

- Changes in transportation costs as a share of wage income;
- Changes in rent and value of owned homes by income class;
- Changes in wage income by labor category;
- Consumer surplus by income class; and
- Producer surplus by industry sector.

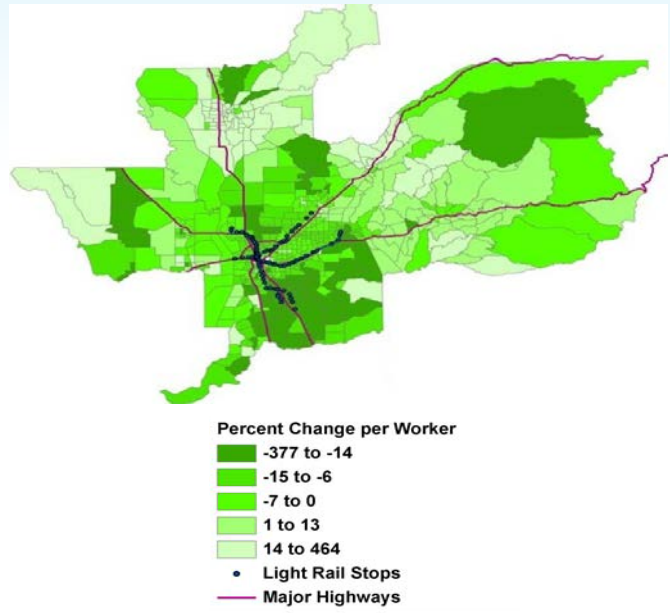


Figure 2: Percent Change in Worker Travel Costs: “Business as Usual” vs. Preferred Alternative – SACOG (Rodier, 2010).

The FHWA Resource Center provides a one-day seminar covering the fundamentals of traditional and advanced land-use forecasting and analysis methods. A two-hour overview version of the workshop was delivered as a web conference for the Iowa DOT quarterly planners’ meeting in June 2012. For more information, please contact Eric Pihl (eric.pihl@dot.gov).

The FHWA Idaho Division Office Pursues New Strategies to Advance Livability

Lori Porreca, PhD, Community Planner
FHWA – Idaho Division

Without regulations or dedicated funding, advancing livability can be a challenge. The Idaho Division Office has addressed this challenge by beginning a conversation with planning partners throughout the State, including agencies, consultants, local communities, and non-profits, to learn what livability means to them and what support they need from FHWA in order to improve it. Those conversations have produced many excellent ideas.

One of the primary comments heard was that Idaho communities want to know what other Idaho communities are doing, how they are doing it, and how they can replicate it. How did Hailey, Idaho, a small rural community in the mountains, successfully win a multimillion dollar Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant to do a complete streets project? How did the rural communities of the Yellowstone region come together across city, county, and State lines to implement a framework for sustainable development and successfully win a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Challenge planning grant? How did Nampa, Idaho integrate alternative transportation into their downtown revitalization? Indeed, there are many lessons to be learned from the communities that have successfully achieved livability goals.



As a result of these conversations, the FHWA Idaho Division Office has focused on establishing connections, generating partnerships, and helping communities act, primarily through the use of two tools: social media and webinars. The Idaho Division Office created a Livable Idaho Facebook page to connect communities to each other and to disseminate information. The page contains updates on how the Idaho Division advances livability, relays information about funding and other resources, and highlights work that Idaho communities are doing to promote livability. The Livable Idaho webinar series features a different Idaho community each month. Representatives from the community present the work they have done to become a more livable community and the lessons learned about partnering, collaboration, leveraging resources, and funding. The webinars are intended to provide short, digestible lessons on what has worked for Idaho communities to achieve their livability goals.



Figure 3: Schematic portraying the Idaho Division Office approach to fostering livability.

As the Idaho Division Administrator stated last year at our PSC Dialogue, “This is not your grandfather’s Federal Highway Administration.” We are asking communities to set and meet new standards, work with a new diverse set of partners, and leverage resources to accomplish this. As an agency, FHWA is also relating to local communities in a new way, and is beginning to see the potential for partnership and generating change. The livability program is a real opportunity for Federal employees to use their knowledge, skills, and creativity to work with communities more effectively, and to help them set livability goals and build the capacity to reach those goals. This is a new venture for FHWA, and new ventures require new tools and new ways of thinking.

District of Columbia Fosters Livability - A Stronger Anacostia Neighborhood

Sandra Jackson, Community Planner
FHWA – District of Columbia Division

Residents near the Anacostia Metro Station in southeastern Washington, DC stand to benefit tremendously from pedestrian safety improvements and additional green space as a result of the District’s South Capitol Street Corridor Project. The initiative is a PSC project, formed locally by the FHWA Division Office, EPA, and the District’s Department of Transportation (DDOT) and Office of Planning (DCOP). Together, these Federal and local partners are working to incorporate conceptual design elements from the EPA’s Greening America’s Capitals Program.

The project improves the southern-most gateway to our Nation’s capital by transforming South Capitol Street from a freeway into an urban boulevard; furthering pedestrian and vehicular safety, providing multimodal transportation options, increasing community accessibility, and improving economic development on both sides of the Anacostia River. To achieve these benefits, the project will rebuild the Frederick Douglass Memorial Bridge across the Anacostia River, improve local street intersections north of the bridge, and reconstruct two highway interchanges and related local street intersections south of the bridge. These southern improvements are designed to reduce traffic on adjacent local streets,



allowing for improved pedestrian crossings around the Anacostia Metro Station, and creating opportunities for new neighborhood green space.

While awaiting the Record of Decision, DDOT began preliminary design and engineering for the South Capitol Street Corridor Project earlier this year. At the same time, DDOT worked with DCOP and the District's Department of the Environment to form an advisory committee for the Anacostia Metro Station improvements and held a three-day community design charette in February 2012. The FHWA Division Office was involved throughout the process and continues to work with staff on the South Capitol Street Corridor Project to incorporate livability design concepts that emerged from the charette.

For more information about the South Capitol Street Corridor Project and to follow its progress, visit: <http://www.anacostiawaterfront.org/SouthCapitolStreetCorridor>.

2012 Transportation Planning Excellence Awards

Rae Keasler, Transportation Specialist
FHWA – Office of Planning

The Transportation Planning Excellence Awards (TPEA) Program is a biennial awards program developed by FHWA and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and is co-sponsored by the American Planning Association and the Transportation Research Board (TRB). The program provides a unique opportunity to recognize and celebrate the outstanding transportation planning practices performed by planners and decisionmakers in communities across the country.

Anyone may nominate an individual or organization that uses FHWA/FTA funding to develop a plan, project, or planning process that demonstrates excellence in planning. Nominated initiatives must have been completed within the past three years, as evidenced by actions such as formal adoption by a government agency, completion of a built project, incorporation into a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), City Plan, or other similar action.

Plans, projects, or planning processes can be included in one or more of the following categories: Asset Management, Education and Training, Emergency Management and Transportation Security Planning, Environmental and Transportation Planning Linkages, Freight Planning, Land-Use and Transportation Linkages, Livability/Sustainability, Modeling and Technology Applications, Operations and Planning Linkages, Planning Leadership, Public Involvement and Outreach, Rural and Small Communities Planning, Safety Planning, and Tribal Transportation Planning.

An independent, expert panel of judges reviews each nomination. Generally, the projects go well beyond standard practice to demonstrate an exceptional level of innovation and creativity. The judges come from a diverse set of planning backgrounds and use the following criteria: Community and Public Involvement, Context Sensitive Solutions, Demonstrated Results/Effectiveness/Replication, Equity, Implementation/Implementation Strategy, Innovation, Multimodalism, Partnerships and Collaboration, and Potential for Long-Term Benefits.



2012 Award Winners:

2035 Regional Transportation Plan: Linking Health & Mobility
Nashville Area Metropolitan Planning Organization
Nashville, TN

Fast Forward Transit Plan Mobile Outreach Bus
Indian Nations Council of Governments
Tulsa, OK

Georgia Statewide Freight and Logistics Plan
Georgia Department of Transportation
Atlanta, GA

GO TO 2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan
Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning
Chicago, IL

Hillsborough Countywide Bicycle Safety Action Plan
Hillsborough County Metropolitan Planning Organization
Tampa, FL

Holyoke Multimodal Transportation Center Project
Pioneer Valley Transit Authority
Springfield, MA

Lake Champlain Bridge Project
New York State Department of Transportation
Schenectady, NY and
Vermont Agency of Transportation
Montpelier, VT

Toward Universal Access: Leveraging Technology for ADA Compliance
City of Bellevue, WA

Uptown Circle
Town of Normal, IL

2012 Honorable Mentions:

Aquidneck Island Transportation Study
Aquidneck Island Planning Commission
Newport, RI



Emil "Lucky" Reznik Administration, Maintenance and Operations Facility
South Bend Public Transportation Corporation
South Bend, IN

Haywood County Comprehensive Bicycle Plan
Haywood County Recreation and Parks Department
Waynesville, NC

Highway District Transportation Plan
Kentucky Transportation Cabinet, Division of Planning
Frankfort, KY

Memphis MPO Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan
Memphis Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization
Memphis, TN

Minnesota GO: Crafting a Transportation Vision for Generations
Minnesota Department of Transportation
St. Paul, MN

The application period for the 2014 TPEAs will begin in late 2013. For more information on the 2012 winners and the upcoming round see: <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/tpea/>.

Livability at the Tribal Transportation Summit in Oklahoma

Michelle Noch, FHWA Office of Planning
Kyle Kitchel, FHWA Western Federal Land Highway Division
Isaac Akem, FHWA Oklahoma Division

In October 2011, the Oklahoma Tribal Technical Assistance Program (TTAP) sponsored the Oklahoma Tribal Transportation Summit. The theme of the summit was *Livability and Sustainability: Investing in Tomorrow*. FHWA and Tribal representatives participated as panelists during a session titled *Planning for Livability and Sustainability*, which focused on livable and sustainable communities and related Federal initiatives. During the session, participants discussed the definition of livability and agreed that livable communities provide residents with multiple transportation and housing options.

During the session, a representative from the Cherokee Nation's Healthy Nation Program presented about a livability-related initiative to improve the health of citizens in northeast Oklahoma through active transportation. To accomplish this, the Cherokee Nation partnered with the city of Collinsville, Oklahoma to improve infrastructure that advances safety and supports active lifestyles. Since the meeting, the city of Collinsville in coordination with the Healthy Nation Program:

- Re-established a small city-owned plot as a place for physical activity. New playground equipment, park benches, and lighting has turned a once empty lot into a family destination for local recreation.



- Adopted a Complete Streets Resolution and negotiated an in-kind addition of crosswalks, crossing lights, and warning signs to a newly refurbished highway/city street intersection.
- Embarked on an evaluation of all streets and intersections for sidewalk and crosswalk opportunities.
- Received a substantial Federal Land & Water Conservation Fund grant to be used in the city's park/trail improvement plans.
- Invested in sustaining the local Safe Routes to School program through educational events and activities.

FHWA prepared a case study to highlight this experience, available at:
http://www.tribalplanning.fhwa.dot.gov/caseStudy_cherokee.aspx.

For more information about livability in the Tribal context, please contact Michelle Noch (michelle.noch@dot.gov), Kyle Kitchel (kyle.kitchel@dot.gov), or Isaac Akem (Isaac.akem@dot.gov).

Standardization of “Walkability” Performance Measures

Bob Arnold, Director
FHWA – Office of Transportation Management

A key component of “livability” or a livable community is minimizing the need for the automobile by providing realistic alternatives. This goal goes beyond recreational trips to include all of the elements that make walking a safe and practical mode of transportation. “Walkability” is the attractiveness of the pedestrian facility over other modes in terms of ease of access, efficiency, and connectivity to goods, services, and employment.

To this end, the University of North Carolina Highway Safety Research Center (HSRC) conducted a study to distinguish the parameters which characterize a walkable community and outline the important features for a new analysis tool that could help planning professionals evaluate, monitor, and improve pedestrian facilities. HSRC evaluated current tools, determined if they could be used or modified for use by planning professionals, and recommended elements that a new tool should encompass.

In addition to a general literature review, HSRC examined many of the most relevant pedestrian facility tools for their ability to act as an overarching “walkability” tool for planning professionals. HSRC found that current tools, although intriguing, fell short of pedestrian needs. Of the six tools analyzed in depth (see Table 1), all had shortcomings as an evaluation and planning tool for the purposes of the study. At the same time, they all had components which could be useful in developing such a tool.



Performance Measure Variables	Smart Growth Scorecards	Neighborhood Accessibility Index	Walkability Index	Pedestrian Environmental Quality Index	Walkscore	LEED-ND
Density	X	X	X			X
Land-use mix	X	X	X	X	X	X
Connectivity	X	X	X		X	X
Traffic volume				X		
Number of lanes				X		
Traffic speed				X		
Access to transit	X				X	X
Sidewalk presence	X			X		X
Parking	X		X			X

Table 1: A chart depicting “walkability” assessment tools and listing the variables each tool incorporates in its analysis.

HSRC ultimately recommended a tool that contains all of the following elements: density, land-use mix, connectivity, access to transit, sidewalk presence, parking, traffic volume, number of roadway lanes, and traffic speed. These elements could be weighted based on urban or rural factors to give an indexed score which planners could use to identify areas in need of improvement and evaluate proposed projects in a geographic information system framework.

The primary audience/user of the tool is expected to be MPOs or municipal level transportation planners and engineers; however, the output could be easily understood by the public and used for outreach and community input. Users could evaluate current/existing conditions to prioritize short- and long-term improvements to walkability, investigate different design development scenarios developed in the planning process, and track progress toward livability goals. The tool would be most appropriate in tandem with long-range planning activities and could be used as a standard part of the planning and development review process.

The report from this effort will be available in the fall of 2012. The next logical step would be to develop a working tool for validation and eventual deployment. This could then be incorporated into “livable community” initiatives, programs, and planning efforts.



Rural Regions: White House Focuses on Innovation and Leadership

Annie Eberhart Goode, Environmental Protection Specialist
U.S. Department of Agriculture/Rural Development

On June 16, the White House Rural Council (WHRC) held a meeting to showcase innovative regional strategies for sustainable economic development. Representatives of 26 rural regions from across the country convened to share their experiences and make recommendations for the future. U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Deputy Secretary, Kathleen Merrigan welcomed over 50 leaders and practitioners to the event, conveying her and Secretary Vilsack's appreciation of participants' cutting edge regional strategies.

The USDA, in collaboration with PSC (HUD, EPA, and DOT), promotes and supports rural economic development at a regional scale as an important part of strengthening rural communities. Both Doug McKalip, WHRC Director, and Doug O'Brien, Deputy Undersecretary for USDA/Rural Development, highlighted the importance of a regional vision for building on existing assets. At the same time, they emphasized how interagency cooperation helps leverage scarce Federal resources. Shelley Poticha, who directs HUD's Office of Sustainable Communities, Maria Zimmerman, also on HUD's leadership team, and Matt Erskine, of the Economic Development Administration (EDA), described the relevancy of interagency collaboration for regional community development.

The interactive meeting structure allowed participants to describe the unique elements of their respective regional strategies and long-term goals. USDA then held an afternoon brainstorming session on how to disseminate best practices and provide a foundation for an ongoing "community of interest."

Participants described the significant results achieved by rural communities when they are able to coordinate multiple funding sources to capitalize on their assets, create jobs, and promote sustainable, homegrown economic development. For example, Rebecca Brown, Director of the Ammonoosuc Conservation Trust NH/VT, described how USDA's Stronger Economies Together (SET) Program helped reenvision future economic development in the region to better integrate the timber economy with the regional food system and agricultural markets. The value of regional innovation is catalogued in a new USDA report, [Promoting Regional Innovation in Rural Communities](#), which describes USDA programs and individual projects that identify and leverage regional assets to benefit rural Americans.

Participants also reported that keeping track of Federal funding availability, researching program requirements, and completing applications can be a heavy burden for communities, particularly small rural communities with limited staff capacity. Incidentally, the [Partnership for Sustainable Communities](#) and [USDA](#) just released a publication that may help simplify this task. The report, [Federal Resources for Sustainable Rural Communities](#), is a guide to programs from the four agencies that rural communities can use to promote economic competitiveness, protect healthy environments, and enhance quality of life. It provides key information on funding and technical assistance opportunities as well as examples of how rural communities across the country have put these programs into action. With this menu of options, local leaders can more easily identify Federal resources that support community planning, infrastructure, economic development, brownfields revitalization, and other activities that are part of achieving sustainable communities. They can also see eligibility and local match requirements at a glance.

For more information on rural livability and USDA programs, please visit: www.rurdev.usda.gov/Home.html.

Federal Highway Administration: www.fhwa.dot.gov/livability
Partnership for Sustainable Communities: www.sustainablecommunities.gov/



Spotlight on EPA Region 4 (Southeast)

EPA Region 4 (AL, FL, GA, KY, MS, NC, SC, TN) reported multiple livability-related updates in the past quarter. Here are two highlights from the region:

Appalachian Regional Commission and U.S. EPA Highlight Regional Livability in Kingsport, TN

On July 12, 2012, the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) and the EPA Office of Sustainable Communities hosted a “Livable Regions and Communities in Appalachia” workshop at the Kingsport Higher Education Center in Kingsport, TN. The purpose of the workshop was to share information about opportunities available to Appalachian communities that can enhance community vitality and economic competitiveness.

The workshop reviewed best practices in creating vibrant rural communities, discussed the advantages and challenges related to promoting quality growth in Appalachia, and identified opportunities to link economic development strategies with transportation plans, regional development frameworks, and local initiatives to support long-term community goals. The ARC and EPA developed the workshop in partnership with the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) Research Foundation, the Development District Association of Appalachia, and the USDA Office of Rural Development. Participants included the Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT), the Tennessee Division of FHWA, the Kingsport Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organization, and various local development districts, municipalities, and non-profit agencies from Tennessee, North Carolina, Virginia, Kentucky, Alabama, and Mississippi.

Greening the Selma to Montgomery National Historic Civil Rights Trail, Revitalizing West Montgomery, and Restoring the Genetta Stream

The city of Montgomery, AL is actively pursuing plans to revitalize and restore the Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail. A segment of the trail currently runs beneath the I-65/I-85 interchange—an area that is unsightly, noisy, and unfriendly for trail users. The city wishes to reconnect neighborhoods separated by interstate construction and develop more green space (both active and passive) to improve the quality of life for surrounding residents such as those living in Gateway Park and the Renaissance Neighborhood (a HUD project at the confluence of I-65 and I-85). The FHWA Division Office has assisted partners in identifying portions of this project that would be eligible for Federal aid. In the rural segments of the trail, FHWA is working with the National Park Service to site bicycle and pedestrian facilities and parking locations at historic landmarks. Related initiatives include the [Genetta Stream Restoration Project](#) in Montgomery and the West Montgomery Initiative, which aims to revitalize older area neighborhoods. Multiple Federal partners are cooperating on these projects along with State and local agencies. The city intends to complete improvements by 2015, the 50th anniversary of the 1965 Voting Rights March.



New Resources

The FHWA Livability Team hosted a webinar on “Advancing Livability with Geographic Information Systems” on August 9th. Access a recording of the webinar at <https://connectdot.connectsolutions.com/p5ni4a9qn0y/>.

The PSC has launched a database of livability-related case studies developed by partner agencies, available at <http://www.sustainablecommunities.gov/studies.html>.

To learn about current grant opportunities for livable communities, please visit the PSC website at: www.sustainablecommunities.gov.

