

# Environment Research Highlights

Revised October 2012

The Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA's) Office of Planning, Environment, and Realty's research program supports projects with the goal of strengthening transportation planning and environmental decisionmaking. This document highlights recent research projects focused on environment that were conducted to achieve this goal. To learn more about FHWA's these and other research efforts, visit:

<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/hep/step/>.

- **Eco-Logical: An Ecosystem Approach to Developing Infrastructure Projects** outlines an ecosystem-scale approach to prioritizing, developing, and delivering infrastructure projects that are more sensitive to terrestrial and aquatic habitats.  
[http://environment.fhwa.dot.gov/ecological/successes/third\\_edition.asp](http://environment.fhwa.dot.gov/ecological/successes/third_edition.asp)
- The **Environmental Justice (EJ) Emerging Trends and Best Practices Guidebook** summarizes the importance of EJ in transportation and features four chapters that focus on foundational issues that promote EJ in environmental decisionmaking.  
[http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/environmental\\_justice/research/guidebook/guidebook00.cfm](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/environmental_justice/research/guidebook/guidebook00.cfm)
- The **Infrastructure Voluntary Evaluation Sustainability Tool (INVEST) Version 1.0** was released in October 2012 to assist State, regional, and local transportation agencies in evaluating the sustainability of their transportation plans, projects, and programs.  
<http://www.sustainablehighways.org>
- **Going the Distance Together - Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) for Better Transportation** is a guide designed to help practitioners find common ground with citizens by listening to them and understanding how transportation affects their quality of life.  
[http://contextsensitivesolutions.org/content/reading/going\\_the\\_distance\\_together\\_co/](http://contextsensitivesolutions.org/content/reading/going_the_distance_together_co/)
- Three webcasts were recently held as part of the **CSS National Dialog 2**. During the webcasts, best practices for applying CSS in transportation projects, plans, and programs were presented and used to initiate discussion and interaction among workshop participants. Additional webcasts will be held through early 2014.  
<http://www.cssnationaldialog.org/2/workshops.asp>
- The **National Transportation Liaison Community of Practice** website was launched in March 2012 to enable liaisons to share and exchange resources that could streamline and coordinate the services they provide to resource agencies and departments of transportation. The website's features include a resource library, a subject matter expert list, and a news bulletin. A discussion board was added in October 2012 where liaisons can ask questions and share information on project-specific questions and best practices.  
<http://environment.fhwa.dot.gov/liaisonCOP/default.aspx>

## Research and MAP-21:

Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) authorized funding for a new FHWA research program that strengthens transportation planning and environmental decisionmaking. The program's key components will be projects and programs that:

- Minimize the cost of transportation planning and environmental decisionmaking processes, highway infrastructure, and operations.
- Improve transportation planning and environmental decisionmaking coordination and processes.
- Minimize and reduce the potential impact of highway infrastructure, operations, and surface transportation on the environment.
- Improve construction techniques and reducing congestion and related emissions.
- Reduce the impact of highway runoff on the environment.
- Improve the understanding and modeling of factors that contribute to the demand for transportation.

The details of the program are being finalized. Please visit <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/hep/step/> to find the latest information about this program and FHWA's research efforts.

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