

FHWA's Fostering Livable Communities Newsletter

In this issue:

- Introduction to Livability Newsletter 1
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Smart Growth Implementation Assistance (SGIA) Grant in Kentucky 1
- Livability in Rural States – Wyoming Livability Workshop 3
- Civil Rights and Livability 5
- Northwest Interagency Partnership for Sustainable Communities (NIPSC)..... 6
- Sustainable Eastern Connecticut: Strategies for Community Engagement 8
- Partnerships for Active Transportation: The Cherokee Nation..... 9
- New Resources..... 11

Introduction to Livability Newsletter

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is pleased to launch this inaugural issue of the quarterly Fostering Livable Communities Newsletter. The 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 and affordable housing, quality schools, and safer streets and roads. In 2011, FHWA hosted a series of Regional Livability Workshops and heard from highway, transit, environmental and housing practitioners from around the country about the resources, information, and tools that transportation professionals need in order to assist communities. The idea for this newsletter arose from those workshops. The newsletter is intended to share effective practices and resources that may be of use to practitioners and the public. The FHWA Livability team is hopeful that the articles will be of interest and that you will subscribe to receive the newsletter quarterly. To learn more about FHWA's Livability initiative and Livability toolkit, please visit FHWA's Livability website: www.fhwa.dot.gov/livability. To subscribe to the newsletter visit GovDelivery.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Smart Growth Implementation Assistance (SGIA) Grant in Kentucky

Bernadette Dupont, Transportation Specialist
FHWA– Kentucky Division

The first Interagency Partnership for Sustainable Communities (PSC)¹ project to take place in Kentucky was a Sustainable Communities Workshop in Fern Creek, a suburb of Jefferson County, in late 2010. The workshop was designed to provide community members from Fern Creek with the knowledge and tools to help determine “how” their community should change in the face of new growth.

¹ PSC is a combined effort between three Federal agencies: U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and EPA. The Partnership works to coordinate Federal investments and activities to support livability initiatives.

Creating more livable communities through transportation choices



Fern Creek has two distinct areas: a densely-populated area, and a rural area. Developers had started building in the rural area, but residents, concerned about the potential for unplanned growth sought assistance in creating guidelines for development. The Louisville-Jefferson County Metro Government (Louisville Metro) applied for a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Smart Growth Implementation Assistance (SGIA) grant (<http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/sgia.htm>) to assist Fern Creek; they were awarded a grant to fund a Sustainable Communities Workshop.

EPA uses a four-step process for SGIA projects:

- 1) Accept Change – but, help decide how it will happen
- 2) Identify a Sustainable Center
- 3) Identify Growth Boundaries and Preservation Corridors
- 4) Use the Tools Available

The fourth step, “Use the Tools Available”, provided the most opportunity for the three Federal agencies to participate and contribute to the Fern Creek project. Each agency played a key role by bringing their unique perspective and specialized knowledge to the table.

EPA led the SGIA workshop, which consisted of formal presentations and group discussions on community design, transportation, housing, neighborhoods, environment, open space, economic development, and land use. An on-site design studio staffed by students from the University of Kentucky’s School of Design provided drawings and graphics that allowed the community to visualize existing conditions, a range of potential growth patterns, preservation corridors, and potential solutions.

The U.S Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) provided information on equitable, affordable housing, as well as zoning regulations. HUD also emphasized the need to provide a broad range of housing options – including those that would address the needs of workers in the local service industry, schools, police and fire departments.

The Department of Transportation (DOT), which included FHWA and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), identified multi-modal transportation choices for the community’s consideration. DOT provided information on “Complete Streets,”² road diets,³ and

² “Complete Streets” are streetscapes that are designed for users of all modes, including motor vehicles, transit, walking, and biking.

³ A “road diet” is a reduction in the number of travel lanes. Typical goals of a “road diet” may include traffic calming or increased infrastructure for pedestrians and bicyclists.



Posted maps provided participants with an opportunity to delineate preservation corridors.



Participants listened to a presentation about Smart Growth Principles.



access management; DOT representatives discussed the importance of connecting a fragmented roadway network in order to reduce the need for more travel lanes. DOT also provided insight into the planning process and the key role transportation plays in the development of communities.

Workshop participants indicated that they learned a great deal, and they found it empowering and hopeful to be able to participate in how their community would change to accommodate new growth and development.

Livability in Rural States – Wyoming Livability Workshop

Jeff Purdy, Planning and Right-of-Way Program Manager
FHWA – Wyoming Division

In rural communities, enhancing livability through transportation presents a unique set of conditions, as well as opportunities. As the least densely populated State in the Continental United States, Wyoming is characterized by small towns dispersed across a diverse landscape of wide-open prairies, majestic mountains, national forests, and deserts. The wide-open spaces, scenic landscape, and natural beauty combined with harsh winters create a rugged lifestyle that is part of the local culture.

In order to frame livability in the context of rural Wyoming, the Wyoming Department of Transportation (WYDOT) and the Wyoming Division of FHWA jointly sponsored a workshop on transportation livability strategies with representatives of local communities on December 1st, 2011. The intended outcome was to build a roadmap for future efforts toward livability in Wyoming.

A series of presentations were followed by a group discussion of livability-related planning strategies. This included a discussion of resources, tools, and technical assistance for incorporating livability into State, Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), and local planning efforts. The group also discussed tools for measuring effectiveness, including performance-based approaches to implementing livability programs.

Key points from the workshop included:

- **Planning Partnerships:** WYDOT should continue to maintain a strong line of communication with communities through involvement with MPOs, local communities, urban system advisory committees, and rural planning organizations. At the same time, local communities need to become more involved in the WYDOT long-range transportation planning process. Planning assistance also needs to be provided to small towns that often lack the resources for long-range planning and setting livability goals.
- **State Agency Coordination:** State agencies should have a point of contact that is responsible for coordinating livability



Workshop goals included:

- Understanding of livability state of the practice in Wyoming
- Opportunities for implementation of livability in transportation
- Context of livability for Wyoming communities
- Performance measures to evaluate livability initiatives and programs toward meeting community goals
- Additional tools/technical assistance
- Wyoming livability strategies and programs, and their relationship to other planning efforts at the State, MPO, and local level





Center Street, Downtown Casper, WY

initiatives. A State clearinghouse should be provided for livability resources and programs, which includes models of best practices and examples of projects that involve multiple funding sources and agency cooperation.

- **Transportation Programs:** WYDOT's process for Context Sensitive Solutions has been an effective forum for balancing local, community, and regional transportation interests. Multimodal opportunities should continue to be considered in transportation projects. Participants identified small town bus services as important to rural livability. Due to the long distances that rural residents have to travel for goods, services, and healthcare, a greater need exists for regional or intercity bus service.

- **Leveraging Investments:** Livability projects should be coordinated with other funding sources to leverage investments. For

example, transportation enhancements for streetscape improvements can be coordinated with main street programs and downtown redevelopment. Communities should be recognized for leveraging partnerships through the grant process.

- **Livability Performance Measures:** Community character and quality of life goals were identified as the best measurement for success for livability programs. Comprehensive plans, nonmotorized pathway plans, safe routes to school plans, downtown development plans, or other community plans should be used to identify a community's livability priorities and targets.
- **Follow-Up:** Communities should have a mechanism in place to fund long-term maintenance of transportation facilities. This is particularly important in small towns, which may not have the financial resources or capabilities for long-term maintenance. Finally, lessons learned from implemented projects should be used to improve future programs.

Local goals for community character and quality of life are important in identifying livability targets that fit the unique rural lifestyle of Wyoming. FHWA and WYDOT will continue to work with local communities to improve the implementation of livability programs. Through transportation programs, we can help to further livability efforts related to the urban, suburban, small town, and rural contexts of Wyoming.



Plaza, Downtown Laramie, WY



Civil Rights and Livability

Candace Groudine, Director of External Civil Rights Programs
FHWA - Office of Civil Rights

Shana Baker, Livability Team
FHWA - Office of Human Environment

Transportation is fundamentally about accessibility and mobility. It provides a means of access and the foundation for how we live, how we connect with others, and how our economy grows at the national, regional, and local levels. Social equity requires that transportation—its planning, development, and implementation – support mobility for people of varying levels of ability and income, and serve broad community goals such as economic and community redevelopment. Livability in transportation is about addressing these kinds of issues. It's about integrating the quality, location and type of transportation facilities and services in a way that achieves broad community goals that foster social equity and ensures nondiscrimination. Individuals who are socially and economically disadvantaged can benefit from communities with a broad range of transportation options that provide greater accessibility to affordable housing, employment, goods and services.

Livability, from the perspective of a civil rights practitioner, includes, but is not limited to, the removal of barriers to accessibility in the public rights-of-way, e.g., installing curb ramps with detectable warnings on sidewalks, and providing accessible pedestrian signals so that persons with disabilities may cross streets safely. More generally, it means, at a minimum, such things as ensuring full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities in the transportation decisionmaking process and, preventing the denial, reduction or significant delay in the receipt of benefits by minority and low-income populations.

The Cypress Freeway Replacement Project in Oakland, CA is an example of a transportation agency working hard to address the needs and concerns of a low-income and minority community in the planning, design, and construction of an enormously complex and controversial project. Through the efforts of the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) and its partners, a 1¼-mile freeway segment that once drove a wedge through the heart of West Oakland was rerouted and the community of West Oakland was physically reunited. The project contains examples of some of the following effective practices:

- **Responsiveness to Community Preferences.** In the aftermath of the Loma Prieta earthquake and the collapse of the Cypress Freeway, Caltrans faced enormous pressure to reconnect what represented a key highway link between the South Bay and the San Francisco Bay Bridge. Clearly, the least costly and most expedient solution would have been to reconstruct the Cypress Freeway using the freeway's existing right-of-way. Although Caltrans initially explored this possibility, the agency listened when the community of Oakland argued for an alternative route. The result was a more expensive and time-consuming project, but one that accounted for the impact of a major freeway project on a low-income and minority community.
- **Highlighting of Neighborhood History and Culture.** In addition to selecting a new, less intrusive alignment for the Cypress Freeway, Caltrans worked with the Oakland community to mitigate the impact of the freeway and freeway construction on local residents and to ensure that the community benefited in meaningful ways from the project. For example, Caltrans excavated sites along the freeway right-of-way where artifacts



belonging to former African American railroad porters were uncovered. This material became part of a traveling exhibit on African- American labor history in West Oakland sponsored by Caltrans.

- **Provision of Multiple Economic Benefits for the Community.** The new alignment for the Cypress Freeway provides several economic benefits for West Oakland residents and businesses. Negotiations among Community Emergency Response Teams, Caltrans, and the Port of Oakland resulted in a direct off-ramp servicing the Port, which will facilitate Port expansion and create local job opportunities. Preservation of the Market Street off-ramp, an additional concession by Caltrans to West Oakland business and community groups, will maintain accessibility to local businesses.
- **Local and Minority Participation in Construction.** Caltrans also took steps to facilitate participation of local and minority workers and contractors in the construction phase of the project. An agreement between Caltrans and the City of Oakland identified goals for disadvantaged and local business participation in the project and targets for employment of local residents, minorities, and women. The final report of an Independent Monitoring Team hired by Caltrans to monitor compliance with these goals indicates they were indeed met, even if certain groups were underrepresented in the project. In addition, Caltrans' financial support for the Cypress/Mandela Training Center helped produce a program that has outlived the construction phase of the Cypress Freeway and continues to provide badly needed training opportunities for Oakland residents today.
- **Improvement of Community Livability.** Caltrans is working with the City of Oakland and Oakland community organizations to transform the old Cypress Freeway corridor into the Mandela Parkway. The landscaped boulevard promises to undo much of the damage caused by the routing of the original Cypress Freeway through West Oakland during the 1950s.

This project reflects the six livability principles, and demonstrates that effective public involvement programs enable transportation professionals to develop systems, services, and solutions that advance nondiscrimination. Civil rights practitioners and planners must continue to work together to ensure that livability and social equity goals are met in the transportation planning process.

Northwest Interagency Partnership for Sustainable Communities (NIPSC)

Sharon Love, Environmental Program Manager
FHWA – Washington Division

Forging a Partnership

The Northwest Interagency Partnership for Sustainable Communities (NIPSC) includes staff from EPA, HUD, FTA, and FHWA in the States of Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington, working together to implement the goals of the national PSC in the Pacific Northwest. The NIPSC partnership began by conducting outreach through three dialogue sessions, which were funded by FHWA: Salem, Oregon on June 30, 2010; Seattle, Washington on July 21, 2010; and Boise, Idaho on May 26, 2011. The NIPSC decided not to hold a session in Alaska given the existing Denali Commission project that is focused on identifying regulatory barriers.

The dialogues brought together a wide range of public and private sector stakeholders, including city and county governments, housing organizations, academic institutions, and transit agencies. All parties were enthusiastic about the partnership and about improving livability. The following common priorities emerged from the three sessions:

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



- Create a shared vision
- Build relationships and break down isolated silos
- Improve integration, coordination, and collaboration among the Federal agencies
- Remove barriers, reduce bureaucracy
- Make better use of available resources
- Provide more funding
- Provide assistance to both rural and urban communities

NIPSC is addressing these priorities with a number of different activities. Monthly conference calls among the Federal agencies allow members to communicate ideas about the shared vision, developing a common understanding of sustainability and what it entails. These calls and meetings have helped to build relationships and to break down silos. The initial task has been to learn more about each agency's unique regulations, programs, and processes in order to identify the exact barriers that need to be addressed to streamline activities.

Projects and Initiatives

In addition to the process and program-related activities, the NIPSC group is involved in a number of specific projects and initiatives. Examples from the NIPSC workplan include:

- In early 2011, HUD representatives met with planners from the FHWA/FTA-led Columbia River Crossing project to discuss opportunities to incorporate unique linkages between housing, transportation, and the environment.
- In March of 2011 NIPSC representatives met with Alaska tribes and housing experts to discuss the unique challenges and barriers to sustainability facing Alaska Native villages.

In Washington State, partnership agencies are working to establish an interagency team to coordinate with the partnership agencies and stakeholders. Two Washington projects have been selected as priorities – the Bay Vista Neighborhood Redevelopment in Bremerton and the Sunset Area Community Revitalization in Renton.

Sustainable Communities Grants awarded in 2010 in the NIPSC States totaled \$78.7 million and included various planning efforts, a rail line, an electric vehicle corridor, a bridge replacement, freight access, and a road extension. What is not captured in these statistics, however, is that the NIPSC has also improved its own capacity to support sustainability in a more coordinated and effective way. The long-term significance of this is undeniably just as important.



From left to right: Melanie Wood (EPA), Linda Gehrke (FTA), Mary McBride (HUD), and Dan Mathis (FHWA) join hands to kick off the Region 10 Sustainable Communities Partnership.



Sustainable Eastern Connecticut: Strategies for Community Engagement

Kenneth Shooshan-Stoller, Transportation Planner
FHWA – Connecticut Division

There are three consortia operating within Connecticut that work with PSC 2010 planning grants. These are New York-Connecticut Sustainable Communities, New England's Sustainable Knowledge Corridor, and Sustainable Eastern Connecticut. Very early in the process, each consortium took great care in building communications and outreach networks. The initial challenges in public outreach were twofold: 1) The purposes of the new grant programs were not widely known and 2) The consortia were composed of groups, organizations, and individuals with diverse backgrounds, goals, and constituents, many of whom had never worked together. Although the consortium members were well known individually, they had never operated as a single unit. Each regional entity had to be rebranded to relay the message that the consortium was a new initiative composed of existing organizations and groups.

Sustainable Eastern Connecticut is composed of three regional planning agencies and two agencies that focus on jobs and housing. Together, they have developed a cohesive regional plan of sustainable development for eastern Connecticut, funded by a HUD Sustainable Communities Regional Planning grant. All 41 towns in the region will be included, as well as the Mashantucket Pequot and Mohegan Tribal Nations. Work on the two-year effort began in September 2011 and will be completed by December 2013.

The effort is focused on early planning and coordination of sustainability efforts in order to create employment opportunities, diversified housing, accessible transportation, and feasible infrastructure investments. The goal of the project is to lead to more sustainable communities and a stronger economy for eastern Connecticut. One key focus is to identify gaps in current transportation and other services to develop a more connected, sustainable economy for the region. Another important element will be the development of a strategic implementation plan for the consortium.

In an interview with Ken Livingston, AICP, Principal of the firm Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc., Livingston explained the approach toward civic engagement for the Sustainable Eastern Connecticut (www.sustaineasternct.org) effort.

What are the goals of public outreach for your initiative?

Livingston: To identify gaps and missing connections within housing, economic and workforce development, and mobility, which prevent Eastern Connecticut from being an economically stable and sustainable place to live and work. The engagement begins with a consortium group of over 50 agencies, municipalities, universities, and nonprofit groups. These consortium members are already seeking to address many of the gaps and missing connections in the region, but this planning effort seeks to engage them in a comprehensive manner to identify where the current efforts can be better leveraged, augmented, and combined. Additionally, we will be conducting a series of regional public visioning sessions aimed at reaching beyond the consortium member group to hear additional issues and areas of opportunity.

What kinds of strategies and tools are being utilized in your public outreach efforts?

Livingston: We reached out to target audiences and potential partners in a multitude of mediums, such as hard-copy newsletters in various languages, social media such as Twitter and Facebook, and a project website. At the same time, we are also conducting public meetings, topical focus group meetings, and phone interviews. The focus group meetings and



phone interviews target key stakeholders. They are devised to maximize a stakeholders' involvement in the planning process and allow the planning team to obtain detailed, technical insights into specific areas of the plan.

How will you gauge the effectiveness of each different strategy?

Livingston: The effectiveness of the community engagement process can be assessed in a variety of quantitative and qualitative measures. For example, from a metric perspective we can track the number of website visitors, Facebook "likes", comments posted to the Facebook page, Twitter followers, or attendees at a public meeting. What these metrics do not show is the quality of the impression. Is the Twitter follower engaged? Is the person who "likes" us on Facebook reading our posts? For this reason, such quantitative measures need to be combined with more qualitative measures such as discussions with our consortium members who are there to represent the project team with our engagement efforts. As part of the quarterly consortium meetings, we will be asking the members to assess the engagement efforts and suggest modifications and improvements to the effort.

How has the outcome of these strategies reshaped the planning process?

Livingston: At this stage in the process, the most direct reshaping has been the enlightenment of the project team as to the wide range of nonprofit and local agency efforts that target many of the issues encompassed within this regional planning initiative. Many of these groups are not generally involved with traditional transportation planning projects undertaken by State DOTs or regional planning agencies. We are striving to identify the wide range of stakeholders by leveraging our consortium member contacts and working to engage these groups in a manner most convenient to them. Such methods may include on-line surveys, individual face to face meetings, attendance at their board meetings, or telephone interviews.

How will public outreach become part of the planning process in future years of the consortium?

Livingston: Our goal is to generate a general level of interest and "connectiveness" that carries on after this planning project effort is complete. For example, the continuation of a Facebook page is one easy opportunity to continue the dissemination of information. Additionally, we are hoping that consortium members and additional stakeholders are able to learn from one another's successes and failures, and realize that they are not alone in their efforts. In creating these connections, we are hoping longer-term partnerships will be forged in the region.

Partnerships for Active Transportation: The Cherokee Nation

Jared Fijalkowski, Community Planner
DOT – Volpe Center

The Cherokee Nation is determined to improve the health of Cherokees in northeast Oklahoma. As a recipient of a grant through the Centers for Disease Control's (CDC) Communities Putting Prevention to Work program, the Nation has implemented numerous programs to encourage Cherokees to live healthier lives, including physical activity encouragement, nutrition promotion, and commercial tobacco prevention. Through its Healthy Nation program, the Cherokee Nation offers smoking cessation courses, provides information about healthy eating at health fairs, encourages children to be physically active during and after school, and promotes health screenings.

Recently, the Cherokee Nation has expanded the scope of its Healthy Nation program to promote physical activity through improvements to transportation infrastructure. The Cherokee Nation recognizes that, by making it easier and safer to walk



and bike within a community, it can encourage all Cherokees to incorporate more physical activity in their lives, improving the overall health of the Cherokee Nation. To do so, the Cherokee Nation has partnered with the city of Collinsville, OK, to make infrastructure investments that improve safety and support more active lifestyles which in turn make Cherokee communities healthier and better places in which to live.

In order to guide future investments toward making the community healthier, the Cherokee Nation helped the city of Collinsville develop a “Complete Streets” policy. The Complete Streets policy will require all roadway projects to consider the safety and mobility needs of all roadway users, including motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians. With this policy in place, Collinsville’s roadway network will develop into a system that better serves residents wishing to engage in active transportation.

The Cherokee Nation is also working with the city of Collinsville to encourage children to live more active lives. Many students live within a mile of their schools – a short walk – but many parents are concerned about traffic safety and so most children are either driven to school in cars or ride buses. A survey indicated that parents felt that the walking routes to school were unsafe due to a lack of adequate infrastructure and “eyes on the street.”

To address this problem, the Cherokee Nation is working with the city of Collinsville to secure \$186,000 in FHWA funds to implement a Safe Routes to School program in the community. If granted, the funds, which are administered by the Oklahoma Department of Transportation, will support infrastructure improvements and programs that encourage children to walk and bicycle safely. The Cherokee Nation hopes to use the funds to implement infrastructure improvements that will demonstrate the benefits of building complete streets.

The Complete Streets policy and the Safe Routes to School program are two building blocks in the Cherokee Nation’s and the city of Collinsville’s partnership to promote walking and bicycling through infrastructure improvements. Building upon these efforts, the city of Collinsville expects to receive Federal funds to construct a shared use path linking Herald Elementary School and Collinsville Middle School. As part of its partnership with the city, the Cherokee Nation plans to use some of its CDC funding to install amenities along the bike path, including lighting and benches. This shared use path will provide a safe place for children to walk and bike to school and for all community members to enjoy being active.

The partnership that the Cherokee Nation and the city of Collinsville have formed exemplifies their commitment to making the community a healthier and more attractive place to be physically active. By leveraging resources, the Cherokee Nation and the city of Collinsville are working together to improve the health of everyone in their community.

Contacts:

Michelle Noch, Community Planner
FHWA – Office of Planning
michelle.noch@dot.gov

Kyle Kitchel, IRR Transportation Specialist
FHWA – IRR Program Coordinator, Alaska
Kyle.kitchel@dot.gov



New Resources

- Twelve livability factsheets were recently developed. Please visit the FHWA Livability website to access these and other resources: www.fhwa.dot.gov/livability.
- To learn about current grant opportunities for livable communities, please visit the Partnership for Sustainable Communities (PSC) website at www.sustainablecommunities.gov.

