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Transportation Planning Capacity Building

Transportation Planning Capacity Building Program

– Peer Roundtable Report –

"Forging Transit-Bicycle-Pedestrian Partnerships for Livable, Sustainable Communities"

Location:	San Antonio, Texas
Date:	October 6, 2010
Host Agency:	American Public Transportation Association (APTA) Annual Meeting
Peer Agencies:	America Walks, Portland, OR Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA), Columbus, OH Complete Streets Coalition, Washington, DC Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS), Charlotte, NC King County Metro, Seattle, WA Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District of Oregon (TriMet), Portland, OR VIA Metropolitan Transit (VIA), San Antonio, TX Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), Washington, DC
Federal Agencies:	Federal Transit Administration (FTA) U. S. Department of Transportation (DOT), Volpe National Transportation Systems Center (Volpe Center)

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I. Introduction

This report summarizes presentations and discussions from a roundtable discussion on "Forging Transit-Bicycle-Pedestrian Partnerships For Livable and Sustainable Communities" held in conjunction with the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) Annual Meeting in San Antonio, Texas, on October 6, 2010.

The half-day roundtable involved representatives from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), two national stakeholder organizations, and six transit agencies from around the country to discuss opportunities to better coordinate regional transit, bicycle, and pedestrian planning and project development.

The event was sponsored by the Transportation Planning Capacity Building (TPCB) Program, which aims to advance the state of the practice in multimodal transportation planning nationwide. The TPCB Program is jointly funded by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA).

The report provides highlights from each participating agency's presentation, including key themes and concepts.

II. Goals and Key Concepts

Representatives from the FTA, as well as two national stakeholder organizations and six transit agencies from around the country participated in this half-day roundtable to discuss opportunities to better coordinate regional transit, bicycle, and pedestrian planning and project development.

The goals of the roundtable were to:

- Share information about the new Federal emphasis on multi-modal planning that supports improved walking access to transit and greater transit and bicycle coordination.

- To highlight specific actions and strategies that transit agencies around the country have taken to better integrate bicycle and pedestrian needs into their transit planning, operations, and facility design in six case study regions:

    - Washington, DC
    - Columbus, Ohio
    - Portland, Oregon
    - Charlotte, NC
    - Seattle, Washington
    - San Antonio, Texas

Key concepts shared by participants on how to better integrate bicycle and pedestrian needs into transit planning, design, and operations included:

- **Be strategic and take a systems approach to integrating bicycle and pedestrian considerations in transit system planning and development.** This could include activities such as placing bicycle racks on all buses in the system rather than a few in order to maximize usage of the racks, building bicycle parking at transit stations that connect to designated local or regional bicycle routes, and improving pedestrian safety along busy streets.

- **Prioritize "low-hanging fruit" to make the most of limited resources and demonstrate the value of smaller successes** through activities such as updating

websites to provide information about regional bicycle routes and programs, and programming funds to replace or repair old bicycle racks.

- **Ensure that the data collected on bicycle and pedestrian usage at transit stations is accurate.** Understand how people access and egress the transit system and the implications for bicycle use. This may mean an agency needs to hire an outside independent survey firm to conduct counts and see how well programs are being utilized. The data will be more reliable than what is collected by bus drivers or advocacy group volunteers.

- **Partner with bicycle and pedestrian advocacy groups on communication and outreach efforts** so that people with an interest in walking and biking are aware of your projects, programs, and procedures. Partnering with bicycle and pedestrian advocacy groups will not only help to gain greater support for bicycle-friendly changes, but alsotap into their expertise on the needs of cyclists and pedestrians.

- **Partner with MPOs and local jurisdictions** to identify new funding opportunities, develop programs to improve pedestrian access to transit stops, and transit-bicycle supportive policies and plans.

- **Build bicycle parking at transit stations** to encourage bicycle commuters to access transit by bicycle. In addition, participant experience indicates that people are reluctant to use bicycle parking unless it is secure and inexpensive.

III. Summary of Presentations

The "Forging Bicycle-Transit-Pedestrian Partnerships" roundtable included a series of presentations focused on improving bicycle and transit planning, facilities design, and operation by representatives from the FTA, two national stakeholder groups, and six transit agencies.

This section provides a brief summary of each presentation and, where appropriate, incorporates the answers to questions posed during the session. The presentations were organized and presented as follows:

- *Federal Perspective*: Federal Transit Administration
- *Advocacy Perspective*: America Walks and the National Complete Streets Coalition
- *Lessons Learned from Transit Agencies*:
    - Developing a Long-Range Capital Plan to Integrate Bicycles and Transit in Washington, DC
    - Columbus, Ohio's Bikes on Buses Program
    - Portland, Oregon's Regional Bicycle Parking Program
    - Integrating Bicycles in Charlotte, North Carolina's New Regional Rail
    - Seattle, Washington's Bikes + Buses Program
    - Bicycle and Transit Coordination in San Antonio, Texas

Federal/FTA Perspective on Integrating Bicycle and Transit Planning

Matthew Welbes, Executive Director, FTA
Jayme l. Blakesley, Attorney-Advisor, FTA

In March 2010, the U.S. DOT released a new policy statement on bicycle and pedestrian accommodation, which included a series of recommended actions for consideration in all transportation planning efforts and project development cycles:

- **Consider walking and bicycling as equals with other transportation modes** – The primary goal of a transportation system is to safely and efficiently move people and

goods. Walking and bicycling are efficient transportation modes for most short trips and, where convenient intermodal systems exist, these non-motorized trips can easily be linked with transit to significantly increase trip distance. Because of the benefits they provide, transportation agencies should give the same priority to walking and bicycling as is given to other transportation modes. Walking and bicycling should not be an afterthought in roadway design.

- **Ensure that there are transportation choices for people of all ages and abilities, especially children** – Pedestrian and bicycle facilities should meet accessibility requirements and provide safe, convenient, and interconnected transportation networks. For example, children should have safe and convenient options for walking or bicycling to school and parks. People who cannot or prefer not to drive should have safe and efficient transportation choices.

- **Go beyond minimum design standards** – Transportation agencies are encouraged, when possible, to avoid designing walking and bicycling facilities to the minimum standards. For example, shared-use paths that have been designed to minimum width requirements will need retrofits as more people use them. It is more effective to plan for increased usage than to retrofit an older facility. Planning projects for the long-term should anticipate likely future demand for bicycling and walking facilities and not preclude the provision of future improvements.

- **Integrate bicycle and pedestrian accommodation on new, rehabilitated, and limited-access bridges** – DOT encourages bicycle and pedestrian accommodation on bridge projects including facilities on limited-access bridges with connections to streets or paths.

- **Collect data on walking and biking trips** – The best way to improve transportation networks for any mode is to collect and analyze trip data to optimize investments. Walking and bicycling trip data for many communities are lacking. This data gap can be overcome by establishing routine collection of non-motorized trip information. Communities that routinely collect walking and bicycling data are able to track trends and prioritize investments to ensure the success of new facilities. These data are also valuable in linking walking and bicycling with transit.

- **Set mode share targets for walking and bicycling and tracking them over time** – A byproduct of improved data collection is that communities can establish targets for increasing the percentage of trips made by walking and bicycling.

- **Remove snow from sidewalks and shared-use paths** – Current maintenance provisions require pedestrian facilities built with Federal funds to be maintained in the same manner as other roadway assets. State Agencies have generally established levels of service on various routes especially as related to snow and ice events.

- **Improve non-motorized facilities during maintenance projects** – Many transportation agencies spend most of their transportation funding on maintenance rather than on constructing new facilities. Transportation agencies should find ways to make facility improvements for pedestrians and bicyclists during resurfacing and other maintenance projects.

In November 2009, the FTA issued a new policy proposal that expands the catchment area around transit stops within which bicycle and pedestrian improvements are eligible expenses for FTA program funds. FTA believes that this will help encourage the programming and implementation of projects that promote walking and biking to access public transportation. Pedestrian improvements would be eligible within a one half-mile radius of a transit stop or

station, and bicycle improvements would be eligible within a three mile radius of a transit stop or station. Mr. Blakely noted that the policy has not been published in the Federal Register yet, but that FTA intends to publish it soon.

National Advocacy Perspective: America Walks and National Complete Streets Coalition
Scott Bricker, Campaign Manager, America Walks (Portland, OR)
Barbara McCann, Executive Director, National Complete Streets Coalition (Washington, DC)

America Walks is a national coalition of local advocacy groups who promote walkable communities throughout the country. Mr. Bricker discussed the importance of walking to transit, since transit service is often accessed by people on foot. He explained that America Walks is in the process of developing a "national walking strategy" to promote more and safer walking routes, with three areas of focus:

1. Safe Routes to Transit – to enhance pedestrian accessibility and safety near transit stops.

2. Safe Routes for Seniors – to support the growing concern over helping senior citizens "age in place" by making it safer for them to walk in their neighborhoods.

3. "Drive 20" – a campaign to improve pedestrian safety by encouraging the design and redesign of roadways and urban thoroughfares for 20 miles per hour speeds in residential areas.

The National Complete Streets Coalition is a national association of advocates and transportation professionals that are working to support Federal, state, and local agencies in developing and adopting policies that ensure transportation projects are designed to be safe and accessible for all potential users. Pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders of all ages and abilities should be able to move safely along and across a "complete street." Ms. McCann noted that 169 transportation planning agencies, including 23 state DOTS, have adopted complete streets policies. Model language for developing a state DOT complete streets policy can be found on the National Complete Streets Coalition website.

Developing a Long-Range Capital Plan to Integrate Bicycles &Transit in Washington, DC
Kristin Haldeman, Manager of Access Planning & Policy Analysis, Office of Long Range Planning, Washington Metropolitan Area Transportation Authority (WMATA)

The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) operates the second largest rail transit system in the nation and its fifth largest bus network. It currently provides approximately 1.2 million passenger trips each weekday, and ridership is projected to grow by over a million trips per day on the rail system alone by 2030. WMATA does not have the necessary land or capital resources to accommodate all the projected ridership growth through park and ride lots; therefore, it looks to bicycle and pedestrian investments near rail stations as critical supportive infrastructure to help riders access the transit system.

In order to make bicycle supportive investments as effectively as possible, WMATA launched a study to identify strategic opportunities to enhance transit accessibility by bicycle. The study evaluates existing and projected demand for station area access by bicycle and explores opportunities to improve bicycle accessibility and safety through:

- Bicycle parking (e.g., covered racks, bicycle cages)
- Customer information (e.g., improved bicycle information on website, signage, wayfinding)
- Appropriate bicycle-supportive design in TOD and surrounding developments

The study recommends that WMATA adopt a goal of tripling the bicycle mode share to access MetroRail stations during the morning peak to 2.1 percent by 2020 and quintupling it by 2030. The WMATA Board is expected to vote on this goal in January 2011. Once the bicycle accessibility study is complete, WMATA will release it to the public, incorporate its recommendations into its next 6-year capital improvement plan and begin implementation.

Lessons Learned from Columbus, Ohio's Bikes on Buses Program

Douglas B. Moore, Vice President of Planning, Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA)

The Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA) launched its Bike n' Bus Program in 2003. Funded through the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) Program, it provides all buses in COTA's fixed-route system with a 2-bicycle rack, a limited number of enclosed bicycle lockers at park and ride lots throughout the region, and a marketing program to encourage bicyclists to ride transit and demonstrate how racks and lockers may be used.

Figure A. Bicycle Rack on a COTA Bus
Image Courtesy of COTA

Mr. Moore noted that partnerships have been essential to funding, operating, and marketing the program. Partners include:

- Local biking associations and advocacy groups
- City of Columbus
- Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC, the MPO)
- Franklin County
- Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT)

Other lessons learned that Mr. Moore shared, include:

- Provide bicycle access throughout the entire transit system, rather than on just a few routes.

- Involve bus drivers in bicycle program development early on in order to gain their understanding and support for the program. Transit agencies often rely on bus drivers to provide the data on how often bus bicycle racks are used, so it is critical to have their buy-in for a bicycle program to be successful.

- Create partnerships with bicycle advocacy organizations to help market the bicycle program.

- Work with the MPO (and local municipalities, if appropriate) to develop and adopt a complete streets policy that encourages multi-modal, bicycle friendly street design for all transportation projects.

- Reinforce the importance of bicycle riders as an important potential market for increased transit ridership.

- Develop a plan for how to deal with bicycles that are left behind on buses (e.g., holding locker in the bus yard) and for how bicycle racks will be used and maintained during the winter in northern climates.

Portland, Oregon's Regional Bicycle Parking Program

Colin Maher, Planner, Bicycle Programs and Projects, TriMet

TriMet is the largest transit provider in the Portland, Oregon region. One of the agency's major current initiatives to increase bicycle access to the transit network is to develop a high-capacity bicycle parking network, called "Bike & Ride." Through community input and field research, Tri-Met took an inventory of current stations, bicycle parking, and bicycle routes and then identified key corridor and hub stations with the potential to increase bicycle-transit connections region-wide.

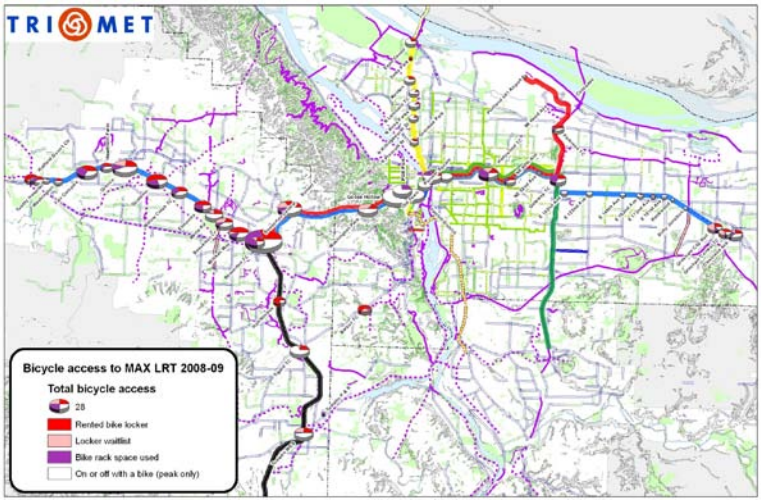

Figure B. Map of Bicycle Access to TriMet Transit Stations
Image courtesy of TriMet

Characteristics of the stations targeted for Bike & Ride investments included:

- High level of transit service.

- Evidence of clear benefits for accessing the station by bicycle, relative to other modes (e.g., good bicycle routes already in place, some level of bicycle parking/access already in place, destinations outside of walking distance).

- Evidence of clear benefits for transferring from bicycles to transit at the station (e.g., travel time savings, barriers to cycling overcome).

At designated Bike & Ride stations, commuters will be able to park their bicycles for 3 cents an hour in a secure, enclosed building that is monitored by security cameras and accessible by keycard 24 hours a day. This low hourly rate is enough to cover the operating and administrative costs of the Bike & Ride program. The first Bike & Ride facility opened at the Sunset Transit center in August 2010. It replaced 8 car parking spaces in an existing parking garage with 74

secure bicycle parking spaces, housed on two tiers, with a custom railing rack for cargo bicycles/trailers, as well as a work stand and bicycle pump. Two more Bike & Ride stations are scheduled to be operational by the end of 2010.

Integrating Bicycles into Charlotte, North Carolina's New Regional Rail

Olaf Kinard, Marketing and Communications Manager, Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS)

The Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS) has worked in close collaboration with regional planning agencies and stakeholder groups to focus growth and expand multimodal transportation choices in the Charlotte region since the mid-1990s. After 10 years of planning and project development, CATS opened the LYNX light-rail line in 2007 with 15 stations and nearly 10 miles of line. CATS worked closely with stakeholder groups and local municipalities to ensure that bicycle accessibility would be integrated into the new light-rail system's station area and corridor design. All stations have bicycle racks, and approximately half have bicycle lockers as well. In addition, the entire light-rail corridor can be ridden by bicycle, either on a shared use path or sidewalks abutting the tracks (with the exception of one bridge).

Currently CATS estimates that 10 percent of its light-rail riders access the LYNX system by bicycle. Counts show that bicycle access of light-rail system is steadily rising, and Mr. Kinard noted that CATS is committed to working with regional planning agencies and local jurisdictions to develop policies and projects that incorporate walkable, bikable access to transit stations. Fifty million dollars in city infrastructure bond funding is available to construct enhanced walking and biking infrastructure around transit stations, such as sidewalk connections, bicycle lanes, bicycle parking, and crosswalk enhancements. CATS is also collaborating with City of Charlotte's Bicycle Program to implement the City's Bicycle Master Plan's recommendations for current and future station areas and transit corridors.

Seattle, Washington's Bikes + Buses Program

Christine Anderson, Special Projects Manager, King County Metro

King County Metro (Metro) is the largest transit provider in Washington State, providing a mix bus, trolley, streetcar, paratransit, vanpool and other transportation alternatives for residents of Seattle and King County. The Bikes + Buses program is designed to enhance bicycle access and use of the Metro system. It is comprised of five key elements:

- **Bicycle parking** at transit facilities – Metro has 236 bicycle lockers at 30 stations system-wide.
- **Bicycle policies** – Metro allows bicycle loading in the downtown Seattle transit tunnel, and provides a free ride for bicyclists across the State Route 520 bridges, which does not allow for pedestrian or bicycle crossings.
- **Bicycle racks** on buses – Metro was the first transit agency in the country to put racks on its entire bus fleet; the program was so successful that Metro now has 3-position bicycle racks on all buses.
- **Bicycle stations** – There are four bicycle stations throughout the transit system that provide secure bicycle parking for members and bicycle repair/rental/retail, as well as gear lockers and changing facilities.
- **Bicycle sharing** – Metro is seeking funding to create a bicycle sharing program with 50 stations and 500 bicycles for short term rental for day-to-day transportation needs.

Figure C. Bike Station in Seattle
Image Courtesy of King County Metro

Bicycle and Transit Coordination in San Antonio, Texas
Abigail Kinnison, Sustainability Officer, VIA Metropolitan Transit

Via Metropolitan Transit (VIA) is the largest bus-only transit system in the country. It provides service nearly 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to nearly 42 million riders each year. All of VIA's buses are equipped with bicycle racks. The agency worked with bicycle advocates and the San Antonio City Council to pass a "safe passing" ordinance in 2009 that ensures that vulnerable road users (including bicyclists) are given adequate space in the travel lane (3 feet) when they are being passed. Commercial vehicles, including all VIA buses, are required to allow at least 6 feet to pass. The City of San Antonio is also developing a bicycle sharing program, which was recently awarded funding through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA).

Ms. Kinnison noted that VIA is eager to find additional ways to integrate bicycle accessibility elements into its system, particularly as the agency moves forward with plans to develop a network of high-capacity bus-rapid transit (BRT) corridors, and explores opportunities for future light-rail transit in the region as well.

Ms. Kinnison also highlighted several challenges the agency faces in better addressing bicycle-transit connections:

- **Bicycle lane design and sharing the road between cyclists and buses** – because cyclists and buses can travel at approximately the same speeds, they frequently experience "leap-frogging," which causes safety concerns.

- **Collecting reliable data on how many people are using bicycle racks on buses** – VIA does not currently collect data about bike rack usage and, historically, there has been a reluctance to rely on bus drivers to collect this information.

- **Unclear how to accommodate bicycles on the planned BRT vehicles** – level boarding from the stations eliminates the ability to use front-loading bicycle racks, but it is not clear whether VIA will allow bicycles inside the BRT vehicles.

IV. Conclusion

The "Forging Bicycle-Transit-Pedestrian Partnerships" roundtable convened transit agencies, national stakeholder groups, and the FTA to share strategies and lessons learned for how to create effective transit-bicycle-pedestrian partnerships to support livable, sustainable communities.

Key concepts emerging from the transit-bicycle-pedestrian roundtable were:

- **Be strategic and take a systems approach to integrating bicycle and pedestrian considerations in transit system planning and development.** This could include activities such as placing bicycle racks on all buses in the system rather than a few in order to maximize usage of the racks, building bicycle parking at transit stations that connect to designated local or regional bicycle routes, and improving pedestrian safety along busy streets.

- **Prioritize "low-hanging fruit" to make the most of limited resources and demonstrate the value of smaller successes** through activities such as updating websites to provide information about regional bicycle routes and programs, and programming funds to replace or repair old bicycle racks.

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- **Partner with bicycle and pedestrian advocacy groups on communication and outreach efforts** so that people with an interest in walking and biking are aware of your projects, programs, and procedures. Partnering with bicycle and pedestrian advocacy groups will not only help to gain greater support for bicycle-friendly changes, but alsotap into their expertise on the needs of cyclists and pedestrians.

- **Partner with MPOs and local jurisdictions** to identify new funding opportunities, develop programs to improve pedestrian access to transit stops, and transit-bicycle supportive policies and plans.

- **Build bicycle parking at transit stations** to encourage bicycle commuters to access transit by bicycle. In addition, participant experience indicates that people are reluctant to use bicycle parking unless it is secure and inexpensive.

V. About the TPCB Program

The Transportation Planning Capacity Building (TPCB) Program is a joint venture of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) that delivers products and services to provide information, training, and technical assistance to the transportation professionals responsible for planning for the capital, operating, and maintenance needs of our nation's surface transportation system. The TPCB Program website (www.planning.dot.gov) serves as a one-stop clearinghouse for state-of-the-practice transportation planning information and resources. This includes over 70 peer exchange reports covering a wide range of transportation planning topics.

The TPCB Peer Program advances the state of the practice in multi-modal transportation planning nationwide by organizing, facilitating, and documenting peer events to share noteworthy practices among state departments of transportation (DOTs), Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO), transit agencies, and local and Tribal transportation planning agencies. During peer events, transportation planning staff interact with one another to share information, accomplishments, and lessons learned from the field and help one another overcome shared transportation planning challenges.