



Federal Highway Programs and Livability

How FHWA programs can help support your livability efforts

Livability in transportation is about leveraging the quality, location, and type of transportation facilities and services available to help achieve broad community goals such as access to a variety of jobs, community services, affordable housing, quality schools, and safe streets.¹ Livability is an outcome of a multimodal transportation planning process that involves nontraditional partners and advances policies and projects that integrate transportation solutions into broader community goals. FHWA funding programs provide opportunities to incorporate livability principles and better align projects with local interests and needs.



Federal programs support roadway, transit, walking, and biking improvements, to make it easier to get around – connecting people, business, and communities (H.B. Rue)

FHWA programs that support livability. Within the Federal-Aid Highway Program, there are several major funding programs that support a broad range of livability-related projects.² Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) Program and National Highway Performance Program (NHPP) funds can be used flexibly to advance projects that promote livability. Metropolitan Planning (PL) and State Planning and Research (SPR) funds can be used for livability-related planning, research, training, and technical assistance. Bicycle and pedestrian projects are eligible for most Federal-aid highway and transit program funds.³ Other programs that have been used to support livability include:

- **Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) Program** provides funding to areas in nonattainment or maintenance for ozone, carbon monoxide, and/or particulate matter to support surface transportation projects and other related efforts that contribute to air quality improvements. For example, in 2011, Massachusetts used \$16.4 million in CMAQ funds for a project to retrofit school buses, lowering bus-related particulate matter emissions by 80 percent.⁴
- **Transportation Alternatives (TA)** funds are a set-aside of Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) program funds for a variety of smaller-scale transportation programs and projects such as pedestrian and bicycle facilities, recreational trails, safe routes to school projects, community improvements such as historic preservation and vegetation management, and environmental mitigation related to stormwater and habitat connectivity. TA funds provided \$1.5 million toward Philadelphia's Indego bike share program, a nationally-recognized leader in bike share equity and inclusivity that maximizes mobility benefits for all residents and visitors and ensures that low-income residents can participate.



Transportation Alternatives funds provided \$1.5 million for Philadelphia's bike share program, Indego. (City of Philadelphia)

¹ FHWA, The Role of FHWA Programs In Livability State of the Practice Summary, 2011. www.fhwa.dot.gov/livability/state_of_the_practice_summary/research2011.pdf

² FHWA Livability Initiative. Leveraging the Partnership. <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/livability/scp.cfm>

³ Bicycle and Pedestrian Funding Opportunities: USDOT, FTA and FHWA Funds. http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bicycle_pedestrian/funding/funding_opportunities.cfm

⁴ MassCleanDiesel 'Clean Air for Kids' Program. <http://www.mass.gov/eea/docs/dep/air/diesel/mcdretrofits0911.pdf>

Creating more livable communities through transportation choices



Another example is improvements to streetlights, bike lanes, sidewalks, and crossings in the West Vernor corridor in Detroit, MI, to improve accessibility to businesses, health care, and several schools. The projects used \$2 million in TA funds through the Southeastern Michigan Council of Governments; Michigan DOT provided \$2.5 million in former Transportation Enhancement funds and \$700,000 in previous Safe Routes to School funds. The Federal funds were matched by over \$1 million in local funds and private donations.

- **EcoLogical Grant Program** funded the Salt Lake City region's Blueprint Jordan River Project to follow the city's growth vision and protect its natural resources, as part of the implementation of Envision Utah.⁵
- The **Federal Lands and Tribal Transportation Programs** fund transportation improvements in the National Parks, Forests, Wildlife Refuges, Recreation Areas, and Tribal Lands. One example is the reconstruction of the Grand Loop Road in Yellowstone National Park, allowing safer transit to the park's main attractions, such as the Old Faithful.
- The **Recreational Trails Program** funded the acquisition of about 2.3 miles of the San Diego Gas and Electric easement that bisects the City of Encinitas, California, to develop recreational trails under the City's Recreational Trails Master Plan.⁶

“Livability is investing in a way that recognizes the unique character of each community. The era of one-size-fits-all transportation projects must give way to one where preserving and enhancing unique community characteristics, be they rural or urban, is a primary mission of our work rather than an afterthought.”

-Former USDOT Secretary Ray LaHood

Success Stories

Transportation choices help clear the air. Fort Collins, Colorado used CMAQ funds to create a bicycle library (bike sharing). Members of the public borrow bicycles at no cost from two locations. The City estimated that the project would reduce carbon monoxide by 759 kilograms in the first year of operation. Within the first month, the library was lending bicycles at capacity, with more than 3,000 bicycles lent out since April 2008.⁷

Small towns need Safe Routes to School. Students and nearby community members of Galax City Public Schools benefited from multiple grants awarded from 2012 to 2015 totaling \$571,850. Safe Routes to School infrastructure and noninfrastructure funds were used on several projects, including installing new sidewalks and crosswalks around schools and providing education on walking and bicycling to and from school. The Gala Safe Routes to School Program also was awarded the 2016 SRTS Jim Oberstar award at the fifth Safe Routes to School National Conference in Columbus, Ohio.⁸

Bridges provide ‘Gateways’ to Communities. The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation replaced a severely deteriorated bridge that serves as a gateway from downtown Pittsburgh to the Oakland neighborhood. The Boulevard of the Allies is one of the main roadway entrances into Oakland which is the region's premier medical, educational, and cultural center as well as a vibrant community. Oakland is not only a destination but it also serves as a through corridor between downtown and the eastern neighborhoods and suburbs.

⁵ FHWA, Blueprint Jordan River. http://environment.fhwa.dot.gov/ecological/grantProgram_rpt/grants/bpjr_2011.asp

⁶ FHWA 2015 Recreational Trails Program Annual Report: www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/recreational_trails/overview/report/2015/index.cfm

⁷ League of American Bicyclists, Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program. <https://www.fcbikelibrary.org/index.php>

⁸ Safe Routes to School. <http://www.saferroutesinfo.org/about-us/newsroom/galax-safe-routes-school-program-receives-2016-oberstar-safe-routes-school-award>

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

