

# FHWA's Fostering Livable Communities Newsletter

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## Introduction

The Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA's) Fostering Livable Communities Newsletter is intended to provide transportation professionals with real-world examples of ways that transportation investments promote livability, such as providing access to good jobs, affordable housing, quality schools, and safer roads. To access additional tools and resources, or to learn more about FHWA's Livability Initiative, please visit [FHWA's Livability website](#), or visit the interagency [Partnership for Sustainable Communities \(PSC\) website](#). To read past issues of the newsletter, visit [www.fhwa.dot.gov/livability/newsletter/](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/livability/newsletter/). To subscribe to the newsletter, visit [GovDelivery](#).

Creating more livable communities through transportation choices



## Southern Nevada Strong Community Engagement Initiative

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Southern Nevada Strong – Southern Nevada Regional Planning Coalition

Southern Nevada Strong (SNS) is a regional planning project working to build a foundation for long-term economic success and livability by better integrating transportation, housing options, and job opportunities throughout Southern Nevada. The project is funded by a \$3.5 million Sustainable Communities Planning Grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), which provides the resources to conduct in-depth research and community engagement efforts to analyze the issues facing Southern Nevada.

More than 150 elected officials, and business and community leaders attended the project kickoff last spring to learn more about the project and get involved. Launching straight into outreach following the kickoff, SNS participated in more than 35 community events, presentations, and open meetings from Boulder City to North Las Vegas. At these events, SNS staff presented information on the project and collected information on community concerns and priorities via 725 iPad surveys. The survey was also made available on the SNS website, through social media, and e-newsletter communications. These efforts were coupled with a statistically valid telephone survey. This initial phase of outreach showed that Southern Nevadans value good weather, access to the outdoors, and a high quality of life. It also identified areas of improvement or concern, such as improving K-12 education, creating more jobs, and attracting new business.



*Figure 1: School children review land use and development concepts at a public meeting at the Downtown Boys & Girls Club of Las Vegas.*

The project team conducted the next outreach phase between July and October 2013, which consisted of 15 open houses across the region. Open houses provided:

- iPad surveys, which allowed the public to review priorities for the Regional Plan and rank areas throughout the valley they feel are best positioned to better connect transportation, housing, and job opportunities
- Photo preference surveys of land use and development choices
- Activities for kids and more

During the open houses, SNS utilized a cutting-edge community input tool called [MetroQuest](#). This survey tool allowed for more in-depth feedback, priority ranking, and interactive visuals. SNS also made the survey available online and promoted it via social media and e-mail. SNS continued its outreach efforts at more than 50 community events, meetings, speaking engagements, and briefings with elected officials, reaching nearly 2,500 local residents. Key findings of this community outreach included:

- General public support for compact development that integrates housing, transportation, and jobs
- Community interest in light rail and support for streetscape improvements
- Bicycle lanes and pedestrian improvements



- Community support for more open spaces and community gathering areas
- Identification of “opportunity sites” for compact, infill development

The final phase of community outreach, will roll out in early 2014 and focus heavily on the opportunity sites identified for further evaluation. The community chose these areas to explore the benefits of potential opportunity sites throughout the region. Interactive scenario planning software and grassroots community kiosks are being used as well as telephone town halls and site-specific open houses.

For more information, visit: [www.SouthernNevadaStrong.org](http://www.SouthernNevadaStrong.org).

## New Accessibility Guidance – Curb Ramps, Pedestrian Facilities, and Outdoor Developed Areas

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Title II of the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires that State and local governments ensure that persons with disabilities have access to pedestrian routes in the public right-of-way. Design guidelines, which are developed by the U.S. Access Board, have important implications for all types of nonmotorized transportation facilities, including sidewalks and curb ramps, as well as shared use paths and outdoor developed areas. These guidelines apply to various issues, including access for blind pedestrians at street crossings, wheelchair access to on-street parking, and various constraints posed by space limitations, roadway design practices, slope, and terrain. These guidelines are triggered by the construction of new facilities or alteration of existing facilities.

In June 2013, the U.S. Department of Justice (U.S. DOJ) and U.S. Department of Transportation (U.S. DOT) [issued joint Title II technical assistance clarifying policies on the provision of curb ramps](#) when roads are resurfaced. Also, the U.S. Access Board is [developing new guidelines that apply to pedestrian facilities in the public right-of-way](#) and [plans to include shared use paths within these guidelines](#). Lastly, in September 2013, the U.S. Access Board released [Final Guidelines for Outdoor Developed Areas](#) under the Architectural Barriers Act (ABA) of 1968. A brief synopsis of each document is provided below:

- **U.S. DOJ/U.S. DOT joint technical assistance on ADA Title II requirements to provide curb ramps when streets, roads, or highways are altered through resurfacing:** Over the past few years, State and local governments have sought further clarification from both U.S. DOT and U.S. DOJ on requirements to provide accessible curb ramps when streets, roads, or highways are being resurfaced, and which road and street treatments are considered alterations or maintenance. The joint technical assistance addresses these questions, defining alterations as “reconstruction, rehabilitation, *resurfacing*, widening, and projects of similar scale and effect. Maintenance activities on streets, roads, or highways, such as filling potholes, are not alterations.” The new technical assistance stipulates that in general, whenever streets, roadways, or highways are altered, a public agency is obligated to provide curb ramps where street level pedestrian walkways cross curbs. Alterations, in contrast to maintenance



activities, are changes that affect or have the potential to affect the usability of all or part of a building or facility, such as a sidewalk.

- **U.S. Access Board rulemakings on pedestrian facilities in the public right-of-way and shared use paths:** The proposed accessibility guidelines would add shared use paths (trails for transportation purposes) to forthcoming guidelines for pedestrian facilities in the public right-of-way, including crosswalks, curb ramps, street furnishings, pedestrian signals, parking, and other components of public rights-of-way. These guidelines will apply to the design, construction, and alteration of pedestrian facilities, including sidewalks and shared use paths. These guidelines may become final in 2014.
- **U.S. Access Board guidelines on outdoor developed areas:** The guidelines provide specifications for accessible recreational trails and other components of outdoor developed areas. They provide exceptions for situations where terrain and other factors make compliance impracticable. The guidelines apply to projects on Federal lands or constructed by a Federal agency. Although the guidelines do not necessarily apply to Federal-aid projects (unless on Federal land), they provide best practices that States may adopt to ensure equivalent compliance under the ADA.

Without such guidelines, travel in urban areas can be dangerous, difficult, or even impossible for people who use wheelchairs, scooters, and other mobility devices. Without accommodations, individuals are forced to travel in streets or roadways, placing them in imminent danger. They are also prevented from reaching their destination and may simply choose not to venture out of their homes or communities, much to the detriment of livability goals.

## MassDOT Healthy Transportation Policy Directive

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In September, the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) announced a [Healthy Transportation Policy Directive](#) that integrates agency goals for public and environmental health into project development. The directive requires that all State transportation projects increase opportunities for walking, bicycling, and transit. MassDOT will review current projects to ensure they enhance these “healthy transportation” options. MassDOT’s directive is a notable example of an agency integrating livability considerations with its own goals for health and environmental sustainability.

The new Healthy Transportation Policy Directive is part of MassDOT’s wider “[GreenDOT](#)” initiative, which encompasses three related State goals: reduce greenhouse gas emissions, support smart growth development, and promote the healthy transportation options of walking, bicycling, and transit. MassDOT developed the original GreenDOT Policy Directive in 2010 and the GreenDOT Implementation Plan in 2012. The Healthy Transportation Policy Directive implements a key performance goal from the GreenDOT Implementation Plan: to triple the combined mode share of walking, bicycling, and transit in Massachusetts by 2030. MassDOT also coordinates with other State agencies through the [Massachusetts Healthy Transportation Compact](#).

In addition to the project development requirement, the directive also includes other policies that advance the agency’s healthy transportation goal. For example, MassDOT will enhance safety for pedestrian, bicycle, and transit users by reviewing cluster sites where many accidents occur, especially in low-income communities and minority communities. The agency will then develop projects to address safety issues at these sites.





The MassDOT directive also outlines the connections between transportation facilities and surrounding land uses in the communities they serve. All MassDOT facilities, such as roads and transit stations, will be designed to consider nearby existing and planned land uses and will include design features that enhance nonmotorized and transit options.

Under the directive, MassDOT will:

- Develop a project design guide to assist communities proposing shared use paths on or alongside rail right-of-way.
- Ensure that all new bridges, overpasses, underpasses, as well as non-limited access roads in urbanized areas provide sidewalks on both sides of the right-of-way.

FHWA and the U.S. DOT are providing resources to support States such as Massachusetts that are choosing to emphasize health in their transportation decisionmaking. This support includes:

- In 2012, FHWA and the Volpe Center produced the first in a series of white papers looking at how transportation agencies can choose to integrate health into the transportation planning process. The first white paper, *“Metropolitan Area Transportation Planning for Healthy Communities,”* explores exemplary metropolitan planning organization practices as the basis for a holistic framework for considering health in planning.
- U.S. DOT is currently working in partnership with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the American Public Health Association to develop a “Health Index” to assist metropolitan planning organizations and State DOTs to evaluate the health effects of transportation decisions.

MassDOT and its partners are also featured in the upcoming white paper from the FHWA Office of Planning on State DOTs that are incorporating public health into their transportation planning and other activities.

### **FHWA Texas Division Hosts Green Streets Workshop in Arlington, Texas**

Kirk D Fauver, Environmental and Transportation Planning Coordinator  
FHWA – Texas Division

The FHWA Texas Division in partnership with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 6 (Dallas) hosted a Green Streets Workshop in Arlington, Texas at the offices of the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) on September 25, 2013. This free one-day event was sponsored by the Region 6 PSC.

Nearly 100 participants from the private sector, academia, and public organizations learned about EPA’s Green Infrastructure Program and storm water runoff protection efforts, and the American Society of Civil Engineers Institute for Sustainable Infrastructure green rating program. In addition, participants learned about best management practices from real-world examples of green street programs implemented in Houston, Texas; the city of Mesquite; and the University of Texas’ Green at College Park, and Dallas’s Urban Reserve development.



*Figure 2: Participants at the Green Streets Workshop in Arlington, Texas. (Photo credit: Kirk Fauver, FHWA Texas Division)*



To download materials from this workshop, please visit: <http://www.nctcog.org/trans/sustdev/landuse/eventrain.asp> (look under “View Past Meetings and Events”). For additional information, please contact Kirk D. Fauver of the FHWA Texas Division at (512) 536-5952 or e-mail at: [kirk.fauver@dot.gov](mailto:kirk.fauver@dot.gov).

## Improving Access to a National Park for Low-Income and Minority Populations through Bicycle Sharing

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Across the country, public lands like National Parks are looking for ways to improve walking, bicycling, and transit access to recreational opportunities for underserved populations, including minority and low-income neighborhoods. The Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (MISS) partnered with Nice Ride Minnesota, the Twin Cities’ bicycle share system, to expand the system and provide a means for minority and low-income populations in north Minneapolis to access the MISS and its many destinations without the use of a car.

The MISS, administered by the National Park Service (NPS), spans 72 miles on both sides of the Mississippi River in the Twin Cities metropolitan area of Minnesota. The park features numerous State and regional destinations, as well as a 72-mile stretch of the 3,000 mile Mississippi River National Millenium Trail, a multiuse path that runs the length of the River from northern Minnesota to the Gulf of Mexico. The park attracts over 33 million visitors per year.

The bicycle share system is part of the overall effort by the MISS to implement an Alternative Transportation System (ATS) to enhance the visitor experience and improve access without adding congestion or pollution. Since the MISS is in the middle of a major urban area, one challenge is that no single transportation system serves all visitors or connects area residents to the River and its major destinations. In part to address this issue, the ATS includes an expansion of Nice Ride within and near the MISS, including minority and low-income neighborhoods.

Launched in June 2010 with 700 bicycles and 65 stations, Nice Ride has since expanded to over 1,600 bicycles and 175 stations. By mid-2013, riders had taken over 700,000 rides on Nice Ride bicycles, reflecting the Twin Cities’ strong bicycling culture. Following a successful partnership in 2012, when the NPS funded the installation of 30 Nice Ride stations near the Mississippi River, NPS partnered with Nice Ride again in 2013 to install an additional 17 stations along the River. The MISS and Nice Ride decided to locate these stations in the traditionally underserved urban neighborhoods of north Minneapolis, where access to the River can be a challenge. This provided these neighborhoods with access to parks, trails, and green space; encouraged more people to get outdoors and recreate close to home; and connected urban neighborhoods.

The new bicycle share stations are located along seven miles of the Mississippi River and form a network of stations in and near high-density areas of underserved communities to facilitate multi-modal access to the River. This bicycle share system expansion is helping to ensure that all visitors and area residents have access to the MISS without using a car. NPS expects this expansion of Nice Ride to serve as a “door opener” to active transportation, promoting economic vitality and demonstrating that healthy recreation is an important part of a vibrant, urban National Park.



## Spotlight on Region 5

Region 5 (Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin) reported multiple livability-related updates for 2013. Here are some recent highlights from the region:

- **Opportunity Corridor in Cleveland, Ohio:** The city of Cleveland and the PSC are planning for brownfields redevelopment in the Lower Buckeye and Kinsman neighborhoods, which are Environmental Justice areas featuring extensive tracts of vacant land. This is part of a larger project called the [Opportunity Corridor](#), a proposed six-lane boulevard that would link Interstate 490 with fast-growing University Circle. FHWA approved the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the \$331.3 million Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) project in August 2013. EPA provided a \$175,000 grant to help develop an implementation strategy which focuses on vacant land and redevelopment options along the planned parkway. The city planning commission completed and adopted the strategy in fall 2013. State agencies, including the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency and ODOT, are working with local stakeholders to facilitate business expansion and brownfields site assembly for redevelopment. The U.S. DOT plans to direct \$29 million in planning funds and over \$200 million in construction funds to complete the Opportunity Corridor project. More information is available at: [www.cleveland.com/metro/index.ssf/2013/07/opportunity\\_corridor\\_in\\_clevel\\_1.html](http://www.cleveland.com/metro/index.ssf/2013/07/opportunity_corridor_in_clevel_1.html).
- **Roundtable Discussions:** The Region 5 PSC held three roundtable discussions in 2013 in Cincinnati, Ohio; Indianapolis, Indiana; and Racine, Wisconsin. Municipal staff, community leaders, business and industry representatives, and other stakeholders were all invited to attend and report about the successes and challenges of their projects—and what the PSC can do to help. The event in Racine, Wisconsin convened local government, business, non-profit, education, and religious leaders along with officials from HUD, U.S. DOT, and EPA as well as the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Department of Homeland Security, Small Business Administration, Department of Labor, and Department of the Interior. The discussion focused on ways Federal agencies could work more effectively with the Racine community on housing, economic development, and environmental quality issues.

### Announcements/New Resources

- U.S. DOT and HUD collaborated on an online [Location Affordability Portal](#), which includes a cost calculator that the public can use to estimate housing and transportation costs. The tool builds upon the original H+T affordability tool developed by the Center for Neighborhood Technology.
- A new [case study on improving pedestrian safety for older adults](#) is available on the FHWA Livability website.
- The Safe Routes to School National Partnership developed a resource on [Overcoming Obstacles in Underserved Communities](#).
- Reconnecting America conducted a [study that examines the critical role of transit in linking low-income communities with career-ladder opportunities](#).
- The Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center has completed a new study identifying the costs for pedestrian and bicycle safety infrastructure. The report "[Costs for Pedestrian and Bicycle Infrastructure Improvements: A Resource for Researchers, Engineers, Planners, and the General Public](#)," provides estimates and cost ranges on 77 pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure projects.
- Join the discussion! The FHWA Livable Communities Discussion Board is an online public forum for users to participate in discussion threads and engage with colleagues on questions and ideas related to livable communities. Have a question or idea to post? Check out the site at: <https://www.transportationresearch.gov/dot/fhwa/livablecommunities/>.

Federal Highway Administration: [www.fhwa.dot.gov/livability](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/livability)  
Partnership for Sustainable Communities: [www.sustainablecommunities.gov/](http://www.sustainablecommunities.gov/)

