



Activity #10: Wildlife Mortality Mitigation

The federal Transportation Alternatives (TA) program funds 10 different types of transportation-related activities. Activity 10, Wildlife Mortality Mitigation, allows communities to decrease the negative impact of roads on the natural environment. Roads can harm wildlife by causing habitat fragmentation and vehicle-caused wildlife mortality. Projects funded in this category seek to reduce these environmental impacts. Since the Transportation Enhancements (TE) program began in 1992, approximately 1 percent of available TE/TA funds have been programmed for Environmental mitigation projects.

Eligible Projects

Working within Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) guidelines, each state Department of Transportation (DOT) determines the eligibility of TA projects for funding. Examples of projects that may be considered eligible include:

- Wetlands acquisition and restoration;
- Stream channel stabilization;
- Wildlife underpasses or overpasses which may include bridge extensions to provide or improve wildlife passage and wildlife habitat connectivity;
- Monitoring and data collection on habitat fragmentation and vehicle-caused wildlife mortality.

The definition for this category is less restrictive under the MAP-21 transportation bill (effective October 1, 2012) than under the previous SAFETEA-LU bill. Projects that were previously ineligible under SAFETEA-LU may be eligible under the new law.

Examples of Successful Projects



Highway 89 Wildlife Underpass, Tahoe National Forest, CA. The 25 mile long highway 89 in California runs through Tahoe National Forest offering beautiful views of conifer forests and snow-capped peaks. The highway intersects the natural migration route of Loyalton-Truckee mule deer herd which has led to high collisions rates. Using gps tracking collars, the Highway 89 Stewardship team was able to determine where deer were crossing the highway in the largest numbers. \$599,000 in TE funding was matched with \$77,000 to fund the wildlife underpass which opened in June of 2009.

Visit www.ta-clearinghouse.info/project_examples for additional project examples.



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Federal Guidance

Projects that use TA funds must qualify as one or more of the 10 designated activities and be related to surface transportation in order to meet basic federal eligibility requirements. Past FHWA TE Guidance has required the following for environmental mitigation projects:

- Projects must go above and beyond environmental mitigation required in law for federal-aid highway projects.
- Projects may target wildlife not listed as threatened or endangered species.

In some cases where it is not feasible to construct wildlife crossings, it may be possible to develop new habitat resources or to improve existing habitat resources to support additional population.

Visit <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/map21/guidance/guidetap.cfm> for a full copy of the FHWA

Project Funding

Most states require TA project sponsors to provide at least 20 percent of project costs, also referred to as matching funds. In many states, the value of donated property, materials and services, the labor of state and local government employees, and the costs of preliminary engineering may count towards the matching requirement. Federal, non-DOT funds can often be used as matching funds. Check with your state TA manager whether these innovative financing options are available in your state. Additional funds for this activity may come from local and state governments, foundations, nonprofit organizations, businesses, or other federal sources.

Visit www.ta-clearinghouse.info/funding_sources for more suggestions on potential funding sources.

Related Resources

- Federal Highway Administration, water quality and Critter Crossings Web sites: www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/natural.htm
- The Center for Transportation and the Environment (North Carolina State University): 919-515-8893 or www.itre.ncsu.edu/cte
- Defenders of Wildlife Habitat and Highways Campaign: 202-682-9400 or www.defenders.org/habitat/highways/new/congress.html
- Western Transportation Institute, Montana State University: Offers a reference database focused on animal-vehicle collisions and mitigation options: www.coe.montana.edu/wti
- USDA forest service, Wildlife Crossings Toolkit: www.wildlifecrossings.info/beta2.htm

To Get Started

Inquiries about the TA application process should be directed to the TA manager at your state DOT. Visit www.ta-clearinghouse.info/contacts for TA manager contact information.