

2013 Transportation Alternatives Professional Seminar Greenville, SC

Proceedings



Prepared by the
National Transportation
Alternatives Clearinghouse

About the National Transportation Alternatives Clearinghouse

Founded in 1998, NTAC provides transparency to a complex program, promotes best practices, and provides citizens and policymakers with sound, nonpartisan information for decisionmaking and evaluation. NTAC is funded through a cooperative agreement between the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy and the Federal Highway Administration through the Office of Planning, Environment, and Realty's Surface Transportation Environment and Planning Cooperative Research Program (STEP).



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INTRODUCTION

The 2013 Transportation Alternatives (TA) Professional Seminar was planned and organized by the National Transportation Alternatives Clearinghouse (NTAC), an information service sponsored by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC). NTAC is funded in part by the Office of Planning, Environment, and Realty's Surface Transportation Environment and Planning Cooperative Research Program (STEP) within FHWA.

When the Transportation Enhancements (TE) program was created in 1991, it required State Departments of Transportations (DOTs) to adapt to a new role and new types of transportation projects. The FHWA, as well as RTC and other partners, recognized that state staff needed adequate workforce development training and support to take on the new challenges of the TE program, and organized the first Transportation Enhancements Workshop in 1994. The approximately biannual TE training seminar provided an opportunity for TE professionals to share their knowledge and experience and to receive direction from FHWA headquarters. The seminar has contributed to major improvements in the implementation of the TE program. Since 2009, the seminar has become an annual event. The 2013 seminar was the first Transportation Alternatives Professional Seminar and was held in Greenville, SC from July 16-17, 2013.

Previous Transportation Enhancements Professional Conferences and Seminars:

- July 23-24, 2012, Detroit, MI
- August 29-30, 2011, San Francisco, CA
- September 16-17, 2010, Chattanooga, TN
- August 13-14, 2009, Washington, DC
- August 7-8, 2007, Portland, OR
- July 26-27, 2005, Minneapolis, MN
- June 25-26, 2003, Providence, RI
- September 25-26, 2001, St Louis, MO
- June 22-23, 1999, Pittsburgh, PA
- January 27-28, 1998, San Diego, CA
- June 9-11, 1996, Washington, DC
- June 1994, Arlington, VA

2013 PROFESSIONAL SEMINAR OVERVIEW

Transportation Enhancement (TE) & Transportation Alternatives (TA) Activities are projects that expand travel choices and enhance the transportation experience for diverse users. Eligible activities were defined in the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA), expanded upon with the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century of 1998 (TEA-21), and continued with the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users of 2005 (SAFETEA-LU). With the enactment of the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21), the Transportation Enhancements, Recreational Trails, and Safe Routes to Schools programs were all combined into the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP). These Acts amended Title 23, United States Code (23 U.S.C.), the section of Federal law that codifies Federal highway legislation. Through ISTEA, TEA-21, and SAFETEA-LU, the Congress set aside 10 percent of the Surface Transportation Program (STP) for TE Activities. Through MAP-21, the Congress set aside about 2% of the amounts authorized for the year to carry out chapters 1, 2, 5, and 6 of 23 U.S.C.

TE projects included building bicycle and pedestrian facilities, scenic and historic highway programs, landscaping and scenic beautification, preserving historic transportation infrastructure, and mitigation of negative environmental impacts of highways. The TAP eliminated categories such as pedestrian and bicycle safety and educational programs; acquisition of scenic or historic easements and sites; scenic or historic highway programs including tourist and welcome centers; and establishment of transportation museums. The TAP added other eligible activities such as any environmental mitigation and construction, planning, and design of infrastructure related projects that provide safe routes for non-drivers.

Congress intended the TE/TAP to encourage partnerships between local and State officials and public interest groups in the development and implementation of TE-funded projects. The diversity in the types of eligible TE/TAP projects and flexibility in program administration has generated a need for State TE/TAP managers to receive regular workforce development training from Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) staff. To facilitate this exchange, the National Transportation Alternatives Clearinghouse (NTAC) organizes two-day seminars for State TE/TAP managers, MPO staff, FHWA division staff, and FHWA headquarters staff. Seminar participants have the opportunity to voice problems and successes with the implementation of the TAP, ask questions of FHWA headquarters staff, and identify the areas where more guidance is needed.

The 2013 Seminar, which was held in Greenville, SC on July 16-17, 2013, focused on transitioning to MAP-21 (Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act). There were 69 people attending the seminar: 33 from State Departments of Transportation (DOTs), 5 from FHWA, 6 from the National Transportation Enhancements Clearinghouse/Rails to Trails Conservancy, 14 from local governments, and 11 from other organizations. The two-day seminar consisted of a keynote presentation, multiple best practice sessions, a site visit, and interactive discussions.

The seminar kickoff was a keynote presentation by Mary Ebeling of State Smart Transportation Initiative on getting the most out of the program. Following the keynote address, Christopher Douwes and Paul Wistrand discussed the burdens and effects of the Treatment of Projects requirement. After a short break, Pat Tomes of the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC) gave a presentation on RTC's forthcoming report on the Rails-to-Trails

Conservancy. The afternoon began with Amber Thelen and Kevin Vettraino discussing Michigan's new Grant IT System and how the Michigan DOT and Southeastern Michigan Council of Governments are collaborating together. Afterwards, a dialogue by two Safe Routes to School Coordinators and two staff from the National Center for Safe Routes to School focused on best practices for the program. A similar conversation on best practices for the Recreational Trails Program was held by Christopher Douwes, Ronda Pratt, and Jim Radabaugh. As the day progressed, projects from Michigan, Delaware, and Mississippi were shared with the group. The day ended with a site visit to the Swamp Rabbit Trail and Liberty Bridge in downtown Greenville lead by Michael Kerski, the Economic Development Manager for the city of Greenville.

The second day began with an overview of the SRTS data collection instruments by Pam Barth and Seth LaJeunesse from the National Center for Safe Routes to School. Next, Nick Ferenchak of NTAC gave an update on the Transportation Alternatives Certificate of Excellence. After a short break, a panel consisting of Kyle Lukacs, Kevin Mills, Darren Flusche, and Brighid O'Keane discussed the current status of TAP as implemented under MAP-21. After lunch, this discussion segued into each state coordinator explaining how their state was implementing TAP. The concept of community improvement activities was then discussed by Brandon Buckner of the Louisiana Division office of the FHWA. Finally, Christopher Douwes held a Q&A session so attendees could ask any questions they had regarding federal guidance or project implementation. To wrap up the seminar, Kyle Lukacs gave a closing speech on where NTAC and the TAP program go from here.

KEYNOTE PRESENTATION

Mary Ebeling, State Smart Transportation Initiative

Ms. Ebeling began by saying that everyone is doing a great job implementing this new program, and that when best practices are shared, everyone benefits from it. She explained that the State Smart Transportation Initiative (SSTI) is a collaboration of different DOTs. Ms. Ebeling then recounted that when the former TE coordinator of Wisconsin got the job 15 years ago, he was handed a folder with all the TE projects that was labeled “Silly Projects”. Today, we have made much progress in understanding that these are real and important projects that greatly improve our transportation system.

Ms. Ebeling explained that prior to 1991, there were 24 states that were not spending any federal-aid on bicycle and pedestrian activities. ISTEA started a conversation and directed the USDOT to start talking about multimodal transportation. She explained that successive legislation has pushed the envelope by establishing additional programs and refining TE, and creating performance measures and data collection procedures.

MAP-21 has now introduced a paradigm shift. Ms. Ebeling stated that there are both challenges and opportunities. She explained that we need to measure travel behavior and show how travel modes are shifting in order to prove the program’s importance. SSTI also had a meeting that brought different state DOTs and MPOs together, and they realized that people understand the importance of this data collection. She stated that the role of MPOs has also changed, and this change was based on the idea that MPOs are more aware of the types of projects that their residents are looking for, especially for infrastructure that serves short trips.

Ms. Ebeling then spoke of the “drama of project selection,” which is a big challenge with TAP. Having less money can be paralyzing, and it makes it more important to prioritize. The key is to assess projects separately from funding to identify the best opportunities to meet needs and then think about the money and how to make it work. Ms. Ebeling advised that we shouldn’t get hung up on the minutia of particular numbers, but instead we should pursue basic goals such as connectivity, safety, or compatibility with other plans. She said that flexibility to take risks in the name of getting facilities in place was important. Also, don’t discount the importance of links, both intermodally and across barriers like rivers and major arterials.

If there is a high-priority project but only limited funds, Ms. Ebeling expressed the importance of using creative, diverse funding approaches, including programs such as the Surface Transportation Program (STP), Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ), Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP), and state and local sources. Accessing HSIP does require data showing the safety impact, however, so start collecting! Ms. Ebeling remarked that some cities and states are also creating their own programs as the federal government steps back from being the primary funder. She stated that although sales taxes are unpopular, there are good examples such as the Denver MPO which is using toll revenue to make multimodal improvements within the corridor generating the revenue. She is leery of the suggestion of combining TAP funds with the STP funds unless there is a clear agreement in

writing that states that the funds will be used for the bicycle and pedestrian activities that they were intended for.

Ms. Ebeling then showed a map with houses that are almost next-door to each other, but which you must drive 9 miles in your car to get from one to the other. She talked about scenario planning, which goes down to the tax parcel level and can reliably model bicycle, pedestrian, and transit trips. Scenario planning is encouraged by MAP-21, and can be seen in SSTI's "3D Micro Modeling Process" called LUTSAM or Land Use and Transportation Scenario Analysis and Microsimulation.

Intrastate funding allocation – Ms. Ebeling noted that after 50% of the TAP funds are distributed by population, they still have the opportunity to compete for the remaining statewide funds. TMAs are where the greatest need is in terms of magnitude, but smaller areas also have worthy projects and there are significant political and equity benefits to geopolitical balance.

SRTS –The education component of TAP now competes with infrastructure, Ms. Ebeling noted, and some states are shifting their funding so that education has a chance. She remarked that education may need a set-aside in order to survive. It is important to remember that federal dollars cannot be matched with federal dollars, but the HSIP is something that should be looked into. The new 20% match requirement is not a simple hurdle for entities pursuing education projects.

The communication aspect of TAP was noted, especially the importance of sharing the important work that is being done. Ms. Ebeling said that we are still searching for the right word to describe what we do; neither "alternatives" nor "enhancements" seem to fully capture the essentialness and specialness of our work. She finished by explaining that as we collect more data, there is more and more evidence that what we do is important and valuable.

Question: Why is there a concern with the term "enhancements"?

Answer: It suggests that it is not essential. Ms. Ebeling is looking at it from the perspective of designing a specific corridor and designing it to account for bicyclists, pedestrians, and cars. The term doesn't capture the concept the way "complete streets" does. It's about marketing – what is the "hook" that communicates what the program is about? This work is more essential than "enhancements" implies.

It was noted that securing a ROW is as expensive for a sidewalk as it is for a roadway.

Question: Do you have examples of data collection efforts and performance measures used to date?

Answer: The National Bicycle and Pedestrian Documentation Project that Alta Planning & Design is working on with the Institute of Transportation Engineers is trying to address data collection. However, performance measures are really uncharted waters where there is no baseline. They are only using travel to work, which is only about one third of the trips.

Question: Our state is updating our HSIP plan, and the steering committee includes people from the Department of Health. They are looking into getting the DOT data about bicycle and pedestrian crashes from emergency rooms rather than police reports.

Answer: In my state, data is not recorded unless there is a motor vehicle involved and either a treatable injury or \$1000 in damage, so accidents just don't get recorded. Sometimes you have to spend money to get money, meaning that you may have to do your own data collection knowing that it will bring funding later on. This is a problem for smaller communities, though. Make sure to share data with others.

Question: Earlier we discussed DOTs thinking strategically as to whether their dollars go to large metros areas versus other areas. Large metros have tremendous demands and can't meet all of them with their own funding.

Answer: I understand, and one strategy would be to see one or two additional projects be made whole, while trying to phase others in over time. Tracy Hadden Loh added that large metros also have more capacity to raise their own revenue, even though it is politically difficult, the resources are there. This is not the case for smaller areas: projects will not happen there without state DOT involvement. There are ways to make a project more competitive, such as putting up a larger match than just the minimum.

TREATMENT OF PROJECTS REQUIREMENT OVERVIEW

Christopher Douwes, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)

Paul Wistrand, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Alaska Division

The session began by going around the room and having everyone introduce themselves.

Christopher Douwes: All TAP projects must be treated as though they are within the right-of-way of a federal-aid highway (except for projects funded under the Recreational Trails Program (RTP) set-aside). Many trail and historic preservation projects are not in highway rights-of-way (ROW), and could use procedures under 49 CFR Part 18. However, MAP-21 requires TAP projects (again, except for the RTP set-aside) to be treated as highway projects. It is still questionable whether this treatment of projects is going to be the burden that some think it will be. This section of the law works mostly to protect the labor unions.

Paul Wistrand: The interesting part about MAP-21 is that RTP has been kept largely intact. Treating all TAP projects in the same way may make the process smoother. The nuances of Title 23 will be the important part of this new process. Fifteen states have already obligated TAP funds of about \$61.3 million, with Florida obligating over \$30 million. Now that the state DOTs cannot sponsor a project, there are problems in Alaska due to the population layout of the state. The state of Alaska is actually considering not obligating its TAP funds and just waiting to see if it can spend them somewhere else after 2 years.

Christopher Douwes: About \$252 million in old TE funds have been obligated. This shows that much of the old money is being used first, which makes sense. Mr. Douwes was looking for input from the states so that we can explore how the new requirements changed project selection and implementation. A project must be treated as though it is in the ROW of a federal-aid highway, and this is the "treatment"

that we are going to be looking into. From the RTP standpoint, this could have destroyed the program, but how are states dealing with the TAP side of things?

Robert Meador, Florida: We have not had an issue; it is treated as a local public agency process. They have always had this process, and the projects have always had to go through these environmental requirements.

Joan Peters, Greenville County, South Carolina: This is an issue for the smaller municipalities. They are not large enough to do the entire project, so it might be broken up piecemeal and thus not follow FHWA requirements completely.

CJ Brown, Wyoming DOT: Wyoming has many smaller communities, so they don't have the in-house people to reduce the costs. With this increase in requirements, the costs are prohibitive for small communities.

Christopher Douwes, FHWA: From the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) perspective, there should be no change in process. The change should be in contracting and minimum rate of wage.

Chris Berrens, Minnesota DOT: With even less money coming in, small communities don't have the staff to put in the necessary requirements.

Paul Wistrand, Alaska FHWA: What are the states' interpretations of a project sponsor? Is it just someone that recommends a project, or does a sponsor have more financial involvement?

Val Horton, Louisiana DOT: However you want to negotiate a project, just make sure that you put it in the agreement and that everyone is held to their word. Then a state sponsor can bring it into the program as a sponsor.

CJ Brown, Wyoming DOT: It should be a community that is the project sponsor and then the state provides guidance to make sure that you have the capacity to handle the funds.

Christopher Douwes, FHWA: It sounds like many of the states are already treating the projects like they were in the federal ROW, so maybe this isn't that big of a deal for TA.

Necole Baker, Mississippi DOT: Our treatment of projects has not changed.

Sara Janes, Wyoming DOT: The division office has been very forceful with what they need done, but they don't actually have any guidance. They are more than happy to tell you what is wrong than actually tell you what is right.

Amber Thelen, Michigan DOT: Treating the projects as a federal-aid ROW always made more sense, so it won't be a change for Michigan.

Christopher Douwes, FHWA: This doesn't seem to be the problem that we thought it would be for the states. There seems to only be one state that was using an alternative treatment, so not many states were using their allowed flexibility in the treatment of projects.

Mr. Douwes posed the question “If the treatment of projects did not exist, would it change how you pursued your projects?” There was a resounding answer of yes, without the treatment it would be very much simplified. This is especially important for small communities.

Sara Janes, Wyoming DOT: We had a project in which 33% of the budget was just to meet the requirements. How can you complete a project with that cost?

Christopher Douwes, FHWA: We have had meetings with congressional staff. We want to know what should be changed. We need documentation for how changing the treatment would simplify the process for the states. We need input and data from the states showing this. So why is no one using the flexibility that you could use that was put in place in 1996?

RAIL-WITH-TRAIL: DESIGN & MANAGEMENT CHARACTERISTICS

Pat Tomes, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

Ms. Tomes began her presentation by defining rails-with-trails (RWT) as shared-use paths on or directly adjacent to an active rail corridor. Even a trail with only a small portion adjacent to a rail line is considered a RWT. She then detailed a RWT draft report that is being funded by the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources which has just been finished. The report has a national scope with 41 states participating. She noted that there were two previous national reports and one from California pertaining to RWT. The numbers are not definitive as new projects are being found every day. She explained that the prevalence of RWT has been steadily growing since the first report was done in 1996.

Ms. Tomes revealed that one of the most important facts about RWT is that there have been no known railroad fatalities involving trail users. Many fatalities are from trespassers and rail workers, but not trail users. Putting a pathway next to a line will actually keep people off of the railroad line. She noted that while many trails have no railroad crossings, some have up to 7, and the accepted model for crossings comes from the AASHTO Report on crossings. There are no standards for the design of RWT, but a USDOT report completed by Alta Planning & Design is the accepted model. She explained that fences are usually the standard barrier between the lines and the trails.

Ms. Tomes defined the setback as being measured from the center of the track to the edge of the trail. There are many different setback distances ranging on average from 11-20 feet, but some are right next to a rail line. It would be difficult to standardize the setback for every trail across the country, and RWT should be examined on a case-to-case basis. Ms. Tomes then relayed a case study exemplifying the importance of communication. On the Clarion-Little Toby RWT, the State Game Commission owned the property up to the railroad berm and allowed for a trail to be built. A lack of communication in the implementation of a trail led to the railroad attempting to shut down the trail. After a 6 year battle, the problem was finally solved by putting in a cable divider between the trail and the line. This is a lesson in planning and diplomacy.

The railroads are not any more open to cooperating with RWT, and Ms. Tomes stated that they are actually very firm in staying out of any trail plans. These types of projects can take longer than normal trail projects, but typically there are no issues after they are built. She stated that many of these trail corridors are on public owned lands. Some of these lines are running up to one train per hour, which is mostly in urban areas where the majority of RWT are located. She stated that railroads will use easements today instead of selling their property to the trails, but they still want to maintain that continuous ROW. It was found that all of the light rails that are being implemented are immediately including multi-use pathways for a multi-modal approach. This is mostly seen in the west where there are larger parcels to work with.

Ms. Tomes noted that safety and liability are always the primary concerns when dealing with RWT. If a community is looking to add insurance for a trail, it can add the trail to its policy, but if a private group is trying to insure a trail, it will be a little more expensive. The annual costs for liability for RWT are going to be a little higher than a traditional project.

It was explained that there has been an increase in supporting policies such as Recreational Use Statutes. These protect the property owner, and allow property to be used for recreational purposes without the user suing the owner of the land, as long as the owners don't charge a fee. All 50 states have these statutes. These can be for private property owners, railroads, industry, or whatever it may be. Ms. Tomes noted that Maine and Virginia have gone out of their way to make sure that the railroads are specifically included in the statute. This protects the railroads so that they should be more willing to help out and cooperate with the trails. MassDOT actually has policy that permits the construction of paths next to railroads, and ensures that the cost of fencing is an eligible project cost. Ms. Tomes went through a number of examples of RWT friendly policies from across the nation. She also noted the importance of RWT projects working in conjunction with SRTS to keep kids off of railroad tracks.

Ms. Tomes concluded by saying that people are becoming more understanding of RWT and their use is growing. There are many projects that act as great examples and guidelines that can be followed. She reported that 9% of all rail-trails are designated RWT, and reiterated that there have been no trail-users fatalities on the rail lines. Ms. Tomes said that the report is going to hopefully be published in August, but we need to continue to collect detailed metrics so that we can compare apples to apples and see what the benefits of these RWT are. The railroad fatalities are now including latitude and longitude coordinates, so this makes it easier to show that RWT are not as dangerous as some people would assume. She noted that many of the railroads are more worried about the crossings than the parallel trail itself. The online resources available include a survey with all the individual responses, the Recreational Use Statutes, legal agreements that have been developed, feasibility studies, and a list of the RWTs in the United States. Ms. Tomes finished by mentioning tourist lines that work in conjunction with RWT.

Question: Mark Scoular, West Virginia DOT: We have an example where the barriers are close to the rails, and now that the railroads want to renovate the rails, they are going to tear up the barriers.

Answer: The trail maintenance team sometimes has a positive relationship with the railroads, but sometimes they have no relationship and this can lead to problems. These must be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. Gates are sometimes needed, and if a barrier gets ripped up we sometimes don't have the funding to put it back up again.

Question: Jeff Niezgoda, Delaware DOT: We have a lot of abandoned rail corridors which the state has taken over. There are many times environmental problems with these former railroad lands. Also, the railroads sometimes try to retake the land, but people want to keep the trails.

Answer: This is why there are standards, and if there is a rail corridor that has been sold recently, chances are that it has some pollution issues. There are no simple solutions, and they must be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

Question: What strategy would you have when dealing with the larger railways and trying to get them to change their policies?

Answer: We are trying to get a serious dialogue going with the railroads now that RWT have been around for a while and we have the data and research. We think that this is going to involve more of the Class 2 railroads than the Class 1. We are trying to show that these trail projects can actually help the railroads by showing the positives for both parties.

MICHIGAN'S GRANT- IT SYSTEM & REGIONAL COOPERATION

Amber Thelen, Michigan DOT

Kevin Vettraino, Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG)

The session began by explain that with Transportation Enhancements (TE), Michigan used a centralized process. There would be constant communication between the state and the Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs). All of the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) and TE projects went through the Michigan DOT process. All of these were in the same office, so this was helpful with the reformatting for MAP-21. Michigan had invested \$1 million in an IT program that was aimed at TE, but this program had to be changed when MAP-21 was passed. With so many different MPOs within the state, there was the possibility of having 7 different TAP programs or silos. Michigan used to have a huge backload in TE funds because of deficiencies in allocating, so they wanted to make sure that the problems weren't repeated. In the past, even when projects were selected, they still had difficulties in getting these projects built.

Kevin Vettraino: With a 2 year bill, these funds need to be obligated and used so that we have completed projects to show for the TAP program. We want to make sure that we are doing well with the funding that we are getting, and this is a challenge to ourselves. How do we realize benefits both on the MPO level and the state level?

Amber Thelen: All of the MPOs adopted the Michigan DOT's grant system, so this makes it much easier to communicate and to share what we are doing. There are also monthly meetings between the MPOs and the state, and this helps to keep communication open and make sure that obligations keep moving. This is best for everyone because there is one process and one application, which makes everything smoother, and results in better projects and therefore more implementation and completion.

Kevin Vettrai: We didn't have the money or the capacity to reinvent the wheel with every project, so we can continue to use the same application so everyone is on the same page, even for SRTS. This has made the relationship between the MPOs and the state even stronger. The new system improves the equity of the process as well. If an area has not received funding for a while, and they submit a poor application, how do you deal with this? The new application format helps communities in this type of situation to get the funding that they need.

Amber Thelen: This new system allows us to fund bigger and better projects by working jointly through collaborations. The single format means everyone can work together much easier.

Kevin Vettrai: There were two workshops held to help people understand early in the process exactly how to go about filling out an application and setting up a good project. You need to have a connection with the community so that you get good applications, and the community needs to understand that there is funding out there. There was also a SRTS specific training right before the call for 2014.

Ms. Thelen then brought up the grant application site and demonstrated some of the capabilities.

Amber Thelen: Everyone can have access and comment on the grants so that all stakeholders have their chance to communicate and supply their input. There is contact information available for everyone involved. The system has a narrative section explaining the project, as well as a place to attach documents such as drawings and pictures. There is a budget tab which details all the economics of the project. The schedule is also available so that all of the different project schedules can be integrated together. Total budgets are able to be quickly compiled and displayed. The most important aspect of the new system has been the review section. All of the reviews (state, MPO, etc.) are all collected in one place so each entity's point of view is accessible to everyone else.

Question: Is this in-house?

Answer: This was built in-house. We experimented with a few other generic systems, but in the end we decided to work with our IT people and build this context-sensitive system in-house. Things can get updated as they need to be now. Having everything and everyone on one system makes the process much easier because everyone is on the same page.

Question: Who maintains the data as the project progresses?

Answer: All of the information needs to get updated in every step of the process, and this can be done by any player on any level.

Question: How do you go from having \$65 million uncommitted to planning for the future?

Answer: The program has helped out a lot by allowing for coordination between different groups instead of the siloing that was happening in the past.

Kevin Vettriano: Southwest Detroit wasn't getting a lot of funding, and we have a large percentage of Hispanics. There were a lot of store fronts which provided the potential to have a streetscape. After we brought in the private sector, we are hoping to get this projected obligated by the end of the fiscal year. This would be a very big project for Michigan. 40% of residents in this area have no vehicle, and there are 17 schools in a one mile stretch.

Question: What are the typical proportions of TE to SRTS?

Answer: There are examples of projects that see TE funding covering the expensive parts while SRTS funding is used to fund the cheaper parts.

SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL BEST PRACTICES

Chris Metka, Pennsylvania DOT

Tressie Kamp, Wisconsin DOT

Pam Barth, National Center for Safe Routes to School

Seth LaJeunesse, National Center for Safe Routes to School

Pam Barth: About half of the audience deals with SRTS, and everyone in the audience is familiar with it. SRTS was very tightly defined through SAFETEA-LU, and there have been about 14,000 schools that have seen benefits from the program. We don't want to talk about rescinding funds because that hasn't happened with SRTS. With MAP-21, the SRTS is no longer exclusive but it is consolidated under TAP.

The program was actually started in part for kids that were already walking and biking, and was targeted at keeping these kids safe. The National Center for Safe Routes to School (NCSRTS) is the clearinghouse for SRTS, and it functions to keep a list of the projects as well as resources that can be used by communities. NCSRTS also works on prioritizing schools that need assistance. More than ¾ of the "Walk to School" events lead to policy or environmental changes. That first step is the most difficult and really gets the ball rolling. Once people see that it is possible, they are happy to continue to walk and bike.

Chris Metka: We will be detailing some of the project types that SRTS can fund that you won't be familiar with. Not having the state be able to sponsor a project makes it more difficult in some instances. There are numerous examples of noninfrastructure projects that have been funded by SRTS. There have been many educational projects, such as bike rodeos, that were held at a number of locations, not just at schools. In Pennsylvania, we created crossing guards standards that were borrowed from Florida. Before, there were no standards or training for crossing guards, so they weren't that effective, but this has been fixed.

When a school is looking into implementing a project, walkability audits are completed by a consultant at three different routes. The principal, police force, and a member from the municipality are all involved with the process. We look at not only how the students walk, but also how drivers interact and how crossing guards work. From these audits, you can create a wish list of projects that need to be completed to make the area safer. There has been about \$350,000 of projects awarded at this point for noninfrastructure.

We also created some educational videos and other resources for pedestrians and bicyclists as well as drivers. Mr. Metka also mentioned the “What’s on TAP” newsletter.

Tressie Kamp: My presentation will be going through some best practices. You have to be able to take a message and tailor it so that it attracts new partners and stakeholders. We want to make sure that other people can be brought into a project and are motivated to become committed to the project. We also want to pull in public health and environmental partners into our work. We need to educate across political divides in order to get people involved and committed. Our work is an expanding net in that one connection will lead to another, and then will lead to another. In Wisconsin, there is a good collaboration between that state, TMAs, counties, and communities in relation to SRTS.

Practice 1 - We have to make sure that these actors on different levels all know how to work together and there is guidance through the entire process.

Practice 2 - SRTS should be coupled with policies so that it will be more engrained and therefore more successful. In Wisconsin, this comes in the form of the Complete Streets statute. There are wide divergences in the amount of policies in place on the local and state level for locations across the country.

Practice 3 - Wisconsin is working on a balance of unobligated funds, although they don’t have a grant system like Michigan. In Wisconsin, they are working to make sure that noninfrastructure projects aren’t falling through the cracks. They are ensuring that there are resources out there so that everyone can access them, and to keep everyone from asking the same questions. This is about maximizing the efficiency of everyone’s time.

Practice 4 - Alternative funding is an important point to focus on. We want to make sure that we fully use other funding programs such as HSIP.

Seth LaJeunesse: The primary audience of the NCSRTS was originally the state reps for SRTS, but now we are dealing with MPOs also. We are going to be looking at different approaches to handling TAP and SRTS funds. MPOs traditionally didn’t engage school districts in outreach, but this is now changing. The funding is overall modest for such large areas, and MPOs aren’t sure how SRTS will be applied on a regional level. Scaling data collection from local districts up to a regional level is an important step. We want to expand the reach of SRTS on the regional level through encouragement and education.

Question: How receptive were the Department of Education and the Police Department to these training opportunities?

Answer: The Department of Education was not excited about the training, but the police liked the opportunity. The TMAs were excited to use the available training.

Question: States are looking to create an integrated TAP program, how are they using the SRTS? How do you create a balance between planning grants and infrastructure projects?

Answer: Educational projects are many times much cheaper and can still provide large benefits. In Michigan, very few projects are funded through SRTS that are only infrastructure; most are both infrastructure and noninfrastructure combined. We fund this through old money, and you can also use STP because anything that was eligible under SRTS should still be eligible.

RECREATIONAL TRAILS PROGRAM BEST PRACTICES

Christopher Douwes, FHWA

Ronda Pratt, South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism

Mr. Douwes began by offering several points regarding the RTP program, including:

I. Most Recreational Trails programs are administered through state resource agencies. Therefore, there is a need for interagency collaboration between the DOT and the resource agency for trails.

Exceptions: Arkansas, Iowa, West Virginia, Maryland, and DC.

II. Recreational trails are for snowmobiles, ATVs, hikers, equestrians, etc. The motorized users pay federal motor fuel excise taxes, and a portion of these taxes are allocated under the “user pay, user benefit” principle for the Recreational Trails program.

III. The program has existed in its current form since 1998. MAP-21 converted the program into a set-aside within the TAP program, but otherwise all provisions and requirements remain the same.

IV. An opt-out provision was also added under MAP-21. In 2013, Florida and Kansas opted out. The 2014 opt-outs are to be determined, with much focus on the status of California.

V. For MAP-21, any recreational trail is eligible under any part of TAP, not just the set-aside. All TAP projects are eligible under STP. Therefore, there is technically more money than ever potentially available for recreational trails!

Ronda Pratt: Previously worked on TE and Scenic Byways at SCDOT. She is now the RTP coordinator for South Carolina. She and Christopher emphasized the need to KNOW and REGULARLY TALK TO the people playing these roles.

There are always more requests for projects than there are funds. In order to maximize the utility of these funds for a state, it’s important that these programs coordinate.

States are required by Congress to have a State Recreational Trails Advisory Committee that meets at least once a year. The committee needs to represent all user groups, including motorized and nonmotorized interests.

South Carolina used to solicit for projects annually. The solicitation has several steps:

1. A statewide mailing announcing the solicitation.
2. The rating committee has 4 members from the state advisory committee and three internal raters. The rating committee then allocates funds to projects until the money is gone. If the top-rated project is so large that it takes up all the money, is it the only one that gets funded?
3. If projects don't move forward within 18 months, they get deobligated and the money goes to someone else. A six-month extension is possible if there is a good reason for the delay. In other words, boundaries are a best practice. In general this means that all the right-of-way issues need to be resolved prior to applying for funds, because 18 months is not enough time to acquire easements and buy property.
4. Partnerships and phasing are also critical to getting projects completed and on the ground. Trails generally don't get built 10 miles at a time by a single sponsor. The Swamp Rabbit Trail is a great example of this, which we will be visiting this afternoon.
5. Trails don't get completed overnight. Before any ground is broken, master planning is required, which is typically paid for by using local funds or private money.

Jim Radabaugh - Michigan

The Michigan RTP requires ROW and engineering to be completed before receiving RTP funds. RTP funds are used to leverage other state and federal funding programs. This is particularly potent because RTP funds can be used to match other federal funds. Michigan had 50 applications covering \$23 million in requests for \$2.8 million in apportionments in this fiscal year. Michigan's funds are granted for 12 months. If projects have not made progress by then, they cannot get renewed for the next year. Projects typically get renewed for up to three years until they are completed. Michigan's RTP has recently moved to the Parks & Recreation Department.

The Ocqueoc Falls project was detailed, which won the 2013 da Vinci Award for Environmental Adaptation award for accessibility. This project was funded with RTP and the Michigan National Resources Trust Fund. See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9T962Cg3tdk>.

Question: What kind of match requirements do you have?

Answer: RTP match is 20%, but in-kind labor, material donations, and land donations are acceptable, as are other federal funds. South Carolina requires that at least 5% of this be non-federal funds. Both Michigan and South Carolina are now doing two-year cycles for funding rather than every year. This reduces administrative overhead and allows the program to plan ahead more.

GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Mr. Douwes reminded everyone of the importance of obligating old pre-MAP21 money, as rescissions are possible at any time. This includes rescissions that pull back all unobligated funds, rather than a set amount. Having these funds obligated by September 30th would be a good idea.

We have also had requests from members of Congress for how many applications are coming in and how many dollars are being requested. The question has been specifically for TAP, but providing leftover TE fund information would be appreciated. NTAC will be doing a survey on its listserv to find the answer.

PROJECT ROUND ROBIN

Mississippi's Urban Youth Corps Program: Paula Morgan, Mississippi DOT

Plainfield Avenue Streetscape: Amber Thelen, Michigan DOT

A Year of Delaware Projects: Jeff Niezgoda and Richard Sinegar, Delaware DOT

Mississippi's Urban Youth Corps Program: Paula Morgan, Mississippi DOT

Ms. Morgan began by introducing the Urban Youth Corps (UYC), which has been funded with SAFETEA-LU funds. The program puts youth to work in cities for the summer, and gives them life skills and training, while getting work done for cities. From 2006 up to the present, Mississippi has put \$3.8 million into this program, which cities apply to individually. She explained that UYC designed for cities of 10,000 or more. Each city can apply for up to \$35,000 in federal funds, with a 20% match requirement. Cities apply for the reimbursements annually to the MDOT Local Public Agency office, and are reviewed along with a representative from the FHWA. Ms. Morgan noted that there are requirements for a certain amount of the youths' time to go to life-skills training, as well as a clear description and breakdown of the project budget. All of the applications were funded this year for a total of \$700,000 in 20 cities, which is a new record. The program is administered on a reimbursement basis and the packets submitted by the cities are audited by MDOT, so checks don't go out until compliance is assured. Ms. Morgan noted a few challenges, one of which was the change in mayors resulted in some confusion. She also noted that cities have a hard time sticking to deadlines, if only because of elections and turnover in local staff. However, it is helpful to remind people that they probably shouldn't apply for additional money before they have been reimbursed for last year's money.

Question: What kind of funding was used for this program, and what can be used?

Answer: These funds are federal training and workforce development funds, not TE. We are checking to see if TAP funds can be used for the program. STP and HSIP funds can definitely be used. Mr. Douwes said that none of the workforce development provisions have changed. The TAP guidance doesn't say that it is eligible, but Mr. Douwes thinks that it may be possible to get such a ruling as part of any eligible project from the relevant FHWA division.

[Plainfield Avenue Streetscape: Amber Thelen, Michigan DOT](#)

Ms. Thelen talked about this project in the Creston neighborhood of Grand Rapids, which was funded through TE but is still eligible for TAP. This is a mixed-use neighborhood with a school, shops, and a

residential area. Plainfield Avenue, a city street with narrow sidewalks, is near the Grand River which flows into Lake Michigan. There was already a road project scheduled for the street. She explained that the Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) process, which engages stakeholders to shape a project by reviewing the neighborhood's master plan, called for the neighborhood to become more walkable, bikeable, and green to improve their quality of life and calm traffic.

Ms. Thelen noted that the street segment was 0.9 miles long and saw about 16,000 vehicles per day. The posted speed was 30 mph, but many vehicles went faster. The CSS process resulted in goals to maintain parking, narrow through lanes, introduce turn lanes and islands, add bike lanes, and landscape the islands for aesthetics and placemaking. However, Ms. Thelen noted that stormwater management to protect the Grand River was a larger issue within the city. So, since the islands had already been mentioned, they decided to try having a rain garden right in the middle of the road. Ms. Thelen said that this type of project was new to Michigan.

The Plainfield Avenue design has curbs on the road that collect the rain water and direct it into the basin at set entry points, where it filters into the soil. If there's overflow there is a vent to the storm sewer system. She explained that the city thought that the idea was great, but didn't have much money to fund it. They wanted neighborhood association to raise money for the matching funds, and decided to try it as a pilot project. There was a lot of local support, which was exemplified by the \$70,000 raised by local foundations and the \$84,000 raised from door-to-door donations by private individuals and businesses. The city's accountants created a fundraising tool whereby people could pay their contribution over 10 years at 3% interest. Of over 60 donors, 35% of them took advantage of the tool. Ms. Thelen said that the city is considering running similar funding programs in the future. She explained that the city was concerned about how to maintain the project, and that the city is also creating a maintenance endowment that pays a contractor to pick up trash and maintain the plantings.

Ms. Thelen went through some lessons learned from the different levels involved in the project: Planning and sound policy created a foundation; The project could not have happened without stakeholder involvement, sound engineering, and funding mechanisms; Public/Private Partnerships are key because corporate and foundation support brings additional advocates to the table; the "right project in the right place" is the principle underlying CSS; and pilot projects lead to best practices.

Kyle Lukacs noted that Michigan is a great example of placemaking, and that the proceedings from last year's seminar include some other great projects that Ms. Thelen had worked on.

[A Year of Delaware Projects: Jeff Niezgoda and Richard Sinegar, Delaware DOT](#)

Jeff Niezgoda: Delaware is a small state which only receives about \$3 million per year in TAP. There is only one big MPO which gets \$230,000¹, so there is a big focus on creative partnerships. Mr. Niezgoda explained that the MPO is able to rank the projects by priorities, and then the state makes the final decisions with these rankings in mind. Currently the program has 62 active projects. They just completed

¹ Editor's note. The large urbanized area received \$716,055, small urban areas received \$380,573, nonurban areas received \$238,373, and any area received \$1,335,002.

5 conceptual planning processes, 20 projects are in design right now, and 15 are under construction. There are also 22 trail projects under the governor's "[First State Trails and Pathways Initiative](#)" that uses \$7 million of state funds and \$10 million of CMAQ funds. Projects under this initiative saw construction on the ground in 8 months.

Richard Sinegar: A project on Carpenter Street in New Castle County saw pervious concrete used on the sidewalks. In Delaware, generally all ROW is donated by the communities. During the public meeting/engagement phase, Jeff's team explains the project and the community benefits, and usually ROW ends up getting donated since the project ideas are all community-driven anyway. They many times coordinate to also get pave and rehab completed after a project.

Jeff Niezgoda: Sometimes with projects, the electrical conduit will be installed during construction before the funding for the actual lighting is secured. That way, the electrical needs will be ready when the funding comes about. Stormwater management is a huge issue in Delaware. There are no waivers for impervious surfaces, even small pieces such as sidewalks. Pervious concrete is used which doesn't get clogged up, even by sand. The product has a life expectancy of about 15 years, and although it has exposed aggregate, it works great and is ADA compliant.

The beautiful C&D Recreational Trail in New Castle County will be 10 feet wide with an additional five foot crushed gravel shoulder for runners and equestrians on each side. The trail will ultimately be 16 miles long, with the first 9 miles costing \$7 million. Jessica Silwik from Maryland's SHA is hard at work trying to get the 1.5 miles of trail needed to meet Jeff at the border from Chesapeake City.

There was considerable interest and discussion on Jeff's open-ended contracts and how the procurement process works with those at both ends, including the contractors and the DOT/federal procurement requirements. Their process allows him to go to bid before the in-house final design is complete. This also allows him to work on NEPA, ROW certification, and other needs on a task-by-task basis. All that matters is that the contractors are comfortable enough to bid. Delaware obligates at the same time that they do the open bid. If you spend even just \$1, it won't show up on the Financial Integrity Review and Evaluation (FIRE) Program report so it is not an issue that the project is not fully shovel-ready yet.

DAY TWO

SRTS DATA COLLECTION: USING NUMBERS TO SPEAK VOLUMES

Pam Barth, National Center for Safe Routes to School

Seth LaJeunesse, National Center for Safe Routes to School

Mr. LaJeunesse detailed the data collection system that the National Center for Safe Routes to School offers local programs, regional entities, and states. He reviewed the two main data collection instruments used by the SRTS Clearinghouse: the student travel tally and the parent survey. The student travel tally is a classroom survey in which teachers ask children about their mode to school. He stated that the student tally gets one week of information for a cross-sectional look at travel. Mr. LaJeunesse reported that the parent survey gets usual travel mode for a more longitudinal look at travel trends. The parent survey also explores how parents feel about their children walking to school and possible barriers. He explained that they have a data collection system in which the schools gather the information and can enter it into the database themselves. About 50% of teachers and parents participating in SRTS programs enter their own data, and the other 50% send data to the clearinghouse for processing, which is free of charge. He reported that their database has information from about 200,000 classrooms, tens of thousands of students, and 1.2 million parent surveys.

Mr. LaJeunesse then showed the straightforward process of entering a tally into the system. He stated that it takes about 4 weeks for them to process information when it is received from a school and return it in a digital format. Mr. LaJeunesse then delved into the ability of the system to generate reports based on the data, which SRTS program participants have access to. There are both tally and survey reports, depending on the nature of the data. The data is cross-tabulated by key variables such as a child's grade in school, distance from home to school, seasons, and weather, among others. The barriers that affect travel decisions are also accessible to the database users, as well as attitudinal factors and a comment section. He stated that users can also compare two different time periods to see if the changes in behavior were statistically significant. These data collection instruments and reports allow schools to efficiently evaluate their SRTS programs.

Ms. Barth then discussed the SRTS Clearinghouse's work in tracking federal funding for SRTS. Data is collected at the project level through voluntary data collection with the SRTS coordinators. She stated that this "Project List" tracks the characteristics of SRTS awards including award size, date of award, which entity received it, which schools have benefited, and a project description.

Ms. Barth then went on to explain how this "Project List" was geocoded by schools and is available through a national map interface, so that people can visualize the data better as opposed to just having a text list. Ms. Barth demonstrated the interface, which allows users to zoom in to states, counties, MPOs, or congressional districts and see awards to schools, school districts, and statewide programs. For multi-school awards where it is difficult to track exactly how the funds were divided between the

schools, the term 'some or all of' is utilized. All of the projects on the map also have a link to a text-based description that provides more detailed information.

Data from the project list can also be summarized by different geographic areas. For example, users can create a map that shows the number of schools benefiting by county within a state. Ms. Barth noted that these types of maps could be misleading based on the size of the awards distributed. She stated that you can also map individual project awards by school characteristics, along with a number of other specification possibilities. This map interface is available at maps.saferoutesinfo.org. She noted how the map acts as a very powerful tool that makes the tracking of SRTS eye-catching and fun. Ms. Barth also made sure to mention that the voluntary reporting done by SRTS coordinators is what makes this kind of tool possible.

Ms. Barth showed how once the SRTS data was entered into the map, demographics data was also added so that the distribution of SRTS funds can be examined with respect to demographics as well. The representation of low-income schools and rural schools can be seen compared to the complete body of SRTS funding. She stated that the project has been well received by advocates, schools, and even on the federal level.

There was a question about forming the data into reports, and although the text Project List can be converted into a PDF, it is not as flexible with its selections as the map. You can also request for information and reports from the clearinghouse. There was another question about who requires the data. Ms. Barth stated that it is usually a requirement set by the state that data is provided with these SRTS projects. There was a request to introduce a question about whether kids are walking with a parent, and Mr. LaJeunesse said that this can be delineated in the comments section.

There were many questions about how this data collection and analysis will work under the consolidated TAP, but answers were not forthcoming as all of the clearinghouses' contracts will end September 30, and it is not clear if anyone will be collecting this data for MAP-21 fiscal years.

TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES CERTIFICATE OF EXCELLENCE PROGRAM

Nick Ferenchak, National Transportation Alternatives Clearinghouse (NTAC)

Mr. Ferenchak, the Program Assistant for NTAC, began his presentation with a brief introduction of himself and the Transportation Alternatives Certificate of Excellence Program (TACE). He stated that TACE, which is a program that is run by NTAC, works to distinguish between ordinary TAP projects and extraordinary ones. Of the approximately 28,000 projects that have received TE or TAP funds over more than 20 years, the program is designed to share the really excellent examples.

Mr. Ferenchak stated that the purpose of the program was to bring these exceptional TAP projects into the spotlight so that the importance of the projects, as well as TAP itself, can be seen and understood by all. He asserted that innovation is happening on the ground level in small communities all across the nation, and that the program would function to bring these small, innovative successes into a national spotlight. Another purpose of TACE is to share best practices and exchange ideas regarding transportation alternatives. Mr. Ferenchak also stressed that TACE would focus on funding avenues and partnerships in an attempt to show the commitment and support that these projects receive on multiple levels, showing the true worth of these projects to the communities in which they are located.

Some of the basic eligibility requirements for TACE were next detailed. Mr. Ferenchak stated that the basic requirements for a project to be eligible for the program were: a project must be related to surface transportation; a project must have received federal funds through either TE or TAP; a project must be completed; and a project must fit into one of the 10 TAP eligible categories. A project could be from as far back as 1992. Mr. Ferenchak also specifically mentioned that projects that had seen funds through SRTS would be eligible for TACE, as well as projects that had seen funds through RTP and divided highways that had been turned into boulevards. He also stated that members of the community could fill out nomination forms along with project sponsors. TACE should be shared with others that are involved with transportation alternatives to spread some inspired ideas.

Although meeting the basic eligibility requirements was fairly straightforward, there were a diverse set of criteria that Mr. Ferenchak expanded upon that made particular projects really stand out. He stated that exceptional projects should include economic benefits such as benefits to businesses or increasing property values, health benefits such as improved air quality or increased physical activity levels, and environmental benefits such as improved water quality or preserving green space. Exceptional projects should also tie into the heritage and culture of the area, fulfill a need, and provide a service that wasn't available before. Although it is not necessary to have benefits in all of these categories, more categories being accounted for is desirable. Although locals should gain benefits, Mr. Ferenchak also noted that it is important that projects also attract tourists to an area. The importance of showing financial support on multiple levels, along with private contributions and volunteer involvement, was once again mentioned.

After summarizing the program's eligibility requirements and purpose, Mr. Ferenchak delved into two examples of excellent projects so that audience members could see examples of what the program was designed for. The examples of excellence were the Delaware & Lehigh Trail in Pennsylvania and the Houghton Streetscape in Michigan. Mr. Ferenchak explained that both of these projects had benefits in many different categories, and exemplified a great use of federal transportation funds.

Mr. Ferenchak then detailed the benefits of the program and how to apply. Regardless of if a project wins an award, he explained that people could still look at the other great projects to spread ideas and learn about best practices. If a project is chosen for the award, Mr. Ferenchak said that it would be mentioned on the NTAC website, entered into a publication, the sponsor and nominee would receive the physical certificate, and national recognition and bragging rights would be gained. He then explained that applying for the program is quick and easy, and that the nomination form can be found and submitted online at www.ta-clearinghouse.info or by contacting any member of NTAC. The nomination

form does not need to be overly extensive, and the TACE program should be shared with others not only to get more nominations but also to spread ideas and share these great projects.

There was a question of whether noninfrastructure projects were eligible for the award, and Mr. Ferencsak stated that they certainly were. Amber Thelen then commented that NTAC should consider adding criteria related to safety and recreation.

NAVIGATING MAP-21

Darren Flusche, League of American Bicyclists

Brigid O’Keane, Alliance for Walking and Biking

Kevin Mills, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

Kyle Lukacs, National Transportation Alternatives Clearinghouse (NTAC)

Mr. Lukacs began the presentation by providing a national overview of what’s happening with MAP-21, followed by a more detailed analysis of 4 states in particular. He stated that 21 states have obligated some TAP funds from MAP-21 and logged these obligations in the FMIS system. Half of the total dollars obligated are in Florida. Florida and Idaho lead when obligations are normalized by apportionments, with Florida obligating 65% of their apportionments and Idaho 45%.

Mr. Lukacs first went into detail about the state of TAP in Oregon. He stated that Oregon did a call for projects that was coordinated with a state program, the Oregon Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee. They got 155 letters of intent, 62 of which were invited to apply. He stated that 50 applications were invited to continue with a total request of \$48 million. Eleven of these were then selected along with 5 reserve projects. He explained that Oregon has decided to keep SRTS funded at existing levels through STP funds until 2018. There were a number of diverse projects that Mr. Lukacs briefly mentioned.

The unique situation in Florida was then noted by Mr. Lukacs as he explained how the state has obligated so much money. He described that FDOT had maintained a five-year plan of projects based on the assumption that SAFETEA-LU would be reauthorized. This means they had more projects ready to go than funding under MAP-21 and were able to obligate their funds immediately. According to their project list, they should be able to continue this trend through 2018.

Mr. Lukacs then noted that the funds obligated by Idaho for the last five years have been low. However, the state has recently created a new program called Community Choices for Idaho that will annually solicit locally-driven projects. The program will be funded by Transportation Alternatives and other sources. He stated that no matter what happens to TAP in the future, the Community Choices for Idaho will be able to aid the selection process. The program aims to be 70 – 90% infrastructure and 10 – 30% noninfrastructure. Mr. Lukacs explained that the application process has two phases: Letter of Intent and full application. Applications are reviewed by a diverse advisory committee with representation

from the Idaho Transportation Department, bicycle and pedestrian, public transportation, scenic byways, SRTS, local TMAs, FHWA, and housing boards.

The state of TAP in Virginia was then expanded upon by Mr. Lukacs. Projects for FY13 had already been selected and programmed prior to the passage of MAP-21. Fortunately, these were eligible under TAP and fit the geographic distribution requirements of MAP-21. Mr. Lukacs explained that for FY14, funding will go to existing projects that have not been completed and need more funding in an attempt to close out some ongoing projects.

Kevin Mills, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

Mr. Mills briefly summarized how we should be looking at TAP implementation with four key questions that we must ask ourselves when evaluating state and regional implementation. The first question was: Are the TAP dollars being spent in a timely manner? He stated that many states are doing a good job; however a number of states felt they needed to wait for federal guidance. Christopher noted that this was an imprudent idea. Mr. Mills mentioned that feedback from the seminar last year was helpful in shaping the guidance, and that the final guidance is now available. The second question was: Is the money going to quality projects? For example, in Delaware the state legislature is trying to focus on building connected networks. Mr. Mills stated that this is an example of being strategic about priorities. The third question was: Is the process effective and efficient? This takes into account whether stakeholders are working together, whether funding sources are being combined, and whether a single application process is being implemented. The fourth question was: Are states investing additional funds in TAP-eligible projects beyond TAP funds? Mr. Mills gave the example of California, which is creating an active transportation program that will combine a number of funding sources to achieve state goals related to climate change. Mr. Mills then summarized concisely by saying that the goals of TAP implementation are:

1. Spending the money
2. Streamlining the process
3. Finding more money

Brigid O'Keane, Alliance for Walking and Biking

Ms. O'Keane detailed the Alliance for Walking and Biking's Advocacy Advance program, which is a collaboration with the League of American Bicyclists aimed at connecting advocates at the state and local level with agency staff. The goal is to work together, rather than in tension, to achieve shared goals. She expanded upon the different resources that are available and how they can be used to maximize available funding.

Ms. O'Keane explained how, the Navigating MAP-21 Campaign worked to fully fund, staff, and implement TAP to fully spend existing funds and maximize bicycle and pedestrian spending across funding sources. The program is primarily focused on state lead advocates. You can learn more at www.advocacyadvance.org/MAP21.

A toolkit for advocates to guide them on how to work with agency staff as well as elected officials and educate them about how TAP works was described by Ms. O'Keane. This program covers a range of transportation programs, including STP, HSIP, CMAQ, FLAP (Federal Lands Access Program), and Section 402. Ms. O'Keane also referenced an online tool called "Find It, Fund It" that can aid in finding out which type of funding your project type is eligible for.

Ms. O'Keane talked about how Advocacy Advance also hosts workshops that are co-hosted by agency staff and advocacy groups to educate everyone about MAP-21 and build partnerships. She stated that the workshops are regional, but include players at the state level, and also send invitations to elected officials. The workshops are free and people can contact Ms. O'Keane to schedule one for 2014. She stated that the goal is to make sure that quality projects are completed so that the value of TAP is made apparent. Ms. O'Keane urged audience members to make sure that advocacy groups are seen as partners and fully utilized. She also stated that Advocacy Advance provides many other resources, grants and scholarships, webinars.

Ms. O'Keane mentioned that there will be a webinar on 7/22 to review the first year of TAP implementation and to examine how SRTS is being impacted.

Darren Flusche, League of American Bicyclists

Mr. Flusche spoke of the regional implementation of TAP in relation to the new suballocation regulations. Christopher Douwes noted that the part of the Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers region that extends into Missouri, with a population of 2, receives \$3. Mr. Flusche said that this then becomes a puzzle when the funds are suballocated in such a way, and the goal is to discover how we can create high-quality, efficient projects.

Mr. Flusche noted that with suballocation to large MPOs happening, Advocacy Advance assembled a working group of MPOs which produced two helpful resources: "How MPOs Plan for and Fund Bicycling & Walking Investments," and "TAP Competitive Grant Processes: Examples of Regional Applications."

While MPOs are trying to get projects on the ground, he stated that there are a few problems that are being encountered. Mr. Flusche explained that regional TAP implementation trends towards a 'waiting game' in which MPOs look for leadership from DOTs, while the DOTs are stuck waiting for FHWA guidance. He stated that now that the guidance is out, we can all aggressively move forward.

Although there is less funding through MAP-21 and it's only a two-year bill, we must play the hand that we've been dealt. Mr. Flusche described how creating a new process for MAP-21 is a lot of work, and that to be efficient and effective, MPOs are pursuing a number of different strategies. He stated that MPOs are doing one call for two years; establishing minimum and maximum project sizes; coordinating applications with statewide funds by automatically entering an application into the state pool if the project is not selected on the regional level; and pooling the TAP funds with other programs. Mr. Flusche noted the factors that the MPOs found to be most important:

1. Transportation and mobility

2. Safety
3. Intermodal connections
4. Quality of life
5. Equity
6. SRTS

Mr. Flusche then detailed a number of different innovative solutions that are being pursued by MPOs across the country. He stated that Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG) emphasized accessibility and coordination with other plans and projects by factoring in a project's proximity to Metro and employment centers. They also examine if a project is viable and if it has a likely chance of actually happening. Mr. Flusche expanded on the Memphis Urban Area MPO which provides an application that asks specific questions about safety and security, including crash history, traffic calming and design details, security improvements like lighting. He also mentioned the Knoxville Regional Planning Organization which factors in adjacent land uses such as parks, schools, libraries, transit stops, retail, employment centers, and residential centers.

Mr. Flusche then took time to specifically note the Northwestern Indiana Regional Commission (NIRC). This organization already had a competitive TE process when MAP-21 was implemented, and they were therefore able to continue their process with minimal barriers. He stated that NIRC aims to distribute their funds at 80% to bicycling and walking, 10% to environmental and historic projects, and 10% to SRTS. The bicycling and walking funds are distributed by another set of defined priorities which are rated by an in-depth application that includes drawing the project on a map and finding the number of public amenities within close proximity to it. He recommended that this application process is used as a guide.

The importance of addressing equity was then discussed. Mr. Flusche noted that some MPOs are identifying specific communities of concern such as elderly, car-free, low-income, racial or ethnic minorities, and giving extra points for projects that serve these communities. He also mentioned that MPOs are pursuing a similar practice for environmental justice concerns.

The new formatting will have unique implications for SRTS. Mr. Flusche expanded upon issues that are being addressed related to SRTS such as how people are balancing infrastructure and noninfrastructure, data collection, unique applications, school and neighborhood engagement, equity, and community connections.

Mr. Flusche finished by saying that MAP-21 is a time of transition, and this time can be taken as an opportunity for innovation. He also stated that by visiting www.advocacyadvance.org/MAP21 folks can get in touch with Advocacy Advance and have access to the available resources.

Kevin Mills, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

Mr. Mills went into what the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC) is doing in terms of MAP-21 implementation. He stated that RTC provides different resources, data collection, success stories, benefits and toolboxes. He wanted to compare how the RTC resources align or overlap with those provided by Advocacy Advance. He explained that while AA has national coverage in every state, RTC is

focusing on 10 – 12 target states through their regional offices. For example, Pennsylvania is one state that RTC is particularly focused on. In Pennsylvania, Pat Tomes is working on studying Rails-with-Trails. Mr. Mills also detailed the work that RTC is pursuing at the regional level in Philadelphia with ‘The Circuit’, an active transportation system, as well as with the Keystone Transportation Funding Coalition. He explained that this advocacy coalition works to generate additional revenue for transportation and then guide that investment strategically for bicycling and pedestrian activities to complete systems and networks. It involves leading working groups of implementers, pushing legislation at the state level, and educating federal-level elected officials through key constituents like business owners and health partners. Mr. Mills also mentioned the RTC Sojourn and the economic roundtable that was held with business leaders along the trail. This is an example of the kind of work that RTC does with a target state.

RTC is also advocating specifically for the Recreational Trails Program (RTP) as a leader of the Coalition for Recreational Trails. Mr. Mills went on to explain the strategies that RTC is implementing to ensure that every state remains committed to RTP either by staying in the current program or supporting it another way. He stated that last year, 49 jurisdictions stayed in the RTP while only 2 opted out, and that one was political and one was a mistake. He noted the work that RTC is currently pursuing with California in relation to RTP.

Mr. Mills also explained the role of RTC’s new pursuit, the Partnership for Active Transportation, as being to engage new constituencies to bring their reach and voice to support the movement for walking and bicycling. The focus is especially aimed at health, economic development, and local elected officials. He stated while active transportation may have become an ideological issue on the federal level, once you get back to the local level, people understand the benefits of active transportation much more clearly. The Partnership for Active Transportation includes a national leadership council that sets policy and strategic direction with partners such as the American Association of Retired Persons, the National League of Cities, the American Public Health Association, and the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Question: Amber Thelen: What is RTC’s prognosis about Congressional support for TAP in the future?

Answer: Kevin Mills: Mr. Mills stated that strong implementation of the program is going to be crucial to how the program fares in the future. He stated that there are interests in Congress that would like to go further in terms of reducing or eliminating TAP. However, there is also a sense that the fight has been fought, TAP is the compromise, and it needs to be left at that. Mr. Mills concluded by saying that now that we have TAP, there may be efforts to refine the program, correct mistakes, and try to do more of what’s working.

Darren Flusche: Mr. Flusche agreed with Mr. Mills’ answer. Mr. Flusche explained that for such a small slice of the pie, TAP got disproportional attention, both positive and negative from Congress, as well as at the grassroots level. This means that in the future, we should anticipate that it will remain a contentious issue. He stated there are those who will continue to ask Congress to eliminate the program in the name of “flexibility” for the states.

Question: Jessica Silwick: Ms. Silwick noted that in Maryland, there are large and loud bicycling and pedestrian advocacy groups. These groups often ask her why more TAP funds aren’t going into bike

projects. She stated that they are barking up the wrong tree and need to focus on urging local jurisdictions to apply for funding for bicycle and pedestrian projects. How can the state make clear to advocates the proper process by which these improvements happen?

Answer: Darren Flusche: Mr. Flusche stated that the keyword is coordination when engaging with these advocates and local entities. These advocates can help you connect to localities where they have support, and it may be beneficial to make them a part of the outreach process when you do application workshops. He stated that they can help ensure that you get good applications that meet federal requirements, but it is necessary that they understand what those are. Mr. Flusche suggested that advocates should also build coalitions with non bicycle and pedestrian groups. Advocates may also be coming to the DOT because they are not getting traction at the local level, but they need to understand that they cannot bypass that step. He explained that garnering local support is a very important role for advocates and they should be encouraged to embrace it. Mr. Flusche did note, however, that cities are not necessarily receptive to these advocacy groups because their priorities might not align with the municipalities needs, and that's just a fact of life. Cities may be trying to set up the DOT as the bad guy by concealing these priorities, and so the DOT may need to adjust the application process so that cities can't do that.

Mr. Flusche then asked how many states saw more applications than they had money for, and the majority of the representatives indicated that this was the situation in their state. Christopher Douwes then noted that the match had been 50/50 in Maryland. Ms Silwick said it was recently changed to 80/20, which may have had an influence on the quality applications that were being received.

Tracy Hadden Loh then interjected that the TAP is not a program exclusively for bicycling and pedestrian projects, but serves many different transportation needs. She noted that, in particular, Maryland is located on the Chesapeake Bay and there are many stormwater mitigation projects being pursued. Although the bicycle and pedestrian advocacy groups may be loudly calling for more TAP funds, it is important to remember the comprehensive nature of TAP. She suggested that we should see if we can get the bicycle and pedestrian advocates to form partnerships with other groups that share their broader goals.

Val Horton stated that in Louisiana, district administrators use the program to help local entities. This helps the smaller communities get the funding that they need. She also explained that they work directly with municipal associations and educate them so that they are aware of the TAP process and that once this is done, the applications will come.

Amber Thelen: In the Detroit area, advocacy groups have been educated on how to work with the city. There has been more project need expressed from advocacy groups than available funding. The advocacy groups' projects therefore needed to be turned away by the city, which was pursuing projects of other types. It was suggested that coordination between these smaller advocacy groups would be helpful in realizing completed projects.

Karla Weaver of North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) stated that the city would provide them with a list of projects and expect them to pick and choose, which turned them into the

bad guys. NCTCOG therefore added a ranking criteria to projects so that cities would choose which projects were most and least important.

Question: How do we get more information about Brighid's resources?

Answer: www.advocacyadvance.org/map21

Question: It was mentioned that administrative costs of federal aid projects can be as much as 30% of project cost. Is there a nationwide trend towards minimum project sizes to improve the administrative to construction cost ratio? How can we address the fact that suballocation has fractured the pot and made minimum project sizes more difficult politically?

Answer: Darren Flusche: Yes there has been a trend nationwide, and also a large push in Texas in particular. Advocacy Advance and RTC both advocate this to lower administrative costs. Mr. Flusche personally prefers to have a few really great projects instead of multiple mediocre ones so that we can show off the exceptional benefits that TAP funding provides. He stated that with the new suballocation demands, we should urge MPOs to combine their TAP funds with local STP or CMAQ funds.

Question: Darren Flusche to the audience: How often is TAP coordinated with CMAQ?

Answer: In some places CMAQ was programmed out so far in advance that it could not be combined with TAP when MAP-21 was introduced. The same applied to STP funds in some cases. In other regions the MPO staff simply assemble a project list, and only then assign projects to different funding sources. This helps to streamline projects across all funding sources. In North Carolina, the Bicycle and Pedestrian Program works with the CMAQ group to help simplify the process for all bicycle and pedestrian projects. NCTCOG puts aside a small amount of money, referred to as "spot improvements", that the MPO can add to projects when there is a match issue or a safety issue that arises.

Question: Tressie Kamp: Are there any resources for locals to understand the implications of combining funds from RTP, TAP, and other sources?

Answer: Kevin Mills: It depends on the nature of the project, and the different programs have different regulations associated with them. Mr. Mills mentioned that there are FHWA resources online for this issue.

Christopher Douwes stated that requirements will vary from region to region and state to state, so the burden of explaining these issues will many times fall to staff. He suggested that STP should be considered since it has the most flexibility out of any program. Mr. Douwes also noted that a pedestrian or bicycle project is broadly eligible across every federal-aid highway and federal lands highway program.

Amber Thelen: Relationships and regular meetings between departments and agencies to discuss jointly funded projects need to become routine to make these combinations successful. She stated that you must set up a routine to ensure that key people remain in constant communication.

Kevin Mills: Some observations from the discussion:

- We need to have a sense of urgency about obligating dollars, getting projects on the ground, and showing that TAP is valued and needed.
- There are three historic core programs that are living within TAP and there are issues with navigating this.
- Prioritization of projects is getting pushed upstream, which could be an opportunity to streamline the combining of funding sources. Should we be funding larger projects, and how do we do this with the new suballocation?

Question: Mary Ebeling: We all need to brainstorm and come up with a better name than “Transportation Alternatives”. Ms. Ebeling suggested “Community Active Transportation Connections.” She also suggested that the name should account for the goal of creating complete networks and systems.

Christopher Douwes: Mr. Douwes mentioned that everyone should be a member of the Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals. He stated that transportation was originally by the use of our feet, and that referring to this type of transportation as an “alternative” is odd.

MOVING AHEAD FOR PROGRESS IN THE 21ST CENTURY ROUNDTABLE

Kyle Lukacs provided an introduction to the roundtable session, stating that the session would proceed by going around the room and getting input from every state or MPO about their particular TAP and where they are in terms of implementation.

Mary Harding from the New York DOT began the conversation. She stated that New York is currently working on spending the TEP money from SAFETEA-LU. She will be having a kickoff meeting with MPO directors, and also facilitating quarterly meetings between members of the DOT, MPOs, and bicycle and pedestrian coordinators. New York currently has 13 MPOs, and will be adding one more, which provides the possibility for 15 different application processes. She stated that cooperation is necessary with all of these unique entities. There are regional offices and a decentralized structure. There are mini-solicitations with the same applications and deadlines from all across the state. Ms. Harding said that she believes that New York has a good precedent set for a teamwork approach going into MAP 21.

In South Carolina, there is no annual cycle. Applications are received throughout the year and are approved twice a year. The state must go through its commission to receive approval, and the MPOs are responsible for submitting the applications directly.

Carlos Meredith from the Arkansas State Highway & Transportation Department said that the state LPAs were responsible for most of the process, and that his department just goes in when there are reimbursement requests and change orders. He reported that his organization is still trying to finish up 2011 funding. SRTS is currently getting their contracts out to all of the cities, and the RTP contracts are just about to go out. After that they have 2012, and then his office will transition to MAP-21 and will be dealing with all 3 programs together.

Rosa Kozub from the New Mexico DOT spoke next. She described how they are working very closely with the MPOs and RPOs. The guidelines for the state were created this spring in close conjunction with the MPO and RPO planners in order to create a framework that works for both urban and rural participants. She explained that the state gives everyone a target, and that the MPOs and RPOs provide a prioritized list that gets reviewed. New Mexico is currently calling for FY14 and FY15 funds, and using up their SAFETEA-LU funds. Ms. Kozub stated that a primary focus was to distribute funds equitably across the state.

Nancy Surprenant from the South Dakota DOT detailed how TE and SRTS were in separate programs within the DOT. They went forward to combine the two and released guidance and a digital application guide. Ms. Surprenant stated that they started with a letter of intent and received 19 replies. This was followed by mandatory site visits in which communities were educated about eligibility requirements. 16 full applications were finally received with \$4.6 million in request, resulting in the over \$2 million that South Dakota had apportioned being distributed to 9 communities. These will go before the Transportation Commission in August, and hopefully design and construction will begin shortly thereafter. She stated that Class I cities are designated as having a population over 5,000, and about \$1 million was assigned to each class. Four Class I cities received funding and all of the projects were shared use paths. Ms. Surprenant stated that they received some SRTS projects that needed a little more work, and that they should be submitting again next year. South Dakota set its low cap at \$50,000 and the high cap at \$400,000. A community of 982 people saw funding, along with 2 tribal projects. Ms. Surprenant stated that there has been a good range of projects that saw funding.

Val Horton from Louisiana explained that they had a 95/5 program that dates back to the beginning of TE, but with the advent of MAP-21 a flex-match policy was created. After this is signed into law, then policies and procedures are in place and they hope to reach full implementation and start getting new projects. She stated that past transportation bill changes only involved a little tweaking, but that this has been a big change for their department. Some projects in the system were eligible for TAP and they have been able to move ahead with those. Ms. Horton stated that TAP, SRTS, and RTP are going to remain separate programs because this has been working efficiently for them, and because there are already staff for each program. She explained that they ask for applications once every two years, and usually receive about 90 applications at 2-3 times the money that is available. That money is divided between the districts, and will now also be divided between the 4 TMAs. She said that the TMAs will get to prioritize first and pick what they want, and then the rest goes into the pot. Highway safety improvement funds will continue to be used for SRTS because of the safety access and because Louisiana has a lot of safety money. SRTS has always been in the planning program and funded with

safety so they were able transition fairly easily. The soft-match is going to be tested in Val's TAP first and then may be implemented into the other programs.

Chris Berrens from the Minnesota DOT spoke next. He stated that the public outreach phase of the TAP implementation process was just finished, and their strategy should be released by end of the summer. He explained that Minnesota hopes to combine all of the programs [meaning TAP/TE, SRTS, and Scenic Byways], but the primary concern is how to bring the ineligible but still active programs of SRTS and scenic byways into the system when they are not used to dealing with districts. Mr. Berrens aims to make sure that the solicitation and selection process aligns with the strategy that is created as well as the state multi-modal plan and the bicycle and pedestrian plan. He also said that the SRTS match is going to be a big issue.

Toni Tisdale from Idaho explained how the Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) decided to not fund TE or CMAQ after 2008, meaning that locals have not received funding. They were happy to see that funding was provided to the TMAs, and guidance was created accordingly. Ms. Tisdale said that they had applications in November with projects scored and ranked by the end of December. Even though they didn't know what the exact requirements from ITD would be for TMAs, they went forward with selections, and when the state requirements did come out, they were ready. They took the projects to ITD in March, and the projects were accepted in April for FY13 and FY14. A second call was put out and projects are now fully funded through FY18. This is also the first time local entities have applied for programs since 2008. Idaho has seen had 20 project applications in just one small area, with more applications expected. Funds have been rescinded, but ITD is trying to get the funds used where they can.

CJ Brown from the Wyoming DOT stated that the applications for 2013 were collected under the assumption that nothing would change, and that the program would be a continuing resolution. He explained that when the applications came in, they were simply tweaked according to the new TAP regulations. Those projects are now ongoing and working. For 2014, Wyoming is trying to merge the SRTS and TE programs together, while treating CMAQ separately. He stated that there is now a \$350,000 ceiling on projects. It is important that small and large communities are treated the same, and that everyone gets the same training and the same inspection criteria. The Wyoming DOT decides what CMAQ funding the counties receive, and then the county decides which towns get which monies based on their needs. Mr. Brown summarized by saying that the communities express what they need, and then the DOT works with them so that their projects fit within the federal mandates.

Lauren Blackburn from the North Carolina DOT explained that they are using unobligated TE funds for projects already selected in the TIP for the next few years until FY16 when their new system takes effect. SRTS has been using funds that haven't been obligated yet, and will continue to do so until the funding is gone. Once the new system starts, SRTS will be combined with the bike/ped program with a way to designate that a project is SRTS. Most of the rest of the TAP will go towards bicycle and pedestrian projects due to the fact that North Carolina has a bicycle and pedestrian program instead of a TAP program. Ms. Blackburn stated that the exception is that the funding TMAs receive can be distributed as

they wish. The huge overhaul is allowing for competition between the different transportation modes, so this is a whole different world.

Jessica Silwick from the Maryland State Highway Administration noted how their program has successfully changed from a 50/50 match to an 80/20, and how sidewalk projects have now been allowed. The administration is attempting to make the program friendlier to local governments. The 3 MPOs were quickly brought on board for the MAP-21 implementation process, and everyone was able to agree on one application to quicken project review process. Ms. Silwick hopes to have award letters out in early September. She stated that the website and guidance have been updated to coincide with these TAP changes. SRTS does have backlog of funding that they are trying to award to good projects. Ms. Silwick concluded by saying that they are going to focus on outreach to get the money obligated and spent.

Stephen Hurst from the District of Columbia DOT detailed how figuring out the suballocation issue and getting those projects out the door was the first priority. Because Washington, DC is the only locality within the “state”, it was difficult to set up a competitive process. Mr. Hurst explained that for TAP, it had been considered as a state DOT and not an eligible local agency. DDOT had to work with the District Department of the Environment as its local agency to sponsor the project. He stated that DDOT basically had to tell the agencies how to fill out the applications, and then just have the local agencies send them right back to the DOT. This problem has hopefully been fixed going forward.² He does have unobligated TE money, so the next step is to figure out how to do an internal call for projects around the agency after the suballocation is complete. Another issue is how to make this process competitive.

Karla Weaver from the North Central Texas Council of Governments explained that the DOT had \$70 million leftover that they wanted to get used. The state rules were re-written so that MPOs could make selections, whereas before the state was able to rank the regional projects. About \$35 million went to the state while the rest went to the TMAs, with \$13 million going to the Dallas region. DOT applications were used with 45 applications for \$56 million in federal request being received for Dallas. Ms. Weaver then noted that projects are first scored in relation to 5 key categories. In the next step, projects earn extra points if they are related to the regional trail network, barrier crossings, safety, and mobility functions, among other factors. She stated that 11 projects were funded, including a unique user count project in which two bridges in the cities will have counters so that they can compete against each other. In regards to TAP implementation, they are depending on coordination between key players. She stated that the DOT will now share how exactly the projects are scored with the MPOs. For the next 10 years, \$8-10 million per year will be allocated to Dallas. Ms. Weaver stated that they are trying to break these awards up into 3 year periods. She also mentioned that sidewalks don't score well compared to other projects, so they are going to try to get some small communities some sidewalks. There should be another call in the fall, with projects being selected in the spring.

² Because the Washington, DC government is the only local government, it qualifies as a local government, and therefore is eligible to sponsor TAP projects.

Amber Thelen finished the session by thanking Ohio for their innovative use of toll credits for an SRTS match. Ohio started this and now Michigan has followed suit to move some projects along that were having difficulty securing matches.

WHAT ARE COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT ACTIVITIES?

Brandon Buckner, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Louisiana Division

Christopher Douwes started by showing that historically, the word “including” in the original TE definition was considered as “this is the definition of that activity”. Now the word “including” is no longer taken as simply the definition in MAP-21, but is instead defined as “include but are not limited to”. He noted that the National Highway System was expanded greatly, and this imposed expanded requirements of the Highway Beautification Act, including the requirement that junkyards be screened. FHWA received the questions: “Who is going to pay for that unfunded mandate? Can we use our TAP money?” This prompted FHWA to reconsider the definition of the word “including” and the nature of TAP. Therefore, Community Improvement Activities may include more than the four defined activities.

Brandon Buckner began his presentation by explaining the 4 eligible Community Improvement Activities originally defined under MAP-21. These include: outdoor advertising management, historic renovation works, vegetation management, and archeological activities. Mr. Buckner mentioned the Houma House as an example of the private sector trying to tweak their application so that they can receive federal funds.

There was a question about whether a historic facility must be a transportation facility, or if it could simply be “related to” transportation. The individual was under the impression that TAP was trying to tighten up this definition. Previously, as long as a structure, such as an inn or a tavern, was related to transportation, it was eligible. Mr. Douwes said he would be more comfortable if it was actually transportation infrastructure. It was decided that this explanation had to be strengthened. [Editor’s note: the presentation was revised to specify that historic preservation had to be for transportation facilities.]

Mr. Douwes noted the three basic requirements of TAP projects:

1. Related to surface transportation
2. Submitted by an eligible entity
3. Selected through a competitive process.

Another question was asked about the importance of the future use of a project facility. Mr. Douwes said that the future use would be highly worth considering. He then stated that FHWA is not allowed to give strict guidelines, and must provide flexibility to the states. Mr. Buckner stated that every state will have to use discretion and each state will have to create their own definition. He specified that if a state does not want to fund a project, then they should define it as such. CJ Brown noted that much power still lies within the states, and just because a project qualifies doesn’t mean that it will be selected. There are always politics involved.

Mr. Buckner then moved on to vegetation management projects, which improve roadway safety, control invasive species, and provide erosion control along roadways. Archeological activities include interpretive signs and exhibits that must be related to transportation. Mr. Buckner gave the example of

a roadway project that found archaeological artifacts during the preconstruction phase, and then TE funds, which were not originally being used, were added once they found that there was a historic element. Tracy Hadden Loh clarified that this category used to be archaeological projects that weren't part of other Title 23 work, but now it is only archaeology projects that are part of Title 23 work which was going to be done anyway. She asked if this category is this still relevant. Mr. Douwes noted that there is a chance that this category could be used with local highway projects, but whereas this category used to be for proactive archaeological work, now it is for reactive project mitigation.

There was a question about whether a sign would need to be erected at the archaeological site, or would the site simply be covered up after. Val Horton explained that in Louisiana, she would want an exhibit of the finds, but this exhibit could be on site or it could be put in City Hall. It all depends on how you define it.

Mr. Buckner noted that the new guidance, which accounts for the new definition of "including", allows for streetscaping, outdoor landscaping, and junkyard screening. Mr. Douwes noted that once you open up that definition of "including but not limited to" then you open the door to all of these types of projects. Mr. Buckner noted that with this increased flexibility, the states can define these projects as they like. This is the reason that the guidance rewrite is very vague, and also why the different states present are having trouble agreeing on a set definition. There was then a question directed at Mr. Douwes as to whether community welcome signs are eligible. Mr. Douwes replied that it would be up to the community to determine if it meets the three eligibility requirements. Mr. Buckner stated that states must come up with strong definitions now for eligibilities, so there are no questions during the selection process.

There was a question asking if the DOT should impose their definitions upon the TMAs or MPOs. Mr. Buckner replied that it depends on who is going to provide the selection. There was then a question asking if bicycle education would fit under Community Improvement Activities. Mr. Buckner stated that education is not eligible under TAP, but that he would recommend using safety money.

Mr. Douwes noted an example where there was one bridge on the National Highway System and a neighboring bridge not on the NHS. He stated that nowhere is it stated that you cannot do a road diet on an NHS route, so you can install a road diet on an NHS route. Mr. Douwes stated that under MAP-21, traffic calming techniques are eligible. A roundabout exclusively for vehicles might not be eligible because traffic calming is under the bicycle and pedestrian program.

There was then a question asking what traffic management is? Mr. Buckner replied that it includes access management and road diets, and this could possibly be signaling and management of other forms of infrastructure related to bicycles and pedestrians. Next was a question asking to define signage. Mr. Buckner answered that it depends, but it will usually be street-specific signage such as orientation signing. Mr. Douwes stated that a signage project should be implemented in conjunction with other projects rather than an independent signing project.

Mr. Buckner went on to corridor landscaping and scenic enhancement. Public art is allowable but the focus must be improving the corridor. Project sponsors also can consider creative designs: nothing requires projects to be ugly!

There was a question asking whether the interpretation by the FHWA ever goes back to the lawmakers to see if the FHWA has gotten it correct. Mr. Douwes replied that they sat down with both Senate and House staffers from both sides of political spectrum and told them that without more guidance, they are going to interpret as best they can. Everyone has now seen the interpretation in the guidance, and congressional staff have not had any complaints.

There was a question about whether utility relocation can be permitted for purely scenic reasons. Mr. Douwes replied that this should be eligible because it benefits the transportation corridor. However, some States have legislation that prohibits using public funds for utility relocation; in those States it is illegal to use TAP funds for utility relocation.

Mr. Buckner noted that all of this information is in the guidance, while Ms. Loh noted that clearinghouse.info has informative PDFs of the new categories with pictures, summaries, and links to the guidance.

Mr. Buckner stated that project selectors should be very cautious of selecting a standalone piece of art that is its own primary focal point. There was next a question about categories that were “no longer expressly prohibited” and Mr. Douwes replied that although projects may no longer be expressly prohibited, it does not mean that they are necessarily ineligible. He stated that he can’t give a list of yes or no to eligibility questions because local circumstances vary widely. After a state goes through its selection process, then it goes to the FHWA division office. Therefore, we should include our division offices in our state selection process to get to the heart of the problem.

It was then asked if there is guidance coming from the federal office to the division offices. Mr. Buckner answered that it is very important that the division offices and the DOTs work together in TAP eligibilities and selection. Each state has to decide its definitions, and then they must ensure that the division offices understand these definitions. Mr. Buckner stated that although TAP has confused the TE process, TAP has not turned 360 degrees, and we have to take what we were doing before and just tweak a few eligibilities. He stated that it is basically the same as before, so don’t completely erase everything, but keep the division office involved as you are making adjustments.

It was then discussed how some local entities go directly to the top of the ladder instead of working with their own division office. It was stressed that going directly to Mr. Douwes or even higher up is not the appropriate procedure.

Mr. Buckner then went on to junkyard screenings. He reiterated the three eligibility requirements:

1. Related to surface transportation
2. Submitted by an eligible entity
3. Selected through a competitive process.

He noted that while the state DOT is not an eligible sponsor, it can be a cosponsor, and must build strong relationships with the local entities.

Mr. Buckner summarized by saying that this information has not been set in stone, but is just vague guidance. It is up to the states to make the final decisions, and the division offices are there to help throughout the process.

FHWA Q&A – THE ANSWER IS: “IT DEPENDS”

Christopher Douwes, FHWA

Mr. Douwes began the session by explaining that there is an order of supremacy for different kinds of documents, (1) the Constitution, (2) legislation, (3) regulations, and (4) guidance. Under Office of Management and Budget guidance, Federal agency guidance must interpret legislation, interpret regulations, but can offer opinion only if it is necessary and does not become a burden. Therefore, unless something uses the word “shall”, the guidance will be relatively vague. Guidance is something that has to be approved by a high level manager.

Mr. Douwes then delved into a joke involving an encounter at a bar between an interstate highway and a “cycle path”. The joke was meant to show how some people are afraid of pursuing transportation solutions that are new and different. He stated that around 15% of morning traffic is related to parents driving their kids to school because they feel it isn’t safe to walk, and every bicyclist and pedestrian is another driver pulled off the road, so it also helps the road system. Mr. Douwes reinforced that we have a program worth defending and that does good for the people.

Question: If trail is built on an abandoned rail line, can it still be brought back to active rail use?

Answer: If it is not rail banked property, you will probably not have to worry about it. But if it is rail banked property, then you will definitely have to worry about it. This is happening in Pennsylvania with Marcellus shale drilling, so it is no longer unlikely for rail service to come back. What do we do then? This can only be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

Question: If it does go back to rail, does the sponsor need to pay back the federal funds?

Answer: According to the old TE guidance, you may have to pay back funds if you take a TE project out of use, but this is also case-by-case. If it is a 20 year agreement and it is year 19, then we might not ask for the funds back, but if it is new we will want funds returned.

Question: Discuss turnouts, overlooks, and visiting areas.

Answer: The definition of a safety rest area is under 23 CFR 752.5 and scenic overlooks is under 23 CFR 752.6, which states: “Scenic Overlooks shall be located and designed as appropriate to the site and the scenic view with consideration for safety, access, and convenience of the motorist. May provide facilities

equivalent to those provided in a safety rest area.” The amount of ROW needed for an overlook is a legitimate expense. This definition opens up to interstate rest areas.

Question: Do these have to be on scenic byways?

Answer: No, they can be on any road.

Question: Can funding be used to purchase a billboard and then remove it?

Answer: Yes, this is pretty much unchanged.

Question: What is the reason behind paying for a billboard inventory?

Answer: To know what is going on within the entire state. This category is used so little that I wouldn't worry about it, but your division office should be able to help you out.

Question: Toni Tisdale from Idaho: With the expanded NHS system, can this be an expanded inventory?

Answer: This is eligible, but the DOT is not an eligible sponsor so it would be difficult for a DOT to use TAP funds for an expanded inventory. If an eligible entity wants to fund an inventory within its corridor then it would work.

Question: Are any museums eligible?

Answer: They are clearly no longer eligible. There may be some rare and unique cases, but this doesn't seem to be a big issue.

Question: Is wayfinding signage eligible?

Answer: Yes, in most cases for pedestrian wayfinding systems. Mr. Douwes cited a case study from Rhode Island in which a walking tour with way-finding signs was not eligible for RTP because there was no trail building, but it was still eligible under TE. A project doesn't need to be related to a scenic byway, but this certainly helps. If the signage is also aimed at motorists, it must conform with the [Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices](#).

Question: What qualifies as a trail facility?

Answer: You should use the definition from RTP as an example. For the most part, it is a facility that is not in general use by highway motor vehicles. (According to the National Recreational Trails Advisory Committee, the terms 'trailside' and 'trailhead facilities' mean trail components or associated facilities which serve the purpose and safe use of the recreational trail and may include but not be limited to the following: 1) Drainage, 2) Crossings, 3) Stabilization, 4) Parking, 5) Signage, 6) Controls, 7) Shelters, and 8) Water, Sanitary, and Access Facilities.) http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/recreational_trails/guidance/rtp9908_pt2.cfm#ftnref21

Question: Are there AASHTO or any other lighting requirements?

Answer: FHWA doesn't require any lighting. Mr. Douwes' personal view, not on behalf of the FHWA, is that before you put any lighting on any project, go to www.darksky.org, the website of the International Dark-Sky Organization. Every state and locality should adopt dark sky ordinances.

Question: What of the old TE streetscape elements are eligible?

Answer: We had this discussion during Brandon's presentation and the answer was that it depends. It will depend on if it is a community improvement activity.

Question: Do tribes need an 18.05% match? [Asked by a State that uses the [sliding scale](#).]

Answer: We came up with an answer for this, but we don't have the official answer yet. In New Mexico, they can use their Tribal Transportation Program Funds to match federal with federal. Mr. Douwes referenced 23 U.S.C. 120(f). If we have authorization within tribal lands, then we have authorization for projects that are funded with funds under Section 104 to fund these projects at up to 100% federal share. So are transportation alternatives funds apportioned under Section 104? The list in Section 104 does not list TAP, however he then references 23 U.S.C. 213 which ties TAP to Section 104. The short answer is: Yes, a TAP project on tribal lands can be up to 100% federal share. We are going to get this answer to you in a final form. A match can be required, but it is not necessary. This means that it can even be 100% TAP. In the guidance we do have a lot on match, along with donations and federal agency funds. Another issue is workforce development projects and whether they are fundable at 100% through TAP.

Question: Give some examples of what is and what is not eligible for Safe Routes for Non-Drivers funding. Have any state's MPOs awarded TAP funds for this category? Do states or MPOs have any idea how they will use this category?

Answer: This category is hardly any different from the bicycle and pedestrian category before it. This may have been an attempt to get some of SRTS in TAP, but it is not clear. This is still focused on bicycles and pedestrians.

Kevin Mills: It was an attempt by the DOTs to express an interest in systems and networks, even though as a stand-alone category it comes across as not having much direction.

Christopher Douwes: It was thought at one time that this was an attempt to make bike share programs eligible, but these are clearly already eligible under the bicycle and pedestrian category.

Question: Can a SRTS coordinator funded by TAP spend time on non-SRTS projects?

Answer: If you're funded as a SRTS coordinator your time has to be on SRTS.

Question: Can someone clarify how a local government can sponsor a project under TAP, but a DOT is not an eligible recipient?

Answer: For example, Greenville is doing an eligible project but it is on Interstate 385 meaning that the DOT is going to have to do the project even though Greenville is applying for it. If the DOT decides that they do not want to pursue the project, then this is a state issue.

Question: Can we ask for flexibility for the DOTs to choose between suballocation to local sponsors of population under 5,000, and transfer to another TAP eligible project to be administered by the DOT.

Answer: This is what I call the “Law of Unintended Consequences”. You think that you are doing wonderful things by getting it down to the local level, but the state is responsible for it, and I don’t have a definite answer for you.

Question: Can we ask for Congress to expand the definition of positions fundable under TAP to include a TAP project administrator for the DOT in addition to existing SRTS position?

Answer: Under RTP, administration for the state is an eligible category, but the agency will not entertain allowing administration under TE. As far as the possibility of Congress considering it in the future, that is between you and your Congress person. It works for the RTP, and results in more efficient sponsors and applications, but other people don’t want administration paid for, they want to see physical projects. Theoretically, the state DOT is supposed to be able to handle administration. RTP, SRTS, and Workforce Development are exceptions to this.

Question: Can you elaborate on transfers of TAP funds to other program areas?

Answer: There has been some interest among Congressional staff as to which states have transferred from or to TAP. As of July 15th, Connecticut has transferred all of its any-area funds to the National Highway Performance Program, while the rest have transferred their any-area funds to the STP-flex as follows: Arizona has transferred about half, Kansas less than half, Mississippi \$1.4 million out of \$4.5 million, North Carolina transferred half, while Georgia, Idaho, North Dakota, South Carolina, and South Dakota transferred all. The state may transfer up to 50% of its TAP funds after the RTP set aside, and it can only come from the any-area funds. You can transfer the full amount of the any-area funds. Several states did the transfer on the day the guidance came out.

Question: Can you elaborate on distribution of funds?

Answer: The Fayetteville-Springdale-Rodgers section of the MPO in Missouri only has \$3 available. The Census Bureau must get great joy by messing with us.

Question: Is a Community Improvement Activity only in a community? And what is a community?

Answer: Community is in the eye of the beholder. For example, this room is a community, and tribal areas would call themselves a community. I could call a city and a county a community. Certain natural areas do not follow our political boundaries. Congressional districts are so gerrymandered that our political definitions of community are not reliable. By opening up junkyards, it pretty much opened up Community Improvement Activities to almost anything that people want. This allows for flexibility, but

makes defining things hard. Any recreational trail is now eligible under RTP, STP, and TAP. This is now open to ATV, motorcycle, snowmobile, hiking or equestrian trails.

Question: For a project, do you have to consider all categories?

Answer: No, you do not have to. If your state only wants to fund historic bridges, you have a right to do so. Of course, you have to have a competitive process and explain how you determined this is best for your state. Public involvement is going to be whatever is appropriate for your state in the transportation planning process, and is going to vary from location to location.

Question: How about resurfacing for aesthetics as a Community Improvement Activity?

Answer: There was a project where there were so many enhancements done, that a resurfacing was absolutely necessary. The enhancement project required this repaving, so this was allowed. But if you are just repaving and nothing else, this would not be eligible. It would have to relate to one of the Community Improvement Activity categories that we discussed before, and if it does it could be eligible. This will be an “it depends” on a case-by-case basis.

Question: Can we have a clarification on planning and design activities? Is it overall eligible or only for specific categories?

Answer: It depends. One FHWA official said that you could do any type of planning, but Mr. Douwes believes that planning, design, and construction should be project specific, not just overall general planning. But for any project there will be preliminary engineering which will be eligible.

Question: The specific project is a historic district that wants bricks put in and a streetscape with some bike/ped elements. But they don't have the funding for the necessary planning and design. Would the planning be good?

Answer: In Louisiana, there was a project in a very historically significant town that involved the replacement of an old brick roadway. They needed an archaeological survey, and it was recommended that an EIS report be completed. Because of the importance of the project and the nature of the project, the planning was considered eligible for this one. The state made sure that it happened.

Mr. Douwes: On another note, there are still some advocacy organizations that believe FHWA is not doing enough for TAP outreach in relation to guidance. We have been asked to do additional webinars. We are sending out an email about some more webinars that will be coming up. [Editor's note: FHWA scheduled four TAP webinars for August 2013. See FHWA's MAP-21 website at <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/map21/webinars.cfm> for the webinar recordings.]

Question: Could you briefly describe what would qualify under that boulevards category?

Answer: We used the definition from the Institute of Transportation Engineers, and it can be found inside the Q&A. The eligible activity is creating boulevards out of existing roads. A good example is when I-40 was completely moved in Oklahoma City. So the old I-40 was still technically I-40, but they wanted

to turn it into a more bicycle and pedestrian friendly boulevard. Occasionally pieces of the interstate get decommissioned and they are not part of the interstate anymore, they are still roadways but also have alternative amenities. But these projects are so large that they will probably be very expensive and therefore probably rare with TAP funds.

Question: Is there a presumption that every year the state will reconsider cancelling the RTP fund?

Answer: For a state to opt-out of RTP, it must do it on an annual basis. If you do not opt-out annually, then you will be in. Florida, California, and Maine have not confirmed that they will not opt-out yet. All the other states are expected to continue with the RTP for the next year. When the RTP, SRTS, and TE are combined together, the share set aside for the RTP is relatively high in several low population snowbelt States: 43% of TAP money is for the RTP in Maine. The deadline for opting out is on September 1st. There is another opt-out provision that states that if your state Recreational Trail Advisory Committee does not meet prior to September 30th, then you are not allowed to have an apportionment of RTP funds, but this has not been an issue.

CLOSING: WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Kyle Lukacs, National Transportation Alternatives Clearinghouse (NTAC)

Kyle Lukacs: Where do we go from here? Everyone sitting in this room and everyone that couldn't make it, you are the ones that are going to be building the great projects and using these funds. How do we communicate the importance of TAP? How do we get people to believe in this program, and show that they are really important to our communities? Nominate projects for TACE in order to get some great projects national recognition, make sure that you have before and after pictures so people can see the benefits, talk to local stakeholders, news agencies, community groups to keep everyone involved. We want great projects and get these projects in the spotlight. We have the list serve with everyone on it, so we can continue to communicate after the conference. Keep the ideas flowing, and share your best practices. It was awesome to be in Greenville, and thanks to the South Carolina DOT.

Tracy Hadden Loh: Thanks to everyone for coming to Greenville and sharing your experiences. We do want to let you guys know that the NTAC contract expires at the end of September, so data collection might not occur for upcoming fiscal years. But for the remainder of this fiscal year, we are still operating at complete capacity. We are at our normal email addresses and phone number, and we always want to hear from you guys.