Making America Bikeable & Walkable, Again!

Of the more than $2.1 billion spent (or slated for spending) for the various Transportation Enhancement Activities, more than half has been programmed for bicycle and pedestrian projects (see pie chart below). More than 3900 projects in 2200 communities across the nation involve various types of “bike/ped” activities: building rail-trails or greenways, striping on-street bike lanes, paving roadway shoulders, constructing sidewalks and pedestrian plazas, installing bicycle racks on buses, or providing bicycle parking at transit stations.

Data on TE funding developed by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy shows how the bicycle and pedestrian projects are distributed among five general facility types (see box on page 2).

RTC’s data also shows that annual Federal spending for the development of bicycle and pedestrian facilities has shot up dramatically in the ISTEA years. Federal “bike/ped” spending, which averaged $3 million a year in the 1980’s and early 1990’s, now averages over $200 million a year, and the existence of the TE program is the primary reason.

As ISTEA-I comes to a close, it is useful to look back and see what it has produced. The transportation benefits of bicycle and pedestrian projects are usually self-evident to local project sponsors and community residents, however, a summary of typical projects and their benefits can help others involved in the debate surrounding ISTEA reauthorization. Project highlights also provide sponsors who are eager for round two of TE funding with project ideas for the future.

(continued on page 2)
Recycling Valuable Infrastructure

Bridge recycling is an increasingly common enhancement activity. The cities of Lewiston and Auburn, Maine used $350,000 to recycle a railroad bridge that spans the Androscoggin River. The recycled bridge created a direct bicycle and pedestrian link between their two downtowns, which are undergoing a remarkable revival. Ft. Morgan, Colorado used $500,000 to refurbish a road bridge, the historic Rainbow Arch Bridge, for non-motorized travelers. In Michigan, the DOT Enhancement Program has become a clearinghouse for bridge reuse. A total of 5 projects have preserved valuable historic bridge structures and produced cost savings for trail projects such as the Portland Rail-Trail near Lansing and the Fred Meijer Heartland Trail, northeast of Grand Rapids.

Creating Non-Motorized Systems: Linking On-Road and Off-Road Facilities

Boulder, Colorado, is using $2.5 million in TE funds to link on-road bicycle facilities with its already well-developed trail system. Ten TE awards are being used to build ~10 miles of bike lanes, paved shoulders and sidewalks on five of the city's main arterials. Like Davis, California, consistent investment in bicycling and walking infrastructure by the city of Boulder has produced a 32 percent mode share for trips taken on foot and by bicycle.

Kids Need Transportation Too!

The phenomena of “soccer parents” is all too familiar to many Americans, a result of the lack of transportation alternatives for children and young adults. In Jackson Hole, Wyoming a $500,000, 4-mile pathway and underpass under US 89 (one of the busiest highways in Wyoming), allows middle and high school kids to walk, bike and skate to school and the library. In the winter they cross-country ski. Additionally, two sidewalk projects and another trail project have received funding—all part of the community-generated Pathways Conceptual Plan for non-motorized transportation and recreation.

Lighting the Way

Illinois is one of several states that has awarded TE funds for lighting sidewalks, trails and other pedestrian ways. In the cities of Delavan, Elgin and Kankakee, pedestrian lighting projects were implemented in historic districts and combined with landscaping and historic preservation activities. Chicago, Joliet, Lockport and Peoria also implemented sidewalk lighting projects.

Lighting projects address public safety concerns that are central to providing pedestrian access and revitalizing “Main Street” business districts.

Making the (Intermodal) Connection

Maybe the simplest, yet most innovative examples of ISTEA’s focus on intermodalism are TE projects involving the installation of bike racks on the front of transit busses. To expand their customer base and enlarge the range of destinations accessible to their patrons, rural and small city transit operators are the most frequent users of TE funds for bike-on-bus programs (average federal awards are $22,000). A short list includes:

- Kitsap County Transit in Bremerton, WA
- Blue Water Area Transit in Port Huron, MI
- Centre Area Transit in State College, PA
- Salem Area Transit in Salem, OR
- Yolobus in Davis & Woodland, CA

On large city bus fleets, ISTEA clean air funds (CMAQ), Federal Transit funds and local monies have also been used for this popular intermodal innovation. Currently implemented in more than 130 communities, bike-on-bus programs are sweeping the nation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TE-Funded Bicycle &amp; Pedestrian Projects</th>
<th>(in millions)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Facility Type</strong></td>
<td><strong>Federal Funding</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greenway Trails &amp; Pathways</td>
<td>$491.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rail- Trails</td>
<td>306.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-Road Bicycle Facilities</td>
<td>98.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sidewalks &amp; Pedestrian Fac.</td>
<td>216.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bike/Transit Integration</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
to scenic byways, many of which cross state boundaries. The Enhancements provision, on the other hand, ensures that each State will have funding to foster development of its own instate scenic byway system.

The Scenic Byways Grant Program made $72 million available over the course of ISTEA’s six years, and all available funds in this program have now been granted to the States. However, new funding for Scenic Byways is expected in a reauthorized ISTEA.

To access these funds, projects and program needs are first identified by a State Scenic Byway Agency. Funding proposals are then forwarded annually to FHWA, where an agency selection committee makes funding recommendations to the U.S. Secretary of Transportation.

Enhancement funds, on the other hand, are apportioned to the States and programmed at the discretion of the State Department of Transportation (DOT). Only three of the ten Transportation Enhancement Activities (TEAs) are directly related to scenic byways (see below), and States have the authority to determine which TEAs, and which projects, should receive funding priority.

What Can be Funded with Scenic Byways Grants?

Many of the initial grants were used by State DOTs to develop state scenic byway programs and management plans to prepare for future development of important byway corridors. Other project highlights include the following:

In Colorado, the Gold Belt Tour received several grants to construct kiosks and interpretive signs, update and reprint brochures, and build exhibits about historic events. One of the grants even provided for dust abatement and road surfacing for safety improvements needed because of the increase in traffic that resulted from designation of the byway. The project also used Transportation Enhancement funds to reduce the number of nonconforming billboards along the byway.

Massachusetts, like several other states, has included bicycles and pedestrians in its scenic byway plans. Along Cape Cod on the Old King’s Highway (Rt. 6A) grant funds were used to construct a bicycle path, develop bicycle byways maps, and implement traffic calming and other pedestrian enhancements.

In Maine, grant funds were used to improve roadway shoulders and add scenic turnouts to improve safety for motorists and bicyclists along U.S. Route 201 and Maine Route 27, the Kennebec River Valley Highway.

What can be Funded with Enhancement Funds?

In the area of scenic byways, state Transportation Enhancement Programs typically fund activities such as: 1) the acquisition of scenic easements and historic sites; 2) the development of state scenic highway/byway programs, including the construction of overlooks and turnouts, placement of historic markers and restoration of historic roads; and 3) the control and removal of billboards.

As of February 1997, 160 scenic/historic acquisition projects were funded totaling $75.7 million; 299 scenic/historic highway projects were funded totaling $66.5 million; and 42 billboard removal projects were funded totaling $22.1 million (see pie chart on page 1). A detailed list of these and other TE projects is available from the NTEC.

Scenic Byways Clearinghouse

Additional information and technical guidance on scenic byways is available through the National Scenic Byways Clearinghouse in Washington, DC.

- Phone: toll-free at 800-4BYWAYS or 202-628-7718
- Fax: 202-783-4788
- E-mail: clrhouse@byways.org
- Mail: 1440 New York Avenue, NW, Suite 202
  Washington, DC 20005

The Clearinghouse is operated as a public/private partnership of the American Automobile Association (AAA) and the Federal Highway Administration.
Nominations Sought for National Scenic Byway & All-American Road Designations

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is currently seeking nominations for the second round of the National Scenic Byways and All-American Roads program. Designation as a National Scenic Byway or All-American Road entitles projects on or along the byway to receive priority consideration for funding under the Scenic Byways Discretionary Grant Program (see article on page 3). It can also generate a level of national attention and acclaim that translates into significant economic benefits.

The first round of National Scenic Byway designations in 1996 identified twenty roads and highways with qualities that exemplify the scenic and historic characteristics of the nation’s diverse regions. Of these, six were named All-American Roads, the “best of the best” including California’s Pacific Coast Highway (Route 1); the Selma to Montgomery March Trail (US 80) in Alabama and the Blue Ridge Parkway in North Carolina.

Nominations for the second round are due to FHWA by December 15, 1997. Copies of the nomination guide and filing instructions can be obtained by contacting the National Scenic Byways Clearinghouse at 800-4BYWAYS, extension 3.