

Successes **in** Stewardship

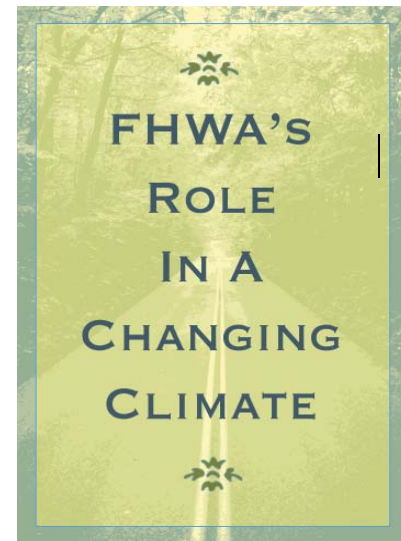
<http://www.environment.fhwa.dot.gov/strmlng/es4newsltrs.asp>

July 2008

FHWA 2008 Environmental Conference: FHWA's Role in a Changing Climate

From June 17 to 19, 2008, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) held its third biennial Environmental Conference in Washington, DC, for FHWA field and headquarters personnel. The conference brought practitioners together from around the country to share and learn from one another about current environmental practices and activities. Nearly 250 transportation and environmental professionals attended the event, representing:

- 47 FHWA Division Offices
- 9 FHWA Headquarters Offices
- 21 Resource Center staff members
- Eastern, Central, and Western Federal Lands Highway Divisions
- Eastern, Southern, Midwestern, and Western Legal Services
- 1 FTA Office
- 1 State Department of Transportation
- 1 Tribal Nation
- Presenters from the Environmental Protection Agency, US Army Corps of Engineers, state resource agencies, academia, and the private sector



Participants in the 2008 Environmental Conference celebrated past achievements, shared lessons learned while addressing current challenges and planned for future successes.

Conference topics built on discussions from gatherings in 2004 and 2006 while highlighting emerging trends and analysis techniques in the "state of the practice" at FHWA. Sessions were offered on a variety of topics (see box at left) related to

2008 Session Topics

Historic Preservation	Context Sensitive Solutions
NEPA Nuts and Bolts	Section 6002
Habitat	Wetlands
PEL and Eco-Logical	Planning/Fiscal Constraint
Section 4(f)	Indirect and Cumulative Impacts
Air Quality	Managing the ROW – Environmental Benefits
Water and Ecosystems	Forecasting
Shifting the NEPA Documentation Paradigm	Tolling, Pricing, and PPPs in NEPA
Tribal Consultation	Legal Panel
Climate Change	Re: NEPA
Emergency Permitting Procedures	Regional Environmental Network Meetings
Mitigation of Environmental Impacts	

policy and practice and featured presentations from FHWA Headquarters, Division Offices, and attorneys; one state Department of Transportation; one tribe; and representatives from other Federal agencies. Six plenary sessions addressed priority issues for all attendees, such as Section 6002 of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), while 18 breakout sessions allowed participants to attend discussions that best fit their interests and needs.

Primary themes woven throughout the event were global climate change,

improving the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Documentation, Section 4(f), and fiscal constraint. Other central points of discussion were how to manage upcoming changes in FHWA leadership and administration as well as reauthorization of SAFETEA-LU, which will expire on September 30, 2009. By the conference's end, participants commented that they were walking away with a clear message on the status of these critical issues.

Preconference Training Options

One new feature of this year's conference was a series of preconference trainings, held on Monday, June 15. Each participant could attend up to two of five half-day trainings or one full-day advanced training seminar on the confluence of

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and transportation decisionmaking. Topics for the half-day training sessions included:

- Air Quality 101 Workshop
- Environmental Impacts for Innovative Finance Projects
- Managing the NEPA Process
- Essential Elements of NEPA
- Integrating Green and Gray Infrastructure: The Eco-Logical Approach to the Passage of Wild Things

These training sessions, attended by 70 conference participants and led by subject-matter experts, offered a mix of presentations for multiple user levels and roundtable discussions. This format allowed participants with more experience on specific topics to share their knowledge with less experienced colleagues.

The Marketplace: Another Successful Addition

Another new feature of this year's conference was the "environmental marketplace," an exhibit hall filled with program booths and offering roundtable discussions hosted by subject-matter experts representing various FHWA programs and those of other attending agencies. These included the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials' (AASHTO) Center for Environmental Excellence, the US Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution, and a number of FHWA programs such as Eco-Logical, Planning Environment Linkages (PEL), and the Environmental Review Toolkit.

The marketplace provided an alternative to formal conference presentations, serving as a space for more focused discussion and information exchange in small, informal groups. Interacting with experts one-on-one expanded participants' knowledge and allowed for clarification of complex topics as well as an introduction to new and valuable tools. Topics included Bicycle and Pedestrian Issues, Border Issues, Environmental Commitment Tracking, Environmental Competency Building, Environmental Impacts of Winter Maintenance, Environmental Justice, Environmental Research, Geographic Information Systems, NEPA-Related Hot Topics, SAFETEA-LU Pilot Programs from Sections 6004 and 6005, Sustainability/Green Highways, and Wild and Scenic Rivers.

Congratulations and Farewell to Fred Skaer

This year we celebrate the retirement of Fred Skaer, Director of the Office of Project Development and Environmental Review (HEPE). Fred began working with FHWA as a transportation planner in 1974. In his 34 years with the agency, he served in three Division Offices and at Headquarters. Among his greatest accomplishments were his role in implementing the environmental streamlining provisions of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century, Executive Order 13274, and Context Sensitive Solutions. Fred will be greatly missed, but his valuable contribution to FHWA is sure to be felt for many years to come.



"Fred, heading down the retirement highway, downshift to a new gear."

Contact Information

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Look What's New!

Stay tuned; proceedings and presentations from the 2008 Environmental Conference will soon be posted on the web at <http://www.environment.fhwa.dot.gov/conference/>.

FHWA is currently soliciting interest in the hosting of workshops entitled Linking Conservation and Transportation Planning during 2008 and 2009. The workshops, held by FHWA, are aimed at helping state Departments of Transportation, Metropolitan Planning Organizations, and state and Federal resource agencies to coordinate and integrate transportation and conservation planning activities. For more information, visit http://environment.fhwa.dot.gov/integ/resources_training.asp or contact Becky Lupes at Rebecca.lupes@dot.gov or 202-366-7808.

FHWA is also soliciting feedback on the FY09 Research Plan for the Surface Transportation Environment and Planning Cooperative Research Program (STEP). FHWA requests suggestions for research that should be pursued within each of the 18 emphasis areas. Feedback should be received by September 22, 2008. For more information, visit <http://knowledge.fhwa.dot.gov/cops/step/nsf/home/>.