

PUBLICROADS

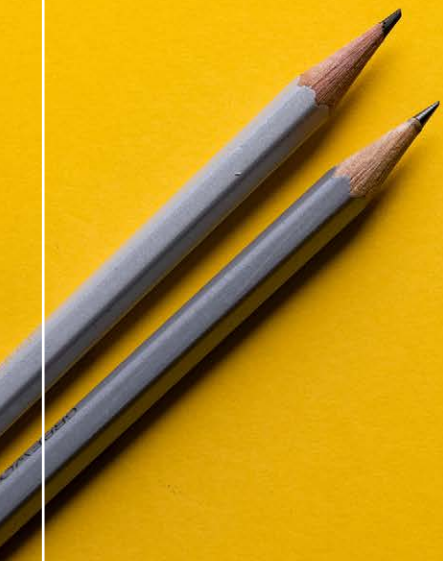
Writing for *Public Roads*: **How-To Guide**




U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration

FHWA-HRT-20-026





You should write for *Public Roads!*



This booklet will introduce you to options for writing for *Public Roads* so your content can reach the magazine's wide readership. In these pages, you will find descriptions of article types, as well as submission deadlines and requirements for each type.

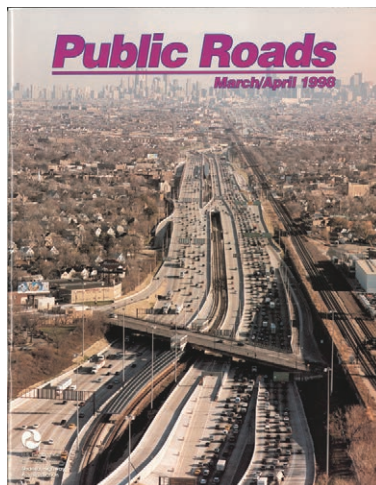
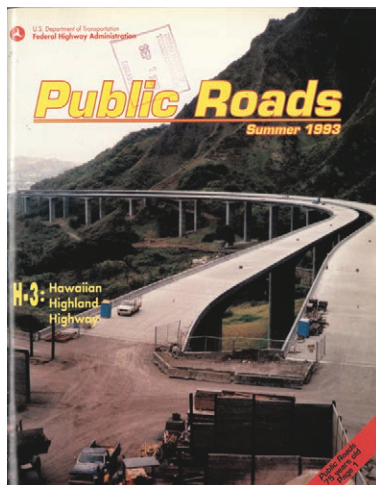
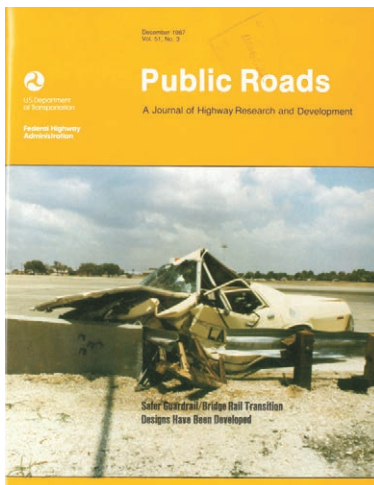
Public Roads is the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA's) premier magazine that presents information of keen interest to highway industry professionals:

- Advances and innovations in highway and traffic research and technology.
- Critical national transportation issues.
- Developments in FHWA policies and programs.
- Important activities and achievements of FHWA and others in the highway community.

With a readership that spans over 80,000 individuals¹ across the United States and more than 7 countries (including Australia, Canada, China, Germany, India, Russia, and the United Kingdom), *Public Roads* offers FHWA and State department of transportation (DOT) staff² an avenue for communicating both technical and general-interest topics with peers (e.g., engineers, scientists, and economists) and other stakeholders across the highway industry.

¹Internal data obtained from web tracking.

²Other Federal agencies, local and Tribal DOTs, field researchers and practitioners, and academia may also submit content for *Public Roads* but are encouraged to collaborate with FHWA and State DOTs.



There are many ways you can contribute to *Public Roads*. From full-length feature articles to 200-word summaries, choose the option that best fits the information you want to share.



Feature Article

A detailed, substantive article that typically spans two to six magazine pages. Each magazine issue contains between four and six feature articles.



Guest Editorial

A one-page article, typically drafted by a senior leader within FHWA or another transportation agency, that briefly introduces high-profile initiatives or shares agency goals. Guest editorials may focus on a topic related to a feature article in the issue.



Departments

Recurring sections with summaries of topics of general interest; notices of recent publications in research, development, and technology applications; internet-related information applicable to transportation professionals; and programs and courses offered by the National Highway Institute.



Advertisement

A one-page promotion of a program or initiative in a visual format. Ads do not need to be tied directly to any article featured in the issue.

View past issues of the magazine for samples of each writing option: <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/publicroads/past.cfm>



Feature Articles



Detailed, substantive articles

A feature article is a longer, more detailed article that typically spans two to six pages but may run longer on occasion if appropriate per the topic and as space in the magazine allows. Each issue of *Public Roads* contains between four and six feature articles. The *Public Roads* Editorial Board (which consists of the FHWA Executive Director and several Associate Administrators) reviews all suggested story ideas for feature articles, selecting topics that fit with agency goals and the scope and intended audience of the magazine.

The process for developing a feature article includes four main steps.

Step 1. Prepare a proposal of your story idea for review by the Editorial Board.

A story idea is a brief (half- to one-page) summary about the topic of your article and should include the following information:

- A brief introduction to the project, program, or milestone (such as an anniversary).
- Bullet points—about four to six—noting any results or data points, challenges identified during the project and the solutions identified to solve them, project benefits, and/or next steps.
- Anticipated authors (no more than four bylined authors).

Step 2. Wait for approval from the Editorial Board.

The Marketing and Communications Team in the Office of Corporate Research, Technology, and Innovation Management submits batches of story ideas to the Editorial Board every two months for review and approval. Once the Editorial Board approves a story idea, the editorial team will work with you to determine in which magazine issue your article will be published. The issue in which your article will appear is a decision that depends on articles that are already scheduled and your availability. The editorial team will also provide you with author guidelines, templates, and other helpful information to support the development of your outline and subsequent article.

Step 3. Prepare and deliver an outline of your article.

Expand your story-idea proposal into an article outline and email it to the editorial team by the predetermined deadline (see table 1). The editorial team will provide feedback to help you develop and refine your article.

Step 4. Prepare and deliver your article manuscript.

Produce a draft manuscript and deliver it to the editorial team by the predetermined deadline.

Requirements

Your feature article draft manuscript must include the following:

- 1,200 to 3,600 words (2 to 6 magazine pages).
- A brief bio (25 to 50 words) for each bylined author.
- 6 to 8 high-resolution digital photos or graphics (300-dots-per-inch [dpi] JPEGs of 4 by 6 inches at a minimum).
- A title, a single sentence summarizing the article (known as “deck copy”), and recommended subheadings.

Recommendations

- Avoid obvious opinions or statements that are difficult to back up.
- Include URLs to sources for any data cited.
- Refrain from promoting a particular brand of material or equipment; for example, use generalized terms such as “asphalt paver” instead of “Caterpillar” or “loader” instead of “Komatsu.”

More information on the format of an article, as well as detailed guidelines for submitting photos, can be found here:

<https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/publicroads/author.cfm>

Deadlines for Feature Articles

Deadlines for feature articles are set by working backward from the publication date of the magazine issue. In general, draft manuscripts are due six months prior to the print date of the magazine issue; for example, the draft manuscript for an article in the Autumn issue, which is printed in October, would be due in May. Outlines are due two months prior to

manuscripts, allowing time for the editorial team to review proposed articles and provide suggestions and feedback. The suggested deadlines for story ideas in table 1 will ensure you receive approval from the Editorial Board before you invest resources in writing the outline and manuscript.

Table 1. Deadlines for feature articles.

Issue (Months)	Deadline for Story Ideas	Deadline for Outlines	Deadline for Manuscripts	Estimated Print Date
Winter (January–March)	April 1*	May 1*	July 1*	January
Spring (April–June)	August 1	September 1	November 1	April
Summer (July–September)	October 1	December 1	February 1	July
Autumn (October–December)	February 1	March 1	May 1	October

***Deadlines for the Winter issue are set earlier to ensure more time to complete the issue before the Transportation Research Board Annual Meeting, which typically takes place mid-January. For the Winter issue to be available for distribution at the Annual Meeting, draft manuscripts are due seven months prior (i.e., July).**



Guest Editorials



Short articles presenting high-profile initiatives or sharing agency goals

A guest editorial is typically drafted by a senior leader within FHWA or another transportation agency. This one-page piece is a great way to briefly introduce high-profile initiatives or share agency goals. Guest editorials may also focus on a

topic related to a feature article in the issue. Drafts for guest editorials are due at least three months prior to the print date of the magazine issue (see table 2).

Requirements

Your guest editorial must include the following:

- 550 words, maximum.
- A title that introduces the theme or topic of the editorial.
- Your full name and title as it should appear in the magazine.
- A high-resolution headshot (300-dpi JPEG of 4 by 6 inches at a minimum).
- An electronic image of your signature (300-dpi JPEG).

Recommendations

- Avoid using first person (e.g., me, I, us, we, our) and instead use third person (e.g., the Nation, the agency, FHWA).
- Reference one or more articles scheduled for the issue, if appropriate.
- Avoid obvious opinions or statements that are difficult to validate.
- Include URLs to sources for any data cited.

Table 2. Deadlines for guest editorial submissions.

Issue (Months)	Deadline for Content	Estimated Print Date
Winter (January–March)	September 1*	January
Spring (April–June)	January 1	April
Summer (July–September)	April 1	July
Autumn (October–December)	July 1	October


*Deadline is set earlier to ensure more time to complete the Winter issue before the Transportation Research Board Annual Meeting.

See samples from previous issues: <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/publicroads/past.cfm>



Departments

Recurring sections with summaries of topics of general interest, recent publications, internet-related information, and available programs and courses



Public Roads has a number of departments, which are recurring sections of the magazine with summaries of topics of general interest; notices of recent publications in research, development, and technology applications; internet-related information applicable to transportation professionals; and

programs and courses offered by the National Highway Institute. While some of these departments are reserved for specific authors, most are available to you as another way to share your content.

Hot Topic

One-page article intended to accommodate important subjects that are of particular interest near the print date of a magazine issue.

Along the Road

Information about current and upcoming activities, developments, trends, and items of general interest to the highway community.

Internet Watch

A showcase for new resources developed by FHWA or its partners that are available on the web, such as a software tool or resource portal.

Communication Product Updates

Summaries of select publications developed by FHWA staff.

Innovation Corner

Highlights of new innovations; this department is written by the FHWA Office of Innovative Program Delivery.

Training Update

Programs and courses currently offered by the National Highway Institute; these updates are written by the National Highway Institute.

Hot Topic

The Hot Topic department is intended to accommodate subjects that are of particular interest near the print date of a magazine issue. Hot Topics are one page in length, and as such, they do not require the longer lead time needed for lengthier pieces, such as feature articles. See table 3 for submission deadlines.

Requirements

Your Hot Topic draft must include the following:

- A title that introduces the theme or topic of the article.
- 500–550 words that describe the subject.
- A high-resolution image (300-dpi JPEG of 4 by 6 inches at a minimum), such as a photo or graph, that is related to your topic; a logo or screenshot may be used if suitable imagery is not available.

Along the Road

The Along the Road department provides short summaries about current and upcoming activities, developments, trends, and items of general interest to the highway community. The information in this section of the magazine comes from sources and personnel throughout USDOT. The Along the Road department is a great place to share success stories and technical news. See table 3 for submission deadlines.

Requirements

Your Along the Road draft must include the following:

- A title that introduces the topic of your summary.
- 200–300 words that summarize the latest developments in your topic.
- A high-resolution image (300-dpi JPEG of 4 by 6 inches at a minimum) to accompany your summary.
- A URL or contact name and email address where readers can get more information.

Table 3 contains suggested deadlines for department submissions.

Internet Watch

The Internet Watch department is intended to showcase a new resource developed by FHWA or its partners that is available on the web, such as a software tool or resource portal. See table 3 for submission deadlines.

Requirements

Your Internet Watch draft must include the following:

- A title that introduces the theme or topic of the article.
- 600 words, maximum, that describe the online resource.
- A URL that leads readers to the online resource you are describing.
- A high-resolution image (300-dpi JPEG of 4 by 6 inches at a minimum), such as a screenshot of a website.

Communication Product Updates

The Communication Product Updates department highlights select publications developed by FHWA staff. Typically, *Public Roads* features summaries of three or four publications in each magazine issue. See table 3 for submission deadlines.

Requirements

Your Communication Product Updates draft must include the following:

- 300 words, maximum, that describe the product and/or update.
- A high-resolution image (300-dpi JPEG of 4 by 6 inches at a minimum) of the publication's cover.
- A URL where readers can access the featured publication online.

Table 3. Deadlines for department submissions.

Issue (Months)	Deadline for Content	Estimated Print Date
Winter (January–March)	September 1*	January
Spring (April–June)	January 1	April
Summer (July–September)	April 1	July
Autumn (October–December)	July 1	October

*Deadline is set earlier to ensure more time to complete the Winter issue before the Transportation Research Board Annual Meeting.



Advertisements



One-page visual promotions of a program or initiative

A one-page ad is a great way to promote a program or initiative in a more visual format. An ad does not need to be directly tied to an article in the issue. *Public Roads* has run ads to promote Work Zone Awareness Week, the Professional Development Program, Federal Aid Essentials, the Eisenhower Transportation Fellowship Program, CARMASM, the National Roadway Safety Awards, and National Roundabouts Week, just to name a few examples. If your ad is tied to an observance month or week, it is best to run the ad in an issue that would be printed closest to that date.

There is often room for one or two ads per magazine issue. The process of creating an ad is relatively simple and involves submitting content (see Requirements) to the editorial team, which will work with you to design the ad. Content for ads

is due at least three months prior to the print date of the magazine issue. See table 4 for submission deadlines.

Requirements

Your draft ad content must include the following:

- Bullet points—about four to six—highlighting the program, event, or reason for the ad.
- A URL that provides readers with further information.
- Several high-resolution images (300-dpi JPEGs of 4 by 6 inches at a minimum) that are original (preferred) or stock photography.
- High-resolution program or event logo(s), if applicable (be sure that your logo has been approved by Public Affairs before submission to the editorial team).

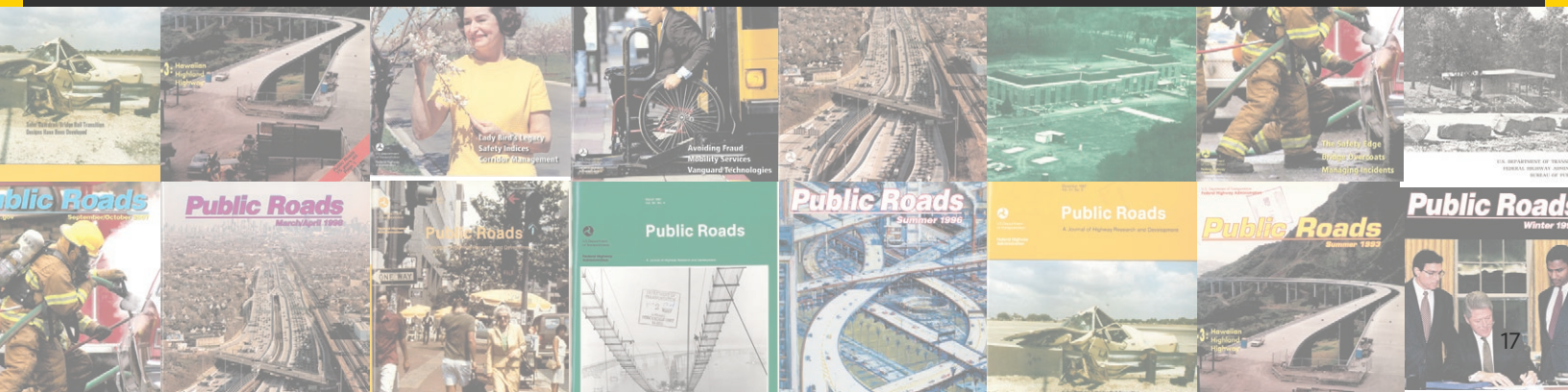
Table 4. Deadlines for advertisement submissions.

Issue (Months)	Deadline for Content	Estimated Print Date
Winter (January–March)	September 1*	January
Spring (April–June)	January 1	April
Summer (July–September)	April 1	July
Autumn (October–December)	July 1	October

*Deadline is set earlier to ensure more time to complete the Winter issue before the Transportation Research Board Annual Meeting.



Public Roads offers many options for writers, so there is surely an option best suited to your content or the information you would like to share. If you are interested in writing an article or contributing to a department, send your content to PublicRoads@dot.gov. We look forward to working with you!



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