

Human Environment Digest

October 15, 2020

Welcome to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Office of Human Environment biweekly email digest. This digest shares the latest information from a range of Federal and non-Federal sources, addressing transportation and its relationship to the human environment. Through this information exchange, FHWA hopes to foster dialogue at all levels and continue to further the state of the practice on these important topics in support of safety; infrastructure, including accelerated project delivery, access to jobs, and community revitalization; technology and design innovation; and accountability, including, data-driven decisions and performance-based planning.

For more information on any of these topics, see the FHWA Related Links on the sidebar.

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*The information provided in this mailing does not necessarily reflect the view of the Federal Highway Administration or the U.S. Department of Transportation.



Safety

FHWA Updates Pedestrian and Bicyclist Road Safety Audit Guide and Prompt List

The *Federal Highway Administration* published the [Pedestrian and Bicyclist Road Safety Audit Guide and Prompt List](#), which serves as an update to the [Pedestrian Road Safety Audit Guidelines and Prompt Lists](#) (2007) and [Bicycle Road Safety Audit Guidelines and Prompt Lists](#) (2012). The updated resource combines content into a single document, outlining information on how to conduct road safety audits (RSA) and effectively assess the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists. It discusses the RSA process, basic safety principles, and potential hazards affecting users.

NHTSA Releases Data on Motor Vehicle Traffic Fatalities

The *National Highway Traffic Safety Administration* (NHTSA) released a [preview of 2019 data](#) from the Fatality Analysis Reporting System and [preliminary fatality estimates](#) for the first half of 2020. Both datasets show a decrease in total traffic fatalities during 2019 and into the first half of 2020, including a decline in total traffic volume by more than 16 percent between January and June 2020. In addition to the data, NHTSA published two companion reports discussing the [traffic safety environment during the second half of 2020](#), as well as [drug and alcohol prevalence in seriously and fatally injured road users](#) before and during COVID-19. The findings indicate continued decline in overall traffic fatalities during the second half of 2020, in addition to trends in unsafe driving patterns and behaviors. The research suggests drivers who remained on the roads engaged in more risky behavior, such as speeding, not wearing seat belts, and driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

IIHS Study Compares Crash Rates between Older Adult and Middle-Aged Drivers

The *Insurance Institute for Highway Safety* released a [study](#) comparing crash rates and safety trends among drivers age 70 and over with drivers ages 35-54. Researchers analyzed how crash rates have evolved for various age group between 1997 and 2018. The findings indicate older adult drivers had fewer fatal crashes per licensed driver and fewer police-reported crashes per mile traveled than those aged 35-54. It suggests improvements in vehicle safety, infrastructure, and health, and changes to licensing policies contributed to the decrease in crashes among older adults.



Infrastructure

Research Analyzes Benefits of Interconnected City Centers to Support Regional Transportation

The *National Institute for Transportation and Communities* published a [study](#) analyzing how interconnected city centers support regional transportation planning in the Salt Lake City region in Utah. The study notes an interconnected or "polycentric" region is a network of compact developments linked by multimodal transportation options. These areas enhance public health, environmental sustainability, social cohesion, and economic diversity through the availability of mobility options. Researchers are hosting a webinar on [January 19, 2021 at 1:00-2:00 PM ET](#) to discuss the study.

Study Highlights Pedestrian and Bicyclist Preferences for Tree Locations by Sidewalks and Cycle Tracks

The *Cities Journal* published a [study](#) examining pedestrian and bicyclist preferences for tree locations by sidewalks and cycle tracks in Boston, Massachusetts. The study surveyed users to compare their preferences about the inclusion and location of street trees, which generally promote active transportation and physical activity because they provide shade and cooling benefits. The findings show users preferred trees and trees with bushes between the cycle track and the street, compared with no trees or trees in the sidewalk.



Innovation

BTS Launches Interactive Maps of Bikeshare and E-scooter Trends and Impacts

The *U.S. Bureau of Transportation Statistics* (BTS) launched interactive maps visualizing the impacts on bikeshare (docked or dockless) and electric scooters (e-scooters) during COVID-19 through August 2020. One map displays [micromobility systems by city since 2015](#), which indicates an overall decline in systems in 2019. BTS also published an interactive map showing the [ridership levels of docked bikeshare systems](#), featuring monthly and trip-level data to better understand the impacts on travel behavior. The map on [bikeshare and e-scooter operations](#) shows the effects on these systems from January to August 2020, including whether the systems suspended operations, delayed opening, or closed operations. The maps allow users to compare data across different time periods to examine how the spatial distribution of micromobility trips have changed in response to evolving local demands.

New Medical Codes Categorize Injuries Related to Micromobility Devices

The International Classification of Diseases, Tenth Revision, Clinical Modification (ICD-10-CM) is used to categorize diseases and injuries, in order to facilitate tracking, analysis, and research. As part of the [fiscal year 2021 version of ICD-10-CM](#), there are new codes categorizing injuries related to micromobility devices such as electric scooters. [Led by a team of researchers](#) at the *Collaborative Sciences Center for Road Safety*, the new codes aim to improve the ability to track injuries from micromobility devices by standardizing key terms. The ICD-10-CM has approximately 40 new codes categorizing injuries related to micromobility devices. The codes provide more accurate transportation and injury data for medical staff, safety professionals, practitioners, and researchers. Researchers released an [updated micromobility coding poster](#) to raise awareness.



Accountability

Webinar Discusses Economic and Business Effects of Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvements

The *National Institute for Transportation and Communities* hosted a webinar analyzing the economic and business effects of bicycle and pedestrian improvements. Researchers provided an overview of a study that examined the economic outcomes of bicycle infrastructure on 14 corridors in six U.S. cities. The findings indicate active transportation infrastructure had either positive or non-significant impacts on the local economy based on sales and employment. The webinar recording and presentation materials are [available online](#).

AARP Livable Communities Virtual Transportation Workshop Materials Online

AARP Livable Communities hosted a virtual transportation workshop on September 15 and 16 to explore mobility options supporting vibrant neighborhoods, improving public health, and connecting older adults and people of all ages to economic, social, and civic opportunities. The event featured panel discussions, presentations, best practices, and other resources across three themes: safety, accessibility, and resiliency. Video recordings from the event are [available online](#).

Walk/Bike/Places 2020 Conference Report Available Online

Project for Public Spaces published a [report](#) from its virtual Walk/Bike/Places 2020 Conference held on August 3-7, 2020. The event included more than 50 concurrent sessions and activities addressing the implementation of transportation planning and placemaking. The online sessions facilitated discussions across seven topics: place, planning, transit, health, infrastructure, excellence, and advocacy.