Human Environment Digest

March 5, 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

National Bike to School Day is May 6

The ninth annual *National Bike to School Day* is on May 6, 2020 and registration is now open. This event brings together families, school officials, and community leaders to celebrate safe, active transportation. It also highlights improvements that would allow more people to safely walk and bike while inspiring long-term change.

New Report Analyzes Pedestrian Traffic Fatalities By State

The *Governors Highway Safety Association* recently published a report examining State and national trends in pedestrian deaths during 2019. The report outlines a series of factors that may result in pedestrian fatalities such as unsafe road crossings and distracted driving. It also discusses next steps to better support roadway safety to decrease pedestrian and motor vehicle crashes.

New Research Examines Relationship Between Driver Yielding Behaviors and Car Value

A recent study published in *the Journal of Transport & Health* analyzes the rate at which drivers of cars of varying value points yield to crossing pedestrians. Researchers found that estimated car cost is a key indicator of whether or not drivers yield to pedestrians. The study found that drivers of expensive cars are less likely to yield to pedestrians than those driving less expensive cars. The study shows that the gender and race of pedestrians also contributes to this safety issue, as researchers witnessed drivers yielding less frequently for men and people of color waiting at mid-block crosswalks.

Infrastructure

U.S. DOT Announces Availability of $1 Billion for BUILD Grant Funding

The *United States Department of Transportation (U.S. DOT)* Secretary Elaine L. Chao recently announced $1 billion in available grant funding as part of the Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Transportation Discretionary Grants program. The grant funding will support planning and capital investment projects that improve surface transportation infrastructure such as roads, bridges, multimodal connections, and more. The Fiscal Year 2020 BUILD program plans to award 50 percent of grant funds to projects located in rural communities, aligning with the Department's Rural Opportunities to Use Transportation for Economic Success initiative. The Notice of Funding Opportunity application period will remain open until May 18, 2020.

New Research Examines Interaction Between Bikeshare Systems and Public Transit

A recent study published in the *Transportation Research Record: Journal of the Transportation Research Board* examines the spatial-temporal relationship between bikeshare systems and public transit. The published study analyzes whether bikeshare systems help close the first/last-mile network gaps that riders often face with public transit, or whether bikeshare service competes with transit by providing an alternative travel mode without concerns regarding waiting time and schedule delays.

Innovation

New Report Analyzes Micromobility Safety

The *International Transport Forum* recently published a report analyzing the safety of electric scooters (e-scooters) and other forms of micromobility. The report examines the road safety risks associated with e-scooters, skateboards, and skates as compared to bicyclists and motorists. The report found that e-scooters and bicycles are similarly safe, highlighting the importance of improved regulations to better support micromobility. Researchers found that "a trip by car or by motorcycle in a dense urban area is more likely to result in a traffic fatality than a trip by micro-vehicle," a category that includes both traditional and powered bicycles, scooters, skates, and skateboards.

San Francisco, California Begins Pilot Requiring Permittees to Add Accessible Electric Scooter Models for People With Disabilities

San Francisco, California is currently piloting a new requirement for the companies permitted to operate electric scooter (e-scooter) fleets to include models for people with disabilities. The city instructed the companies to develop devices with input from the disabilities community rather than requiring specific types of devices. Through the adaptive scooter pilot program, a total of 50 adaptive scooters, which range in device type and size, are available to the public. The city's goal is to make e-scooters more accessible and inclusive to riders who have not previously had access to shared e-scooter programs. The lessons learned from this pilot will help inform the city's future regulations.

Accountability

New Research Examines Walking and Bicycling Trends

A recent study published in the *Journal of Transport & Health* examined walking and bicycling trends across the country between 2001 and 2017. Based on data from the 2017 National Household Travel Survey, researchers found that national rates of daily walking slightly increased while bicycling rates remained consistent. The research also highlights the impact that demographic, socioeconomic, and spatial variations have on active travel rates.

Research Highlights Social Equity Implications of Congestion Management Strategies

The *Transportation Sustainability Research Center* at the *University of California, Berkeley* released a report on the social equity impacts of congestion management strategies. It discusses a range of strategies related to pricing, parking and curb policies, operations, infrastructure, transportation service, and taxation. The report includes a comprehensive list of 30 congestion management strategies and examines whether they help reduce social equity barriers or create additional challenges.

New Research Analyzes Transportation Impacts Using Vehicle Miles Traveled Rather than Level of Service

The *National Center for Sustainable Transportation* at the *University of California, Davis* released a policy brief on transportation impact assessments using vehicle miles traveled (VMT). The brief highlights the differences between using VMT and Level of Service (LOS) metrics to assess the transportation impacts of land use development projects. Researchers analyzed 153 projects in Los Angeles between 2001 and 2016 to determine how using VMT rather than LOS could affect transportation impact assessments for urban development. They found that using VMT could streamline the permitting process, help reduce delays and costs for housing development, and incentivize infill development.