

## Human Environment Digest

July 25, 2019

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

#### New Technology Makes Transit Safer and More Accessible for the Visually Impaired

A recent [article](#) from *City Lab* reports how improved signage and technology have helped to make public transit more accessible to the visually impaired. The new technology, when paired with a smartphone, allows visually impaired individuals to scan their environment to locate strategically positioned tags that help users to navigate through metro stations and bus stops.

#### European Union Enacts Rule Requiring New Electric Vehicles to Emit Noise

The *British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)* reports that the European Union (EU) enacted [a new rule](#) requiring electric vehicles to be fitted with a noise-emitting device. The rule was developed due to concerns that electric vehicles are too quiet, putting pedestrians and cyclists at risk. This concern focuses on models of hybrid and electric cars sold in the EU that must have the Acoustic Vehicle Alert System (AVAS) installed, which will make a sound when travelling at or below 12 miles per hour.



### Infrastructure

#### Report Reveals the Potential for Demand-Based Parking Programs

The *Transportation Research Board (TRB)* published a [report](#) on findings from a demand-based parking pilot program in Washington, DC. The *District Department of Transportation (DDOT)*, using federal funding from the *Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA's)* Value Pricing Pilot Program, implemented a demand-based pricing pilot program in various neighborhoods across the city in 2014. The pilot revealed that the demand-based pricing program made it easier to find parking in certain neighborhoods, suggests that similar programs can be both cost-efficient and effective, and provides suggestions for expanding demand-based pricing more broadly.

#### Report Analyzes Impact of Bicycle Infrastructure on Business Performance

The *Transportation Research Board (TRB)* released [a report](#) analyzing the relationship between bicycle infrastructure and business performance in San Francisco. The research indicated that new restaurants and grocery stores had significantly higher sales when located on corridors with bicycle infrastructure, while sales declined for home or auto-related goods. This research can assist communities to leverage opportunities to support businesses that benefit from bicycle infrastructure and mitigate the influence of this infrastructure on industries that may be adversely affected.

#### Paper Examines User Preferences for Bicycle Infrastructure in Communities with Emerging Cycling Cultures

A recent [paper](#) released by the *Transportation Research Board (TRB)* examines preferred bicycle infrastructure in communities with emerging cycling cultures. The findings in the paper rely on surveys conducted in a number of communities in Alabama and Tennessee, which indicate a significant preference for separated bicycle infrastructure and options that exclude on-street parking. The report presents insights and strategies that planners and policymakers can employ in order to design successful bicycle infrastructure that attracts riders and promotes safety.

## AARP Announces 2019 Community Challenge Grantees

The *American Association of Retired Persons (AARP)* [announced 159 quick-action grant projects](#) that will be funded through its Community Challenge. The program focuses on quick-action projects for permanent physical improvements and temporary demonstrations that support residents of all ages. The awarded projects focus on improving multimodal transportation, including bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, such as multiuse paths, crosswalks, and bicycle sharing stations; wayfinding signage; traffic calming devices and demonstrations; and other projects that promote safety and access for all users.

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### Innovation

#### Report Considers Urban Curbside Freight Management

A [report](#) from the *Transportation Research Board (TRB)* assesses a pilot completed in Washington, D.C. to reduce the number of illegally parked non-commercial vehicles blocking loading zones. The pilot used a targeted approach to address this challenge by increasing parking prices and extending the hours of operation of loading zones. Preventing double parking in loading zones will help reduce congestion, support economic development, and improve safety for all users of the street.

#### Report Identifies E-Bikes as Beneficial Tool to Incentivize Active Transportation

Portland State University's *Transportation Research and Education Center (TREC)* [published a series of papers](#) outlining the potential of e-bikes to incentivize active transportation for users who may be concerned about the barrier to using a traditional bicycle or unable to use one. The findings indicate that increasing e-bike mode share will help to lower transportation emissions, while also reducing congestion on roadways. The papers outline four types of e-bike incentive programs that help to subsidize the high cost of e-bikes and lower the barriers to expanding their use.

#### Public Transit Agencies Develop Rewards Programs to Boost Ridership

A recent [article](#) published by *Wired* reveals new strategies that public transit agencies are adopting in an effort to boost ridership. A number of transit agencies across the country have implemented rewards and loyalty programs that offer transit users benefits for driving less frequently. These programs aim to attract new riders and help transit agencies reverse ridership declines of recent years in cities across the country.

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### Accountability

#### TRB Releases Strategic Communications Toolkit to Improve Public Support for Transit Projects

The *Transportation Research Board's (TRB's)* *Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP)* published a [strategic communications toolkit](#) that explores the use and effectiveness of strategic communications in building public support for transit projects. The toolkit contains an analysis of communication approaches used by cities and transit agencies across the country and is designed to serve as a guide for cities to implement effective communication strategies for transit-priority projects.

#### Report Outlines Project Prioritization Approach Measuring Access to Jobs

The *Transportation Research Board (TRB)* published a [report](#) outlining the accessibility scoring approach used by the *Virginia Department of Transportation's* Smart Scale project prioritization process. The scoring approach identifies how candidate projects will support an increase in residents' access to jobs, and could serve as a framework for other communities that seek to quantify the impact of transportation projects on this measure.