

Human Environment Digest

September 10, 2015

Welcome to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Office of Human Environment weekly 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.

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

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

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Bicycle/Pedestrian



Surgeon General Announces His Call to Action to Promote Walking and Walkable Communities

The *U.S. Surgeon General's* Call to Action campaign, called "Step It Up!," recognizes the importance of physical activity for people of all ages and abilities. "Step It Up!" includes five strategic goals: 1) make walking a national priority; 2) design communities that make it safe and easy to walk for people of all ages and abilities; 3) promote programs and policies to support walking where people live, learn, work, and play; 4) provide information to encourage walking and improve walkability; and 5) fill surveillance, research, and evaluation gaps related to walking and walkability.

Delivering Safe, Comfortable, and Connected Pedestrian and Bicycle Networks: A Review of International Practices

The *Federal Highway Administration* (FHWA) and the *University of North Carolina* (UNC) [published a report](#) examining noteworthy and innovative international designs and treatments that improve bicycle and pedestrian safety. The report covers practices in 11 countries and focuses on such topic areas as signalization, policy change, and network infrastructure.

DC's Capital Bikeshare Reduces Traffic Congestion

A recent study examined whether or not Washington, DC's Capital Bikeshare program [reduces traffic congestion](#) in the urban environment. The researchers found evidence that the presence of a Capital Bikeshare dock reduces traffic congestion by an average of two to three percent. There is also evidence that there is a spillover effect that causes higher traffic congestion in areas neighboring bike stations. This study only examined within-city commuting decisions.

Community-Based Pedestrian Safety Training in Virtual Reality

A [trial study was conducted](#) by the *Southeastern Transportation Research, Innovation, Development and Education Center* (STRIDE) to see how children would respond to pedestrian safety training in a semi-mobile, semi-immersive virtual pedestrian environment placed at schools and community centers. Forty-four children ages seven and eight completed six 15-minute training sessions in the virtual pedestrian environment and their pedestrian skills were pre- and post-assessed. The results show promise for this type of early childhood training.

Changing Perceptions of Cycling in the African-American Community to Encourage Participation in a Sport that Promotes Health in Adults

The *Center for Transportation Research at the University of Texas at Austin* [published a report](#) that studies two intervention strategies designed to influence perceptions of cycling among African-Americans. Past research shows that cycling disparities between African-Americans and other ethnic groups are linked to negative perceptions among inexperienced cyclists and non-cyclists. This study examines African-American cycling perceptions and fills a void in addressing the lack of bicycle ridership in the African-American community.

Economic Development



New Attainable Housing and Social Equity Initiative Pilot Program

Smart Growth America's LOCUS group announced a new pilot program aimed at ensuring accessibility and social equity in walkable urban places. The [Attainable Housing and Social Equity Pilot Program](#) adopts a private sector, place-based approach to address economic development needs and social equity. A number of U.S. Cities will be selected to participate. The first city selected is Somerville, MA which kicked off its work with a [public meeting in July](#),

Health



August Edition of the Active Living Research Newsletter

The August edition of the [Active Living Research Newsletter](#), sponsored by *Active Living Research*, is available online. This issue highlights several upcoming events as it relates to active living, from public health to bicycle and pedestrian topics.

Livability



Public Roads Article, Changing the Landscape of Livability

The *Federal Highway Administration's* (FHWA) Public Roads newsletter published an article titled, "[Changing the Landscape of Livability](#)." The article discusses how the multiagency *Partnership for Sustainable Communities* has worked toward improving Federal policies and investments better serve U.S. citizens since its creation in 2009.

Map of Local Community Projects Funded by the Federal Government

The *Office of Management and Budget* (OMB) [created a map](#) that displays work being done by the Federal government in local communities across the country. The map shows projects from more than 15 Federal agencies with many transportation-related project being highlighted such as the Loyola Avenue-Union Passenger Terminal Streetcar Line in New Orleans, LA.

2015 Urban Mobility Scorecard Returns to Pre-Recession Levels

The annual [Urban Mobility Scorecard](#) produced by *INRIX* and the *Texas A&M Transportation Institute* shows that traffic congestion has returned to pre-recession levels. This gridlock keeps travelers stuck in their cars for nearly seven billion extra hours, summing to a total nationwide cost of \$160 billion. The report shows that traffic congestion is not just a big-city problem, but cities of all sizes are experiencing the challenge of increased traffic due to population growth, lower fuel prices, and lack of funding to build sufficient infrastructure.

Public Involvement



Expedited Public Transportation Improvement Initiative

The *Federal Transit Administration* (FTA) is looking for ways way to speed up the planning, approval, and delivery of FTA capital investments. The agency created the [Expedited Public Transportation Improvement](#) (XPEDITE) Initiative. The FTA is seeking public comment on the initiative through October 16, 2015.