



THE ROAD TO LIVABILITY

How State Departments of Transportation Are Using
Road Investments to Improve Community Livability

LIVABILITY—MUCH HAS BEEN DONE AND MUCH MORE IS POSSIBLE

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR JOHN HORSLEY

Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood has made “livability” one of the U.S. Department of Transportation’s (DOT) top priorities. We agree that transportation is a critical link in creating more livable communities, playing an important role in connecting affordable housing, good jobs, a safe and healthy environment, and strong schools.

As a representative of the state departments of transportation, I am proud of the work that has been done over the last two decades to invest in transportation projects that improve community quality of life.

Even before “livability” became a buzzword, many of us in the transportation field were working hard at improving the quality of life in neighborhoods, counties, cities, and states. Twelve years ago, First Lady Hillary Clinton helped create the Millennium Trails Program through the U.S. DOT, which channeled millions of dollars to build hundreds of walking and biking trails in communities throughout the country. And I was proud to see Kitsap County, Washington, where I served as a county commissioner for 17 years, designated as “the most livable community in America” by *Money Magazine*.

AASHTO’s reauthorization recommendations embrace much of what the Secretary is trying to accomplish: We support increasing federal transit assistance by 89 percent, with a goal to double transit ridership by 2030. We support continuation of the Transportation Enhancement Program and the many other programs through which State DOTs have channeled \$5.2 billion to fund thousands of biking and walking improvements over the last 10 years. And we support creating a technical assistance program for counties and cities to improve the coordination of transportation and land use plans, funded at \$100 million a year.

We appreciate that the U.S. DOT has broadened the scope of its “livable communities” proposal to include highways as well as transit, and to serve both urban and rural areas.

While State DOTs support what can be done through transit, walking, and biking to enhance “livability,” what has been missing from the national dialogue is what can be accomplished through road-related improvements.

Documented in this report are a remarkable number of ways state DOTs are working to enhance a community’s attractiveness, build its local economy, create a sense of place, preserve its character, enhance its safety, and improve the convenience of travel and access to services for all citizens. Most of this has been done working in close partnership with the Federal Highway Administration.

We have prepared this report to show what has been done and what is possible.



First Lady Hillary Clinton and John Horsley, then-Associate Deputy Secretary of the U.S. Department of Transportation, announced the new Millennium Trails program in 1998.





Photo courtesy of Short North Business Association.

THE ROAD TO LIVABILITY

HOW STATE DEPARTMENTS OF TRANSPORTATION ARE USING ROAD INVESTMENTS TO IMPROVE COMMUNITY LIVABILITY

WHAT IS A LIVABLE COMMUNITY?

Soon, members of Congress will be asked to decide “What makes a ‘livable’ community?” Since the U.S. Department of Transportation is making livability a top priority for future transportation funding, this is an important concept to define. While some would suggest livability means a life without cars, this definition really doesn’t work for the millions of Americans who have chosen the lifestyle that an automobile affords.

A public policy that addresses true livability must include not only urban but rural communities, not only the environment but also the economy, not only transit riders and bicyclists, but soccer moms and family vacationers at the Grand Canyon.

The Washington State Department of Transportation suggests that a “livable future” requires a balance of three key societal goals: vibrant communities, vital economy, and sustainable environment—all goals for which good transportation is essential.

In providing good transportation networks for their citizens, state DOTs have long been the incubator of such “livable” policies as community-sensitive design, historic preservation, asphalt recycling, and practical engineering. They support the expansion of choices for transportation users to include transit, walking, and biking. Daily, they are working with communities and demonstrating that livability can be accomplished through road-related improvements.

If enhancing livability is the objective of transportation legislation or regulation, then it must work for those who live in rural Montana just as much as it would for those in downtown Portland. Equating livability only to riding transit, walking, and biking, limits its relevance and excludes a wide range of improvements and community needs.



The new Charleston, WV, market is in a restored train station.

Photo courtesy of Leah Appel.

LIVABILITY MEANS CHOICES

- Realtor Tracy Wiens uses her hybrid Toyota to drive her clients around Portland, Ore, to visit properties, but on the weekends, she walks with her children to the nearby Mount Tabor City Park to bike.
- Barb and Don Abbruzzese, recently retired and living in a suburb of Columbus, Ohio, head out three times a week to drive down I-70, I-670, and I-315 to their Pilates class at McConnell Heart Health Center.
- In getting to her job in the Palisades neighborhood of Washington, DC, from the nearby suburb of Upper Marlboro, Md, Leah Appel rides a car to the Metro, hops the Green and Red lines to Dupont Circle, and then transfers to a bus—a two-hour trip each way.
- In downtown Charleston, West Virginia, Sandy Fisher uses her lunch break to walk her dog, “Mr. Mouse,” around her Capitol area neighborhood. Her bungalow is just minutes from her job, shopping, restaurants, and a quick drive to visit her mother at a nearby nursing home.

Every transportation project is an opportunity to improve the quality of life in a community.

Each of these people live in what they believe to be “livable communities”, whether it is in the heart of a downtown, a close-in suburb or farther out in a more rural area. And while much of the focus on livability has been about expanding the opportunities to use transit, or in making it easier to walk or bike, for many Americans these options are simply not practical in meeting their everyday needs for transportation.

ACHIEVING LIVABILITY THROUGH SMART TRANSPORTATION

State departments of transportation are using several techniques to improve the livability of their communities.

- Creating good-paying jobs
- Stimulating the broader economy
- Investing in green projects
- Revitalizing a small town's "Main Street"
- Transforming urban streets into neighborhood centers
- Preserving scenic country roads
- Creating Smart Transportation Solutions in tight economic times
- Enhancing neighborhoods through the enhancement program
- Making design responsive to community needs
- Integrating transportation and land use
- Using scenic byways to attract tourists and support local economies
- Promoting walking and biking
- Supporting travel and tourism

ROAD-RELATED INVESTMENTS PLAY A CRITICAL ROLE

State Departments of Transportation recognize that road-related investments can play a critical role in improving community livability. States see that road projects offer a multitude of opportunities to improve the quality of life in their communities and must be tailored to the environments they pass through. As a result, state DOTs are increasingly using the flexibility in the AASHTO roadway design guidelines to produce community-responsive approaches.

States are:

- Focusing on integrated planning solutions and increased public outreach;
- Designing facilities that are sensitive to the communities through which they pass; and
- Developing partnerships that achieve multiple community objectives: a strong economy; safe neighborhoods; vibrant, healthful, aesthetically pleasing settings; and the preservation of historical, cultural, and natural aspects valued by the community.

AASHTO's "livability" objective is to use transportation investments to improve the standard of living, the environment, and quality of life for all communities, rural, suburban, and urban.

The livability initiative should respect how many Americans choose to travel to basic community services from jobs and health care, to recreation and religious services. AASHTO supports the objective of providing more transportation choices for families to include travel by walking, biking, and transit. Enhancing community livability, however, cannot be restricted to this alone. For most Americans, driving is also a legitimate transportation choice, especially if it provides a more convenient way to get to a destination or is the only viable way to get there.



Photo courtesy of Arnold Agency/copyright SNBA.
"The Cap" over I-670 in Columbus, Ohio, has created a vibrant neighborhood with shops and restaurants.

A BAKER'S DOZEN OF WAYS STATE DOTs ARE INVESTING IN COMMUNITY LIVABILITY



Vice President Joe Biden announces the 2000th Recovery Act project. Behind him are transportation worker Frank Anzenberger and Michigan Governor Jennifer Granholm.

States are using funds from a variety of federal, state, and local resources to improve community livability.

1) CREATING GOOD-PAYING JOBS

Livability starts with a job. One year after the enactment of the Recovery Act, states and local governments have generated almost one million jobs through stimulus funding for highway and transit programs. This has resulted in the repair of 1,262 bridges, improvements to almost 35,000 miles of pavement, and the purchase of 7,400 buses.

But the real story of the Recovery Act has been about people: the people whose jobs were saved or who went back to work; the people who were able to make their mortgage payment, put their kids through school, and pay for health care.

As Susan Martinovich, AASHTO Vice President and Director of **Nevada's** DOT stated, "When you put money into infrastructure, you are putting contractors to work, engineers to work, you are putting the people who provide the materials, striping, paint, asphalt, and gravel to work."

In **Michigan**, veteran highway construction worker Frank Anzenberger had been out looking for a job for more than half a year when the Recovery Act was signed. Anzenberger was not only hired, but at a June 2009 Kalamazoo ceremony marking approval of the 2,000th transportation project funded by the stimulus bill, he introduced Vice President Joe Biden to the audience. "For me, the economic stimulus means that I'm going to have a weekly paycheck," Anzenberger said.

In **Washington State**, Michael Joseph was a construction laborer struggling to care for a wife battling cancer. He had only worked four months out of the previous year before he was hired to work on a project widening Interstate 5 between the Port of Tacoma and the King County line. "For me," said Joseph, "being able to pay for health care is everything."

In **Maryland**, Rhea Mayolo was a divorced mom trying to support her kids by working part-time jobs waiting tables and keeping books. Through the Recovery Act, she was hired by an engineering company to be their office manager. Working on a full-time job meant she could earn a decent living.

2) STIMULATING THE BROADER ECONOMY

As of April 12, 2010, 14,065 transportation projects worth \$37.4 billion have been approved through the Recovery Act. States have achieved a remarkable record of jobs created, highways rebuilt, and transit systems improved. But the benefit to the broader economy goes well beyond the infrastructure improvements themselves. The success of the Recovery Act will help sustain the economy, and create more jobs, more opportunities, and a better future.

In **Texas**, a new bridge across the Colorado River is helping the city of San Angelo keep its commitments to the largest new manufacturing plant it had seen in decades. In 2008, Martifer-Hirshfield Energy Systems had agreed to locate a wind tower construction plant in San Angelo, on the condition that an early 1900s rail bridge across the Colorado River be replaced. It was too low and

too narrow to carry Martifer's wind towers north to markets throughout the rest of the country. Only when stimulus funds came into play was the city able to replace the bridge.

In Johnson, **Rhode Island**, Mayor Joseph Polisena said he was "hell bent" to redevelop a "blighted" parcel of land just 300 yards from town hall that had sat vacant for 18 years. To widen and improve Hartford Avenue—a prerequisite for the parcel's redevelopment—the Rhode Island DOT had completed all the necessary planning and engineering, but lacked the funds necessary. Thanks to \$3.4 million in stimulus funding, RI DOT's work is scheduled to be completed in Spring 2011, and the first phase of a \$40 million shopping and hotel complex should be finished along-side the road improvements. Said Jeffrey Saletin, who is developing the property, "Our project is one that never would have started if this road hadn't been improved."

3) INVESTING IN GREEN PROJECTS



Stevens Creek, California

serves as a commuter route to key businesses along the corridor. Said Secretary LaHood at the event, "When I talk about investing in livable communities across America, this is exactly what I mean."

Michigan's Department of Transportation invested \$2.3 million in streetscape improvements in Detroit. The project, called the Midtown Loop, is an urban greenway that will connect Wayne State University and the Detroit Medical Center to downtown and the Detroit River. As a result, walking and biking will become safer and more convenient options. Already new commercial activity has taken place along the greenway, including new boutiques and cafes. The project supported Governor Granholm's "City of Promise" initiative to assist some of the state's most economically distressed cities.

When Governor Jody Rell and the **Connecticut** Department of Transportation were weighing projects that could be funded through the stimulus program, the scenic and historic Merritt Parkway quickly rose to the top of the list. The 71-year-old, 38-mile parkway is getting a facelift along a nine-mile stretch in Fairfield County. The project will include the rehabilitation of architecturally significant bridges, resurfacing, and safety improvements. Connecticut's DOT has long partnered with organizations like the Merritt Parkway Conservancy to ensure that the historic and aesthetic characteristics of the parkway are protected and preserved.

Congress enabled states and local governments to invest some of their economic stimulus resources in projects that not only created jobs but improved "community livability."

On June 30, 2009, Secretary Ray LaHood joined the **Colorado** Department of Transportation to kick off a Recovery Act project in Douglas County, just outside Denver. It repaired and replaced 26 miles of the bike path along route C-470 between Interstate 25 and Interstate 70. The C-470 bike path allows users to connect to several recreation areas and state parks and



Photo courtesy of © Martifer Group.



Photo courtesy of Mark Preuschl.

Main Street, Galena, Illinois

4) REVITALIZING A SMALL TOWN'S "MAIN STREET"

A main street can be the pride of a small town's existence. If a main street is shaped to fit the community's small-town scale, its goals, its features, and its temperament, it can become a place for vibrant public life, for robust commerce and for recreational enjoyment. In countless communities across the country, Main Street also happens to be a state highway. Many states are working with their towns so that these streets play both roles: to move traffic and enhance the community.

Florida's Department of Transportation partnered with the city of Lake Worth to revitalize its downtown. Two avenues were transformed with narrower lanes, parallel parking, decorative light fixtures, planters, paver-block sidewalks and crosswalks, benches, and trash containers. They also installed corner "bumpouts" that shorten street crossings for pedestrians and serve as convenient stops for the "Lolly the Trolley" minibus.

The main street of Natchitoches, **Louisiana**, was rebuilt brick by brick by the state DOT, improving ride quality and drainage while bringing sidewalks up to date. The project required hand-removing and individually cleaning and reinstalling 300,000 bricks, while surfacing many archaeological discoveries. The historic street, located in the oldest section of town, is vital to tourism and the economy of central Louisiana.

5) TRANSFORMING URBAN STREETS INTO NEIGHBORHOOD CENTERS

Streets are centers of community life, where local people come to shop, do errands, get together, and enjoy leisure time. Urban streets need to be geared to serve the business and residential needs of their communities: by accommodating traffic yet keeping it moving at a pace that gives pedestrians a sense of comfort and safety; by providing adequate parking; and by offering amenities that make people feel "at home."

At the community's request, **Oregon's** governor asked his department of transportation to work with the city of Portland on an effort to rejuvenate the city's Martin Luther King Boulevard. ODOT restored on-street parking on both sides, narrowed traffic lanes, and built a "mini-median" that provided space for plantings. AASHTO minimum guidelines were followed rather than the stricter state standards.

The improvements included widened sidewalks, curb extensions to shorten street crossings, bus shelters, and concrete crosswalks to alert drivers to pedestrian areas. Ornamental lighting, decorative paving, and street trees were included to add visual character to residential and commercial areas. As a result, new businesses have opened up and neighbors are returning to shop and stop for coffee. Property values are up on a street where banners now fly during neighborhood events and special holidays.

The Cap at Union Station is a \$7.8 million retail development constructed as part of a bridge over I-670, reconnecting downtown Columbus, **Ohio**, with the burgeoning Short North arts and entertainment district. Opened in October 2004, the project was composed of three separate bridges—one for through-traffic across the highway, and one on either side for the retail structures. Now the Cap is home to 25,496 square feet of leasable space, with an urban streetscape, nine retail shops, and restaurants.

The **District of Columbia** Department of Transportation's "Great Streets Initiative" focuses on improving and redefining major road corridors in the city to support local businesses while enhancing its communities with better pedestrian, bicycle, and transit options. Following five basic principles, the initiative will use streetscape and transportation improvements to change market perceptions of the corridors and stimulate economic activity; transform roadways and intersections into environmentally friendly and usable community open spaces; enhance major



The Short North arts and entertainment district over I-670 has revitalized an area of Columbus, Ohio.

Photo courtesy of Arnold Agency/copyright SNBA.

vehicular arterials with pedestrian and transit options; create a “sense of place” in each area; and reposition the street as a vital neighborhood asset.

One major initiative is the Anacostia Waterfront project, which will enhance the diverse waterfront area along one of the nation’s most historic but endangered rivers. Construction has already begun on a new 1.5-mile streetcar line in Anacostia, the first installment of a planned city-wide streetcar network.

6) PRESERVING SCENIC COUNTRY ROADS



Rural areas, especially those with special scenic and historic qualities, face design challenges that are different from those of commercial and urban residential areas. When planning any changes, DOTs seek to respect the contours and characteristics of the land rather than bulldozing out any unique features. They also work to support both the natural and valued man-made features that flank the road. In this way, a scenic road can enhance the experience of driving and living along it, while at the same time preserving a sense of place. With careful attention to design, safety goals can be achieved without sacrificing a road’s compatibility with settings highly valued by the community.

The two-lane Paris Pike was the “main street” of **Kentucky’s** bluegrass horse country. It was flanked by pristine thoroughbred farms with hand-crafted stone walls, wooden fences, and rolling fields. Once a sleepy country road, by the 1990s it faced steadily increasing traffic volumes

and frequent fatal accidents. The state's proposal to four-lane the highway to improve safety was blocked for years by a court injunction secured by local residents. After significant collaboration with the community, the Kentucky's Department of Highways came up with a new design that both met community objectives and improved safety.

The existing two-lane road became half of the new facility. A variable-width median was used to divide the new two-lane addition from the old road. The two new lanes follow the contours of the land rather than using extensive grading to make the land fit the road. Stonemasons were brought in from Scotland to train local artisans in how to relocate and replace historic "dry-laid" stone walls. Guardrails were made of wood and bridges made of stone. The resulting road is one of the most beautiful in the Commonwealth, and carries increasing traffic safely.

7) USING "SMART TRANSPORTATION" TO GENERATE SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS IN TIGHT ECONOMIC TIMES



As states struggle to find the resources to pay for needed transportation improvements, many are using "smart solutions" to help find answers.

Through a program called "Smart Transportation," Pennsylvania has been working to find innovative solutions to the challenges of constrained resources, aging highways and bridges, and congestion by reexamining the relationship between land use and transportation. One example is PennDOT's U.S. Route 202 Parkway project in suburban Philadelphia. First envisioned as a new four-lane expressway between Doylestown and Montgomeryville, the project's cost was simply not affordable. After an extensive consensus-building process, a lower-cost option to build a parkway-type design was approved at roughly half the original cost. The new Parkway included a 12-foot wide bicycle and

walking path along its entire 8.4-mile length; concrete stamped and painted to simulate the appearance of stone on all bridges, culverts, and retaining walls; and landscaped median strips and other aesthetic enhancements.

The Parkway will be built as four lanes for two miles and two lanes for six miles and speed limits will be lowered. Nine signalized intersections will replace three interchanges and slower speeds will help increase safety. Overall, the Parkway will ease congestion while blending in with the communities along this heavily traveled corridor.

In tight budget times, **Missouri's** Department of Transportation has developed "Practical Design", which, according to state officials, is saving millions of taxpayer dollars and creating a positive image of MODOT across the state. Practical Design encourages transportation planners to think beyond a single transportation infrastructure project. Instead, projects are examined on how they fit into the state's overarching transportation goals. Some projects are scaled back to meet immediate needs yet save money while other projects can be scaled up to meet the state's long-term goals. As an example, in the past when bridges were replaced, the state would build a two-mile approach on either side. Now, they simply replace the bridge, freeing up funds that can be used to replace other bridges.

8) ENHANCING NEIGHBORHOODS THROUGH THE ENHANCEMENTS PROGRAM

Since 1992, the Transportation Enhancements program administered by state DOTs has provided \$9.2 billion to fund more than 25,000 projects aimed at improving America's communities. The resulting projects include bicycle and pedestrian trails, historic preservation efforts such as saving historic bridges and train stations, landscaping, and transportation museums. Because most of these projects have strong community support, extensive volunteer labor and local fundraising help stretch what can be achieved with every transportation dollar.

Caltrans used one of the largest Transportation Enhancement awards—\$21 million—to establish a scenic easement that will preserve a stretch of breathtaking coastal land along the Pacific Ocean and California's Highway 1. The easement agreement with the Hearst Corporation protected 1,445 acres of the Hearst Ranch from development. The Hearst Corporation put the rest of the ranch (80,500 acres) under a conservation easement with the American Land Conservancy.

The **Vermont** Agency of Transportation provided \$100,000—matched by nearly \$750,000 in funds raised by local donors—to enable the city of Manchester to restore a village green. The town converted a former car dealership into a park overlooking the mill pond in the heart of the downtown. The project transformed an intersection dubbed the “Malfunction Junction,” into a more coherent traffic pattern and has made the area more inviting to pedestrians.

Roadside maintenance can be environmentally damaging, requiring frequent mowing and pesticide application. **Iowa's** TE-funded *Living Roadways* program, by contrast, uses environmentally friendly techniques to manage roadside areas. Native grasses, trees, and shrubs are planted and allowed to flourish along road and trail sides, helping to restore Iowa's native prairie habitat, control erosion, and beautify the scenery. A nonprofit organization, Trees Forever, works with the Iowa Department of Transportation to administer the program. Trees Forever receives grant applications from small local communities with populations around 10,000 and provides administrative support and technical assistance to get local projects off the ground. Matching funds are provided by the local communities or by other organizations. The number of acres of roadside habitat restored thus far is greater than the combined acreage of Iowa's state, county, and city parks.



Photo courtesy of National Transportation Enhancements Clearinghouse / www.enhancements.org.

Iowa's *Living Roadways* program



Photo courtesy of Daveblog.



The new pedestrian bridges over I-235 in Des Moines were designed to reflect the city's arched river bridges.

9) MAKING DESIGN RESPONSIVE TO COMMUNITY NEEDS

For more than a decade, transportation agencies have been advancing the concept of “context sensitive solutions,” in which transportation projects are planned, designed, and implemented in a way that is responsive to community concerns and to the environment.

Washington State's Department of Transportation put this approach to work on its Interstate 405 Corridor Program, a partnership among communities, elected officials, agencies, and advocacy groups to define a 20-year transportation vision for the 30-mile corridor in east suburban Seattle. Led by the Washington State DOT, the program undertook a streamlined environmental impact statement process. It sought—and won—consensus on a \$7 billion transportation package to address mobility and access needs that includes both highway and transit projects and land use strategies.

The “**Massachusetts** Project Development and Design Guide” won FHWA's 2007 Environmental Excellence Award. The guide establishes flexible design standards, strongly promotes multi-modal options, explicitly incorporates community setting as a design factor, dramatically reshapes the project development process, and supports early planning and coordination with all stakeholders to create safe, attractive roads.

In reconstructing the Dan Ryan Expressway, the **Illinois** DOT used a context sensitive planning process that included outreach, extensive use of multi-lingual print media, environmental assistance to local schools, and a training center that will be used on an on-going basis. The resulting project integrated landscaping, rusticated concrete surface finishes on retaining walls, medallions, and other architectural features to reflect the cultural diversity of the communities neighboring the expressway.

10) INTEGRATING TRANSPORTATION AND LAND USE

The United States is expected to add 100 million to our population over the next four decades. Effective planning for growth will require the coordination of transportation, land use, housing, energy, climate change, and environmental policies.

Because of relatively cheap gasoline that kept commuting costs low, combined with consumer preference for suburban living, the housing development patterns of the past 50 years moved people further away from central cities. Future growth patterns may change, however, as gasoline costs continue to rise and young adults as well as aging boomers choose to locate in more urbanized areas. Some experts have suggested that as much as one-third of the demand for future housing and commercial development could be achieved through infill development in central cities and older suburbs. Another third may be met through new, mixed-use, transit-oriented development and compact single-family subdivisions.

Many state DOTs are working with their local governments to develop joint transportation and land use plans that can lead to smarter development patterns. In the next highway and transit authorization, AASHTO supports a proposal to add \$100 million a year for technical assistance to cities and counties to help them develop better land use and transportation plans.

Illinois Tomorrow Corridor Planning Grants, administered by the **Illinois** Department of Transportation, provide \$15 million to help local governments as they develop plans that integrate transportation, land use, and development decision making.

Idaho's Transportation Department brought together more than 750 people from around the state to define a statewide transportation system for the next 30 years. Recognized under AASHTO's *Best Practices in Smart Growth and Transportation* competition, Idaho's public outreach process developed a vision statement for the movement of people, materials, and information, based on the community's values and priorities.



Transit has played a major role in Jersey City's "comeback."

The Jersey City, New Jersey, "comeback" is an urban infill development success story. In the 1960s Jersey City hit hard times, its railroads went broke and many of its factories closed. In the 1970s, it lost 14 percent of its population and 10 percent of its jobs. Today it is clean, green, and growing. During the past 25 years, the city has gained 30,000 residents, 27,000 jobs, and 18 million square feet of prime office space. Urban planners see it as an example of how the nation can accommodate some of the 100 million Americans expected by 2040, without paving over farms and open space. Many of its residents live in apartments and attached houses near shops, offices, and mass transit.

Part of the success story was the light rail system planned by New Jersey DOT and city officials. The line now running through the downtown alone has spawned 3,000 residential units. A Toll Brothers representative, developers better known for building big houses on large lots in the suburbs, said they decided to focus on locales like Jersey City, "because that's where our customers are going." While not every community is within a mile from Manhattan and can embrace the densities possible in Jersey City, it still shows the tremendous potential for urban infill.



Photo courtesy of Leah Appel.

A good housing mix is important in supporting livability.

11) USING SCENIC BYWAYS TO ATTRACT TOURISTS AND SUPPORT LOCAL ECONOMIES

The Federal Highway Administration oversees the National Scenic Byway Program, which has provided over \$380 million in funding for 2,832 state and nationally designated projects. In 2009, U.S. DOT Secretary Ray LaHood announced 42 new designations, including five All-American Roads and 37 National Scenic Byways in 26 states, increasing the number of America's Byways to 150. Under the program, grants are made to states to fund corridor management plans, interpretive sites, facilities such as restrooms, improved access to recreation, resource protection, safety improvements, and marketing efforts. Federal and state transportation agencies partner with grassroots community organizations to implement the program. Part of the motivation of the community groups is to preserve the heritage and beauty associated with what can be seen and experienced from the scenic byway. Another motivation is to market the byway to attract visitors who will spend money in local economies at restaurants, motels and other businesses.

Designation of Florida State Route A1A as a Scenic Byway helped protect a barrier island in Flagler County. Increasing growth pressures led residents, local businesses, developers, and the county to join forces to protect environmentally sensitive lands and vistas along the Atlantic Ocean and the



An alligator crossing at the Creole Nature Trail.

Intercoastal Waterway. Through an Interim Development Ordinance, setbacks from the road were increased to protect scenic vistas, rewards were created for innovative site designs, and restrictions were placed on commercial projects to preserve open space, limit signage, require native landscaping, and preserve trees. County residents dedicated a portion of their property taxes to purchase environmentally sensitive land and issued \$6.7 million in bonds to maintain and develop the land purchased. One of the improvements installed to attract visitors was the construction of a beachside boardwalk.

One of America's last great wildernesses, the Creole Nature Trail (**Louisiana** Highways 27 and 82) winds through 180 miles of Southwest Louisiana's marshlands along the shores of the Gulf of Mexico. Though traveled by many, it remained one of Louisiana's best-kept secrets until a marketing plan was funded to tout the Trail's significance. The Trail now welcomes visitors from all over the world. The Marketing Action Plan implemented by the Lake Charles/Southwest Louisiana Convention & Visitors Bureau repositioned the area as an adventure destination, spurred economic development, and increased tourism by 30 percent.



A Washington, D.C., bike station enhances livability in this community.

12) PROMOTING WALKING AND BIKING

Building a transportation system that encourages walking and biking is a vital role of the nation's transportation agencies. Through programs delivered by state DOTs, the Federal-aid highway program provided \$5.2 billion in funding from 1999 to 2009 to bicycle and pedestrian programs. In FY 2009 alone, states funded \$1.125 billion, or 2 percent of Federal-aid funding, for bike and walking programs and projects, more than twice the amount of any previous year. Almost half of the funds from the Transportation Enhancements program were used, along with funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, and federal programs including Congestion Mitigation/Air Quality, National Highway System, Bridge, Interstate Maintenance, Federal Lands, Recreation Trails, and National Scenic Byways.

AASHTO has teamed with several other organizations, including the Adventure Cycling Association, to develop a national Interstate route system for bicycles. The **U.S. Bicycle Route Corridor Plan** will be used by state DOTs to designate coordinated bicycle routes in a plan that includes

many states. AASHTO has also published one bicycle manual and is working on a new publication with new standards and specifications developed in concert with biking advocacy groups.

In 2005, SAFETEA-LU provided \$612 million for the **Safe Routes for School** Program, an idea championed by House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman James Oberstar (D-MN). Each state received a share of the funding. At least 70 percent of the funding had to go to infrastructure improvements such as sidewalks or bike paths.

Hundreds of students from Gilles-Sweet Elementary School in Fairview Park, **Ohio**, walked or biked to school to celebrate International Walk to School Day on October 3, 2007. The local ice cream store gave free cones to all students who made a sign and the students met celebrity crossing guards.

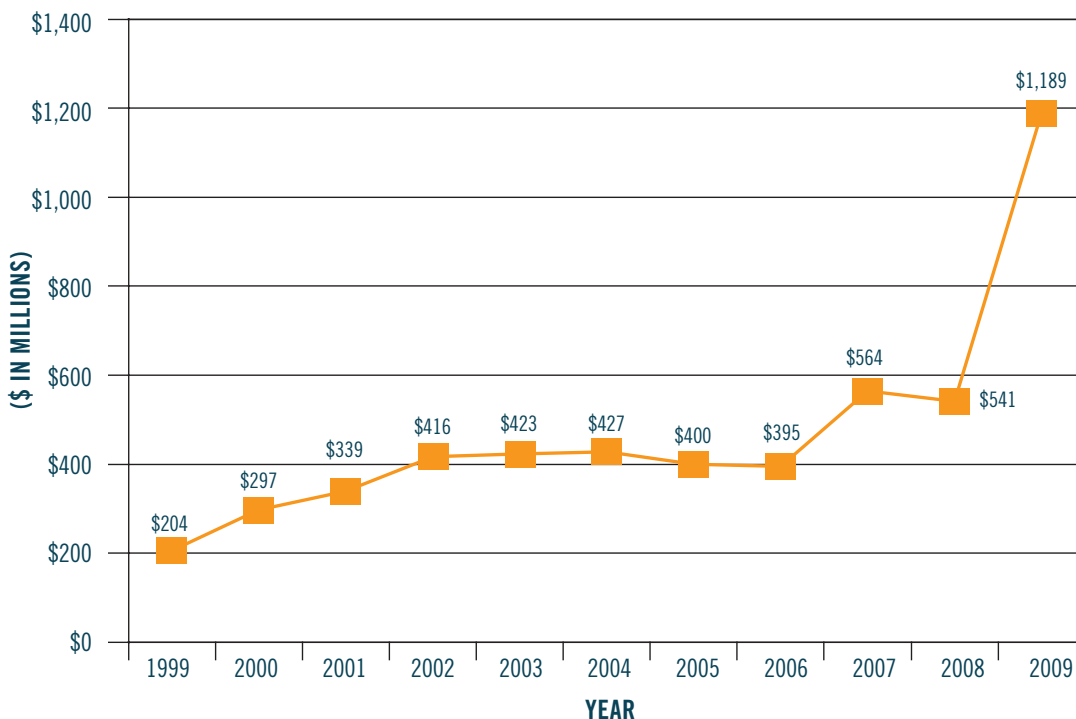
The **District of Columbia** Department of Transportation just unveiled its first Bikestation, a new free-standing, ultra-modern glass and steel structure housing more than 100 bicycles. Part of a growing network of bikestations and related transit centers springing up in cities, the facility is now staffed 66 hours per week and available to members (only) 24/7. In addition to secure bike parking, the facility also provides a changing room, lockers, bike rental, bike repair, and retail sales.

When **Iowa** rebuilt 14 miles of I-235 through the heart of Des Moines, it replaced 25 bridge crossings over the freeway, including three steel-arch pedestrian bridges, designed to reflect the city's arched river bridges. These bridges now serve as easy connections for neighborhoods and schools.



Children from Gilles-Sweet Elementary School celebrate Walk to School Day.

FEDERAL FUNDING FOR PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE FACILITIES AND PROGRAMS, FY 1999–2009



NOTE: Sources of funding include: Safe Routes to School; Non-Motorized Transportation Pilot Program; American Recovery and Reinvestment Act; Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program; STP Safety Set-Aside and Highway Safety Improvement Programs; Surface Transportation Program Set-Aside for Transportation Enhancements Activities; Recreational Trails Program; High-Priority Projects; National Highway System; Bridge, Maintenance; Federal Lands Highway Program (primary Public Lands Highway Discretionary earmarks); Corridor Planning and Development and Border Infrastructure; Transportation, Community, and System Preservation; National Scenic Byways; Ferry Boats; and Congressionally earmarked funds.

13) SUPPORTING TRAVEL AND TOURISM

For the many tourists and travelers roaming America's landscape, easy access, good public services, and abundant choices are critical components when setting out on a weekend—or weeklong—adventure. For those providing these travel experiences, however, the importance of the tourism, travel, and recreation industries is altogether different: they mean regular paychecks and good money coming into the small businesses, restaurants, and communities surrounding these tourist attractions. Taken together, tourism, travel, and recreation rank as the most important industry in three states, as measured by employment, and among the top ten industries in all but two states.

Travel and tourism generated over \$700 billion in revenues in 2009, more than \$93 billion from international visitors alone. Fourteen million people used overnight camping and lodging facilities in the National Park system in 2009. The Forest Service was equally busy. In FY 2008, the U. S. Forest Service had 176 million visitors; and 1.7 million vehicles used Forest Service roads each day.

The ski industry is a vital part of the economies of states like **Colorado, Utah, and Vermont**. In winter, backcountry is enjoyed by snowmobiles. In summer, it is sought after for fishing and camping. **Oregon's** economy derives more from the sale of recreational equipment, clothing, lodging, and meals, than from its timber industry. Equipment sales for golf, hunting, fishing, boating, camping, and backpacking are strong in every region of the country.

This industry is directly dependent on the efficiency of the transportation system.

Traffic bottlenecks at major vacation destinations are becoming more prevalent, all too often making the weekend outing with the family less than enjoyable. Many of the nation's most popular tourist destinations—including ski slopes, seashores, and National Parks—experience significant traffic delays on roads that serve as primary access routes for visitors. In fact, traffic on many of these roads has increased faster than on major urban roads. Focused investments are needed to eliminate these bottlenecks, just as they are for key freight corridors. The Canamex Corridor from the Mexican border in South **Arizona**, north through **Utah, Idaho, and Montana** to the Canadian Border along the alignment of Interstate 15, is a good example of a NAFTA Corridor focused on tourism.

Important to improving travel to these destinations is balanced investment that not only improves Interstate capacity where needed, but also includes strong investment in the Federal-aid system below the level of the Interstate. Much of the access mileage to National Parks and other federal lands used for recreation is on two-lane, Federal-aid highways. These are highways that not only need improvements to meet tourism and travel needs, they also need updating to speed delivery of agricultural and other resource products and to improve their safety.

Surrounded on three sides by Zion National Park, the town of Springdale, **Utah**, has long served as the gateway community to the park. The town's businesses provide services for park patrons including lodging, restaurants, retail, and parking. With almost three million people visiting Zion annually, by the early 1990s traffic congestion in the town was bad and getting worse. In 1993, the National Park Service announced a new approach that changed how visitors would be allowed to visit the park. Instead of driving their cars, visitors to Zion's inner canyon could take a free bus shuttle service to destinations in the park.

As part of the effort, Utah's State Route 9 (the town's Main Street) was narrowed from 40 feet to 32 feet at four locations where pedestrian crossings and bus shelters were installed. The roadbed, curbs, and sidewalks were all colored red to better harmonize with the natural landscape and to create a seamless connection between the town and the park. Road access to Zion's inner canyon has now been closed to car traffic. The shuttle bus service is up and running, providing frequent and convenient service within the park and back and forth to the town of Springdale.

Connecticut's Riverfront Plaza along the Hartford River has turned an isolated no-man's land blocked by I-91, a railroad, and flood control dikes, into a focal point for activities ranging from concerts and water activities to holiday fireworks displays and festivals. The Federal Highway Administration worked with Connecticut DOT, Hartford, and Riverfront Recapture, Inc. to create the new plaza, with a widened Founders Bridge offering easy access for pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicles.



Photo courtesy of Riverfront Recapture.

Hartford's Riverfront Plaza has become the focal point for concerts, festivals, environmental activities, and holiday fireworks displays.

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF
STATE HIGHWAY AND
TRANSPORTATION OFFICIALS

AASHTO
THE VOICE OF TRANSPORTATION

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF STATE HIGHWAY AND TRANSPORTATION OFFICIALS

444 N. Capitol St., NW, Ste. 249

Washington, DC 20001

www.transportation.org

ISBN: 978-1-56051-482-4

Pub Code: LR-1