

THE URBAN TRANSPORTATION MONITOR

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International Scan Identifies Innovative Approaches to Increase Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety

FHWA, AASHTO, and NCHRP Sponsor Study

Pedestrian and bicyclist deaths accounted for 14 percent of U.S. highway fatalities in 2008, according to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). In an effort to identify and assess effective approaches to improve pedestrian and bicyclist safety and mobility, the FHWA, the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), and the National Cooperative Highway Research Program (NCHRP) sponsored a scanning study of five European countries.

In May 2009, a team of 12 transportation professionals from the United States visited Denmark, Germany, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom — countries that were chosen because of their innovative approaches to non-motorized transportation, as well as the potential transferability of their policies and practices. The team gathered information on strategies and approaches in the areas of engineering, education, enforcement, encouragement, and evaluation. They learned that many of the countries studied have established an urban street user hierarchy that gives the highest priority to walking, biking, and public transit.

Some countries, like Denmark, experienced an increase in car use in the 1960s and 1970s, and subsequently reoriented their transportation policy to give priority to bicycling and walking. The team met with the foreign hosts and often went on guided field visits by bike and by foot to

Please turn to Page 10

Inside

Surveys Page 13
Requests for Proposals Page 22
Conferences Page 23



A separated bikeway in Winterthur, Switzerland has bicycle signals and painted pavement to reduce turning vehicle conflicts and improve intersection safety. (Source: FHWA International Scan report)

Many Against Speed Cameras in Phoenix, But Accidents are Down

Speed-Related Injury Accidents Reduced by 48%

Redflex Traffic Systems created the first statewide highway speed monitoring program in Arizona in 2008, but now the system is generating an intense backlash, particularly in the city of Phoenix. Many are asking what went wrong with a program designed to improve traffic safety.

According to Redflex, mistakes were made in implementing the Arizona program in 2008, but the program itself is a success in terms of safety. Currently there are 76 photo enforcement speed cameras

on Arizona highways — 36 fixed cameras in the Phoenix area and 40 mobile cameras on the side of highways throughout the state. Just ask law enforcement about the program, said Shoba Vaitheeswaran, Redflex's Director of Communications. "They will tell you that the program has improved safety."

Vaitheeswaran told UTM that in the first nine months of the statewide photo enforcement program — in the metro

Please turn to Page 9

Bipartisan Policy Center Recommends Applying Experience with Transit New Starts Programs in Competitive Grant Programs

The Goal is to Move Towards a Performance-Based System in Federal Transportation Funding

The Bipartisan Policy Center's National Transportation Policy Project (NTPP) is recommending a new approach to federal transportation funding decisions. The recommendation is based on an analysis of the Federal Transit Administration's New Starts program to identify the lessons learned and components that might be relevant to new competitive programs, particularly with respect to federal funding decisions. The analysis was conducted by Donald Emerson and Jeffrey Ensor of Parsons Brinckerhoff for the NTPP and resulted in a document entitled "New Starts: Lessons Learned from Discretionary Federal Transportation Funding Programs."

The New Starts program is one of the few discretionary, metropolitan-focused transportation grant programs that attempts to use performance criteria. NTPP has recommended new and larger competitive programs with broader investment goals through which federal transportation resources can be allocated based on results and outcomes. In its recent report, "Performance Driven: A New Vision for U.S. Transportation Policy," NTPP recommends moving towards a transportation system that is structured around the achievement of specific national goals: economic growth, national connectivity, metropolitan accessibility, energy security and environmental protection, and safety. The NTPP report proposes that 25 percent of all federal transportation funding be allocated through mode-neutral competitive programs.

While the long application and approval process of the New Starts program and some of its criteria have been criticized, the researchers highlight several features of this program that are worth emulating in a competitive grant program, including a comprehensive evaluation process using multiple criteria, shared decision-making between the executive and legislative branches, and incentives for a

large local funding match. NTPP suggests that these features are essential for the design of an effective, competitive, and performance-based program.

The report also outlines challenges with the New Starts program. For example, the New Starts process has become a large and cumbersome burden for potential grant recipients, perhaps discouraging worthy proposals. Also, the evaluation criteria have become too narrow, thus discouraging potential innovations. NTPP suggests that any new competitive grant program should be designed to avoid the problems New Starts has experienced.

Other findings include:

Federal decisions about New Starts funding go through an effective shared decision-making process between the legislative and executive branches of government. The U.S. DOT receives and rates local project proposals and makes specific recommendations based on analytic criteria, and Congress retains final approval over funding decisions. This process is an excellent model for future competitive grant programs.

New Starts features a prescribed planning and project development process, combined with a rigorous and comprehensive federal review and rating of proposed projects, through which FTA seeks to minimize risk and evaluate projects in a fair and transparent manner.

In the early years of the New Starts program, federal evaluators compared projects in relative terms, separating them into groups according to their worthiness for federal investment. Over time, the evaluation has changed to emphasize an absolute score of each project's costs and benefits. Rather than a competition, successful projects are those that can survive a protracted process and satisfy FTA funding criteria.

The New Starts program has broad investment objectives, but relatively narrow eligibility. It only funds fixed guideway

mass transit projects, plus a few corridor-based bus improvement programs. A mode-neutral competitive program, as recommended by NTPP, would have broader eligibility.

The NTPP, a project of the Bipartisan Policy Center, was launched with the goal of bringing fresh dialogue and approaches to transportation policy. It is co-chaired by former Senator Slade Gorton (R-WA), former Congressman Sherwood Boehlert (R-NY) and Martin Sabo (D-MN), and former Mayor of Detroit Dennis Archer. In June, NTPP released its blueprint for surface transportation reform. It is the product of a broad, bipartisan coalition of transportation experts, and business and civic leaders.

For more information, the full paper is available for download at: <http://www.bipartisanpolicy.org/sites/default/files/New%20Starts%20Paper%20Jan%202010.pdf>.

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