



FHWA's Fostering Livable Communities Newsletter

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Introduction

The Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA's) Fostering Livable Communities Newsletter is intended to provide transportation professionals with real-world examples of ways that transportation investments promote livability, such as providing access to good jobs, affordable housing, quality schools, and safer roads. The FHWA Livable Communities Newsletter also includes topics related to Safe Routes to School (SRTS), Context Sensitive Solutions, Environmental Justice, and recreational trails. To access additional tools and resources, please visit FHWA's Livability [website](#). To read past issues of the newsletter, visit www.fhwa.dot.gov/livability/newsletter/. To subscribe to the newsletter, visit [GovDelivery](#).

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Creating more livable communities through transportation choices



Benefiting Rural Communities through Indiana's Stellar Communities Program

Joyce Newland, Planning and Environmental Specialist, FHWA Indiana Division Office

Launched in 2010, the [Indiana Stellar Communities Program](#) is a multiagency partnership designed to fund comprehensive community development projects in Indiana's smaller rural communities. The Stellar Communities Program embodies collaborative government partnerships and leverages State and Federal funding from multiple agencies to support large-scale projects. Through this program, Indiana is doing more with current resources and making a bigger impact in communities, even with a slimmer budget.

Led by the Indiana Lieutenant Governor's Office and funded by three State agencies: the Indiana Housing and Community Economic Development Agency, the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs, and the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT), the municipalities identified as Stellar Communities have received over \$58 million in investments to date over a multi-year period.

Each year, two communities are designated Stellar Communities in each of two population groups. Division I is for cities with populations of 6,000 or more (but generally under 50,000) and Division II is for smaller cities or towns with populations under 6,000. After a 10-month multi-agency review process the Lieutenant Governor's Office makes award announcements, which are typically followed in the community by celebrations to publicize the success. During this period, the State agencies follow up with communities not selected in order to advise them of the decision and to engage in dialogue about how some of their projects may receive funding and implementation in future rounds.



Figure 1: City of Greencastle streetscape improvements. (Image courtesy of the city of Greencastle Mayor's Office)

INDOT commits up to \$2 million per designee over a three-year period. Most of the funding is allocated from Federal [Surface Transportation Block Grant Program](#) or [Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside](#) funds, along with State funds.

The city of [Greencastle](#) was one of the first Stellar Communities. Before receiving the Stellar Communities designation in 2011, Greencastle was a college town that had a comprehensive community development and revitalization plan on the shelf, but needed funding to implement its vision. The Stellar Communities funding provided the economic development stimulus to support streetscape improvements and other economic revitalization efforts in the downtown. Over the next few years, the city used the funding on various projects including enhancing streetscapes near universities and local employment areas to include raised sidewalks, curb extensions, and landscaping. In total, Greencastle received nearly \$2.9 million in Transportation Enhancements/Surface Transportation Program funding (now the Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside/Surface Transportation Block Grant Program).

The town of [Delphi](#), with a population under 3,000, was designated as a Stellar Community in 2012. Constructed in 2012, the Hoosier Heartland Highway bypasses the town of Delphi, which prompted town officials to create a new plan to attract visitors and enhance economic activity. With the \$5.4 million in Federal Transportation Enhancement funding provided by the Stellar Communities Program in 2012, Delphi sought to entice visitors with streetscape improvements, including restored downtown



business building facades and sidewalk improvements, as well as enhanced pedestrian connectivity. The town also constructed the Washington Street Gateway Trail, which along with the other improvements, aims to enhance access to downtown area jobs and services, as well as cultural attractions such as the Opera House.

The Stellar Communities Program researchers produce annual reports and measure the impacts of the funding through community partner surveys. Over 50 percent of community partners surveyed in 2016 indicated new business start-ups within the Stellar Target area since designation. According to the survey, 95 percent of community partners estimated new jobs were created in the Stellar Area, since designation. The researchers also survey community residents, with the 2016 survey results indicating the residents see their communities as more walkable since the Stellar Communities projects were implemented.

Revitalizing Existing Infrastructure to Increase Active Mobility Options in Corpus Christi, Texas

Jeff Pollack, Transportation Planning Director, Corpus Christi Metropolitan Planning Organization

The Corpus Christi Metropolitan Planning Organization's (MPO's) [Strategic Plan for Active Mobility, Phase I Bicycle Mobility Plan](#) fosters cycling as a viable and safe transportation alternative for riders of diverse abilities. The Plan, adopted by the city of Corpus Christi in 2016, alleviates uncertainty about where the city should make investments in bicycle infrastructure and how it should design and maintain that infrastructure. The Plan prescribes a 290-mile Bicycle Mobility Network (bike network), which was developed with the bike-dependent commuter and causal recreational rider in mind—not the high-speed sport bicyclist.

The bike network will deliver riders within a quarter of a mile of over 80 percent of all daycare and academic institutions; groceries and markets; low-income housing units; transit stops and stations; and regional parks within the MPO boundary. On average, most individual residences in the project area are within a two- to five-minute bike ride (on a neighborhood street) from some segment of the network. Implementation of this plan will increase direct access to jobs, goods and services, and will extend the effective reach of the transit network, narrowing the equity gap between those who are transit dependent and those who can afford personal automobiles.

Project stakeholder engagement moved well beyond the traditional public town hall meetings, bringing direct engagement opportunities to community members at preexisting events and group gatherings. The planning team also created customized engagement tools, including:

- An interactive, web-based mapping tool called [MapIt!](#) to capture where users ride or want to ride
- A streamlined electronic survey
- A downloadable smartphone application to capture rider movements, through a public-private partnership with Strava™ to access data

The Plan provides a detailed bike infrastructure prescription for every segment of the network based on actual right-of-way characteristics, not just street classification and traffic volumes. Where appropriate, the Plan prescribes rapid implementation transitional treatments. It also identifies specific locations where conditions merit a road diet, lane width reduction, street width reduction, parking recapture (one or both sides), or mid-block crossing treatments. The Plan includes illustrations of each type of infrastructure using local case examples.

On the basis of feedback from the community, the planning team prioritized a low-stress rider experience with maximal separation between cyclists and cars by using off-road trail segments on storm water easements for nearly a quarter (66



miles) of the network. Where the bike network corresponds to the street network, the planning team prioritized neighborhood streets with low traffic volumes and speeds. Where the bike network falls on busier roads, the Plan prescribes alternatives to the standard on-street bike lane, such as separated multi-use paths or protected cycle tracks outside of vehicular travel lanes.

SPECIALIZED TREATMENT: BICYCLE ROUTE STREET CROSSING

Application: Columbia Parkway Trail at West Point Road



Figure 2: Example of specialized bicycle route street crossing. (Image courtesy of Corpus Christi MPO)

Specifying the right infrastructure in the right places is critical to catalyze active mobility, but it is not the only dimension of this work. The Plan includes sample resolutions and model ordinance language to facilitate adoption/integration (codification) of the Plan into existing local municipal planning framework as well as specific recommendations for prioritizing, phasing, and funding implementation (installation of bicycle infrastructure).

The [city of Corpus Christi](#) adopted the Plan in May 2016 by incorporating it into its larger Urban Transportation Plan. The city has displayed a strong commitment to including the Plan's prescriptions into the design of bond-funded roadway reconstruction. In some of these projects, constructing the

prescribed infrastructure will yield considerable cost savings as compared to rebuilding the existing condition. Asphalt pavement designed to support vehicles is much more expensive to build and maintain than hardscape designed only to support bicycles. The cost of constructing and maintaining the roadway goes down significantly more than the cost of building new bike infrastructure when two conditions are met: 1) roadway width is narrowed by eliminating on-street bike lanes without reducing the number or width of travel lanes, and 2) one-way cycle tracks are installed adjacent to and level with the sidewalk (behind the curb).

The Plan specifies 21 discrete performance metrics in three categories (Quality of Bicycle Infrastructure, Bicycle Safety, and Bicycle Demand) for evaluating the success of implementation. The MPO and partners have begun to collect data on many of these metrics—including capturing baseline bike counts on corridors on which construction of new bike infrastructure is pending—and have created an online [StoryMap](#) depicting these data to foster transparency.

Implementation of the Plan is already well under way, with 30 miles of designated bicycle boulevards, construction of 7 miles of separated cycle tracks, and a bicycle share pilot in process. Since 2015, the MPO has awarded over \$2.75 million in [Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside](#) funding to support construction of the infrastructure prescribed in the Plan, with another roughly \$1 million available for the fiscal year 2018-2019 call for projects. Much of the remaining infrastructure in the Plan will be installed opportunistically as part of roadway reconstruction projects, and the MPO estimates that within 12-24 months, bicyclists will be able to benefit from a significantly improved and expanded network of infrastructure.



Construction of the bike network will provide residents with safe bicycle access to jobs, services, and education. In a community living under the moniker “Fattest City in America” ([Men's Health Magazine, 2010](#)), the Plan has the potential to be transformative. As the [surveys](#) conducted as part of the creation of the Plan found that 70 percent of residents want to ride a bike but are unwilling to do so because of unsafe existing conditions, these infrastructure improvements are bound to increase the number of people bicycling in Corpus Christi.

SamTrans Youth Mobility Plan Engages Youth and Increases Visibility of Transit Options

Lindsey Hilde Kiner, Senior Planner, San Mateo County Transit District & Millie Tolleson, Planner, Nelson\Nygaard

The San Mateo County Transit District (SamTrans) finalized its [Youth Mobility Plan](#) in August 2017, following adoption of the Plan by the SamTrans Board of Directors. SamTrans is the primary fixed-route bus transit provider in San Mateo County, California, serving 20 municipalities with 76 routes with 12.7 million annual boardings systemwide.

The purpose of the Youth Mobility Plan is to present strategies designed to foster and enhance youth awareness of and ease of access to SamTrans bus services. The Plan targets youths approximately 12 to 24 years of age, many of whom need access to San Mateo County’s schools, part-time jobs, and other destinations.



Figure 3: San Mateo youth ride SamTrans. (Image courtesy of SamTrans)

The Youth Mobility Plan first appeared in the [SamTrans Strategic Plan](#) (2015-2019), which calls for expanded mobility options for SamTrans passengers. [Studies](#) over the last few years indicate that young people increasingly seek lifestyles that are carless and compatible with public transit. Furthermore, [research shows](#) that adults are more likely to use transit if they are exposed to it as youths.

In developing the Plan, SamTrans engaged directly with youths in the community to better understanding the motivations for choices they make related to transit and the barriers they experience when traveling. A key partner to SamTrans in the youth engagement effort was the Youth Leadership Institute, an advocacy organization focused on training young leaders to create positive change in their communities. One of the key takeaways from the focus groups was that youth participants had heard of SamTrans, but had not tried riding it or did not ride regularly. This signaled to the project team that a key focus should be increasing awareness of existing services and resources, as well as helping youth feel comfortable riding transit.



Input from multiple avenues of public outreach in San Mateo County informed the development of the initiatives, as well as best practices and case studies from around the country. Overall, the project team developed and evaluated 14 initiatives. Recognizing that SamTrans currently operates in a fiscally constrained environment, the screening process aimed to identify the initiatives expected to provide the strongest benefit for a small or reasonable financial investment. Of these, half were recommended to the SamTrans Board for implementation. These include:

- Create a Youth Mobility Coordinator Position to coordinate with schools, community groups, and across departments within the agency on youth-related needs and initiatives, as well as promote SamTrans services.
- Establish a Transit Youth Ambassador Program to leverage peer-to-peer engagement in order to promote SamTrans services and provide leadership opportunities to high school students. As ambassadors, they could organize transit-awareness events at schools, conduct travel trainings to help their peers become more comfortable using transit, and engage on social media.
- Launch a pilot expansion of the [Way2Go Program](#) to include local colleges. Currently, the SamTrans Way2Go Program allows organizations and residential communities to purchase annual unlimited-ride passes for all eligible employees or residents. Expanding this program as a pilot to community colleges in San Mateo County would make transit use more convenient and affordable for college students.
- Increase social media engagement with youth and parents on the platforms they use most. Based on findings from outreach and best practices research, staff determined that youth-focused campaigns should be carried out on some particular social media platforms, while parent-focused campaigns should use others. Implementation of this initiative has already begun.
- Enable purchase of youth fares using a mobile ticketing app, slated for early 2019. SamTrans is currently in the process of developing a mobile ticketing application for the agency, and this initiative is focused on offering the ability to purchase youth-discounted fares via the mobile app, which focus groups overwhelmingly supported.

Future potential initiatives include offering free transit passes to low-income youth; offering free transit on school-related routes at the beginning of school years; and developing a multi-agency youth pass.

In addition to improving mobility options and access to opportunities for today's youth in San Mateo County, SamTrans seeks to foster the next generation of transit users within the county. Facilitating youth mobility may pay off decades into the future for transit operators like SamTrans, while also benefiting youth by provide crucial social services and access to education and jobs through youth-focused mobility initiatives.



Enhancing Economic Development and Transit Connections at Union Depot in Saint Paul

Deborah Carter McCoy, Communications Manager, Ramsey County Economic Growth and Community Investment

[Union Depot](#) in Saint Paul, Minnesota, is one of the country's iconic Beaux Arts-style train stations. Completed in 1926, the station enjoyed a brief period of bustling activity before the decline of passenger rail travel shuttered it in 1971. The station's location in the now-thriving historic Lowertown neighborhood is notable. Local artists and urban revitalization advocates have led renewal and revitalization plans for Union Depot and the neighborhood since the mid-60s. The head house was placed on the National Registry of Historic Places in 1974 and large portions of the property were sold to the neighboring United States Postal Service. These two actions minimized the risk of station tear-down and set the stage for the grand vision of restoring passenger rail service, connecting to the transit network, and creating a community gathering space.

In 2002, Ramsey County assembled a task force, which included representatives of business and civic groups and transportation industry stakeholders, to identify a location for a multimodal transportation hub to serve the capital city. The task force ultimately chose Union Depot because of the excellent opportunity for regional transportation connections and the potential for mixed-use, transit-oriented development. The grand vision included Amtrak, light rail line connections, local and regional buses, and comfortable access and amenities for those arriving by bike or on foot. The county's Regional Railroad Authority purchased property parcels to piece the 33-acre property back together into one contiguous unit. The Authority continued extensive planning and design work with contractors, architects, and historic groups, ultimately leading to the groundbreaking for the construction project in 2011.

The \$243 million project included building restoration, track installation, and property purchases. Federal funding included \$45.3 million allocated under Section 1301 of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), \$35 million from a Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant by the U.S. Department of Transportation, and \$40 million from the Federal Railroad Administration's High-Speed Intercity Passenger Rail Program. Additionally, \$4 million from the Federal Transit Administration's Bus and Bus Facilities Infrastructure Investment Program helped finance the new bus terminal. Other funds came from State bonds and a tax levy imposed by the Regional Railroad Authority.



Figure 4: The revitalized Union Depot. (Image courtesy of Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority)

Workers spent over 635,000 hours on the restoration project, which created more than 4,000 jobs on- and off-site. Minority, female, and disadvantaged business participation exceeded goals. Work began in 2011 and ended on schedule in December 2012.

The Union Depot renovation, which achieved Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Gold status, is the catalyst for improved [transit connections](#) in the east metro, including [Metro Transit's Green Line](#) connecting downtown Minneapolis to the north plaza of Union Depot. The 11-mile light rail

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line began operating in June 2014, and connects Saint Paul and Minneapolis through the University of Minnesota. The Green Line tracks mirror the location of the original streetcar tracks that were present when Union Depot first opened in 1926. Connections, providing access to jobs and opportunities, are as important today as they were almost a century ago. Additional transportation services include Amtrak, Jefferson Lines, Greyhound, Megabus, Hertz, Metro Transit, Minnesota Valley Transit Authority, and a local bicycle shop. Three new transit routes connecting Union Depot to White Bear Lake, Woodbury, and Bloomington—home of the Mall of America and Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport—are under development. The first of the three transit routes is slated for completion in 2024, with the other two to follow shortly thereafter. These important transit routes will directly serve 3M and Ecolab, a significant medical corridor and key employment center in Bloomington. Combining improved transit with additional passenger rail service, such as the proposed second daily train between Saint Paul, Milwaukee, and Chicago, will create stronger business and tourism opportunities for the region.

Development and revitalization in the Lowertown neighborhood began prior to the renovation of Union Depot, but the public investment into the building and transportation infrastructure created an opportunity for additional public and private investment. After the grand reopening at Union Depot, the new ballpark for the St. Paul Saints minor league baseball team opened. The facility provides neighbors a quiet place to walk, hosts private and public events, and provides a community dog park. The fully renovated United States Postal Service and Custom House reopened as a mixed-use development with private condominiums, a hotel, mini-storage, and plans for a full-service restaurant. The historic Pioneer-Endicott building is also fully renovated with mixed uses including commercial, retail, and residential spaces. Vacant parcels surrounding the station are under development for multiple uses. Hundreds of millions of dollars have been invested in downtown Saint Paul within the past 10 years with the public commitment to renovating Union Depot as a cornerstone.

Trails Catalyze Economic Growth in Ohio

Katie Frank, Downtown Development Coordinator, City of Miamisburg, Ohio & Chris Schmiesing, City Planner, City of Piqua, Ohio



Figure 5: Wayfinding connecting trail users to Miamisburg’s historic downtown and other attractions. (Image courtesy of City of Miamisburg)

Multi-use trails for walking and biking can drive economic development, while providing community members and visitors with access to natural and cultural resources. In Ohio, trails have been contributing to economic development, access to opportunity, and job attraction, while helping create attractive communities and places for people to live. Ohio’s cities of Piqua and Miamisburg, each with populations around 20,000, offer examples of cities taking advantage of trails to encourage tourism, development, and active transportation.

City of Miamisburg

The [Great Miami River Recreational Trail](#), part of the largest paved network in the country, runs directly adjacent to the historic downtown of Miamisburg. For years, the public associated the trail with crime and danger. However, recent efforts to enhance and promote use of the trail have transformed the downtown intersection into one of the area’s most traveled trail segments. The city began by promoting organized free community trail rides one to two times each



year. In 2011, the city rolled out a [Bicycle-Friendly Business \(BFB\) program](#). Participating businesses provide bike parking, free water, and restrooms, along with bike trail maps and downtown business directories. In the last couple of years, in order to enhance connectivity between the trail and the downtown area, the city placed sharrows along a “downtown business bike loop” route off the trail. The city and community formed a bicycle task force to promote additional initiatives and to apply to the League of American Bicyclists to become a Bronze [Bicycle Friendly Community](#).

Wayfinding signage works to encourage visitors to call on local businesses and amenities throughout the downtown area. Miamisburg’s downtown area is now filled with bike commuters, family riders, and visitor using the Great Miami Trail. The city’s efforts to change the image of the trail, along with improvements in connectivity and wayfinding have enhanced both quality of life and economic vitality in Miamisburg.

City of Piqua

At the intersection of Main Street and the Great Miami River in downtown Piqua, Ohio, are Lock 9 Park and the north-south/east-west intersection of U.S. Bike Route 25 and State Bike Route 36. The riverfront park is a hub on the local and regional trail system and provides access to the 13 miles of local trails looping around the city and the 340 miles of trails found in southwest Ohio, “[The Nation’s Largest Paved Trail Network](#).”

The Piqua trail system runs along the banks of the Great Miami River, on portions of abandoned transportation infrastructure, including a former canal corridor that was long ago filled in and forgotten, and on a former elevated railroad embankment that previously divided the community. Repurposing these abandoned infrastructure facilities into paved trails for bicycling, walking, and running introduced new recreation and transportation opportunities for Piqua’s residents and visitors. The trail system provides access to the Great Miami River, designated as a [National Water Trail](#), along with three intra-city lakes, an arboretum, the Johnston Farm & Indian Agency historical site, and various city parks. The Piqua trail system

construction took approximately six years, and the initial phase of work began in the late 1990s. City funds and in-kind services and various funding programs offered by the State of Ohio supported the trail construction.

Citizen surveys conducted since the completion of the trail system routinely indicate that it is one of the most favored community assets. Likewise, it is abundantly clear the trail system has positively impacted the quality of life of citizens, and influences location decisions made by developers and individuals. In response, the city of Piqua updated its community branding and economic development materials to promote the trail system as part of the community’s identity. Similarly, local businesses are partnering with [Bike Piqua](#) and the city to install branded bike racks at their places of business to cater to guests arriving by bicycle. The program is just one of many ongoing efforts to increase ridership and advance the emerging bicycle-friendly culture within the community.

Piqua’s trail system is truly an asset that reflects community values and the quality of life found within the community.



Figure 6: Trail through the city of Piqua. (Image courtesy of City of Piqua)



Announcements/New Resources

- The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development has published the final [SC2 Case Studies](#), which highlight best practices of the two-year Strong Cities, Strong Communities Initiative place-based engagements.
- [19 Designated Urban Waters Locations](#) have been established to restore urban waterways. Revitalizing urban waterways can reconnect citizens to open spaces and have a positive economic impact on local businesses, tourism, and property values, as well as spur private investment and job creation in these communities.
- The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has published the [Health in Transportation Working Group 2016 Annual Report](#). The Report provides an overview of the Working Group's activities in 2016, documents its progress toward implementing the recommendations laid out in the 2015 Annual Report, and offers future recommendations for the Working Group.
- Beginning in fiscal year 2016, FHWA generates an annual report on the status of transportation alternatives (TA) projects. FHWA has published the [2016 Transportation Alternatives Annual Report](#).
- FHWA issued [Interim Approval for the optional use of two-stage bicycle turn boxes](#) through the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices for Streets and Highways (MUTCD). A two-stage bicycle turn box enables bicyclists to queue to turn at a signalized intersection outside of the traveled path of motor vehicles and other bicycles. Two-stage bicycle turn boxes reduce conflicts between bicycles and pedestrians and separate queued bicycles from bicyclists moving straight through a green light.

