

Human Environment Digest

February 11, 2021

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

Click [here](#) to manage your subscriptions.

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



To ensure this email digest continues to meet the needs of subscribers, FHWA is collecting feedback through an anonymous, 5-minute survey. [The survey](#) is open for responses through April 9.



Safety

NHTSA Evaluates Increase in Risky Driving and Fatal Crashes During 2020

The *National Highway Traffic Safety Administration* (NHTSA) released a [research note](#) analyzing traffic safety during COVID-19. NHTSA estimates 28,190 people died in traffic crashes from January through September 2020, which increased from 26,941 during the same period of 2019. In an [open letter](#) to the driving public, NHTSA notes that fewer Americans drove in 2020, but those who did were more likely to speed, not wear seatbelts, and drive under the influence of drugs or alcohol, which contributed to serious and fatal crashes.

Research Analyzes Pedestrian Fatalities and Policy Approaches to Support Safe Mobility of Older Adults

The *AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety* released a [research brief](#) examining data from the [National Highway Traffic Safety Administration Fatalities Analysis Reporting System](#), indicating a 53 percent increase in pedestrian fatalities across the U.S. between 2009 and 2018. The brief notes that pedestrian fatalities in urban areas, on arterial roads, in non-intersection locations, and in areas with limited lighting accounted for the increase during the study period. The *AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety* also issued a [report](#) examining policies and practices in driver licensing of older and medically at-risk drivers to more effectively balance public safety and individual mobility.

Research Assesses Impacts of Residential Street Speed Limit Reductions on Driving Speeds

The *Transportation Research and Education Center* at *Portland State University* published a [report](#) on the effects of residential speed limit reduction from 25 to 20 miles per hour (mph) in Portland, Oregon. Researchers analyzed 58 locations and found that the speed limit change resulted in lower observed speeds and fewer vehicles travelling over 30 mph in residential areas. The study highlights how roadway characteristics including surface width, pavement condition, and presence of curbs contribute to vehicle operating speeds.

PBIC Webinar Discusses Improving Safety with Bicyclist and Pedestrian Road Safety Audits

The *Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center* hosted a [webinar](#) on pedestrian and bicyclist road safety audits (RSAs), which can be used to formally assess roadway conditions and identify factors influencing road user safety and comfort. RSAs can inform development and implementation of safety countermeasures for vulnerable road users. Panelists highlighted how practitioners can use the *Federal Highway Administration Pedestrian and Bicyclist Road Safety Audit Guide and Prompt List* to plan and conduct RSAs.



Infrastructure

TRB Releases Guidebook and Research Plan to Help Communities Improve Transportation to Health Care Services

The *Transportation Research Board Transit Cooperative Research Program* released a [guidebook and research plan](#) discussing elements of developing a health care and transportation framework to improve linkages between health care facilities and services and transportation infrastructure. The research notes that lack of transportation infrastructure and services can lead to negative health outcomes. It analyzes actions and strategies for building and sustaining partnerships, such as understanding differing motivations and identifying transportation needs and solutions.

Research Develops Guidebook Series for Street Transformations

The *National Institute for Transportation and Communities* published a set of [evidence-based guidebooks](#) describing design approaches for the reallocation of street spaces. The guidebooks highlight case studies and considerations for physical distancing during COVID-19, bicycle network planning, and complete street transformations. Researchers are hosting a [webinar on April 6 at 1:00-2:00 PM ET](#) to discuss street redesigns during COVID-19.

AARP Handbook Highlights Policy Changes and Strategies to Improve Neighborhoods

AARP and Congress for the New Urbanism published a [handbook](#) discussing small-scale, incremental policy changes and strategies to support livable communities. It describes code changes that can help transform street spaces into areas that better support community needs; code changes include complete streets and road diet policies, parking requirements, placemaking techniques, and stormwater management.

Research Analyzes Approaches to Support Transportation and Land Use Coordination in Corridor Planning

The *Mineta Transportation Institute* at *San Jose State University* released a [report](#) examining practices and strategies to support transportation and land use coordination on corridor-level planning. The report analyzes literature and practices related to sustainability, livability, and equity. It discusses key principles, performance measures, and decision support tools to help agencies coordinate transportation and land use planning.

Complete Streets Training Materials and Resources to Support Active Transportation

Smart Growth America released [resources and training materials](#) on complete streets development and implementation. It provides six fact sheets on (1) economic benefits, (2) healthy communities, (3) older adults, (4) people living with disabilities, (5) small towns and rural communities, and (6) safer streets. Other resources include a walk audit toolkit, policy templates, and two introductory-level training modules on designing for active transportation and integrating land use with complete streets.



Innovation

U.S. DOT Releases Draft Strategic Plan on Accessible Transportation

The *U.S. Department of Transportation* released a [draft Strategic Plan on Accessible Transportation](#), outlining ongoing and future initiatives across the Department to enhance accessibility and remove barriers in transportation for people with disabilities. Building upon the [Strategic Plan Framing Document](#), the draft establishes the Department's accessibility goals and objectives for fiscal years 2021-2025. The draft Strategic Plan is available for [public review and comment](#) through February 16 at 5:00 PM ET.

U.S. DOT Releases Request for Information for Inclusive Design Reference Hub on Accessible Automated Vehicles

As part of broader accessibility efforts, the *U.S. Department of Transportation* released a Request for Information regarding the launch of an [Inclusive Design Reference Hub](#) to establish a library of resources for accessibility in automation and to research best practices for ensuring accessibility in automated vehicles. [Responses](#) are requested by February 19 at 5:00 P.M. ET.

FHWA Releases Planning and Environment Linkages Hypothetical Case Studies

The *Federal Highway Administration Office of Planning, Environment, and Realty* released a set of new Planning and Environment Linkages (PEL) hypothetical case studies covering: (1) [Planning Studies](#); (2) [Planning Analyses](#); (3) [Purpose and Need](#); and (4) [Alternatives](#). The case studies provide hypothetical examples of how practitioners could use PEL in different scenarios to inform the National Environmental Policy Act process and accelerate project delivery. Additionally, the *National Highway Institute's* [Course on Planning and Environment Linkages](#) (FHWA-NHI-142078V) is now available as a virtual, instructor-led training.

FHWA to Host EDC-5 Value Capture Strategies Webinar Series

The *Federal Highway Administration* (FHWA) is hosting a [Value Capture Strategies webinar series](#) from March 10 to October 6. The webinars will detail Value Capture techniques promoted in the FHWA [Every Day Counts](#) initiative, focusing

on the intersection of innovative finance and innovative project delivery tools. The series will also discuss FHWA Value Capture Primer resources and highlight noteworthy examples and practices.

TRB Releases Report on the Role of Transit, Shared Mobility, and Public Policy in the New Mobility Landscape

The *Transportation Research Board* released a [report](#) discussing how transit and shared mobility can improve mobility, equity, and sustainability in metropolitan areas. It recommends strategies and policies that help deliver the benefits of shared mobility and support other planning goals. The report highlights the importance of building partnerships, sharing data, and encouraging equitable access to transit and shared services.

Research Agenda Highlights Opportunities for Intelligent Infrastructure Solutions

The *Computing Community Consortium* published a [national research agenda](#) discussing opportunities for intelligent infrastructure to support climate change, sustainability, economic development, and equity goals. The research agenda addresses four themes: (1) resilience to the COVID-19 pandemic and natural disasters, (2) sustainability and energy efficiency, (3) job recovery and employment opportunities, and (4) the advancement of social justice. Its recommendations for future research explore the application of intelligent transportation infrastructure to reduce climate impacts.

Report Discusses Data Sharing Practices for Municipalities to Support Micromobility Policy Making

The *North American Bikeshare Association* (NABSA) published a [report](#) discussing micromobility data sharing practices and the [General Bikeshare Feed Specification](#) (GBFS) data standard. NABSA developed GBFS in 2015 to provide municipalities a standardized approach to collect, analyze, and compare data from micromobility providers including bikeshare and electric scooters. The report recommends practices and policy requirements to help municipalities effectively use the GBFS.



Accountability

Biden Administration Issues Executive Orders with Human Environment Implications

The Administration recently issued Executive Orders (E.O.) on Protecting Public Health and the Environment and Restoring Science to Tackle the Climate Crisis ([E.O. 13990](#)), Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government ([E.O. 13985](#)), and Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad ([E.O. 14008](#)).

TRB and U.S. DOT Call for Abstracts: Conference on Advancing Transportation Equity

The *Transportation Research Board* and *U.S. Department of Transportation* released a [call for abstracts](#) seeking papers, presentations, panel sessions, and innovative submissions addressing transportation equity and its role in policy and decision making. The selected submissions will be featured at the [Conference on Advancing Transportation Equity](#), scheduled for September 8-10, 2021 in Washington, DC. The conference theme is "Bridging the Divide: Connecting People, Research, and Practice." Abstracts are due February 19.

TRB Releases Request for Proposals for Improving Public Transportation in Rural Areas and Tribal Communities

The *Transportation Research Board National Cooperative Highway Research Program* and *Transit Cooperative Research Program* jointly issued a [request for proposals](#) to develop a guidebook on creating new and improving existing transportation services in rural areas and Tribal communities to increase mobility and accessibility. The guidebook aims to encourage practices that help agencies and practitioners address community needs, integrate innovative technologies, and leverage resources and partnerships. Proposals are due March 16 at 5:00 PM ET.

APBP Launches 2021 Webinar Series

The *Association of Pedestrian & Bicycle Professionals* is hosting a [monthly webinar series](#) on bicycle and pedestrian issues. Scheduled on the third Wednesday of each month, the sessions address planning in rural communities, signalized intersections, inclusivity, COVID-19 response programs, gentrification, partnerships and equity, placemaking, and performance metrics.

EPA to Host Environmental Justice and Systemic Racism Speaker Series

The *U.S. Environmental Protection Agency* is hosting a speaker series on environmental justice (EJ) and systemic racism. The first five sessions of the series will discuss redlining and current environmental challenges. Registration is available for the [March 4 webinar at 12:00-1:00 PM ET](#) on the development of the [Mapping Inequality Project](#), which digitally publishes redlining maps for 200 cities. Future topics will include Title VI and civil rights programs, EJ research and analysis, and rural inequities.