

# State DOTs and Livability

## State DOTs are advancing livability and supporting local livability initiatives

State DOTs play a vital role in advancing livability and supporting local community livability initiatives. Through planning, policy and guideline development, project support, and funding, state DOTs are helping local communities to identify and achieve broader goals, and to implement an integrated, multimodal transportation network.

While all States administer livability-related Federal funding programs, such as Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ), Transportation Enhancements, or Safe Routes to School programs (see *Factsheet on FHWA programs*), some have developed integrated initiatives that combine multiple livability-related issues. These initiatives incorporate livability principles into statewide planning, scenario and corridor planning, context-sensitive solutions, complete street policies, policy and design guidebooks, small town and rural planning, project prioritization criteria, performance measures, and many more tools and strategies.

Although there is significant flexibility in many of the FHWA and FTA programs related to livability, some major programs are especially flexible. Within the Federal-Aid Highway Program, the CMAQ, Surface Transportation (STP) and National Highway System (NHS) programs can all be used for a broad range of livability-related projects.<sup>1</sup>

### Success Stories: How State DOTs are advancing livability

**Statewide Transportation Plans.** Florida DOT's 2060 *Florida Transportation Plan* focuses on long-term objectives that will foster livable communities throughout the state. One such goal, "Make transportation decisions to support and enhance livable communities" seeks to support regional and community visions and plans, and coordinate transportation investments with land use and other public and private decisions.<sup>2</sup>

**Regional Scenario Plans.** California DOT (Caltrans) developed the California Regional Blueprint Planning Program to help MPOs and rural Regional Transportation Planning Agencies (RTPAs) conduct scenario planning, which models alternative future growth and investment strategies. The voluntary, competitive grant program has used almost \$22 million in Federal transportation funds to assist 17 MPOs and 15 RTPAs since 2005. The grants are intended to help regional leaders, local governments and stakeholders to reach consensus on a preferred 20-year growth scenario. The goals for the blueprint plans include identifying more efficient land use patterns and transportation investments that would improve mobility, increase transportation and housing choice, reduce greenhouse gases, protect natural resources, and increase economic competitiveness and quality of life.<sup>3</sup>

### Washington State DOT Initiatives:

Washington State DOT (WSDOT) has implemented several programs that support livability and sustainability at the local level. Many of these are implemented by the Community Design Assistance Program, which incorporates bicycle and pedestrian needs, Safe Routes to School, and local planning. Related initiatives include:

- Livable Communities Policy and Complete Streets legislation.
- 'Green Streets' design practices to prevent and treat stormwater runoff.
- Programs to make communities more walkable and bikeable.
- Parking management strategies.
- Initiatives to improve, connect, or re-connect street grid systems to reduce emissions and traffic congestion, and improve walkability.
- Facilitation and mediation assistance, including transportation design charrettes (community planning workshops).

[www.wsdot.wa.gov/LocalPrograms/Planning/](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/LocalPrograms/Planning/)

<sup>1</sup> FHWA Livability Initiative. Leveraging the Partnership. <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/livability/scp.cfm>

<sup>2</sup> Florida Department of Transportation. "2060 Florida Transportation Plan." <http://www.2060ftp.org/>

<sup>3</sup> Caltrans, California Regional Blueprints Program. <http://calblueprint.dot.ca.gov/overview.html>

Creating more livable communities through transportation choices



**Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) Approach.** The CSS approach considers a range of factors to develop mobility solutions, within the context of broader community goals. Utah DOT's South Design-Build project addressed capacity and safety concerns by reconstructing a six-mile section of urban arterial. The project will also serve as a stimulus for the local economy. Community involvement included residents, business owners, and city officials, who helped to preserve historic and environmental characteristics of the area throughout the project.<sup>4</sup>



South Design-Build project Utah DOT)

**Policy and Design Guidelines.** Several state DOTs have developed guidelines for roadway design, pedestrian and bicycle travel, and transit. The Massachusetts DOT *Project Development and Design Guide* encourages design flexibility, community context, an integrated multimodal approach, and clear project development guidelines. It includes reduced lane widths, new intersection design options, balanced multimodal Level of Service (LOS), and a range of urban-suburban-rural area types to frame design context.<sup>5</sup> Pennsylvania DOT's *Smart Transportation Guidebook* (developed with New Jersey DOT) is intended to integrate transportation system planning and design to foster development of sustainable and livable communities, in rural, suburban and urban areas. The Smart Transportation goal is to plan, program, design, and construct transportation projects that are affordable, able to be implemented, acceptable to the community, and supportive of economic development. The Guidebook is being used to update PennDOT's design manuals.

**Project prioritization.** Incorporating project prioritization and evaluation criteria into funding decisions is one way that State DOTs can help advance livable projects. The NY State DOT Green Leadership In Transportation Environmental Sustainability (GreenLITES) Program is a self-certification program for transportation projects and operations that incorporate sustainable choices. Projects are self-scored based on how well they protect the environment; conserve energy and resources; preserve historic, scenic, and aesthetic characteristics; encourage public involvement; integrate smart growth land use practices; and encourage innovative sustainable design, operations, and maintenance approaches.<sup>6</sup>



**Performance measures and scorecards.** The California DOT (Caltrans) developed a Smart Mobility Framework and Scorecard to evaluate the transportation options available to urban, suburban, and rural residents. The guidebook provides a planning framework to help guide and assess how well projects and programs meet the definition of "smart mobility," which includes six principles: location efficiency, reliable mobility, health and safety, environmental stewardship, social equity, and robust economy. The principles are applied to specific place-types, each with its own set of performance measures. Initial funding was provided by EPA's Smart Growth Implementation Assistance program; many of the projects screened and moved forward are intended to be eligible for Federal funding.<sup>7</sup>

### Available Resources

Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center: [www.pedbikeinfo.org](http://www.pedbikeinfo.org)  
Context Sensitive Solutions. <http://contextsensitivesolutions.org/>  
Caltrans Smart Mobility Framework. [www.dot.ca.gov/hq/tpp/offices/ocp/smf.html](http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/tpp/offices/ocp/smf.html)  
Massachusetts DOT Project Development and Design Guide.  
[www.mhd.state.ma.us/default.asp?pgid=content/designGuide&sid=about](http://www.mhd.state.ma.us/default.asp?pgid=content/designGuide&sid=about)

<sup>4</sup> Utah DOT, South Design-Build project. [http://contextsensitivesolutions.org/content/case\\_studies/12300\\_south\\_design\\_build\\_projec/](http://contextsensitivesolutions.org/content/case_studies/12300_south_design_build_projec/)

<sup>5</sup> Massachusetts DOT. "Project Development and Design Guide." [www.mhd.state.ma.us/default.asp?pgid=content/designguide&sid=about](http://www.mhd.state.ma.us/default.asp?pgid=content/designguide&sid=about).

<sup>6</sup> New York State DOT. Green Leadership In Transportation Environmental Sustainability (GreenLITES) Program. [www.nysdot.gov/programs/greenlites](http://www.nysdot.gov/programs/greenlites). Couldn't get this link to work.

<sup>7</sup> Caltrans Smart Mobility Framework. <http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/tpp/offices/ocp/smf.html>

Federal Highway Administration: [www.fhwa.dot.gov/livability](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/livability)  
Partnership for Sustainable Communities: [www.sustainablecommunities.gov/](http://www.sustainablecommunities.gov/)

