



# TECHNICAL BRIEF

## Innovations in State TE Management

While Congress mandated that states fund Transportation Enhancements (TE) activities as part of their Surface Transportation Program (STP), it left the majority of decision making about how states should implement TE to the states. The basic purpose of TE activities is to enable localities to work with their states to determine how to improve their communities with Transportation Enhancements. The result is that states have tremendous flexibility in managing their TE programs, and that citizens and localities can take part in shaping those programs.

Since TE's inception in the *Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act* (ISTEA) of 1991, and reauthorization in the *Transportation Equity Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (TEA-21) in 1998, states and citizens have worked closely together to establish efficient and effective systems for managing and implementing their Transportation Enhancements programs. The first eight years of Transportation Enhancements led to numerous innovations as the states and sponsors learned what worked and what did not for both parties.

While TE activities are subject to the same policies applied to the STP program, and laws applicable to Federal aid projects, Congress did provide additional streamlining, innovative financing, and cost-sharing provisions specifically for TE activities. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) publishes guidance to states on how to adopt these approved flexible financing and streamlining procedures. Also important is that the FHWA encourages states to improve the efficiency of their implementation of TE projects. According to its December 17, 1999 *Final Guidance on Transportation Enhancements Activities*, the FHWA "seeks to broaden TE program participation, and the rates of implementation of transportation and community enhancing projects," and therefore encourages partnerships to "improve the delivery of these valuable transportation enhancements."

This Technical Brief is designed to highlight a number of states that have found innovative ways to improve the management and implementation of TE activities distinct from the Congressionally approved streamlining measures. The innovations described in this document benefit not only the state Departments of Transportation (DOT), but also the project sponsors and their communities because they simplify procedures, streamline implementation, and in some cases, reduce project costs. By working to the benefit of both the DOTs and the localities, program management innovations epitomize the very purpose of the TE activities.

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# Case Studies

Each case study contains a contact to provide more information on that particular innovation and the state's TE program. ■ For information about Transportation Enhancements in general, please visit the National Transportation Enhancements Clearinghouse's (NTEC) Web site at [www.enhancements.org](http://www.enhancements.org), or call NTEC toll-free at 888-388-6832, or email NTEC at [ntec@transact.org](mailto:ntec@transact.org).

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## Local Governments Manage Projects in New Jersey

New Jersey DOT truly believes that communities should have “ownership” of Transportation Enhancements projects from start to finish. The DOT thus allows every municipality and county in the state to manage their TE projects, with the DOT's involvement limited to applications, project selection, and signing off on project plans, phases, and final inspection. New Jersey DOT does provide localities with a procedures handbook to assist them with project implementation, and the DOT remains available for consultation throughout the project process. New Jersey does require that localities use a Project Manager, a licensed professional who is generally a consultant engineer or architect. While the DOT does allow localities to manage procurement according to local specifications, the DOT requires some FHWA procurement rules to be applied, and that all local specifications be in accordance with Federal procurement rules. By utilizing this flexible management approach, New Jersey has provided over \$50 million to county and local governments and non-profit organizations to advance community oriented TE projects. ■ *For further information, contact Bob Goslin at 609-530-3640 or [RobertGoslin@dot.state.nj.us](mailto:RobertGoslin@dot.state.nj.us)*

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## Sponsors Can Outsource Administration of TE Funds in Vermont

Since the inception of the TE program, Vermont has required every TE project sponsor to appoint a Municipal Project Manager (MPM) from within their organization, or to procure a MPM through a competitive process. However, Vermont is a state with 250 municipalities, most with a population of less than 2,000, and many do not have the technical nor staffing capacity to administer Federal aid projects. In order to help sponsors find a MPM, the Vermont Agency of Transportation (AOT) allows sponsors to procure a MPM from one of the AOT's ten Regional Planning Commissions (RPCs) on a sole source basis. RPCs perform planning and management functions similar to those of county governments, and therefore are knowledgeable of Federal procurement procedures and project management. Sponsors ask the RPCs for a price quote for project management services, and then must receive permission from the AOT TE Coordinator to contract with the RPCs. Allowing sponsors to utilize the time, skills, and knowledge of people outside of their own organization benefits both the sponsors and the state as it centralizes management with one entity knowledgeable of procedures, which helps keep projects on track. ■ *For further information, contact Scott Fortney at (802) 828-0057 or [scott.fortney@state.vt.us](mailto:scott.fortney@state.vt.us)*

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## Colorado DOT Assumes Technical Support Costs

The Colorado DOT's experience with local agency Federal aid projects prior to 1991 led the DOT to implement an innovative management technique at the very beginning of administering its TE program. Before TE, the CO DOT charged Federal aid project sponsors for the direct costs of technical services provided by the DOT to individual projects. Although this was a normal administrative procedure, it led to reimbursable assessments ranging from very small amounts to 30% of project cost, depending on the nature and extent of the DOT services. To the local project sponsors, these charges were usually unpredictable, occasionally substantial and always looked like a state "take-back." Realizing that ISTEA's new Transportation Enhancements activities expanded the number of local agency Federal aid projects that CO DOT would administer, CO DOT decided to change how it funded its administrative services. After receiving the Federal allocation of TE funds and before establishing the annual state TE program level, CO DOT sets aside a small amount of the TE allocation for a TE project technical support fund. CO DOT initially set aside 8% but reduced that later to 6%, and the fund is showing a surplus. With fewer surprises, both the state DOT and TE project sponsors benefit. ■ *For further information, contact Lisa Falconer at 303-512-5212 or [Lisa.Falconer@dot.state.co.us](mailto:Lisa.Falconer@dot.state.co.us)*

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## Nebraska's Effective Use of Outside Consultants

During a hiring freeze, the Nebraska Department of Roads (NE DOR) realized it needed more personnel resources to help the sponsors of TE projects. The TE Division searched for an alternative workforce and found the answer in consultants. In Nebraska, a potential TE project sponsor must first submit a one-page application to the NE DOR's Enhancements Coordinator, who then determines if a project is eligible. If the project is eligible, the sponsor is put in touch with the consultants, who walk the sponsors through every aspect of the application for and implementation of TE funds: costs, right-of-way, design, construction, and community support. This assistance is therefore from "Concept through Construction." The consultants tell the sponsors what to fix, how to fix it, and what to leave alone. While the consultants offer no guarantee that a particular project will be selected, they do make sure every project has a fair chance at acquiring funding. A separate selection committee makes the final project selection decisions, so there are no conflicts of interest with the consultants. Training for consultants takes a year and a half, but after this training they are experts in Transportation Enhancements. NE DOR, which has successfully approved or built over 330 TE projects, feels that everyone benefits from this innovative arrangement. ■ *For further information, contact Jim Pearson at 402-479-4881 or [jpearson@dor.state.ne.us](mailto:jpearson@dor.state.ne.us)*

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**Pennsylvania DOT District  
10's Requirements for  
Engineering Drawings Save  
Real Money**

Sometimes small innovations can cause significant benefits for project sponsors. Pennsylvania DOT (PennDOT) District 10 officials looked at the standard engineering drawings used for trail projects, and realized these 22" by 36" sheets totaled 792 square inches of paper. Requiring trail sponsors to conform to these design standards meant that sponsors spent lots of money for details unimportant to a simpler class of trail projects. PennDot District 10 thus decided to allow, on a case by case basis, trail project sponsors whose projects do not also include a structure to submit engineering drawings on 8 1/2" by 11" paper (94 square inches). In addition, the engineering drawings only have to contain "typical" graphics and quantities. On simpler projects like rail-trails, PennDOT District 10 may not require a full survey; stationing by a distance measuring device may be acceptable. These small changes do add up to real money saved for project sponsors, and exemplify a spirit of simplification, flexibility, and service. ■ *For further information, contact Barry Beere at 724-357-2806.*

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If you have other examples of innovative state TE management, please share those with NTEC! Write, fax, or email them to us – our contact information is on the front page. Thanks to all who shared their examples with NTEC and made this *Technical Brief* possible.

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