Southwest Region University Transportation Center
Project Proposal - FY 2013

TITLE OF PROPOSED PROJECT: EVALUATION OF COMPLETE STREETS POLICY IMPLEMENTATION BY METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATIONS

STRATEGIC GOAL(S) ADDRESSED: ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY, LIVABLE COMMUNITIES, SAFETY

CONSORTIUM MEMBER: UNIVERSITY OF NEW ORLEANS

TOTAL PROJECT BUDGET: $33,287 (UTC Funds)

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HAS THIS PROPOSAL BEEN SUBMITTED FOR FUNDING ELSEWHERE? NO

DID THIS PROPOSAL RECEIVE FUNDING FROM ANOTHER SOURCE? NO
(MATCHING FUNDING ONLY)

DOES THIS PROPOSED RESEARCH INVOLVE THE USE OF HUMAN SUBJECTS? YES

WILL THIS PROPOSED RESEARCH INVOLVE OTHER ORGANIZATIONS AS PARTNERS? YES

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ABSTRACT OF PROJECT:

Over the last ten years, complete streets policy diffusion has been rapid, but uneven, and the extent to which policy adoption is making a difference in the implementation of projects at the local and regional level is unclear, as this innovative approach still competing with the decades old auto-oriented design practices. Tracking the transition and understanding the opportunities and barriers to policy diffusion can help communities craft more appropriate strategies to meet the changing demands and expectations of the public. Through a national survey of the 385 metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) around the country, this research seeks to evaluate the extent to which complete streets policies are being adopted and implemented at MPO level, what opportunities and barriers to complete streets adoption and implementation at MPO level, the impact of MAP-21 on complete streets adoption and implementation, and implications for future policy diffusion and innovation efforts.

Evaluation of Complete Streets Policy Implementation by Metropolitan Planning Organizations

A. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Given the growth of complete streets policies and the national commitment to complete streets outlined by US DOT, the extent to which the broad policy commitment is making a difference in the implementation of projects at the local and regional level is an important question. Complete streets policy diffusion is uneven (Handy and McCann 2011, Cradock et al 2009) with this innovative approach still competing with the decades old auto-oriented design practices (Johnson and White 2010). Tracking the transition and understanding the opportunities and barriers to policy diffusion can help communities craft more appropriate strategies to meet the changing demands and expectations of the public.

This research project seeks to address this need through a national survey of the 385 metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) around the country. MPOs represent a vital regional organization for the distribution of federal transportation funds and an important potential platform for sustainable transportation innovation diffusion (Smith et al 2010, Johnson and White 2010). Despite this potential importance, the role of MPOs in transportation planning innovation remains relatively understudied (Handy and McCann 2011). The need for the study of MPOs role will be even more important as a portion of bicycle and pedestrian funding is suballocated to MPOs through the Transportation Alternatives program authorized by MAP-21.

B. BACKGROUND

Over the last seventy-five years, street designs and the accompanying professional standards that guide their construction have developed to focus on the safe and efficient movement of cars and trucks through space (Handy and McCann 2011, Smith et al 2010). This exclusive focus on movement of autos and trucks through communities has resulted in an impressive network of auto-oriented roads across the country linking far flung destinations, but, almost counter-intuitively, has resulted in difficulty for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders to reach closer neighborhood destinations without a car.

Over the last 10 years, the complete streets movement has gained momentum as a policy response to help address this systematic gap in street designs. The complete streets concept focuses on meeting the needs of all transportation users through the provision of multimodal accommodation. The goal, as Lynott et al 2010 argue, is to foster livable communities where residents of all ages and abilities can "get where they need to go, whether by car, public transportation, bicycle, wheelchair, or foot" (p. 3). This movement has gained traction across the country. Over 400 complete streets policies have been passed at the local, metropolitan planning organization, and state levels since 2005 (National Complete Streets Coalition 2012). In addition, the US DOT issued a complete streets policy statement in 2010 providing broad national guidance for all DOT-sponsored roadways.

C. OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

This research seeks to address four overarching questions:

Q1: To what extent are complete streets policies being adopted and implemented at MPO level?
Q2: What are the key opportunities and barriers to complete streets adoption and implementation at MPO level?

Q3: What is the impact of MAP-21 on complete streets adoption and implementation? Specifically, how is the suballocation of Transportation Alternatives funding impacting complete streets policies at the MPO level?

Q4: What lessons does the complete streets implementation analysis provide for broader questions of policy diffusion and innovation?

To answer these questions, the study team will craft a targeted survey directed at the 385 MPOs across the nation. This survey will build on previous work by Lenhing (2011) and Handy and McCann (2011). Lenhing (2011) surveyed the internal determinants and policy diffusion factors associated with innovative transportation practices to improve aging in place in cities across the country. Handy and McCann (2011) analyze MPO effectiveness in implementing bikeped projects. They analyze four factors associated with MPO bikeped implementation: state level, regional level, MPO level, and unique factors (Figure 1). The proposed research seeks to build understanding of the potential differences and similarities in the internal determinants and policy diffusion factors that are at play in MPO implementation of complete streets policies.

D. WORK PLAN

In order to address this gap in understanding, this project will survey MPOs across the country to help identify opportunities and barriers to policy implementation. The resulting report will provide key policy guidance to MPOs across the country as they seek to meet both US DOT's policy statement and the growing public demand for complete streets. In order to help ensure that the results of this research are widely available to broader public, this project will conclude with a one-day complete streets conference in New Orleans. This event will be jointly sponsored by the University of New Orleans Transportation Institute and BikeEasy, the New Orleans region's non-profit focused on improving bicycle conditions.

The data will be obtained from a national electronic survey of all Metropolitan Planning Organizations (n=385). The survey will consist of approximately 50 questions and will include closed and open-ended questions. Many questions will also provide the respondent an opportunity to explain an answer in narrative format. The survey instrument will be savable so that, if necessary, respondents could collect necessary materials or check with colleagues.

A survey website will be established for this study to provide information about the survey to respondents and a link to the survey. Each visitor will be supplied a unique survey respondent identifier for the MPO, allowing existing information to be incorporated into the final dataset while maintaining respondent anonymity.

The research team will draft questions based on a literature review and consultation with MPO experts. Draft survey questions will be circulated with local MPO directors for feedback and to pre-test the instrument.

The survey data collection phase will last three months. Respondents will be recruited using direct email and the survey will be publicized in social media and other websites used by transportation planning organizations. Direct solicitation will also be used and project members will telephone MPOs directly to ask for their participation.

Figure 1: Potential Factors Associated with BikePed Implementation (Hand and McCann 2011)

Level	Factor
State	**Suballocation** **TE match requirement** **State funding for bike/ped** **State bike/ped plan** **State bike/ped staff** **State bike/ped committee** **Complete streets policy**
MPO	**Policy on federal funding** **CMAQ use for bike/ped** **Regional funding sources** **Bike/ped plan** **Bike/ped coordinator** **Bike/ped committee** **Bike/ped in travel demand** **Bike/ped programming in 1991**
Regional	**Local Bike/ped support** **Local bike/ped plans** **Local bike/ped coordinators** **Local bike/ped committee** **Local complete streets policy** **Advocates**
Other	**Unique conditions of local area**

Based on this methodology, we can expect a response rate between 35 and 40 percent. In order to determine if the respondents are representative of the population of MPOs, the characteristics of responding MPOs will be compared with non-respondents. In addition, the national distribution of respondents will be examined for evidence of regional bias. Based on the estimated response rate and the number of MPOs the margin of error from this method should fall between +/- 6 to 7 percent.

STUDY TASKS

Task 1: Literature Review.

The team will gather and analyze relevant literature pertaining to Complete Streets policy implementation and active transportation infrastructure funding at the MPO level.

Task 2: Develop and Distribute Survey Instrument.

The survey instrument will combine closed and open-ended questions, and will be distributed to all 385 MPOs online via email, with follow up with calls and paper or email attachment surveys for non-respondents.

Task 3: Analyze Survey Results
Survey findings will be compiles and analyzed. Case study targets will be identified based on survey results.

Task 4: Conduct Case Studies
Three case studies MPOs will be identified based on survey findings. Case studies will include document review, as well as in person and/or telephone interviews to better understand opportunities, barriers, and best practices for regional Complete Streets implementation.

Task 5: Host New Orleans Regional Complete Streets Conference
UNOTI and Bike Easy will host and produce a regional event bringing together stakeholders from all New Orleans Metro Area jurisdictions to learn about and discuss means of implementing and funding Complete Streets policies at the local and regional level based on survey and case study results.

Task 6: Produce Final Report and draft journal article
Key findings from all previous tasks will be synthesized in a final comprehensive report. In addition, a draft academic journal article will be prepared for submission.

STAFFING PLAN

The project will be completed under the direction Tara Tolford, MURP, Research Associate at UNO Transportation Institute, in partnership with Dr. Billy Fields, Assistant Professor Political Science, and Dr. Tom Longoria, Associate Professor of Political Science, both of Texas State University and Jamie Wine, executive director of Bike Easy.

Tara received her Master's degree in Urban and Regional Planning from the University of New Orleans in 2011, with a dual specialization in transportation planning and land use. She has been involved with the UNO Transportation Institute since 2009, and is currently responsible for leading all bicycle and pedestrian-related programs and research activities. This includes managing the Pedestrian Bicycle Resource Initiative, a joint project with the New Orleans Regional Planning Commission, and leading new research on the development of minimum state requirements for local growth management policies.

Billy Fields (Ph.D., Urban Studies, University of New Orleans) is Director of the Center for Research, Public Policy, and Training and Assistant Professor of Political Science at Texas State University. His research focuses on understanding the key elements of resilient communities. He has examined resiliency from transportation, urban planning, and hazard mitigation perspectives with publications in the Journal of Public Health Policy, the Journal of Urban Design, Cityscape, and Journal Health and Place. He is also co-editor of the spring 2013 release by Island Press, Transport Beyond Oil. This work examines the key policy components of resilient transportation solutions. His ongoing research evaluates the impact of the federal Nonmotorized Transportation Pilot Program in Minneapolis through a longitudinal evaluation of the impact of changes in the built environment on bicycling usage.

Tom Longoria (Ph.D. Political Science, Texas A&M) is an Associate Professor of Political Science at Texas State University. His research focuses on understanding the role of underserved groups in the urban political process. He has extensively used survey research methods to address this area. Recent research has appeared in Journal of Public Management and Social Policy, Social Science Quarterly, and Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health. Prior to joining the Texas State University faculty, Dr. Longoria was an Associate Professor and Director of Center for Public Service at Texas Tech University and Associate Professor at the University of Kansas.

Jamie has served as executive director of Bike Easy since 2010, working toward building the group into a world-class bicycle advocacy organization. He brings nationwide experience in nonprofit management, educational and advocacy programming, and is working to build momentum for bicycling in New Orleans. Jamie has previously worked sponsored research projects with the Merritt C. Becker, Jr. University of New Orleans Transportation Institute, including the Bike Easy New Orleans Bicycle Map (May 2012 and the Bike Easy Bicycle Share Feasibility Study (May 2012).

E. SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES

It is proposed that the project will be completed within a period of 12 months (July 1, 2013 – June 30, 2014).

Project Work Plan	Month of Project											
Task	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Task 1: Literature Review.												
Task 2: Develop and Distribute Survey Instrument.												
Task 3: Analyze Survey Results												
Task 4: Conduct Case Studies												
Task 5: Host New Orleans Regional Complete Streets Conference												
Task 6: Produce Final Report and draft journal article												

F. ANTICIPATED DELIVERABLES

- Review of current literature pertaining to Complete Streets policy at the MPO level
- Summary of survey results and MPO-level complete streets policies adopted
- Case Study profiles

- Comprehensive final report synthesizing state of knowledge and project findings, including outcomes of New Orleans Regional Complete Streets Conference and recommendations for advancing the implementation and funding of Complete Streets policy in the New Orleans Region
- Article for submission to academic journal

G. PLAN TO PURSUE ADDITIONAL FUNDING AFTER CONCLUSION OF SWUTC PROJECT:

A working partnership has been established with the New Orleans Regional Planning Commission through the Pedestrian Bicycle Resource Initiative project. Complete Streets has been one of the areas of focus for this partnership. The deliverables from this study will be made available to this and other local agencies, potentially leading to an expansion of this existing partnership to provide additional resources to advance research related to the implementation of Complete Streets. In addition, other opportunities to partner with MPOs will be explored.

H. REFERENCES

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