



THE VEHICLE

ANN ARBOR-YPSILANTI URBAN AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY COMMITTEE

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As communities grow further out and commuting distances increase, more and more Americans find themselves sitting in traffic when they'd rather be home with their families. By one estimate, Americans waste half a billion hours a year stuck in traffic. But more than time is being lost, increased commuting times decrease air quality and tighten family budgets. The federal government can help communities tailor solutions to meet their individual needs in a variety of ways. For instance, federal funding of research and implementation of intelligent transportation systems and other technologies can help ease traffic congestion and help states and local governments to improve transportation and land use planning. Additionally, several TEA-21 programs provide communities with flexible funding sources that they can use to develop bike paths and improve sidewalks to increase pedestrian safety and create walkable areas. The program described to the right is available to employers directly and can help individuals realize significant tax savings.

Promoting Transportation Choices

Commuter Choice Program

Program Description: The Commuter Choice Program promotes employer-provided commuting options designed to reduce traffic congestion, improve air quality and allow employers to tailor transportation benefits to their individual employees' needs. The national network of businesses environmental organizations, and communities that makes up the Commuter Choice Program has been formed to disseminate information about Federal tax laws (especially recent changes) that provide economic benefits for commuting to work by means other than single occupancy vehicles (e.g., ridesharing, vanpools, public transit). The recent changes make it easier for employers to offer a variety of commute options for employees. By encouraging commuters to consider the financial and environmental aspects of such a variety of employer-sponsored commute options, the Commuter Choice program can help communities improve quality of life by reducing air pollution and traffic congestion.

Tax Benefits: The Internal Revenue code provides incentives for Commuter Choice programs -- specifically for transit, vanpooling, and parking benefits. The tax code gives employers and employees new ways to get tax savings related to their specific work commute choices.

Who is eligible to get funds from this program? The Commuter Choice program encourages individuals and companies to take advantage of federal tax provisions that can reduce their annual tax contributions. EPA estimates average savings for individual taxpayers to range between \$300-\$400 per year.

What types of projects are eligible? Commuter Choice program elements that reduce use of single occupancy vehicles for commuting to work are eligible for federal tax savings. They include Parking cash-out, Ridesharing, Purchase of transit passes and Vanpools. (Note: There are no favorable tax treatments available for Bicycling, Walking or Telecommuting programs.)

Program Information: More detailed information on Commuter Choice outreach efforts at the Environmental Protection Agency is available at <http://www.epa.gov/oms/transp/comchoice/ccweb.htm>.

More information on implementing a Commuter Choice program in your workplace is available from the Federal Transit Administration at <http://www/fta.dot.gov/library/policy/cc/cc.htm>.

More information on Commuter Choice tax information, including the actual tax code, is available from the IRS at http://www.irs.ustreas.gov/prod/form_pubs/pubs/p5350404.htm.

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Midwestern States, Federal Agencies Celebrate Agreement Safeguarding Environment, Streamlining Transportation Projects



Congrats
Terri

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) officials celebrated the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) among 10 federal agencies and agencies of six states to streamline the development of highway projects in the Midwestern states while preserving environmental protections.

The purpose of the MOU is to reduce the time needed for environmental evaluation of federal-aid highway projects in the Midwestern region, while also assuring that the environment is protected and all environmental laws and regulations are fully satisfied. It will also help to meet requirements of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21), which calls for a streamlined transportation planning process that promotes environmentally sound transportation investment choices.

"The ultimate outcome of this MOU is to improve mobility and safety and enhance the environment by working together with all our partners to improve coordination," said FHWA Administrator Kenneth R. Wykle. "This partnership will help make our communities more livable and improve the quality of life for all."

The MOU is a broad regional agreement under which individual state streamlining agreements are planned. Developed jointly by the FHWA's Wisconsin Division and Midwestern Resource Center in partnership with the EPA's Region

5, the agreement establishes shared commitments that states and federal agencies will work cooperatively, resolve conflicts constructively and apply performance measures, benchmarks and goals to make the highway project development process more efficient.

"This MOU on streamlining is an important first step," said Francis X. Lyons, Regional Administrator of EPA Region 5. "We anticipate that this agreement will lead to state agreements that, when implemented, will lead to process improvements and on-the-ground environmental results."

The federal agencies are the Midwestern offices of the FHWA, EPA, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Coast Guard, Natural Resources Conservation Service, U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs and National Park Service. The state partners signing this MOU are the state departments of transportation and state environmental protection agencies of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio and Wisconsin.

The MOU contains several strategies to assist the streamlining process. Examples include expansion of successful existing streamlining practices; better coordination of land use, growth, and transportation issues; alternative strategies to mitigate the environmental impacts of highways, and closer coordination of transportation planning with the environment.

UATS is very proud to announce that Terri Blackmore, Deputy Director of the agency, was one of only fourteen women nationwide selected to participate in a Leadership Initiative Professional Development Program, titled "Leadership for the 21st Century: Managing People, Policy and Politics". Sponsored by the Women's Transportation Seminar (WTS) in cooperation with the Vorhees Transportation Center at Rutgers University, the program is geared toward women with promise for higher levels of responsibility.

The program promises to provide personal interaction with leading industry professionals who will challenge the analytical and creative skills of participants as they tackle case studies and exercises dealing with complex issues of people, policy and politics.

Terri is beginning her second term as President of the Michigan chapter of WTS. Prior to that she served as the Secretary for two years in addition to being instrumental in the creation of the Michigan chapter. Terri has worked at UATS for the past 22 years, each year assuming more responsibilities and managing more projects and work tasks. Participating in this leadership program promises to be a worthwhile and rewarding experience for Terri.

Congratulations Terri!!

Secretary Miller Announces Repeat Offender Laws Working

Reprinted from *Safety Network* (Vol. 7, No. 4), a publication of the Michigan Office of Highway Safety Planning

Secretary of State Candice Miller announced in October that more than 18,000 license plates of dangerous drivers have been confiscated in one year under the repeat offender laws thanks to committed partnership of law enforcement, courts, prosecutors and the Department of State.

Secretary Miller's remarks followed the one-year anniversary of the repeat offender laws on October 1. Calling the traffic-safety initiative a significant success, Secretary Miller added that the goal is to prevent the worst drivers from having access to a vehicle.

In a one-year report generated by the Department of State, figures show that, in addition to the 18,006

license plates confiscated by law enforcement, the courts ordered 4,214 vehicles immobilized and 25 vehicles forfeited, and the department ordered ignition interlocks for 2,600 vehicles. Moreover, the department revoked the driver licenses of 15,114 individuals for two or more drunk driving convictions under the repeat offender laws. The laws now require license revocation for any combination of two or more alcohol offenses, including operating while impaired (OWI).

Effective October 1, a new Repeat Offender law makes it easier for prosecutors to obtain court orders for vehicle immobilization by eliminating some procedural requirements.

Secretary Miller added the laws also provide a strong deterrent effect. She explained that anecdotal evidence from the courts, prosecutors, police and Department of State staff indicate the word is getting out that the state means business when it comes to driving drunk or on a suspended license.

In June 2000, registration denial went into effect, affecting more than 62,000 individuals who risk losing the right to register a vehicle under the laws. As part of the implementation of registration denial, the department developed a new web site allowing auto dealers statewide to immediately check whether a customer is eligible to register a vehicle.

Upcoming Workshops and Conferences

Redefining Community: A Smart Growth Approach to Street and Neighborhood Design, Crime Prevention, and Public Health and Safety

This ground-breaking event will take the Smart Growth/Liveable Communities Movement a step further by approaching the design of the urban environment from a comprehensive public health and safety perspective.

The program will address how and why a strong sense of community serves as a deterrent to crime and how to design to promote that sense of community. Experts will present case studies, techniques, and best practices that have influenced public health and safety by increasing physical activity, decreasing violent crime, and

reducing pedestrian/auto accidents. The conference is being held at the U.S. Grant Hotel in San Diego, California on January 19 and 20. The registration fee for public/nonprofit sector employees is \$195 and \$245 for private sector workers.

For more information about the conference, or to register call 800-PSU-TODAY or look at www.outreach.psu.edu/C&I/RedefiningCommunity/.

Get on board with SEMCOG: Regional Transit Options

SEMCOG is holding the second in a series of public forums on transit. Open to the public, these are forums to discuss transit issues and develop a vision of what the region's transit system should be.

Session 1: Problems and challenges (held on August 10, 2000)

Session 2: Regional Transit Options (January 23, 25, 30, 2001)

Session 3: Preferred Futures (March/April 2001)

Session 4: Public hearings on a proposed vision (June 2001)

Session 2 is designed to develop alternative transit corridors and components. It will result in the identification of alternatives of where transit should be provided in the region and its features. This information will feed into Session 3 where participants will identify preferred alternatives.

To register, call SEMCOG at 313-961-4266 or visit www.semco.org and click on Transit Vision.

Thank You Ingrid and Doug

The Policy Committee, Technical Advisory Subcommittee, and staff of the Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti Urban Area Transportation Study Committee (UATS) would like to express their sincere appreciation for the leadership and contributions of former City of Ann Arbor Mayor, Ingrid Sheldon and former Pittsfield Township Supervisor Douglas Woolley.

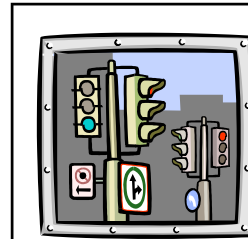
Both Ms. Sheldon and Mr. Woolley were active participants in the transportation planning processes for Washtenaw County and their contributions will be felt for many years.

Ms. Sheldon served on the UATS Policy Committee for 8 years. In addition to her representation on the Policy Committee, she volunteered

to serve on many ad-hoc committees as well.

When Mr. Woolley joined the Policy Committee 8 years ago, it is doubtful that he thought he would leave the group having served as Secretary/Treasurer then Vice-Chair. He was also the Policy Committee representative to the Federal Aid Committee and most recently represented Pittsfield Township on the Technical Committee too.

Congratulations on your many years of public service, Ingrid and Doug, your unending energy, positive attitude and humor will surely be missed by everyone who was lucky enough to work with you. Best wishes for a well-deserved and happy retirement!



Call for CMAQ Projects Coming Soon

The call for Congestion Mitigation /Air Quality (CMAQ) Projects will soon be announced. Projects are awarded funding based on the amount of emissions that will be reduced as a result of implementing the project. Some of the area improvements paid for with CMAQ funds include: initiation of transit service to the City of Saline, signal interconnection from S. University to US-23 on Huron/Washtenaw Avenue, and intersection improvements at Ann Arbor-Saline/Waters/Lohr Roads.

