



# Louisiana

# TRANSITIONS

December 2011



## Impact of Transportation on Human Health

The US spends over \$2 trillion annually on health care, more than any other country in the world, but is only 36th when it comes to life expectancy, as reported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. A recent report by the National Research Council puts it in perspective; in 2008, 16% of our nation's gross domestic product was spent on health care - up from 7% in 1970 - and total expenditures on medical facilities and treatments are, of course, projected to increase even further.

It is obvious that these numbers do not quite add up... 1st in spending... 36th for life expectancy? And "For the first time in our history, the United States is raising a generation of children who may live sicker, shorter lives than their parents. We must act now to reverse this trend", says the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Commission to Build a Healthier America.

The answer to this oxymoron might lie in the fact that within the US only 10% of deaths are attributed to a true lack of access to medical care; 30% of deaths point to genetic constitution; however, a staggering 60% of deaths are related to behavior, environment, and socioeconomic influences, as discussed in Health Affairs, a leading journal of health policy thought and research. Individual behaviors and choices have a significant impact on a person's health and well-being, but those behaviors and choices are strongly influenced by the environment in which the individuals live and work. Therefore, we need to take a much closer look at these 60% that seem to be making the difference, and of course, this is why the topic would even be mentioned in connection to transportation and public transit.

The US is first in the world when it comes to money spent annually on health care, but only ranks 36th world-wide in life expectancy.

By now everyone has heard of the interconnection of transportation planning and community design on public health, as the relationship has been studied for some years; how sprawl is contributing to the growing waistline of the average American; how the lack of access to fresh nutritious foods provides a perfect breeding ground for a variety of debilitating chronic illnesses, such as high blood pressure, diabetes, and obesity; how car-oriented development discourages active life styles, walking, and biking; and how important affordable access to jobs, education and healthcare services is to an overall better quality of life.

How does public transportation contribute to better personal health? According to the US Environmental Protection Agency, motor vehicle emissions cause billions in annual health care costs for damages related to air pollution. On the other hand, public transportation emits 95% less carbon monoxide, 92% fewer volatile organic compounds, and reduces carbon dioxide and nitrogen oxide emissions by almost half when compared to passenger miles traveled in private vehicles. National Safety Council data shows that riding the bus is 170 times safer than automobile travel.

As many as four million children in lower income families miss essential doctor appointments because they are lacking access to transportation options - including transit (according to the Children's Health Fund Kids Can't Wait campaign).

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# Notes from the Top

by Donna Lavigne

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The Holiday season is here again and the Public Transportation Staff would like to wish you all a wonderful, healthy, happy, and peaceful Holiday Season and our best wishes for the coming New Year. It has been a very busy year. We have conducted ten workshops, completed nine transit agency compliance reviews, multiple outreach meetings to parishes without public transit services, and hosted the 2011 Annual Public Transportation Conference. In addition to the above, we have been diligently working to define key coordination issues and make recommendations to the Legislature in response to the House Concurrent Resolution 131, sponsored by Representative Joe Harrison from District 51.

We are excited to report that the 2011 Annual Public Transportation Conference in Lake Charles on November 14-16, 2011 was a great success. Lake Charles Mayor Randy Roach welcomed us to Lake Charles speaking on the importance of Public Transportation. DOTD Secretary Sherri LeBas kicked off the conference with her Keynote Address captivating the audience immediately with her presentation on public transportation funding and DOTD's commitment to building and maintaining seamless transportation systems that moves both people and products safely, efficiently and effec-

tively. Attendees also received information on a variety of topics including Ethics and Credible Leadership training, Safety and Security training, DBE reporting, and a session on Business Etiquette and Professionalism. After lunch on Tuesday, the attendees were "Motivated" by Bruce Hamilton's inspiring and enthusiastic presentation on "No Bad Days." We all wish to express our appreciation to the many vendors who participated, sponsored conference events, and donated some awesome door prizes. Congratulations to the 2011 Extra Mile Award and FTA Award recipients. You can find more about the conference in the Spotlight article in this newsletter.

Just a reminder, all applications for Section 5310 Elderly and Disabled, 5311 Rural Public Transportation, 5316 Job Access and Reverse Commute Programs, and 5317 New Freedom Programs are due by Wednesday, February 1, 2012. Applications and manuals are available on our website at [www.dotd.la.gov/intermodal/transit](http://www.dotd.la.gov/intermodal/transit). Please do not hesitate to contact our office if you need assistance in completing your application.

From all of us in the Public Transportation Section, we wish you all a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! 



# Announcements

FROM ALL OF US AT THE  
DOTD PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SECTION:

HAVE A SAFE AND MERRY  
HOLIDAY SEASON  
AND A PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR

## Events Calendar

### APTA Conferences

Transit CEOs Seminar  
Jan 28-31, 2012 Orlando, FL

Legal Affairs Seminar  
Feb 19-21, 2012 Tampa, FL

Marketing & Communications Workshop  
Feb 26-29, 2012 Miami, FL

Legislative Conference  
March 11-13, 2012 Washington DC

International Bus Rodeo  
May 4-8, 2012 Long Beach, CA

For more information: [www.apta.com](http://www.apta.com)

### Other Upcoming Conferences/Training:

2012 SWTA Annual Conference & EXPO  
Feb 12-15, 2012 Denver, CO

Paratransit Mgmt & Operations Course  
Feb 8, 2012 Houston, TX

For more information, go to the link in  
the next column on NTI Courses

FTA Sponsored Training on Substance  
Abuse Mgmt and Program Compliance  
Feb 13-15, 2012 Tampa, FL

For more information: [transit-safety.volpe.dot.gov](http://transit-safety.volpe.dot.gov)

9th National Conference on Asset Mgmt  
Sept 17, 2012 San Diego, CA

For more information: [www.trb.org](http://www.trb.org)

### NTI Courses:

For information: [www.ntionline.com](http://www.ntionline.com)

Transportation Safety Institute Classes  
Courses are offered around the country  
on various topics throughout the year.  
For more information, please visit:  
[www.tsi.dot.gov](http://www.tsi.dot.gov)



A HAPPY  
NEW YEAR



# 2011 PT CONFERENCE



Spotlight on...



## 2011 Public Transportation Conference in Lake Charles

For those that attended, the 2011 Public Transportation Conference that was held November 14-16 in Lake Charles was a real treat. The conference was held at L'Auberge, which is a first class facility. The conference rooms were functional, the accommodations first rate and the food was excellent. Even better, the educational and networking opportunities were abundant.

Conference attendees were treated to an opening keynote speech by DOTD Secretary Sherri LeBas. Her comments centered on DOTD's commitment to transit and transportation in general around the State. DOTD's focus is on building a seamless transportation system to serve all residents in the State.

The opening general session provided an excellent update on national and statewide issues. Bob Patrick, our FTA Regional Administrator, provided a national update from FTA's perspective and several speakers provided other news from the national and state level.

During the conference, Kristen Joyner, Executive Director of the Southwest Transit Association, gave two great presentations on "Ethics and Credible Leadership" and "Business Etiquette and Professionalism." Both sessions were interactive and educational.

As always, there were opportunities to interact with the various DOTD Program Managers and catch up on the latest information associated with the

various FTA grants. The roundtable sessions are always a favorite, providing everyone a chance to voice concerns and issues and gather information from our colleagues.

One of the highlights was the awards presented by both DOTD and FTA. DOTD presented *Extra Mile* awards to individuals and agencies throughout Louisiana that exemplify the service that we all provide to Louisiana citizens. The *Extra Mile* recipients this year included:

- ✓ Cecil Corley from the Vernon Council on Aging
- ✓ Allison Romero from the City of Westwego
- ✓ Alan LaVergne from the Cameron Council on Aging
- ✓ R.J. Goebel from the Capital Region Planning Commission
- ✓ Emily Efferson from the Capital Area Transit System
- ✓ Central City EOC Senior Center
- ✓ The City of Lake Charles Transit System

The FTA presented awards for the highest positive change in ridership to:

- ✓ River Parishes Transit Authority
- ✓ St. Tammany Parish
- ✓ SporTran (Shreveport)

Congratulations to all of the winners.

Overall, the conference was a great success, in no small part to all of our vendors and their support. They provided assistance to many of the events and provided some awesome prizes for the many attendees. 

One of the DOTD PT Section's mandates is to provide information and technical assistance to transit providers in Louisiana to assist them in meeting their requirements for FTA funding. These activities come in many different formats and venues. DOTD PT provides numerous training courses, workshops, and training material as well as a website and an annual conference. To keep all of our constituents up to date on DOTD PT's activities, DOTD On The Go features just a few selected items each quarter.



expansions. The new streetcar lines will be an excellent addition to the system in New Orleans.

### Regional Coordination Meetings

In addition to their other activities, DOTD has been attending the regional coordination meetings across the state. This quarter, DOTD attended meetings in Baton Rouge, Alexandria and Monroe. They have also participated in two statewide working group meetings associated with the House Concurrent Resolution 131 mentioned in last quarter's newsletter in the spotlight article. This working group is developing a report to the State Legislature on improving transportation coordination across the State. The group will present the report to the Legislature prior to the opening of the 2012 legislative session.



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### DOTD Conducts Site Visits

As most of you know, part of the outreach and assistance that DOTD provides to the Rural Public (Section 5311) and Elderly and Disabled (Section 5310) providers, are site visits from the Program Manager. During the third quarter, Mike Watts visited the City of Ball and new prospective agency, the Winn ARC and the Winn COA. A heads up to some of our agencies, Bennie Nobles plans to visit Allen Parish COA, Ascension COA, Avoyelles ARC, and Avoyelles COA in January 2012..

### In The Spotlight

If your agency or someone within your agency deserves recognition for a job well done, or has already received recognition or an award, please let us know. Email or send a brief description, photos, and contact information to [Donna.Lavigne@la.gov](mailto:Donna.Lavigne@la.gov) or to Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development/Public Transit Section, attn: Donna Lavigne, P.O. Box 94245, Baton Rouge, LA 70804. 

### DOTD Safety & Security Responsibilities

For those that don't know, DOTD is the State Safety Oversight agency for safety and security issues related to the fixed guideway system (street cars) in New Orleans. As part of this duties, DOTD has made numerous site visits to the New Orleans RTA during the past quarter to participate in safety and security related meetings associated with the streetcar line

### Contact Information Announcement

In our attempt to keep everyone informed of special events, workshops, conferences, and important information regarding public transportation in Louisiana, DOTD PT maintains a Contact Database. If information about your organization - new phone number, new director, new address or email - has changed, please help us keep our database current. Email your updated information to: [publictransportation@la.gov](mailto:publictransportation@la.gov)

Thanks for your Help!





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To better quantify these effects of transportation infrastructure and community design as well as point out the importance of non-automobile transportation options on individual and community health, several different metrics can be employed:

- ✓ Community Wellness Score - captures the cumulative impact of transportation, housing, income, education, crime, and other factors on the prevalence of various health ailments (as demonstrated in the 2010 Wellness Score Project study undertaken by the Oklahoma City County Health Department).
- ✓ Sprawl Index Score - is a function of multiple factors that assess four different metro-development features: density of housing and population; neighborhood mix of homes, jobs, and services; strength of activity centers and downtowns; and accessibility of the street network. Lower scores represent greater sprawl.
- ✓ Walk Score - measures how easy it is to live a car-light lifestyle by measuring and awarding points based on the distance to amenities within each category. Higher scores are equivalent to less auto-dependency.

For example, the sprawl index of 83 of the largest metropolitan areas within the US was assessed in the Urban Sprawl and Its Impact study by Smart Growth America. Baton Rouge received a cumulative sprawl index score of 90.13 and ranked 24th most sprawling among the surveyed metros. New Orleans on the other hand had a score of 125.39 and was ranked 74th most sprawling of the 83 metropolitan areas, owing its better than average rank particularly to the accessibility of its transportation network. (As the walk score assessment was designed for individual addresses only, it is not possible to compare the two metros.)

Although a city might not be included in the study mentioned above and/or resources to undertake a comprehensive community wellness assessment are not available, it is still possible to analyze and capture the impact - negative effects as well as positive benefits - of any proposed transportation project, plan or even policy through a targeted Health Impact Assessment prior to implementation of the proposed action.

What is a Health Impact Assessment (HIA)? It is a systematic approach, used to determine potential impacts of a suggested policy, plan, program or project on the health of a popu-

lation, by analyzing related data. HIAs are an immensely valuable tool for making the impacts of certain investment and policy decisions evident to both decision makers and to the public well ahead of any expenditure of project funds.

At this time, HIAs are used sparingly in the US. However, they have been employed in many other countries and organizations around the world to illustrate the health impact of decisions in seemingly non-health related sectors such as housing, agriculture, education, as well as transportation.

Faced with the growing evidence of adverse health effects of automobile-oriented transportation and land use planning, isn't it time to demonstrate and quantify the benefits associated with many public transportation projects by using indices such as the Sprawl Index and Walk Scores, or by comprehensively evaluating planned policies, programs, and projects through a Health Impact Assessment?

Since the passing of the Interstate Highway Act in 1956, transportation planning has been predominantly focused on road-building and private automobile use. Faced with increasing negative impacts on human health - decreased opportunities for physical activity, increased exposure to air pollution, and the growing number of traffic crashes - promotion and implementation of healthier transportation options should be our priority. Health Impact Assessments are another way of demonstrating the immense value of public transportation. 



## From Capitol Hill...

On December 15, Senator Sherrod Brown introduced S. 1992, a bill that would allow urban transit systems flexibility with their Section 5307 funds to pay for operating expenses. The bill, introduced with Senators Ron Wyden and Jeanne Shaheen as original co-sponsors, is a companion bill to HR 3200 in the House. 

