



Advocacy Advance



Tools to Increase Biking and Walking

Improving the Process: How Statewide Organizations Are Winning Federal Dollars for Bicycle and Pedestrian Projects

This report is a product of Advocacy Advance — a partnership of the League of American Bicyclists and the Alliance for Biking & Walking.



Improving the Process: How Statewide Organizations Are Winning Federal Dollars for Bike-Ped Projects

Statewide bicycle advocacy organizations are growing more sophisticated and looking to take on challenges that will have an on-going impact on the way transportation funds are distributed in their regions and states.

More and more, they are turning their attention to policies and processes that determine the flow of federal funds to bicycling and walking projects and programs. To that end, leaders have started to seek models that address these campaigns from a statewide perspective.

The following is a list of steps that statewide organizations have taken to improve the project selection processes for federal funding programs such as the [Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program \(CMAQ\)](#), the [Surface Transportation Program \(STP\)](#), the [Highway Safety Improvement Programs \(HSIP\)](#), and [Section 402 State and Community Safety Grants](#). Some comments on Transportation Enhancements and Safe Routes to School are also included.

The ideas come from organizations that have been successful in reforming project selection processes. For example, in 2011, **BikeDelaware** and partners successfully campaigned for the first CMAQ-funded bicycling project in state history. The **League of Illinois Bicyclists** worked with Peoria's Metropolitan Planning Organization to revise the STP application to award points for bike lanes, trails, and sidewalks as components of larger projects. The **Missouri Bicycle and Pedestrian Federation** has a seat on the CMAQ project selection committee.



Arizona Transportation agency staff and advocates discuss bicycle-friendly project selection policies

1. Promote best policies within MPOs (Metropolitan Planning Organizations) and your state Department of Transportation. Statewide organizations are in a position to encourage every MPO in the state to adopt policies and processes that make bicycle and pedestrian projects competitive. If project selection happens at the state level, these suggestions apply to state DOTs.

For all programs:

- Set-aside a portion of funds for non-motorized projects
- Bike/ped projects are eligible for funding and have policies and procedures in place (including funding for programs, not just infrastructure)
- Combine several projects into one application. The federal funding process involves a fair amount of red tape, and many agencies only want to contend with it for large projects. Therefore, bicycling advocates recommend combining smaller projects together.

For Surface Transportation Program:

- Change scoring criteria to give credit for including bicycling and walking components in larger projects
- Include a check box on Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP) to identify projects that include bicycle and pedestrian accommodations

For Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program:

- Sub-allocate funds to regions; do not require projects to compete with others from across the state
- Divide the funds fairly by project type and compare bike/ped only to other bike/ped
- Place a greater value on reducing Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) than traffic efficiency projects, which induce demand for auto trips
- Include second-order effects of bike projects on air quality; bike/ped projects support efficient land-use

For safety programs:

- Set aside at least an equal proportion of HSIP and Section 402 dollars to the proportion of bike/ped fatalities in the state or region
- Combine crash data over multiple years



“When we asked the question, ‘How often are bicycling and walking included in DOT projects?’ we found out that no one knows the answer because it isn’t tracked. Simply adding a couple of checkboxes to the state’s STIP tracking software would make a huge difference... When we got involved in MoDOT’s long-range planning process, it was very productive for both us and MoDOT..”

Brent Hugh, Executive Director,
Missouri Bicycle and
Pedestrian Federation

How statewide organizations can have an impact

- Learn what works well
 - Survey counties and cities to find out what the best regions are doing.
 - Share peer best practices with poor-performing agencies to encourage natural competition.
- Get to know MPO staff
 - Gauge the staff's feeling on an issue and, if supportive, suggest an idea.
 - Find and cultivate 'inside advocates' and be a resource.
- Provide good ideas at staff level and then "move them up the food chain" to get ideas implemented.
- Learn to [read and analyze a Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan](#)
 - Highlight inequities in past funding decisions
 - Identify opportunities
- Learn the decision-making structure and money flow of your MPO.
- Connect with elected officials who have a direct say and influence over MPO decisions.



"As a statewide organization, where we have really invested time is with state elected officials and our state DOT. That's where the decisions are being made."

James Wilson, Executive Director, Bike Delaware

2. Work with MPOs to improve the quality of applications. Bike/ped projects can't compete unless good projects are submitted.

- Build relationships; work closely with MPO staff.
- Keep a list of officials and staff to alert them to good projects and opportunities.
- Help draft long-range plan: A few small changes can have long-term impact.
- Institutionalize complete streets / routine accommodation policies and implementation.
- Offer time and resources to help write, revise, or review applications.

3. Get involved in committees. That's where the decisions take place.

- This comes from building relationships with policy-makers and staff.
- Find out who sits on the relevant CMAQ, STP and other committees and how they got appointed.

4. Raise public awareness and support. Project selection processes are part policy and part politics. There's plenty of wiggle room for the projects with the most political support to get funded. This can work for bicyclists if the political will is on our side. Advocates can have the most impact by demonstrating the need and benefits of bicycling infrastructure.

- Create an atmosphere of public support for bicycling and walking.
- Make sure cyclists are making their voices heard.
- Shine a light on the closed process and highlight the need for transparency.
- Publicize the results of current process; ask if the community's needs are being met.
- Work with neighborhood associations; listen and be a resource.

5. Fight for proportional Rescissions. Rescissions (see [FAQ](#)) decisions take place at the state level, making them an important issue for statewide organizations.

- Dedicated bicycling funds and CMAQ funds should be protected against [rescissions](#).
- If rescissions to these funds are necessary, the [rescissions should be proportional](#) to apportionment level, not the unobligated balance.

6. Work with local funding decision-makers. MPOs can't program federal funds unless local agencies are willing to sponsor projects and provide a 20% local match. Applications for non-motorized projects demonstrate local demand and help justify favorable policies.

- Secure the support of elected officials.
- Make the case for these projects to agency leadership.
- Identify sources of local funds for the required 20% match to access federal formula funds. Find out if in-kind donations are allowed.
- Find allies, including transportation, health, equity, and environmental partners.

7. Prioritize projects. Getting a bicycling or walking project funded for the first time can open the door for other projects. Identify the best candidates that will have greatest positive impact.

- Focus limited organizational capacity on the most important projects.
- Small projects can be just as difficult as very big projects, so...
 - Don't be afraid to think big.
 - Federal funds are appropriate for more expensive projects — like river crossings or bridge repair / construction — that localities are unlikely to be able to afford.

Conclusion

Statewide organizations are well positioned to improve state-level policies that impact funding processes and to share best practices with regions. Experienced advocates note that federal funding campaigns require patience. Changing the funding process takes time. Construction projects themselves take years to go from conception to completion. It's never too soon to learn how the process works in your state and to get involved.

Acknowledgements

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Additional information

For more information on federal funding campaigns, visit AdvocacyAdvance.org, or contact:

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Resources

Which Federal Program is Right for My Project? (America Bikes):

<http://americabikes.org/Documents/AB-Federal-Program-Factsheet.pdf>

Advocacy Advance Reports: <http://www.advocacyadvance.org/resources>

CMAQ report:

http://www.advocacyadvance.org/docs/lab_cmaq.pdf

HSIP case study report:

http://www.advocacyadvance.org/site_images/content/hsip_casestudies_shsp_emphasis.pdf

Section 402 report:

http://www.advocacyadvance.org/docs/section_402.pdf

Rescissions – Frequently Asked Questions:

http://www.advocacyadvance.org/site_images/content/Rescissions_FAQs.pdf

How Delaware made statewide bike funding history with CMAQ:

http://blog.bikeleague.org/blog/2011/10/delaware_cmaq/

How Peoria made its transportation planning and funding process far more bicycle and pedestrian friendly:

<http://tinyurl.com/8963oma>

How the Missouri Bicycle and Pedestrian Federation analyzed the distribution of funds:

<http://mobikefed.org/UnderservedCommunities>

CMAQ Public Access System (FHWA Project database):

https://fhwaapps.fhwa.dot.gov/cmaq_pub/Reports/default.aspx

Guidance on CMAQ bike/ped eligibility (FHWA):

<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bikeped/cmaqfunds.htm>

Bicycle and Pedestrian Provisions of Federal Transportation Legislation (FHWA):

<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bikeped/bp-guid.htm#bp4>

Federal-Aid Highway Program Funding for Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities and Programs (FHWA):

<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bikeped/bipedfund.htm>

Bicycling & Walking Benchmarking Report (Alliance for Biking & Walking):

<http://www.peoplepoweredmovement.org/>

Guide for Reviewing Public Road Design and Bicycling Accommodations for Virginia Bicycling Advocates (Fairfax Advocates for Better Bicycling):

<http://www.fabb-bikes.org/guide/FABBGuide-LowRes.pdf>