

The Learning Curve for Successful Selection and Implementation for Enhancement Projects in Michigan

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Abstract

The Federal Highway Administration funded Transportation Enhancement Program is a setaside program for ten specific activities such as landscaping and streetscaping; bicycle and pedestrian facilities; preservation of historic transportation structures; and highway runoff mitigation. Michigan's Transportation Enhancement Program has been very successful in identifying and distributing funds for projects. Four hundred-thirty-three enhancement projects have been selected throughout the state. The program was primarily implemented using existing staff and procedures. While the selection of projects has gone relatively smoothly, the learning curve for implementation of projects was steep both for MDOT and local agencies. Today, the selection and implementation of projects is going smoothly and projects are being constructed quickly.

This paper will discuss the details of the selection and implementation process of enhancement projects in Michigan, with a special emphasis on what has and has not been successful. Some early decisions have worked out, others did not and have had to be modified as the program developed.

Some of the issues to be discussed include:

- The program has been the testing ground for innovative project administration practices by allowing local agencies to let and manage their own enhancement projects. This new way of working with local agencies will be extended to other kinds of projects based on this experience.
- The annual call for enhancement projects has allowed MDOT to modify the program to improve its effectiveness, and to work with local agencies in the development of projects on an ongoing basis. It also allows for the debriefing of unsuccessful applicants, and the resubmission of reworked applications.
- The program has been coordinated with MPOs statewide, but it has been a struggle under the existing criteria to identify adequate numbers of urban projects.

Overall, Michigan's experience with the Enhancement Program has been a positive, community building program that has identified new customers for transportation, and new allies in providing adequate resources for transportation. It has also provided us with a new perspective on our transportation needs and the desires of our communities.