



NASHVILLE AREA

Metropolitan Planning Organization

MEDIA RELEASE

Middle Tennessee's Bicycle & Pedestrian Study Receives National Accolade

MPO's Project is First with Non-Motorized Scope to Receive Major Award among Transportation Professionals

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NASHVILLE, Tenn.— A comprehensive study that creates a vision for bicycle and pedestrian mobility in Middle Tennessee –completed in 2010 by the Nashville Area Metropolitan Planning Organization– has been awarded the prestigious “Best Project” designation by the Planning Council of the Institute of Transportation Engineers. This marks the first time ITE has bestowed its Best Project Award on an endeavor focused exclusively on non-motorized modes.

Presenting a well-researched and documented roadmap for allocation of limited resources on quality facilities, with the greatest number of benefits to citizens and the environment, the Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Study is the first all-inclusive vision for improving the overall climate for walking and bicycling across the MPO's seven-county planning area.

Infrastructure recommendations include expansion of greenways, and a regional bicycle network that would provide more than 1100 miles of on-road bicycle accommodations, such as bicycle lanes and bike routes. On policy matters, the report calls for creation of sidewalks on all major thoroughfares —ex., Nolensville Pike, Murfreesboro Road, Lebanon Pike, Gallatin Pike, Franklin Road, Dickerson Pike— along with enhanced public education and law enforcement efforts to improve roadway safety conditions for *all* users.

In a news release on its decision to award the MPO “Best Project,” ITE states: “Contributing to the originality of this project are [sic] linkages between non-motorized transportation, and community issues such as congestion and health. The project provides a blueprint for investment in non-motorized [modes], and helps to put this type of transportation on a comparable level with other transportation projects. [It] is comprehensive in the sense that assignment of responsibilities for implementation, and identification of next-steps, keeps the plan moving past adoption.”

Public input from more than 2100 individuals helped to establish this vision for active transportation, which feeds into localized bicycle and pedestrian plans for area municipalities, as well as the MPO's 2035 Regional Transportation Plan – a document that helps to plan for and prioritize federally-supported transportation projects, across all modes, for the next 25 years. The study demonstrates how 1.5 million Middle Tennesseans, their neighborhoods and communities, could see tangible results through increased:

- ✓ **Options** – More transportation choices to keep people moving, especially those for whom owning a personal automobile is not an option. Data from the study reveals strong potential for non-auto trips, if improved bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure were constructed throughout the region.
- ✓ **Equity** – Providing basic travel infrastructure for all. An often-overlooked fundamental, the study provides *specific* consideration for at-risk populations, to help determine where the needs for non-motorized facilities are greatest.
- ✓ **Health** – Engineering healthier environments: a newer, but critical, challenge. With Tennessee ranked second in the nation for obesity rates, the study identifies land use and infrastructure policies that would promote healthier personal decisions through safer, more convenient means to walk or cycle for routine trips.
- ✓ **Sustainability** – A vision for transforming Middle Tennessee's communities into places where walking and bicycling are realistic alternatives to the automobile. The study prioritizes educating the public and law enforcement on bicycle and pedestrian laws, and delineates critical components of a seamless non-motorized system – such as ample bicycle parking and walkable routes to transit stops.

In November 2009, the study was unanimously endorsed by the MPO, and has since led to regional advancement of related initiatives, including: trainings led by national experts on Complete Streets and school siting; project prioritization criteria that heavily weights active transportation; and the establishment of a 15-percent funding commitment to non-motorized modal facilities in the MPO's 2035 Regional Transportation Plan.

"It's an honor to receive this prestigious award from ITE," said Leslie Meehan, senior planner with the Nashville Area MPO and project manager for the study. "With our community partners and the public, the MPO worked diligently to craft a thorough vision that captures what Middle Tennesseans *want* for bicycle and pedestrian mobility. ITE's validation of this effort demonstrates that investing in active transportation is, increasingly, a national priority—improving transportation efficiency and choice, and well as public and environmental health."

In March of this year, the study also received the "Grand Award" for Best Small Project from the American Council of Engineering Companies– Tennessee Chapter. The Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Study was conducted by the Nashville Area MPO, with assistance from RPM Transportation Consultants, LLC. Firms on RPM's team included Hawkins Partners, Inc., Sprinkle Consulting, and Varallo Public Relations.

The Regional Bicycle & Pedestrian Study is available online in its entirety at NashvilleMPO.org/BikePed. Learn more about the progress of the MPO's 2035 Regional Transportation Plan online at NashvilleMPO.org/2035.

About the Nashville Area MPO:

The Nashville Area MPO is the federally-designated transportation planning agency for over 2800 sq. mi. and more than 1.5 million people throughout Davidson, Rutherford, Sumner, Williamson, Wilson, and parts of Maury and Robertson counties. Serving as a regional partnership among the U.S. DOT, Tennessee DOT, local elected leadership, local planning and public works directors, the business community, and citizens across the five-plus county planning area, the MPO leads in the development of the region's long-range transportation plan and short-range Transportation Improvement Program, and contributes to ongoing conversations about issues such as land use, economic development, climate change and the environment, safety and security, and health.

About RPM Transportation Consultants:

RPM Transportation Consultants, LLC, provides traffic engineering and transportation planning services to a wide range of public, private and institutional clients. A recognized leader in bicycle and pedestrian planning design, RPM has established a reputation over the past 20 years for providing innovative solutions to non-motorized transportation projects. RPM is one of two Bicycle Friendly Businesses in Tennessee as designated by the League of American Bicyclists. Online at: RPMTraffic.net.



PICTURED: Paul Eng-Wong, president-emeritus of the Institute of Transportation Engineers, presents the revered 2010 "Best Project" Award to Leslie Meehan, senior planner with the Nashville Area MPO, and Bob Murphy, president of RPM Transportation Consultants LLC, for Middle Tennessee's Bicycle & Pedestrian Study.