

welfare reform initiatives may require the development of new and innovative public and other transportation services to ensure that former welfare recipients have adequate mobility for reaching employment opportunities. In recognition of the key role that transportation plays in ensuring the success of welfare-to-work initiatives, FTA and FHWA permit the waiver of the local match requirement for job access and reverse commute planning activities undertaken with both FTA and FHWA Metropolitan Planning Program and State Planning and Research Program funds. FTA and FHWA will support requests for waivers when they are included in Metropolitan Unified Planning Work Programs and State Planning and Research Programs and meet all other requirements.

#### *E. Planning Emphasis Areas for Fiscal Year 2003*

The FTA and FHWA identify Planning Emphasis Areas (PEAs) annually to promote priority themes for consideration, as appropriate, in metropolitan and statewide transportation planning processes. To support this, FTA and FHWA will prepare an inventory of current practice, guidance and training in those areas. Opportunities for exchanging ideas and experiences on innovative practices in these topic areas also will be provided throughout the year. For FY 2003, five key planning themes have been identified: (1) Consideration of safety and security in the transportation planning process; (2) integration of planning and environmental processes; (3) consideration of management and operations within planning processes; (4) State DOT consultation with non-metropolitan local officials; and (5) enhancing the technical capacity of planning processes.

1. Safety and Security in the Transportation Planning Process. TEA-21 emphasizes the safety and security of transportation systems as a national priority and calls for transportation projects and strategies that "increase the safety and security of transportation systems." This entails integration of safety and facility security into all stages of the transportation planning process.

FTA and FHWA are working together to advance the state-of-practice in addressing safety and security in the metropolitan and statewide planning process through workshops and case studies. A report prepared by the Transportation Research Board (TRB), Transportation Research Circular E-C02, "Safety-Conscious Planning," January 2001, describes the issues and recommendations identified at a Safety

in Planning workshop held earlier. The report is available on the TRB Web site at [<http://www.nas.edu/trb>]. Also, the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) has prepared a discussion paper on the topic, entitled "The Development of the Safer Network Transportation Planning Process," which is posted to their Web site at [<http://www.ite.org>].

2. Integrated Planning and Environmental Processes. TEA-21 mandated the elimination of the Major Investment Study as a stand-alone requirement, while integrating the concept within the planning and project development/environmental review processes. A training course entitled "Linking Planning and NEPA" is being developed and will be made available at the National Transit Institute Web site, [<http://www.ntionline.com>].

3. Consideration of Management and Operations within Planning Processes. TEA-21 challenges FHWA and FTA to move beyond traditional capital programs for improving the movement of people and goods—focusing on the need to improve the way transportation systems are managed and operated. FTA and FHWA have convened a working group and have commissioned discussion papers on the topic. This information is available at [<http://plan2op.fhwa.dot.gov>].

4. State DOT Consultation With Non-Metropolitan Local Officials. On January 23, 2003, the FTA and FHWA issued a final Rule on consultation, which can be accessed at [<http://www.fta.dot.gov/library/legal/federalregister/2003/fr12303.html>]. This final rule amends the 1993 Joint FTA/FHWA Planning regulation published in the **Federal Register**, Volume 58, No. 207, on October 28, 1993. Consultation is a vital issue within the transportation planning process. Each State shall have a documented process(es) that implements consultation with non-metropolitan local officials in the statewide planning process and development of the statewide transportation improvement program by February 24, 2004. The FTA and FHWA will work with each State to help facilitate development of the documented process(es), but will not review or approve the documented process(es). However, the FTA and FHWA in the State Planning Finding will comment on progress toward accomplishing the documented process(es) and its implementation. Since consultation is a vital issue, each state shall review its documented process and solicit comments regarding the effectiveness of its consultation process within two years of adopting its

documented process, and thereafter, at least once every five years.

5. Enhancing the Technical Capacity of Planning Processes. Reliable information on current and projected usage and performance of transportation systems is critical to the ability of planning processes to supply credible information to decision-makers to support preparation of plans and programs that respond to their localities' unique needs and policy issues. To ensure the reliability of usage and performance data, as well as the responsiveness of policy forecasting tools, an evaluation is needed of the quality of information provided by the technical tools, data sources, and forecasting models, as well as the expertise of staff to ensure its adequacy to support decision-making. If this expertise is found to be lacking, the responsible agencies within metropolitan and statewide planning processes are encouraged to devote appropriate resources to enhance and maintain their technical capacity.

The metropolitan and statewide transportation planning processes have become critical tools for responding to increasingly complex issues at the State and local levels. Many of these issues are encompassed in previously listed planning emphasis areas (e.g., integrated planning and environmental processes, management and operations, analytical tools and methods) and include much more. It is essential that FTA and FHWA provide technical assistance, training, and information to our customers to further enhance the skills and capabilities they utilize to conduct effective transportation planning processes. The FTA and FHWA have created the Planning Capacity Building (PCB) Program, which combines what previously were separate programs focused on planning processes in metropolitan, statewide and rural areas. The PCB is a tool to disseminate and coordinate information, training, and foster a dialogue for the exchange of ideas. More information on the PCB program can be found at [<http://www.mcb.fhwa.dot.gov>]. (Note—As of this writing, a merged Web site focused on metropolitan, statewide, and rural issues is under development.)

For further information on these PEAs, contact Candace Noonan, FTA Office of Planning, (202) 366-1648, or John Humeston, FHWA Office of Planning, (202) 366-1862.

#### *F. Consolidated Planning Grants*

Since FY 1997, FTA and FHWA have offered States the option of participating in a pilot Consolidated Planning Grant (CPG) program. Information concerning