

Understanding the Transportation Alternatives campaign

What do we mean when we say we expect DOTs to fully fund, staff, and implement the Transportation Alternatives (TA) Program and fully spend existing funds?

Fully staff Transportation Alternatives

To make the most of important non-motorized investments, we urge DOTs to have a full time bicycle and pedestrian coordinator, a full time Safe Routes to School Coordinator and a Transportation Alternatives coordinator.

Transportation planners and engineers shepherd existing projects through the byzantine planning and funding process, and they guide the implementation of new projects. Staff with experience and expertise planning and implementing Transportation Alternatives projects will be needed to ensure those projects flow through the pipeline efficiently.

Under SAFETEA-LU, full-time Safe Routes to School coordinators were required in each state as part of the Safe Routes to School program. Until federal guidance is issued, it is unclear how those requirements will apply under MAP-21, but these coordinators will at least be encouraged and could possibly be required as long as Safe Routes to School projects are in the pipeline. Regardless of what comes out in guidance, these coordinators are essential to shepherding the thousands of outstanding Safe routes to School projects through the federal requirements to get them built, to spend any remaining available Safe Routes to School funds, and to ensure that the broad Safe Routes to School constituencies are included in the new Transportation Alternatives program.

Bicycle/pedestrian coordinators were required in the past, and continue to be required under MAP-21. They have a valuable role to play in the state DOT to ensure that policy and programs throughout the DOT are inclusive of bicycling and walking. In addition, most states had Transportation Enhancement program coordinators that will prove valuable in implementing the Transportation Alternatives program.

Dedicated staff makes an impact. An analysis of staffing levels in the 50 largest US cities, by Advocacy Advance shows a correlation between larger bicycling and pedestrian staff and higher bicycle commuting levels and over-all bike-friendliness. See: "Why Communities & States Need Bicycle and Pedestrian Staff,"

http://www.advocacyadvance.org/docs/why_bike_ped_staff_april_2010.pdf