

TEA-21 Reauthorization (S. 1072, H.R. 3550): Guaranteed Funding for **Transportation Enhancements** Good Transportation Policies Protect Historic Resources

Status:

In November 2003, both the House and Senate introduced legislation to reauthorize the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21). The Senate bill, S. 1072, the Safe, Accountable, Flexible and Efficient Transportation Equity Act (SAFETEA) was adopted in early February by a vote of 76 to 21. The Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (TEA-LU), H.R. 3550, is currently being considered by the House. Both the House and Senate versions of the bill continue the popular Transportation Enhancements program, however both are considerably more expensive than President Bush's reauthorization plan.

Transportation Enhancements Build Better Communities:

The Transportation Enhancements Program sets aside 10% of surface transportation spending to fund any one of 12 activities including five that directly benefit historic preservation: Scenic/Historic Highways, Acquisition of Scenic/Historic Easements and/or Sites, Historic Preservation, Rehabilitation of Historic Transportation Facilities, and Archeological Planning and Research.

Since 1991, more than 16,000 projects, totalling \$6 billion have been made possible under the program and nearly every county in the United States has benefited from an enhancement project. Bike paths, hiking trails, scenic beautification efforts, historic train station restorations and a myriad of community revitalization activities have connected and reconnected citizens to their cities, towns, rural communities and to each other.

Close to one third of enhancement dollars have been spent for historic preservation activities making it the single largest source of bricks and mortar funding for heritage resources. Now more than ever, people are turning to the places in their communities that give meaning, context, and richness to the American experience. The enhancement program provides the kind of funding local communities need to realize their heritage preservation goals.

Protect Guaranteed Funding for Transportation Enhancements:

Unfortunately the debate surrounding overall spending levels could threaten the Transportation Enhancements program in two ways. The first would be a wholesale reduction in money available, perhaps by lowering the share below 10%. Second, a rewrite of the program could allow states to transfer enhancement dollars to other spending accounts at the state's discretion. Under that scenario, the debate over spending priorities would be shifted to the states and preservationists would be pitted against a host of competing interests.

Preservationists support the continuation of the Transportation Enhancements Program with a 10% set aside of total highway spending and the mandate that states use these funds exclusively for Transportation Enhancement activities.