

**CTE****The Center for Transportation and the Environment**

North Carolina State University

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FTA Coming to Raleigh to Discuss Policy Changes at Environment and Energy Conference

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) will hold a public forum on the near-future proposals the agency will make regarding how transit projects will be evaluated for federal funding under its New Starts and Small Starts programs. At the forum, FTA will be seeking input from planners and environmentalists as the agency begins a public notice-and-comment rulemaking to change the New Starts regulations. The forum will be held from 4.30 PM to 6.30 PM on Monday, June 7, at the Raleigh Convention Center. The forum is free and open to all interested parties; registration for the forum is not required.

As three federal agencies, the U.S. Department of Transportation, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Housing and Urban Development (HUD), work to align their policies and programs under the livability initiative, the FTA has taken steps under Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood to transform the cost-effectiveness equation used since 2005 to guide funding for New Starts and Small Starts projects. The new strategy departs from those guidelines, based solely on cost and time saving attributes, and represents a shift toward greater consideration of environmental impacts and various social benefits. Two of the criteria that FTA applies to New Starts projects are transit-supportive land use and environmental benefits. Eligible transit projects include light rail, bus rapid transit, streetcars, and commuter rail.

"We want to base our decisions on how much transit helps the environment, how much it improves development opportunities and how it makes our communities better places to live," LaHood was quoted as saying in an FTA press release.

FTA describes the New Starts program as the federal government's primary financial resource for supporting locally-planned, implemented, and operated transit guideway capital investments. The related Small Starts program is designed for lower-cost fixed guideway or bus corridor projects that can be expedited through the funding process.

"This forum will be a great opportunity to highlight how the livability agenda is evolving within the FTA," said Ann Hartell, research associate at the Center for Transportation and the Environment, a transportation research center housed at the Institute for Transportation Research and Education (ITRE) at North Carolina State University. CTE is one of the partners organizing the conference.

The forum will be held in conjunction with the 2010 Transportation Research Board's Environment and Energy Research Conference at the Convention Center June 6-9. The conference will convene over 500 transportation professionals from across the country to discuss current and emerging transportation research results. For more information or to register for the conference, visit: <http://www.cte.ncsu.edu/cte/EEConference/index.asp>

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