



NASHVILLE AREA

Metropolitan Planning Organization

MEDIA RELEASE

Local Planner Receives National Recognition: Named Bicycle & Pedestrian Professional of the Year—Public Sector

Middle Tennessee's MPO Increasingly in National Spotlight for Broader Consideration of Non-Motorized Modes

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NASHVILLE, Tenn.— A senior planner with the Nashville Area MPO, Leslie Meehan, was recently named the “Bicycle & Pedestrian Professional of the Year” for the public sector by the Association of Pedestrian & Bicycle Professionals. APBP announced the winners of its annual honors for excellence in the field at Pro Walk / Pro Bike® – a national conference held this fall in Chattanooga, Tenn.

In a news release on its awards picks, APBP states: “Meehan’s planning and program activities in the last year have established the Nashville Area Metropolitan Planning Organization as a leader in active transportation.”¹

APBP goes on to catalog Nashville Area MPO’s most significant 2009-10 efforts that fall under Meehan’s scope of work:

- **Regional Bicycle & Pedestrian Study:** Led the development of a well-researched and documented roadmap for allocation of limited resources on quality walking and bicycling facilities with the greatest number of benefits to community and personal health and mobility. Meehan’s signature effort is the first all-inclusive vision for improving the overall climate for non-motorized transportation across seven Middle Tennessee counties. In November 2009, the Study was unanimously endorsed by the MPO.
- **Physical Activity & Commuting Study:** In partnership with Vanderbilt University and Geostats, the study measured physical activity and energy expenditure levels as part of automobile, transit, walking, and bicycling commuter trips.
- **Health Impact Assessment (HIA)² of Transit Oriented Development (TOD)³:** A set of health-related criteria for a potential TOD at a prospective transit station in the Madison area of Nashville. The research now serves as the basis for incorporation of HIA criteria into land-development review and design processes of local governments.
- **Mapping Food Access and Transportation:** All projects submitted for the 2035 Regional Transportation Plan were analyzed for their proximity to grocery stores, farmers’ markets, and emergency food sources such as shelters, highlighting the relationship between transportation and food access.
- **Safe Routes to School—Tennessee Network:** Authored a grant for the Safe Routes to School National Partnership’s State Network Program. Tennessee was among just 20 states selected for funding; the MPO serves as an advisor.
- **Safe Routes to School—Train-the-Trainers:** In partnership with Walk/Bike Nashville, this program enabled P.E. teachers at Middle Tennessee elementary schools to receive two-week curriculum training on walking and bicycling safety for students.
- **Tennessee Obesity Taskforce:** Under Meehan’s leadership as 2011 co-chair of the Taskforce, the *Eat Well, Play More Tennessee* plan contains a transportation & built environment focus area, with Complete Streets and school siting policy recommendations outlined therein, aimed at helping to combat and prevent disease related to obesity and physical inactivity.
- **Regional Symposia on Complete Streets and School Siting:** Organized two well-attended, multi-disciplinary educational summits for the region. Complete Streets aim at ensuring roadways work not just for drivers, but for transit users, pedestrians & bicyclists, as well as seniors, children, and people with disabilities. School Siting policy seeks to confront the ways in which school location affects how children get to school –walking, biking, busing or driving– and resulting impacts on congestion, air pollution, school district budgets, and quality-of-life.

“I realize how fortunate we are to have such an accomplished expert and emerging national leader in this field, working for the public good here in Middle Tennessee,” said Michael Skipper, executive director for the Nashville Area MPO.

¹ ‘Active transportation’ refers to any self-propelled form of travel (ex., walking, bicycling, in-line skating, using a wheelchair, riding a skateboard).

² Acknowledging that population health is affected by policies external to the health care sector, HIAs attempt to tackle wider causes of health outcomes by evaluating the health impacts of policies, plans & projects in diverse economic sectors (like transportation) using quantitative, qualitative, and participatory techniques

³ TOD is a strategy for planned development of communities, cities & regions. The intent is to create land use patterns that support transit, based on design elements that incorporate: regional transit systems, regional transit stops, mixed-use development, moderate to high density residential, and a pedestrian-friendly environment.

“Our MPO’s achievements, as recognized by APBP, are directly attributable to the passions and competencies of our regional bicycle and pedestrian coordinator. Her work is generating indisputable results in making our stakeholders more aware that transportation has a direct link to human health, specifically challenges attributable to obesity. We simply wouldn’t have come this far, in as short amount of time, without her dedication, knowledge, and ambition.”

In late summer 2010, Meehan, along with RPM Transportation Consultants, received another national recognition for the Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Study: the prestigious “Best Project” designation from the Planning Council of the Institute of Transportation Engineers, marking the first time ITE bestowed the award on an endeavor focused exclusively on non-motorized modes. In March 2010, 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 –while a key standalone major product of the MPO– was commissioned in order to assimilate its vision and policy provisions into the region’s long-range transportation plan—a federally-required, 25-year roadmap for how the MPO should allocate nearly \$5 billion toward multi-modal transportation infrastructure. The Study led to a 15-percent funding commitment to non-motorized facilities in the 2035 plan, which is scheduled for adoption by the city and county mayors who govern the MPO’s Executive Board on **Dec. 15, 2010**. Learn more about the progress of the 2035 Regional Transportation Plan, as well as ways to get involved, online at **NashvilleMPO.org/2035**.

For more information on the Nashville Area MPO’s policy, planning, and public education efforts for walking and bicycling –or to review the Regional Bicycle & Pedestrian Study in its entirety– visit **NashvilleMPO.org/BikePed**.

About the Association of Bicycle & Pedestrian Professionals:

APBP provides expertise for sustainable transportation and is the only professional membership organization for the discipline of pedestrian and bicycle transportation. APBP members are employees of all levels of government, consulting firms and non-profits, and who work in the engineering, planning, landscape architecture, police, safety, health and promotion fields—specializing in improving conditions for bicycling and walking. More information: www.apbp.org.

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.