

# FHWA report reveals Americans driving at historic lows

*Estimated March travel on public roads dips; first time since 1979*

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) recently reported that Americans drove less in March 2008, continuing a trend that began last November. FHWA's "Traffic Volume Trends" report, produced monthly since 1942, shows estimated vehicle miles traveled (VMT) on all U.S. public roads for March 2008 fell 4.3 percent as compared with March 2007 travel. This is the first time since 1979 that estimated March travel on public roads fell. At 11 billion miles less in March 2008 than in the previous March, this is the sharpest yearly drop for any month in FHWA history.

Though February 2008 showed a modest 1 billion mile increase over February 2007, cumulative VMT has fallen by 17.3 billion miles since November 2006. Total VMT in the United States for 2006, the most recent year for which data is available, topped 3 trillion miles. Additionally, the U.S. Department of

Transportation reported greenhouse gas emissions fell by an estimated 9 million metric tons for the first quarter of 2008.

The estimated data show that VMT on all U.S. public roads has dropped since 2006. The FHWA's Traffic Monitoring Analysis System (TMAS) computes VMT for all types of motor vehicles (motorcycles, cars, buses and trucks) on the nation's public roads. Data is collected through more than 4,000 automatic traffic recorders operated round-the-clock by state highway agencies. More comprehensive data is published in the FHWA's "Highway Statistics" at the end of each year.

To review the FHWA's "Traffic Volume Trends" reports, visit <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/ohim/tvtw/tvtpage.htm>. For "Highway Statistics 2006," visit <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/policy/ohim/hs06/index.htm>.



*Image courtesy of the APWA Jim Martin Public Works Photo Library.*

## **SAFETEA-LU technical corrections head to White House**

The bipartisan SAFETEA-LU technical corrections bill (HR 1195) was sent to the White House June 3 after receiving veto-proof votes in the House and Senate. The White House expressed opposition to the bill, but the President is not expected to veto. The legislation becomes law within 10 days if he does not sign it.

The bill makes a number of technical corrections to SAFETEA-LU, which was enacted in August 2005. It also provides a legislative fix to address research programs whose funding fell short of supporting certain SAFETEA-LU authorized activities, and it increases the total federal authorization for state highway safety formula grants from 0.5 percent to 0.75 percent of a state's apportionment. Finally, the bill calls for a Justice Department investigation into how a Florida earmark was changed between the time Congress passed SAFETEA-LU and when the President signed it into law.

**6/08**

**Transportation**  
1-2

**Environment**  
3-5

**Emergency Management & Disaster Mitigation**  
5



Marshall Elizer and John Davis participated in filming for a transportation reauthorization advocacy video.

## APWA compiling materials for transportation reauthorization toolkit

In May, APWA members participated in filming for a new advocacy video about transportation reauthorization. The video is part of a toolkit and Web site that will be launched later this summer.

APWA members who participated in filming included Past-President Judith Mueller, Public Works Director for the City of Charlottesville, Va.; David Barber, P.E., Public Works Director for the City of Peoria, Ill.; Marshall Elizer, Jr., P.E., PTOE, Chief Transportation Engineer for Gresham, Smith and Partners in Nashville, Tenn.; Kurt Corey, Public Works Director for the City of Eugene, Ore.; and John Davis, P.E., Chief Engineer for the Jacksonville, Fla., Transportation Authority.

The toolkit and video will help APWA members encourage local decision makers to communicate about the critical need for reinvestment in transportation with Federal lawmakers.

## Highways & Transit Subcommittee holds hearing

The House Subcommittee on Highways and Transit met June 5 to hear testimony on investment levels and federal policies necessary to maintain the nation's existing highways and transit infrastructure. Leaders of several state departments of transportation told the committee funding shortfalls have forced their states to put off new construction in favor of maintaining and current deteriorated infrastructure. Officials testified that the transportation reauthorization bill expected next year should address these funding needs.

The issue of maintenance versus expansion was also a common theme throughout the hearing. Allen D. Bieler, Secretary of Pennsylvania's Department of Transportation (DOT) noted, "Because of limited resources, we are moving from a focus on pavement improvement to pavement preservation to hold on to past gains."

Pete Rahn, Missouri DOT Director, suggested a new transportation policy to allow for greater spending flexibility in regard to the 108 federal transportation programs that do not allow funds to be spent on preventative maintenance.

House Transportation Committee Chairman James Oberstar (D-MN) noted a downside to excessive flexibility. He said Minnesota took \$4.5 billion from capital investment and bridge programs in the years before the Interstate 35 bridge collapse last summer.

A full committee hearing and further testimony is expected during the month of June.

## FHWA seeks partners in exploratory advanced research

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is seeking partners through an open competition on five topic areas in exploratory advanced research (EAR). Topic areas include (1) Development of a new data analysis method in support of Integrated Safety System (ISS) for Highway Safety; (2) Development of methodologies to evaluate the nighttime safety implications of the roadway visual scene under varying cognitive task loads; (3) Making Driving Simulators More Useful for Behavioral Research; and (4) Greatly Increased Use of Fly Ash in Hydraulic Cement Concrete (HCC) for Pavement Layers and Transportation Structures; and (5) Sustainability of Freight Movements: Methods to Measure and Reduce the United States Carbon Fuel Needs for Freight Movement. The topics were developed through stakeholder coordination and then reviewed by independent experts with national or international reputation.

Proposals are due June 26, 2008. For more information, contact David Kuehn, EAR Program Manager, david.kuehn@fhwa.dot.gov, (202) 493-3414. A hyperlink to the solicitation is on the EAR Program Web site, [www.fhwa.dot.gov/advancedresearch/research.cfm](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/advancedresearch/research.cfm).

## ***House and Senate to approve Farm Bill, increase water quality funding***

The Senate re-passed the five-year, \$289 billion Farm Bill this week (the House having already done so just before leaving town for the Memorial Day recess), so the President can veto it again, and the Congress for the second time can overwhelmingly override the veto. The legislation, which boosts federal funding for programs to protect environmentally sensitive lands and water resources to about \$25 billion over five years, was originally approved by a Senate vote of 81-15 and a House vote of 318-106. The extra effort is necessitated by the miscue of the trade title not appearing in the printed version of the bill that went to the President to sign or veto on May 16. While technically the entire bill (other than the trade title) is already law, the easiest route to getting the trade title enacted is to go through the entire process one more time.

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) reported that authorized spending under the Farm Bill's conservation title would increase about \$4 billion under the lifespan of the bill (fiscal years 2008 through 2012). The bill would provide an additional \$2.4 billion for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), which offers cost-share assistance to help farmers make environmentally friendly improvements on their land. As part of the EQIP program, this bill establishes the Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP), which funds partnerships between farmers and other key stakeholders, including water and wastewater agencies, to advance watershed protection efforts. AWEP is funded at \$73 million for FY09 and FY10; \$74 million for FY11; and \$60 million for FY12. Finally, the bill includes \$690 million over 10 years for cleaning up the Chesapeake Bay, and made some minor cuts in tax subsidies for ethanol production.

Although improvements to the legislation recognize the nexus between agriculture and water quality, the bill constitutes a very small step in the right direction and water sector groups will continue to make the case that agriculture must be held accountable for its share of water impairment.

## ***Water sector groups meet with EPA Water Office Chief on Utility Management***

Executive directors and staff from key water sector groups, including APWA, the Water Environment Federation (WEF) and the National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA), all participants in the

Effective Utility Management Collaborative Effort, met on April 30 with Ben Grumbles, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Assistant Administrator for Water. The group discussed significant progress made since the groups signed the historic agreement in May 2007.

The groups have been working with EPA over the past year to implement a set of short- and long-term actions identified by a steering committee of utility representatives that developed 10 attributes of

effectively managed utilities. Together with representatives from the initial steering committee, the collaborating organizations have worked to develop a primer on the 10 attributes and a set of example measures for utilities to assess their own agency's performance. The meeting with Grumbles focused on what can be done in the coming years to continue this effort and encourage more utilities to embrace the concepts in the 10 attributes.

## ***EPA announces final rule approving 99 alternative methods for testing drinking water***

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recently issued a final rule approving 99 new testing methods for use in measuring levels of contaminants in drinking water and determining compliance with national primary drinking water regulations. Regulated parties who are required to sample and monitor drinking water may use either the testing methods already established by existing regulations or the alternative testing methods approved by this rule. The new rule pertains to chemicals that are already regulated and does not apply to the draft third Contaminant Candidate List, which includes chemicals that may be regulated in the future. The final rule is effective July 3, 2008.

## **EPA clarifies wet weather enforcement initiatives**

The Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance (OECA) sent a letter on April 30 about a potential new wet weather enforcement initiative affecting combined sewer overflows (CSOs) and sanitary sewer overflows (SSOs). Water Sector representatives requested clarification on the current guidance to the EPA regional offices after hearing reports from municipal utilities and state regulatory agencies in Regions V and VI that EPA officials recently discussed a "new enforcement initiative" from EPA headquarters on wet weather issues, particularly CSOs and SSOs. EPA stated that there is no new initiative, but that CSOs and SSOs continue to be a "national enforcement priority area."

EPA designated CSOs and SSOs as enforcement priorities for fiscal years 2005 through 2007, then renewed these priorities for fiscal years 2008 through 2010. OECA's response indicates that EPA's April 2005 memorandum on Guidelines for Federal Enforcement in CSO/SSO Cases continues to be the most recent guidance to states and regional offices and that there have been no recent updates or revisions to that guidance.

## **Sustainable Water Infrastructure Investment Act introduced in House**

Representative Bill Pascrell (D-NJ), a member of the House Ways and Means Committee, introduced the Sustainable Water Infrastructure Investment Act (HR 6194). The bill lifts state volume caps on private activity bonds for water and wastewater infrastructure projects. Removal of the cap will give communities an important new tool when dealing with the financial challenges of replacing aging and decaying water and wastewater infrastructure.

APWA joined members of the Sustainable Water Infrastructure Investment Coalition in applauding the introduction of the bill. Keep checking the APWA Advocacy webpage for updates on this piece of legislation.

Text of the bill is available at [http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=110\\_cong\\_bills&docid=f:h6194ih.txt.pdf](http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=110_cong_bills&docid=f:h6194ih.txt.pdf).



*Image courtesy of the APWA Jim Martin Public Works Photo Library.*

## **NYC recycling program produces savings**

In 2004, New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg and the City Council restored full mandatory recycling by reinstating curbside glass and plastic collection. A new study demonstrates the restored program is producing cost savings that will cut the city's overall sanitation expenses within five to six years.

According to the city's sanitation department and economic development corporation, the costs of recycling now are nearly equal that of trash disposal, and within five or six years, the net benefits of recycling will lower the city's overall operating costs. Sanitation crews now collect less recyclable material per shift than trash, resulting in a marginally higher cost per ton for the recyclables.

The study also estimates the city recycling program yielded a 500,000 metric-ton reduction in carbon dioxide emissions in 2005. In terms of overall processing costs, sending solid waste to local recycling plants costs much less than shipping it out of state for incineration and landfilling. Increased recycling will also help the city in its efforts to reach its sustainability planning goal of cutting greenhouse gas emissions 30 percent by 2030.

The report is available at [http://docs.nrdc.org/cities/cit\\_08052801A.pdf](http://docs.nrdc.org/cities/cit_08052801A.pdf).

## **Climate Change Bill stalls in the Senate**

This month's introduction of comprehensive climate change legislation quickly stalled over unrelated issues before the debate even began in earnest. Democratic leaders failed to garner enough votes to invoke cloture and to proceed to a vote on the final bill and amendments. The cloture motion failed 48-36, effectively ending any consideration of the climate change bill by the Senate for the remainder of the legislative year.

As efforts stall in the Senate, the House is beginning to move forward on the issue. On June 4, Representative Edward Markey (D-MA), Chairman of the House Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming, introduced HR 6186, Investing in Climate Action and Protection Act. Under HR 6186, water and wastewater sector facilities, along with animal feeding operations, landfills and coal mines, must meet performance standards to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases. Additionally, Representative John Dingell (D-MI), Chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, recently announced plans to hold hearings on comprehensive climate change legislation in the coming weeks.

## **Predisaster mitigation bill introduced in House**

Leaders of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee (T&I) introduced legislation reauthorizing the Predisaster Mitigation Program

(PDM), HR 6109. The program, which expires September 30, 2008, provides grants to state and local governments to mitigate disasters before they occur. The program helps to reduce the costs of disasters to taxpayers, reduce the loss of life in disasters and protect property from damage.

The legislation is a three-year, \$250 million-per-year reauthorization. APWA President Larry Frevert sent letters of support to T&I Committee Chairman James Oberstar (D-MN) and Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings and Emergency Management Chairwoman Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC).

## **DHS releases updated Interoperability Continuum**

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has released the updated Interoperability Continuum to help emergency response officials and policy makers address critical elements for success as they plan and implement interoperability solutions. The five elements of the Continuum – governance, standard operating procedures, technology, training and exercises, and usage – are depicted graphically and the updated version now presents both data and voice aspects of the technology element.

Developed with practitioner input from the OIC Continuum Working Group comprised of Practitioner Steering Group and SAFECOM ERC members, the updated version incorporates data communications as one of the elements needed to reach a successful interoperability solution. The updated Interoperability

Continuum is available at [www.safecomprogram.gov](http://www.safecomprogram.gov).

## **DHS releases system of systems interoperable communications guide**

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) released the System of Systems Approach for Interoperable Communications Guide. This resource will help the emergency response community, as well as local, tribal, state, and federal policy makers, understand the system of systems concept, the benefits of applying this concept, and how it can help agencies in strengthening communications interoperability. The Guide describes effective technology planning from a system of systems approach and provides real-life examples of how a system of systems methodology has improved interoperability in regions across the nation. The Guide is available at [www.safecomprogram.gov](http://www.safecomprogram.gov).

*Contributors include Julia Anastasio, Maggie Doucette and Jim Fahey. Becky Wickstrom is editor.*