

Livable Delaware Activity

Activity/Policy/Program Name: Research, Development and Technology Transfer Program.

Contact Person: Larry Klepner

Purpose: To help us find better ways to solve problems that we have in planning, building, running, and keeping up the state's and local governments' roads, bridges, bikeways, sidewalks, bus and train systems, airports, and water ports.

Enabling Laws: The University of Delaware provides base funding through this Department's operating budget for transportation research. The Department also sponsors a series of infrastructure forums by the university. Other research projects and research related activities are funded with federal funds and/or state monies.

Policies: No officially adopted policies, but there is an agreement with the University of Delaware that governs the conduct of our research program for both state and federally funded research projects.

History: The Federal Highway Administration requires every state Department of Transportation to have an ongoing transportation research, development, and technology transfer program. The objective is to find practical and cost-effective methods to promote the safe and efficient transportation of people and goods in and through the state. The annual state budget has contained the \$250,000 research appropriation for at least 10 years. Federal research, development, and technology transfer funds have come to the state for a much longer period of time; they now amount to approximately \$650,000 per year. Of this amount, about \$200,000 is available for research projects. The balance goes to supporting regional and national research efforts and technology transfer to Delaware's local governments.

The Delaware Transportation Institute, funded by the Department and staffed by the University, determines research emphasis areas, solicits specific research proposals from the university staff, and ensures that projects are completed on time and on budget. A board of directors comprised of senior leaders from the Department, the University, other state agencies, and legislators oversees the activities of the transportation institute. The Delaware Transportation Institute has operated for about eight years. It has made steady improvements in the conduct and implementation of our research program.

Current Situation: The University and the Department have agreed upon the specific projects that will make up the FY 2002 program. The project selection process includes a semi-annual public forum where research emphasis areas are identified. Based upon these emphasis areas, prospective research projects are solicited among the university faculty. A committee of DelDOT staff and faculty (from universities other than the University of Delaware) ranks the proposals. The highest ranking projects are selected for funding. We normally conduct 7-10 projects per year. Each project supports one or more goals in the governor's Livable Delaware program.

Revisions/Actions Needed: DelDOT will make major investments in its research program to support the Livable Delaware program. Transportation has a broad role in shaping development and the environment. We will focus on the effects of transportation on where people live and where businesses locate; and on the effects that these location decisions have on land use patterns, congestion, use of natural resources, air and water quality, and the overall quality of life. Questions to be answered: What mode of transportation is most cost-effective in meeting a region's transportation needs? How should DelDOT prioritize its transportation dollars to maximize economic growth? Should other Delaware agencies and institutions participate in the prioritization process? What is the trade-off between greater growth and the cost of expanding transportation systems to accommodate that growth? What effect does the expansion of transportation systems have on the need to invest in other types of infrastructure? Nationally, the DelDOT Technology Transfer Center is the lead state agency involved with the Federal Highway Administration to develop a guide to rural transportation planning and to deliver training based on that guide. An important objective is to emulate the Delaware model of emphasizing the symbiotic relationship between land use and transportation demand, thereby fostering sound local decisions that will support regional and statewide transportation plans.

Resources Needed to Create/Revise: We will dedicate our existing research funds to Livable Delaware focussed activities. A peer exchange of our research program recommended that at least one Department employee should be assigned to the research program full-time. Salary and fringe benefits for a mid-level manager would approach \$100,000.

Process for Creation/Revision: The Department will work with the University to restructure our priority areas. We will also explore the potential benefits and costs of increasing the human resource expenses in this effort.

Schedule: This reworking of priority areas will be completed before the next solicitation of research topics late this year.

Measures to Guide Progress: Units of local government indicate via survey or other instrument that their needs with regard to training in the area of transportation technology are being met well.

Interactions or Inter-relationships with Other Agencies or Units of Government: Other state and local agencies participate in the selection of our research projects (DNREC, DEDO, etc.) Federal funds are increasing annually.