U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration

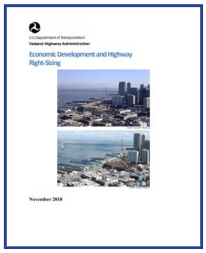
Economic Development and Highway Right-Sizing

Overview

What is Highway Right-Sizing?

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) define a transportation facility right-sizing project as one whose goal is to "match land use and transportation contexts appropriately on existing streets." Right-sizing typically involves reducing the transportation facility footprint and repurposing the land made available to more appropriately meet regional transportation needs and stimulate economic development.

Right-sizing transportation projects can help improve a community's economic competitiveness. By reducing the footprint of a transportation facility, right-sizing can provide new public spaces, increase transportation safety through improved road geometry, and encourage economic development by making the neighborhood more attractive for local businesses, all while meeting traffic demands.



FHWA recently drafted a white paper titled Economic Development and Highway Right-Sizing that provides a more in-depth examination of economic development and highway right-sizing.

Reasons to Consider Right-Sizing a Transportation Facility

- **Obsolescence**—Facilities can become obsolete due to changes in the local economy or transportation network.
- **Damage or Deterioration**—Facilities may be damaged or deteriorated due to deferred maintenance as they near the end of their useful life.
- **Economic Development and Revitalization**—Sometimes, nothing may be wrong with the facility itself. It may just be occupying valuable real estate that would serve the community better as commercial or residential development.
- **Neighborhood Connectivity**—The transportation facility may be cutting off one part of a neighborhood from another, limiting access to jobs and services.

The Indianapolis Cultural Trail street grid road diet brought significant economic development to Virginia Avenue in Indianapolis, IN. The photo at left shows conditions before the road diet and the photo at right shows conditions after. (Source: Indiana University Public Policy Institute)

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Steps in the Highway Right-Sizing Process

FHWA has identified four steps in the right-sizing analysis process. In practice, these steps overlap and their order is flexible:

1. The desire or motivation for change:

Assess community attitudes toward the existing transportation facility in order to determine whether right-sizing would address the community's concerns.

2. The traffic management strategy:

Work with the community to identify appropriate right-sizing solutions that meet connectivity needs as well as contribute to overall quality of life, health, and well-being. This can be accomplished through a "visioning" process.

3. Economic development opportunities:

Solicit input from businesses and residents to identify economic development goals related to the right-sizing project and policies to help achieve those goals.

4. The implementation initiative:

Move to the planning/preconstruction stage. Existing conditions gleaned from previous steps help to create an estimate of potential economic benefits and an investment

Types of Right-Sizing Projects and Examples

Elevated freeway to boulevard:
- Central Freeway—San Francisco, CA
  Completed in 2005

Elevated freeway to tunnel:
- Central Artery—Boston, MA
  Completed in 2007

At-grade freeway to boulevard:
- Harbor Boulevard—Portland, OR
  Completed in 1978

Below-grade freeway to boulevard:
- Fort Washington Way—Cincinnati, OH
  Completed in 2000

Street grid road diet:
- Indianapolis Cultural Trail—Indianapolis, IN
  Completed in 2012

Photo of Fort Washington Way in Cincinnati, OH showing boulevards and cross-freeway connections. (Source: City of Cincinnati)

www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/economic_development/right_sizing