

GUIDANCE MATERIAL ON AMERICA'S TREEWAYS

America's Treeways Initiative

(Signed by T.D. Larson, Federal Highway Administrator, September 24, 1992)

This is to ask for your support and assistance in launching a new program called America's Treeways. The objective is to encourage volunteer groups to plant donated trees along our highways in a way that is safe both to volunteer groups and to the traveling public. In many ways, America's Treeways is similar to the Adopt-a-Highway concept and Operation Wildflower, and can be equally successful in tapping America's volunteer spirit to beautify roadsides throughout the country.

Our partners in this program bring a wide range of interests and expertise to the America Treeways program: AASHTO, the U. S. Forest Service, the National Association of State Foresters, the National Tree Trust, and Take Pride in America (part of the Department of Interior). We are pleased that AASHTO has been a part of this initiative from the start because we hope the State departments of transportation will actively support this program.

I am attaching a new brochure entitled *Plant a Legacy...Support America's Treeways*. The title comes from a comment by the President during a tree planting ceremony in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, on September 18, 1989. "Every tree," he said, "is a compact between generations." We prepared the brochure to encourage the public to enlist in planting trees along our Nation's highways. To provide all FHWA offices with copies of the brochure promptly, we are distributing copies directly to the Division Offices as well as to the Region Offices. I ask that you and the Division Administrators provide copies to key State DOT officials and to encourage them to support this program, as several States already have through pilot programs this year in Michigan, Ohio, and Virginia.

Additional Copies of the brochure may be obtained from Ms. Noreen Bowles of Environmental Analysis Division (HEP-42), Office of Environment and Planning. Ms. Bowles may be reached at 202-366-9173. (No longer available.)

We were pleased that First Lady Barbara Bush helped us launch America's Treeways at a site along I-70 outside Dayton, Ohio, on May 12. Also in May, I had an opportunity to see, first hand, what America's Treeways is all about. I joined fourth graders from Page Elementary School in Arlington, Virginia, to help plant 100 seedlings at Chain Bridge Road and Georgetown Pike. Here, as I worked alongside these bright, industrious 10-year olds, was the "compact between generations" in action.

We in FHWA are fortunate that our work typically involves creating a legacy--a legacy of roads and bridges--that will serve many generations to come. In America's Treeways, we have another opportunity to reach out to future generations, this time by planting a legacy along America's Treeways.

TREEWAYS GUIDELINES

ACTION:

On September 24, 1992 the Federal Highway Administrator sent a memorandum to regional and federal lands highway program administrators. It asked for support and assistance in launching a new program called America's Treeways. The objective was to encourage volunteer groups to plant donated trees along our highways. The idea, similar to the Adopt-a-highway concept and Operation Wildflower taps a volunteer spirit to beautify roadsides throughout the country. You received explanatory brochures. Now we give you the guidelines based on a five year highway planting experience.

We understand the budget constraints on landscape and maintenance programs across the nation. Many of you are theoretically supportive of the initiative but do not have the resources to follow through. For those States who still need some common sense guidelines, we suggest the following:

TREE SOURCE:

The first source in place to provide free trees is the National Tree Trust. The Tree Trust is a non-profit corporation designated by President Bush to receive the support of the U.S. Congress to support tree planting and preservation. The Tree Trust further serves as a clearinghouse of trees for highway plantings. It notifies DOTs of availability of species in time to plan for the following planting season. It coordinates delivery of seedlings in advance of planting dates so that adequate storage can be provided before an event. Other sources may be used, as long as the following criteria are met.

SPECIES SELECTION:

In light of the April 4, 1994 Executive Memorandum encouraging the use of native plants, we suggest you use native tree species wherever practicable.

1. When ordering trees, select tree species that are grow in your region and use local ecotypes whenever available.
2. Select only species that are indigenous to your area for use outside the city limits of urban areas. Within urban areas, select only noninvasive introduced species when natives are unavailable.
3. Avoid species that are known to be invasive in your region: i.e. black locust, Russian olive, Norway maple, Siberian elm, tamarisk, etc.
4. Select tree planting locations in areas of the State where trees have historically grown.
5. Match tree species' tolerances to the site conditions as in soils, moisture, light, etc.

DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS:

Please select safe, yet visible, planting sites like rest areas, State entrances, City entrances, interchanges, junkyard screens, windbreaks, living snowfences, or public or corporate interfaces. The final design should:

6. Respect clear zone and visibility requirements for highway safety.
7. Consider District or local maintenance constraints.
8. Avoid straight lines, unless in a formal setting.
10. Incorporate a diversity of tree species, whenever possible.
11. Include clusters of trees and/or shrubs to ease mowing
12. Allow for volunteer ideas, with final review by State landscape architects.

VOLUNTEER RESPONSIBILITIES:

We suggest that a public announcement be made in each State that invites volunteer application for Treeways projects. Applicants will need to be advised of the following responsibilities involved in a project:

13. Must submit an application to obtain permit to plant.
14. Identify one or two key volunteer contacts.
15. Organize and guarantee a number of people in advance of selected planting date.
16. Be responsible for the initial design concept.
17. Arrange media coverage.
18. Participate in safety training before planting date.
19. Understand nursery planting standards or include supervisor who does.
20. Sign an arrangement to maintain (water and weed) the tree seedlings for 1-3 years.

STATE HIGHWAY AGENCIES:

At a time when States are asked to do more with less, we suggest the following to strengthen your volunteer partnerships, assure safety, and minimize your investment of staff needed to coordinate Treeway Plantings.

21. Insist on a permit before proceeding.
22. Select the site with volunteer input.
23. Require safety training before the event.
24. Provide safety vests, hard hats, etc.
25. Prepare the site, according to the staked plan, in advance of the event.
26. Provide a safe, accessible, clearly marked staging area.
27. Supervise the event and provide safety signage.
28. Sign the site as a thank you whenever possible.
29. Submit a one page report with media coverage whenever possible.
20. Follow up on volunteer maintenance contract.