



AMERICAN COUNCIL OF ENGINEERING COMPANIES

February 27, 2006

U.S. Department of Transportation
Dockets Management Facility
Room PL-401
400 Seventh Street, SW
Washington, DC 20590

**Re: FHWA Docket No. FHWA-2005-23328 –
Highways for Life Pilot Program**

The American Council of Engineering Companies (ACEC) appreciates the opportunity to submit comments to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) on its proposed implementation plan for the Highways for Life Program.

ACEC fully supports the goal of the Highways for Life program to accelerate the adoption of innovations and technologies that will improve safety, increase quality, reduce congestion, and decrease construction time. Many innovations and practices that have been developed and implemented in the past have come from private sector engineering firms, and ACEC members look forward to contributing to the Highways for Life program.

ACEC is the business association of America's engineering industry, representing approximately 6,000 independent engineering companies with 250,000 employees throughout the United States engaged in the development of America's transportation, environmental, industrial, and other infrastructure. Founded in 1910 and headquartered in Washington, D.C., ACEC is a national federation of 51 state and regional organizations.

ACEC's member companies perform important services encompassing the full range of engineering disciplines and land surveying, for clients large and small. We represent small businesses, large international firms, minority, disadvantaged and women owned professional engineering and surveying firms. We are an important and integral component in the delivery of the nation's infrastructure facilities.

Issues for Consideration

The members of ACEC support FHWA's efforts to implement the Highways for Life (HfL) program, and we respectfully offer the following general comments regarding the December 30, 2005 notice:

- SAFETEA LU provides \$75 million for the HfL program between FY 2006-2009. The legislation states that USDOT, "to the maximum extent possible, shall approve at least 1 project for each State for participation in the pilot program and for financial assistance." The FHWA notice that "there is a goal of providing funds for at least one project in each state." It is anticipated that HfL funding levels for each project will be in the \$500,000 to \$1 million range.

ACEC is concerned that the goal of providing each state with HfL funding, with a \$500,000 - \$1 million range for each project, may not provide an appropriate amount to incentivize, highlight, or provide enough financial support for truly innovative approaches. Doing so will emphasize quantity at the possible expense of quality. In selecting projects, ACEC recommends that FHWA consider providing more HfL funding for fewer projects. This will allow for more federal resources to be available for truly innovative project delivery practices.

- FHWA also proposes to dedicate 60 percent of the HfL funding for eligible projects, 30 percent of the funding for technology transfer activities, and 10 percent for education and information dissemination activities. While technology transfer and dissemination activities are critical components of the program, ACEC suggests that FHWA consider dedicating a higher percentage of the limited HfL funding for projects. ACEC, AASHTO and other stakeholders can assist FHWA in highlighting and disseminating successful HfL techniques through newsletters, workshops, meetings, etc.
- The notice lists three categories of Performance Goals – safety, construction congestion, quality and user satisfaction – with specific components recommended under each Performance Goal. The FHWA states that it intends to approve HfL projects that "include the Performance Goals in each of the goal areas."

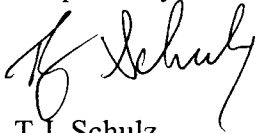
ACEC recommends that FHWA not narrow project selections based on meeting all of the Performance Goals. Rather, FHWA should consider project proposals that may do an extraordinary job accomplishing one or more of the Performance Goals. For example, if a project proposal reduces construction time by a significant amount, and the approach may be suitable and applicable for projects

nationwide, FHWA should consider that proposal as meeting the Congressional intent of the HfL program. This is particularly true for projects that will substantially mitigate congestion, improve travel times and/or increase safety.

- FHWA should consider ways in which private industry can work with their State DOT partners in identifying HfL projects and innovative project delivery methods that may be eligible for HfL funding. While applications for HfL projects are limited to State DOTs, private industry in many cases is at the front lines of developing innovative approaches and technologies. FHWA should encourage private industry to work with their DOTs.
- ACEC encourages FHWA to identify and implement an accelerated education program to relay technologies, practices and information resulting from the HfL program to all States and the transportation community.

We appreciate FHWA's consideration of ACEC's recommendations on the implementation of the Highways for Life program, and we look forward to working with FHWA and the State departments of transportation on this important initiative.

Respectfully submitted,



T.J. Schulz
Director of Transportation Programs