

FHWA Awards Highway Design Excellence

By their very nature, the design of highways is dictated by the lay of the land that the right-of-way traverses. How well the design of a roadway or structure is conceived, then built, determines the effective utilization of the right-of-way. In turn, the acquisition of the right-of-way determines the parameters within which each design and finished project can be developed.

Every two years the Federal Highway Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation, recognizes excellence in design of highways and highway-related facilities. Awards were given in 1982 to those projects that met a variety of criteria which included the compatibility

or adaption to surrounding environment, visual appeal safety factors, functional efficiency, and pleasing user experience.

The FHWA had nine different categories for 1982. This article features four of the nine categories. They are urban highway, rural highway, historic preservation and cultural enhancement, and highway improvements in federally owned lands. Each outstanding example had to meet specific criteria and were evaluated by a panel of judges who had extensive experience in the categories evaluated.

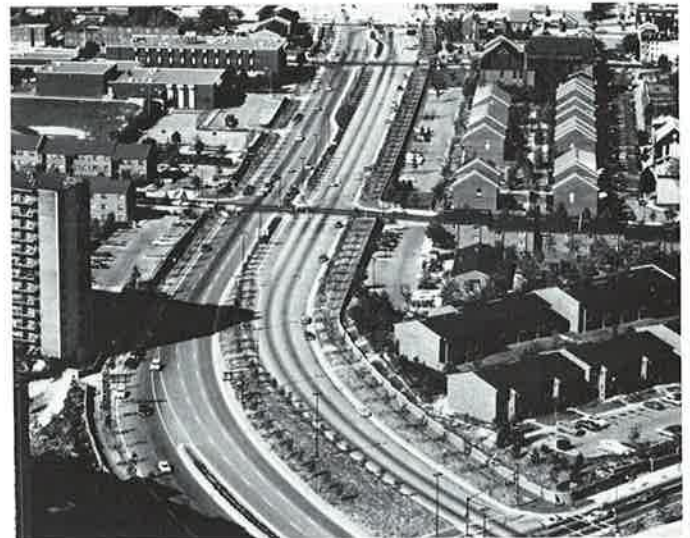
The Urban Highway

...awards are given to the transportation projects whose design evidenced excellence in signing and graphic information, enhancement of the transportation system, landscaping, and its relationship to the environment.

First Award Harbor City Blvd. Baltimore City, Maryland “Urban Revitalization”

The Harbor City Boulevard is a six to eight lane, median divided, collector-distributor roadway which rings the western side of downtown Baltimore City, linking major Interstates such as I-395 and I-170, and primary Routes such as Maryland 295 and U.S. Route 40 to local downtown streets. The challenge in its design was to produce a roadway capable of carrying high volumes of traffic through an area undergoing considerable revitalization. The roadway was designed with special attention to curbside and median landscaping, brick splashblocks, sidewalks, and screening walls, and the architectural quality of lighting fixtures.

The Harbor City Boulevard project was designed under the Federal Aid Urban System (FAUS) program. Development of the project was coordinated there through the Maryland Historic Trust and effected communities, including the City of Baltimore.



Second Award Tower Drive Green Bay, Wisconsin “Wetlands Restoration”

When the Tower Drive segment of I-43 in the city of Green Bay was built, wetlands that had to be destroyed in the process were replaced by new wildlife habitat that more than meets federal requirements for wetland preservation.

The Wisconsin department of transportation worked with the state department of natural resources and the U.S. fish and wildlife service in constructing unique ponds, open water areas and special seedings that actually improve the wildlife habitat over what had been available before. In addition, other wetlands within the highway right-of-way were permanently preserved, and thus kept out of danger of being gobbled up by future development.

In the loop of the interchanges, ponds were built to certain depths to provide nesting and cover for specific types of waterfowl, including several endangered species. Various types of ducks, geese, cormorants and other waterfowl, as well as muskrats have been seen in considerable numbers in the newly created



marshland area.

Tower Drive, which was opened to traffic in the fall of 1980, runs through a highly industrialized area, skirting the edge of the Green Bay Wildlife Sanctuary. An 8-ft. deer fence was constructed to keep the 15 to 20 deer that frequent the area from being killed on the freeway.

This urban freeway project not only offers travelers a safe, efficient transportation corridor along the state's eastern coastline, it offers them a glimpse of the beauties of nature not often seen within a city limits.

Third Award Route 209 and 52 Ellenville, New York “Rehabilitation and Preservation”

The Village of Ellenville is located at the intersection of Routes 209 and 52 in southeastern corner of Ulster County. Both routes had deteriorated to the point that rehabilitation and preservation projects were implemented. Inadequate drainage, poor road alignment, unsafe intersections, and broken sidewalks and curbs were some of the problems encountered.

It was decided to divide the project into more manageable parts. The Route 209 section was designed and constructed first, and Route 52 on Center and Canal Streets next. A bridge replacement on Canal Street over Sandburg Creek and a new eastern approach to the Village on Route 52 constituted the impacting a historic Delaware and Hudson Canal site and museum. Also, a new eastern section of Route 52 removed the hazards of a narrow, poorly aligned approach to the Village.



The Rural Highway

. . . is an award given to the projects of excellence that meet the criteria in design, alignment and location, cross section, preservation of natural areas, and reestablishment of natural vegetation.

First Award

Lake Pleasant Access Road Maricopa County, Arizona “Desert Preservation”

Lake Pleasant Road, located 35 miles from downtown Phoenix, is a popular year-round recreational area. Weekend traffic volumes exceed 5,000 vehicles per day. The old road had washed out three times in three successive years because of excessively high volume water releases from Waddell Dam, which forms the lake.

The Maricopa County Highway Department decided to relocate the road, thus eliminating the chance of future costly washout repairs. The relocation alignment in the mountainous terrain was difficult to determine. Coupled with this, the fragile desert soil and delicate cacti and arid vegetation demanded special consideration for maximum preservation. The combination of these factors established the design parameters that proved to be most challenging.

The end product is an asphaltic concrete road that winds gracefully through the desert foothills in a safe easy and pleasing manner, with the ultimate of preservation of the beautiful, natural environment. Spectacular rock formations and majestic saguaro cactus greet the traveler and enhance the visual awareness and appreciation of the deep blue waters of Lake Pleasant as it breaks into view.

