



Visitors Centers: To Build or not to Build?

*Cindi Ptak, FHWA, Office of Federal Lands Highways,
Washington, DC*



National Park Service
Park Facility Management Division



Total Cost of Facility Ownership



EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

An automobile helps illustrate total cost of ownership

For example, a 2011 Honda Civic costs \$25,490 (MSRP)

The cost of owning this car goes far beyond the \$25K upfront investment.



Operations (\$)

- Gas
- Insurance
- Car wash, etc.



Preventive Maintenance (\$)

- Oil Change
- Washer & Brake Fluid Check
- Tire Rotation/alignment, etc.

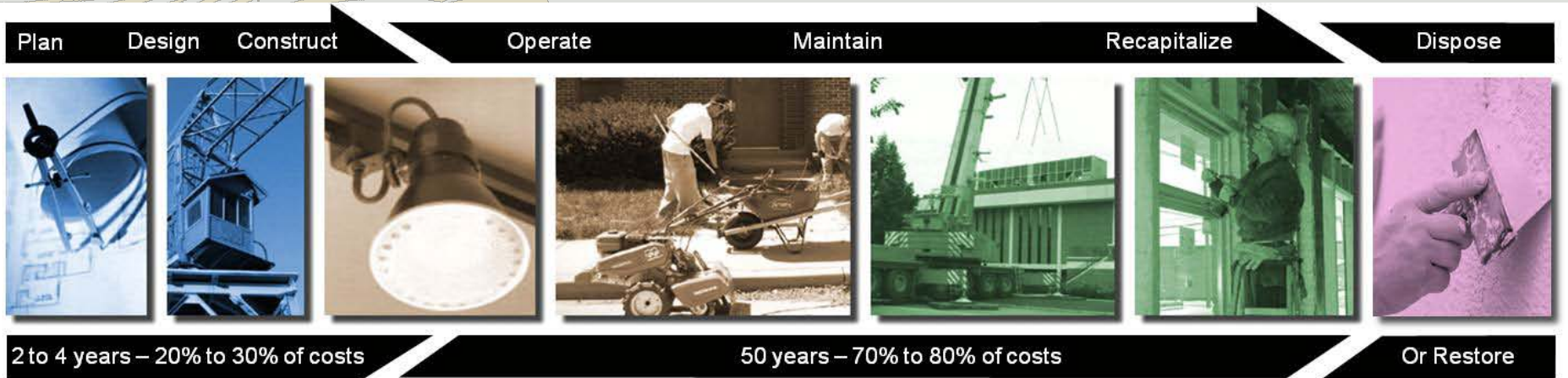


Recurring Maintenance (\$)

- Replace Brake Pads
- Replace Spark Plugs
- Change Tires, etc.

Likewise, facility operations and maintenance costs take up a majority of investment dollars needed

Typical phases of an asset's life-cycle



2 to 4 years – 20% to 30% of costs

50 years – 70% to 80% of costs

Or Restore

| Planning & Design | Construction | Operations | Maintenance (RM & PM) | Component Renewal |
|------------------------|--------------|------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| \$145,080 | \$970,920 | \$429,800 | \$1,255,016 | \$863,412 |
| \$1,116,000 | | \$2,548,228 | | |
| 30% of life cycle cost | | 70% of life cycle cost | | |



FHWA Programs that Fund Visitors Centers



Just because funding is available, should you just build?

- 1. National Scenic Byways Program – Discretionary Grants**
- 2. Public Lands Highways Discretionary Program**
- 3. Transportation Enhancements (formula funding to States)**

In reviewing Visitor Center proposals, although we fund only planning, design and construction, we look for the applicant's ability to fund maintenance and operations for the lifecycle of the facility.

From the NSBP Grant Information in the "Byways Facilities" category: "FHWA expects the applicant to consider and respond to the following:

- What is the relationship of the proposed facility to similar existing or proposed facilities? How many are needed? Where are they located? Why is this facility necessary?**
- Are agreements in place to ensure the maintenance and operation of the facility over its useful economic life (20+ years)?**

Federal Programs that Fund Visitors Centers



Example: NSBP FY2010 awards \$4M for VC Construction in PA

**Translation: Total project cost including planning and design: \$7,750,000
(total project cost was \$6,750,000 plus \$1,000,000 for design)**

Using NPS formula for operations and maintenance, cost over the lifespan of the facility will be approximately \$18,000,000 or just under \$1M a year.

FHWA Programs that Fund Visitors Centers



Just because funding is available, should you just build?

1. National Scenic Byways Program – Discretionary Grants \$40M

2. *Public Lands Highways Discretionary Program \$98.5*

- Transportation planning for tourism and recreational travel, including the National Forest Scenic Byways Program, Back Country Byways Program, National Trail System Program, and other similar Federal programs that benefit recreational development
- Adjacent vehicular parking areas
- Interpretive signage
- Acquisition of necessary scenic easements and scenic or historic sites
- Provision for pedestrians and bicycles
- Construction and reconstruction of roadside rest areas, including sanitary and water facilities
- Other appropriate public road facilities such as visitor centers

FHWA Programs that Fund Visitors Centers



Applications and Program criteria for 11 FHWA discretionary programs for the FY 2011 solicitation can be found here:

www.fhwa.dot.gov/discretionary

Deadline for submission to States is June 3, 2011! Some States have established earlier deadlines so they may review prior to submission to FHWA.



Questions?

Contact Information



U.S. Department of
Transportation

Cindi Ptak
Public Lands Highways Program
Coordinator
FHWA, Washington, DC
cindi.ptak@dot.gov

