

Build a Better Mousetrap

NATIONAL COMPETITION



Photo Credit: Federal Lands Highway



U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration

OFFICE OF INNOVATIVE PROGRAM DELIVERY



Overview

What is Build a Better Mousetrap?

Build a Better Mousetrap National highlights innovative solutions to everyday challenges that local and tribal transportation professionals encounter. These solutions range from the development of tools and equipment modifications, to new processes that enhance safety, reduce cost, increase efficiency and improve the quality of transportation.

How does the Competition work?

- 1) Centers solicit their own nominations within their state.
 - The Build a Better Mousetrap is open to any local government agency (town, borough, city, township, county or parish) and tribal governments in the United States.
 - Applicants submit a Build a Better Mousetrap Nomination Form
 - Photographs are required to illustrate each entry with owner's credit shown and should be included as separate files
 - An optional Spotlight Video can be submitted to demonstrate the problem, the development, and the working solution
 - Applicants must respect OSHA principles
- 2) Centers select nominations they would like to forward. Multiple nominations in multiple categories may be submitted to increase the odds of winning. FHWA may ask for additional information during the evaluation process.
- 3) Centers submit their nominations to the Build a Better Mousetrap at CLAS@DOT.GOV under one of four categories:
 - Innovative Project Award – This category celebrates a local agency or tribe that implemented a new technology or design in construction. The innovation enhances the quality, timeliness, cost effectiveness, safety, environmental benefit and/or efficiency of the highway project.
 - Bold Steps Award – This category recognizes a local or tribal agency that embraced forward thinking in the development and implementation of an innovative practices that improves or streamlines transportation related processes. The innovative change should show improvement in performance, management and efficiency. This award could include advancements in areas of program and project management, finance, safety, mobility, sustainability, and maintenance.

- Smart Transformation Award– This category celebrates development and deployment of solutions that improve field data capture, data analysis, automation and real-time collection, and/or implementation of smart infrastructure. This award category is not intended for the implementation of “off the shelf” products or customizable solutions that are available in the market and/or provided by a specific vendor.
- Pioneer Award – This category recognizes agency inventors that develop new tools and equipment that provide a better way to do a job or advance road maintenance and construction. Implemented tools and methods should be an original design or creative adaptation that results in significant advancement, rather than the result of natural evolution of existing methods, common sense or good practice. Entries should demonstrate genuine change and innovation that can impact the wider transportation community.

Please Note: If the panel of judges believes an entry has been improperly categorized, the entry may be moved to a different category without consent from the entrant.

- 4) Previously submitted entries are not eligible for resubmission under the above categories unless significant, unique and innovative enhancements have been made to the entry. At its sole discretion, FHWA reserves the right to disqualify entries that fail to show significant improvements have been made to a previously submitted product or technology.
- 5) Nominations are accepted only through LTAP and TTAP Center submission. Applications are due by June 1, 2020. Please submit electronically to CLAS@dot.gov

How are the winners selected?

In each category, we are looking for original, innovative projects that provide long-term value to the transportation community. In selecting a winner, the following criteria are considered: recognized importance/ impact; originality; applicability to others; cost effectiveness; time savings; agency or community benefit; and the overall quality of the application. Entries with a Spotlight Video will receive bonus points!

Winners will be selected by an independent panel of judges and will be announced at the annual NLTAPA Conference.

A top **Honoree** will be selected for each category and awarded a certificate of recognition. From the list of top Honorees, a **Best of Innovation** award will be made by casting votes at the annual NLTAPA conference. The winner of the Best of Innovation award will be provided invitational travel to a biennial EDC Summit. Additional award benefits include industry wide recognition through media promotion, exposure on the FHWA website, and the opportunity to have the innovation showcased at the EDC summit.

All qualifying entries will be compiled into an electronic booklet posted on the FHWA’s Center for Local Aid Support’s (CLAS) website at https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/innovativeprograms/centers/local_aid/ so you and your customers can learn more about the best practices from around the country.

Photograph and Spotlight Video Guidance

PHOTOGRAPHS *

- Along with your entry, provide high-resolution digital photos measuring at least 300 dots per inch (dpi). A minimum of two (2) different photographs must accompany each entry.
- A camera that takes 3 megapixels (MP) or more will be fine. When shooting digital photos, ensure that the camera is set to take shots at the highest resolution possible. For instance, a Samsung S5 will take 16 MP photos. An iPhone 6 takes 8 MP photos.
- Digital photos may be provided via e-mail, CD-ROM/DVD, or through a file transfer protocol (FTP) electronic address. Please provide original source files, either in JPEG (Joint Photographic Experts Group) or (Tagged Image Format (TIF) format, and *not* be only embedded in your Microsoft Word file.
- Photos should be interesting to view; support and illustrate the ideas and activities described in your entry; and, whenever possible, show people or equipment in action. Ensure that all photos respect OSHA principles and show safe and appropriate actions, such as workers who are wearing hardhats and safety vests.
- Each photograph should include a detailed caption explaining what is shown and clearly identifying its relevance to the subject of the entry. Also include a photo credit (photographer's name and/or organization) or source (agency or company name).

SPOTLIGHT VIDEOS *

The Spotlight Video is an optional addition to your entry. If submitted, it should demonstrate your entry's problem, its development, and your entry's working solution. It should be no more than five minutes long and be in MP4 format. Deliver it via CD-ROM/DVD or through a FTP site. Staff at CLAS can assist with these details. Here are some tips from

<http://www.usatoday.com/story/tech/columnist/saltzman/2016/07/10/tips-shooting-great-video-your-smartphone/86806080/>.

- **Plan your script.** Write it out on large white board so the narrator can easily see it.
- **Turn the phone sideways.** Use landscape or horizontal shots.
- **Hold your phone steady.** Use two hands with arms in close. Tripods are good too.
- **Compose your shot.** Place your scene in the middle. Avoid background distractions.
- **Lighting is critical.** Avoid harsh sunlight, dark and light contrasts, backlights and windows. A bright but cloudy day is great.
- **Shoot straight, slow and close.** Match the height of your image. Gently glide in for close-ups.
- **Sound matters.** Background noise is distracting. Shut down motors, fans, hammers, and conversations.

- ***Editing is ok.*** Download and edit your video with free or commercial software. Cut, crop, adjust color and brightness, add transitions, special effects, music, narration, captions, and more. It's okay to ask the 14-year old kid down the lane to help you.

* Please request a Release Form (see the next page) from each person you photograph, record, or video. Include a copy along with your entry.