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**From:** Scheibe, Mark  
**To:** Jim Ryan (james.ryan@dot.gov)  
**Sent:** 4/24/2009 1:14:47 PM  
**Subject:** User Benefits

Jim,

Far be it from me to try to argue with you about FTA guidance, but with respect to the use of mode specific constant, it seems like the 2007 Guidance on New Starts Policies and Procedures is fairly clear.

**b. Mode-Specific Effects**

*FTA adopts as final its proposal to allow project sponsors that seek to introduce a new transit mode to an area to claim credits (implemented through what is commonly called a mode-specific constant) for the user benefits caused by attributes of that mode beyond the travel time and cost measures currently available in the local travel model. FTA will continue to work closely with sponsors of projects that have calibrated mode-specific constants to ensure that they are using constants that are generally consistent with the methods and values permitted for sponsors of projects which are new to an area.*

This policy establishes a reasonable approach to crediting alternatives that represent new transit modes locally with the mobility benefits caused by changes in transit service characteristics that are universally omitted from current travel forecasting methods. The policy applies to both the transit guideways identified as locally preferred alternatives and to guideway-like elements of baseline alternatives used to evaluate proposed projects. The approach gives credit – and additional user benefits – based on the specific attributes of the alternative as they are perceived by travelers. FTA will assign credits for characteristics in three categories: 1) guideway-like characteristics (equivalent to a maximum of eight minutes of travel-time savings); 2) span of good service (up to three minutes); and 3) passenger amenities (up to four minutes). Further, FTA will define a discount of up to 20 percent on the weight applied to time spent on the transit vehicle. These credits and discount are applied to the calculation of user benefits only; ridership forecasts will not be affected. This policy is effective immediately except in the case of baseline alternatives in areas that are considering expansion of existing guideway systems. The policy will apply to those alternatives beginning in May 2008 so that project sponsors have sufficient time to modify their travel forecasting procedures.

FTA will issue technical guidance on the application of this policy in the May 2007 Reporting Instructions.

Am I missing something?

**Mark**