Kentucky Complete Streets Leadership Academy
## Observations and proposals for quick-build demonstration projects on state-owned roads

Smart Growth America (SGA) conducted a Complete Streets Leadership Academy (CSLA) in Kentucky with support from the CDC's Active People, Healthy Nation[SM] initiative. This program connected the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC) with local jurisdictions to implement quick-build demonstration projects on state-owned roads. Quick builds are temporary installations to test new street design improvements that improve safety for everyone, and are an important tool to try new designs and materials on state-owned roads, build partnerships between the local jurisdictions and state offices, and bring near-term safety improvements to the places that need it most. Bowling Green, Morehead, and Winchester participated in this program, working alongside their respective KYTC District planning staff: Bowling Green with District 3, Morehead with District 9, and Winchester with District 7.

OBSERVATIONS

Knowledge, skills, and training: Many participants came to the CSLA with a foundational understanding of Complete Streets, while for some, this program was their introduction to the approach. Different starting points meant each team had slightly different goals for what they were looking to learn and practice. Familiarity with Complete Streets also varied among KYTC District planning partners, all of whom had received Complete Streets training prior to the program, but with different amounts of buy-in and capacity. Within the districts, there was also an inconsistent understanding of Complete Streets and quick builds, as design, permit, and traffic engineers involved in encroachment permits had not necessarily attended prior KYTC trainings.

Relationships and coordination: A range of existing coordination levels resulted in significantly different project scopes across the teams. Bowling Green's strong coordination helped lead to a larger project scope. In Morehead and Winchester, the team leads worked to bring others in to build support for more Complete Streets projects in the future. Across all teams, SGA observed increased communication between local teams and the KYTC districts, as well as greater familiarity with each other's work and processes.

Working with small communities: It is important to recognize the limitations that these smaller communities face when partnering with KYTC for a quick-build project, so the local jurisdictions selected for this cohort were intentionally small- to mid-sized cities. Winchester does not have engineering staff, so the city would not have been able to create the drawings submitted for permit approval without support from the SGA team and the local resident with engineering expertise. Morehead's team was so small that the KY Department for Public Health team member focused his support on this team to add to their capacity. Bowling Green was the only
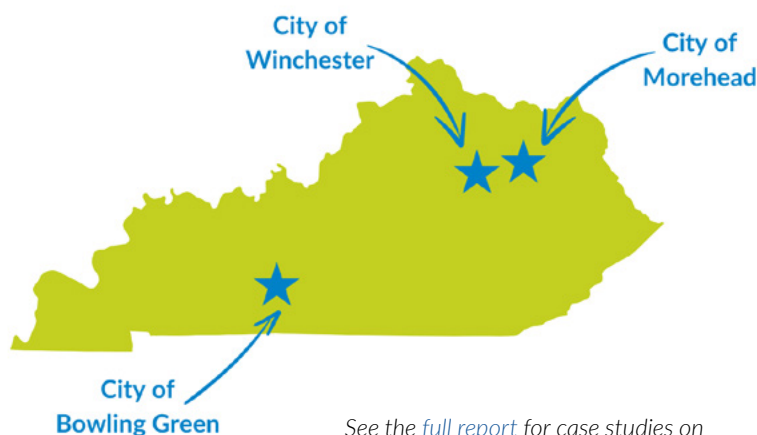
See the *full report* for case studies on Bowling Green, Morehead, and Winchester.

participating jurisdiction within an MPO, which greatly added to their capacity and enabled them to pursue two project sites.

Using quick builds for lasting results: The project sites, especially in Winchester and Morehead, were selected with future quick builds in mind, in part to demonstrate the value of these projects to community members. Both Winchester and Bowling Green were able to include permanent improvements in their quick-build projects by coordinating with city staff on budgets and timelines.

Knowing and navigating the system: By designing and installing a quick-build project together, the local teams and KYTC participants can learn to navigate existing processes and identify areas for improvement. It's also a way for local teams to learn more about resources available at the state level; even with KYTC publicizing their programs, databases, and other resources, it is easy for city staff to miss some of these tools, as SGA observed at the in-person workshop. One challenge local teams faced in navigating the process was the inconsistent information they received from the different KYTC district teams and headquarters. SGA heard from district staff that more specific design standards for quick builds from KYTC's Central Office would help bring everyone to the same page.

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These ideas are for KYTC to use in formalizing and repeating the quick build process, and are informed by SGA's observations throughout this academy, as well as prior experience with quick builds in other states.

For knowledge, skills, and training:

Host mandatory recurring trainings within KYTC on Complete Streets topics and quick builds. Broad familiarity with Complete Streets concepts and applied strategies will make it easier to build buy-in from everyone at KYTC who can be involved in quick-build projects, from planning staff to permitting teams. Holding these trainings across teams and in all districts will help standardize KYTC's approach to Complete Streets and quick builds and will give communities across the state the opportunity to benefit from this learning. By scheduling recurring trainings, the topics can be more focused after an introduction, and new hires can be part of the process. Investing in continued trainings can also demonstrate to district staff that Complete Streets is a priority for leadership and an important approach throughout the Cabinet.

Host public-facing trainings and develop informational materials on Complete Streets topics and quick builds. KYTC can also look to develop additional public-facing trainings or other materials to support local jurisdictions' staff, residents, and elected officials in learning how to work with KYTC to implement these projects. Incorporating quick builds into Complete Streets trainings can create tangible projects with near-term outcomes as a result of the learning process, which can help bring more people on board with the approach. Citizen transportation academies can be used to increase knowledge and foster partnerships between cities and state DOTs.

Walk audits in Winchester, KY

For relationships and coordination:

Not every quick-build project will be about street design change. If your goal is to build relationships that don't yet exist, your project scope will likely be less ambitious. But keep in mind that this is a process, and that the first project is just the start. More ambitious projects will come as a result of building strong working relationships.

Find opportunities to share resources. Find ways for KYTC and local governments to share key resources— like staff time, data collection tools, and signs— including within KYTC itself, such as through a central resource library.

Coordination and dedication benefits from commitment, which comes from the top. By supporting quick-build projects, KYTC leadership can lend credibility to local leaders and set expectations for district staff to support these projects, too. KYTC leadership supporting these projects can encourage district staff to dedicate their time and resources to these projects. Similarly, city leaders can use their support for quick builds to allow city staff to focus on this work, as well.

For working with small communities:

Tailor a quick-build program to different community sizes and capacities. KYTC supporting a quick build in Lexington or Louisville will be a very different process than in a smaller city. Working with smaller communities may involve providing additional training on foundational concepts, adjusting expectations for how polished the drawings need to be for permit approval, and even taking on some of the work within KYTC, such as data collection. Financial support for materials and staff time can also increase the capacity of smaller cities to conduct these projects. Creating suggested best practices for KYTC staff to work with small communities on quick builds can make it easier for district teams to know how to help.

Use quick-build projects as interim options for communities that can't afford a full build, but also can't afford to wait. Quick builds are less expensive than capital projects, and there are only so many full builds that can be completed in a year. To improve safety and access in these smaller communities before construction timelines or funds would typically allow, quick-build projects can be used as near-term options on state roads.

Scale up efforts and share resources with cohorts and partnerships. By using a cohort model to work with multiple communities simultaneously, KYTC can build efficiencies into the quick build process and help share expertise across the teams. Look to work with external partners for support, such as the state Department for Health, the Kentucky League of Cities, and the Kentucky Association of Counties, and similar organizations.

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For using quick builds for lasting results:

Quick build locations can align with both KYTC's project pipelines and local plans. Where small-scale improvements are already scheduled, the quick build can be installed alongside existing work. The quick-build projects are opportunities for KYTC to engage with adjacent property owners, local jurisdictions, and other partners on upcoming projects. At the same time, including a way for communities to submit requests for quick builds outside the existing project pipelines, may provide opportunities for nearby residents to submit areas of concern that were not previously on the state's radar.

Use the measured outcomes from quick-build projects to inform other work. Creating a database of quick builds and lessons learned, such as those focused on speed reduction, community engagement, and safety improvement, can enable the measured effects of a project to inform other quick builds or even other capital projects. Turning each quick build into a data point can help build evidence and support for implementing Complete Streets strategies even more broadly.

Create a menu of quick build materials and strategies, including those that can be made permanent, to be referenced by KYTC staff and local partners. For example, crosswalks can be an interim measure with tape or a permanent installation with thermoplastic. Presenting strategies like crosswalks as opportunities for permanent improvement, if budget allows, can clarify the lines around a "temporary" installation and inspire creativity in what permanents can be done alongside a quick build. Once temporary safety countermeasures are established, this menu can be used to fast-track permit applications, create a library of templates, materials, and resources, and be used as a jumping off point for additional innovation, such as Connecticut's Capitol Region Guide to Community Quick-Builds and the Commissioner's Office Directive.

For knowing and navigating the system:

Develop, publish, and advertise a standard KYTC process for quick-build projects. The process can be tailored to the size or type of community, such as MPOs versus cities while remaining applicable to all KYTC Districts. A written and easy-to-understand process, such as a flow chart, can help everyone navigate the steps and responsibilities for installing a quick build.

Expand approved materials list to include common quick build elements. KYTC maintains a list of approved materials that can be used on state roads, but they are mostly permanent infrastructure materials such as asphalt, concrete, and aggregates. A supplemental list of "experimental materials" includes a few quick-build friendly materials, but is not as widely disseminated or easy to understand. Including a specialized section for quick build materials in the approved or experimental list would simplify design and procurement for both KYTC and local projects.

Develop additional resources to support the quick-build process. This can include supplemental information for the materials list, such as pricing estimates, vendor details, typical lead times for procurement, and other relevant details to help teams plan their projects. It can also include tools like typical drawings for KYTC design engineers and permit staff to reference. A flowchart showing the steps, contacts, requirements, and necessary permits for a few common quick-build project types would help illustrate the process. Share these resources broadly so teams can start with a collective understanding of the information available from KYTC.

Emphasize community engagement throughout the process. Creating standard processes and more narrow options for materials and designs can help KYTC and local staff navigate this work, as well as help with transparency in communication, but the standard process shouldn't preclude community involvement. By engaging community members, local needs can be met quickly, and support for additional projects can be built. Quick builds can even be used as part of ongoing education about the benefits of Complete Streets, which can advance KYTC goals outside of temporary projects.

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