

PUBLICROADS

Writing for *Public Roads*: **How-To Guide**



U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration


FHWA-HRT-24-097



You should write for *Public Roads!*

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This booklet will introduce you to options for writing for *Public Roads*, enabling you to reach the magazine's wide readership. In these pages, you will find descriptions of article types, as well as submission deadlines and requirements for each type.

Public Roads is the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) premier magazine that presents information of interest to highway industry professionals including:

- Advances and innovations in highway and traffic research and technology.
- Critical national transportation issues.
- Developments in FHWA policies and programs.
- Important activities and achievements of FHWA and others in the highway community.

With a readership that spans over 80,000 individuals¹ across the United States and more than 7 countries (including Australia, Canada, China, Germany, India, Russia, and the United Kingdom), *Public Roads* offers FHWA and State department of transportation (DOT) staff² an avenue for communicating both technical and general-interest topics with peers (e.g., engineers, scientists, and economists) and other stakeholders across the highway industry.

¹Internal data obtained from web tracking.

²Other Federal agencies, local and Tribal DOTs, field researchers and practitioners, and academia may also submit content for *Public Roads* but are encouraged to collaborate with FHWA and State DOTs.

Winter 2024

<https://highways.dot.gov>



WINNERS

tenacity, in

by ADAM LARSEN and BRANDON ST.

Imagine traveling on winding North Dakota Badlands, on the forested roads of the great North or witnessing the raw beauty of California's Death Valley at sunrise. You may sound like stunning views or destinations, but they could also be roads without fuel stations, the nearest routes to transport freight packages in inclement weather, or roads to access agency facilities during a wildfire. I built across the Nation's National System of national conservation areas managed by the Bureau of Land Management, and wide-open spaces—including Tribal and national forests—can become at a critical time in emergencies.

The Federal Highway Administration Office of Federal Lands Highway (FLH) serves as a conduit between road managers and the diverse population that needs to transverse these types of roads—no more

The virtual tour camera kit provides 360-degree views of the roof and roadside features in using two lenses.

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in south-eastern Ontario. The number of people allowed to gather at the Toronto AIDS Centre (TAC) was limited due to the COVID-19 restrictions, which had hampered the process by which the RSA had been started. Such restrictions also meant that the gathering was a collection of those with and without a history of sexual contact, typically in response to how events are managed and to various safety data. The team drives their concerns about the route to capture photos for an RSA building upon the evidence of a large-scale, multi-city survey of OTT before its start, to a kick-off safety specialist at the FWA AIDS Alliance, to capture images by using a virtual tour, as presented at a public. As a result, a map was generated that mapped both crash data and police data to crash locations and to the various sites. This information was then shared with members to participate enabled them to capture images of the RSA and other otherwise known locations. The virtual tour was also extracted from the data, a crowd-sourcing feature that the Tahoma O'rdham National gathering inspired from the RSA team at Tahoma O'rdham National. An online data collection map

Load Safety Audits

the examination of an existing road or intersection by an often multidisciplinary team

RSA is to identify elements that present a safety concern, determine what opportunities exist to eliminate the safety concern. This type of analysis is for all potential road users, not just motor vehicle traffic. Therefore, the analysis for all road users are required to consider all resolution options.

within the FHWA, aiding safety and managing the Safety Fund.

for more information, contact Adam Lassen or Brandon Stokes.

Mission

U.S. Department of
insuring that America
efficient, and modern
em in the world, which
ic activity and global
d enhances the quality
es both rural and urban.

the FHWA Office
operation is:

For more information, visit <https://highways.dot.gov/travelers/indian-landscapes/programs-tribal>.

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There are many ways you can contribute to *Public Roads*. From full-length feature articles to 200-word summaries and advertisements, choose the option that best fits the information you want to share.



Feature Article

A detailed, substantive article that typically spans two to six magazine pages with photographs and graphics. Each magazine issue contains between four and six feature articles. Special themed issues may have up to seven feature articles.



Guest Editorial

A one to two-page article, typically drafted by a senior leader within FHWA or another transportation agency, that briefly introduces high-profile initiatives or shares agency goals. Guest Editorials may focus on a topic related to a feature article in the issue.



Departments

Recurring sections with summaries of topics of general interest, and programs and courses offered by the National Highway Institute.



Advertisement

A one-page promotion of a program or initiative in a visual format. Ads do not need to be tied directly to any article featured in the issue and can announce an event, FHWA milestone, new program offering, or future article.

View past issues of the magazine for samples of each writing option: <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/publicroads/past.cfm>



Feature Articles

Detailed, substantive articles



A feature article is a longer, more detailed piece that typically spans two to six pages but may run longer on occasion if appropriate per the topic and as space allows. Each issue of *Public Roads* contains between four and six feature articles. Special themed issues may contain up to seven feature articles. The *Public Roads* Editorial Board (which consists of the FHWA Executive Director and several Associate Administrators) reviews all suggested story ideas for feature articles, selecting topics that align with agency goals and the scope and intended audience of the magazine.

The process for developing a feature article includes four main steps.

Step 1. Prepare a proposal of your story idea for review by the Editorial Board.

A story idea is a brief (one to two-page) summary about the topic of your article and should include the following information:

- A brief introduction to the project, program, or milestone (such as an anniversary).
- Bullet points—about four to six—noting any results or data points, challenges identified during the project and the solutions identified to solve them, project benefits, and/or next steps.
- Anticipated authors (no more than five bylined authors).

Step 2. Wait for approval from the Editorial Board.

The Marketing and Communications Team in the Office of Corporate Research, Technology, and Innovation Management submits batches of story ideas to the Editorial Board approximately every two months for review and approval. Once the Editorial Board approves a story idea, the editorial team will work with you to determine in which issue your article will be published. The issue in which your article will appear is a decision that depends on articles that are already scheduled and your availability. The editorial team will also provide you with author guidelines, templates, and other helpful information to support the development of your outline and subsequent article.

Step 3. Prepare and deliver an outline of your article.

Expand your story-idea proposal into an article outline and email it to the editorial team by the predetermined deadline (see table 1). The editorial team will provide feedback to help you develop and refine your article.

Requirements

Your feature article draft manuscript must include the following:

- 500 words per page (1,000–3,000 words).
- Include up to five named authors.
- A brief bio (25 to 50 words) for each bylined author.
- 6 to 8 high-resolution digital photos or graphics (300-dots-per-inch (dpi) JPEGs of 4 by 6 inches at a minimum).
- A title, a single sentence summarizing the article (known as “deck copy”), and recommended subheadings.

Step 4. Prepare and deliver your article manuscript.

Produce a draft manuscript and deliver it to the editorial team by the predetermined deadline.

Recommendations

- Avoid obvious opinions or statements that are difficult to back up.
- Include URLs to sources for any data cited.
- Refrain from promoting a particular brand of material or equipment; for example, use generalized terms such as “asphalt paver” instead of “Caterpillar” or “loader” instead of “Komatsu.”
- Avoid identifying contractors and consultants by name, noting “engineering consultant” instead.

More information on the format of an article, as well as detailed guidelines for submitting photos, can be found here:
<https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/publicroads/author.cfm>

Deadlines for Feature Articles

Deadlines for feature articles are set by working backward from the publication date of the magazine. In general, draft manuscripts are due six months before the print date of the magazine. For example, the draft manuscript for an article in the Autumn issue, which is printed in October, would be due in May. Outlines are due two months before the manuscripts, allowing time for the editorial team to review proposed articles and provide suggestions and feedback. The suggested deadlines for story ideas in table 1 will ensure you receive approval from the Editorial Board before you invest resources in writing the outline and manuscript.

Table 1. Deadlines for feature articles.

Issue (Months)	Deadline for Story Ideas	Deadline for Outlines	Deadline for Manuscripts	Estimated Print Date
Winter (January–March)	April 1*	May 1*	July 1*	January
Spring (April–June)	August 1	September 1	November 1	April
Summer (July–September)	October 1	December 1	February 1	July
Autumn (October–December)	February 1	March 1	May 1	October

***Deadlines for the Winter issue are set earlier to ensure more time to complete the issue before the Transportation Research Board Annual Meeting, which typically takes place mid-January. For the Winter issue to be available for distribution at the Annual Meeting, draft manuscripts are due seven months before (i.e., July).**



Guest Editorials



Short articles presenting high-profile initiatives or sharing agency goals

A Guest Editorial is typically drafted by a senior leader within FHWA or another transportation agency. This one to two-page piece is a great way to briefly introduce high-profile initiatives or share agency goals. Guest Editorials may also focus on a topic related to a feature article in the issue. Drafts for Guest Editorials are due at least three months before the print date of the magazine (see table 2).

Table 2. Deadlines for Guest Editorial submissions.

Issue (Months)	Deadline for Content	Estimated Print Date
Winter (January–March)	September 1*	January
Spring (April–June)	January 1	April
Summer (July–September)	April 1	July
Autumn (October–December)	July 1	October

Requirements

Your Guest Editorial must include the following:

- Between 500 and 1,100 words.
- A title that introduces the theme or topic of the editorial.
- Your full name and title as it should appear in the magazine.
- A high-resolution headshot and an opening photo (300-dpi JPEG of 4 by 6 inches at a minimum).
- An electronic image of your signature (300-dpi JPEG).

Recommendations

- Avoid using first person (e.g., me, I, us, we, our) and instead use third person (e.g., the Nation, the agency, FHWA).
- Reference one or more articles scheduled for the issue, if appropriate.
- Avoid obvious opinions or statements that are difficult to validate.
- Include URLs to sources for any data cited.

*Deadline is set earlier to ensure time to complete the Winter issue before the Transportation Research Board Annual Meeting in January.



Departments

Recurring sections with summaries of topics of general interest, and available programs and courses



Public Roads has a number of departments, which are recurring sections of the magazine with summaries of topics of general interest; notices of recent publications in research, development, and technology applications; internet-related information applicable to transportation professionals; and programs and courses offered by the National Highway Institute. While some of these departments are reserved for specific authors, most are available to you as another way to share your content.

What's New

One-page article intended to accommodate important subjects that are of particular interest near the print date of an issue. For special topics, authors may be permitted to submit a two-page article. That must be approved in advance.

Along the Road

Information about current and upcoming activities, developments, trends, and items of general interest to the highway community.

Innovation Corner

Highlights of new innovations; this department is written by the FHWA Office of Transportation Workforce Development and Technology Deployment.

Training Update

Programs and courses currently offered by the National Highway Institute; these updates are written by the National Highway Institute.

What’s New

The What’s New department, formerly Hot Topic, is intended to accommodate subjects that are of particular interest near the print date of a magazine issue. Hot Topics are one page in length, and as such, they do not require the longer lead time needed for lengthier pieces, such as feature articles. See table 3 for submission deadlines. For special topics, authors may be permitted to submit a two-page article. That must be approved in advance.

Innovation Corner

The Innovation Corner department is intended to highlight new innovations and technology by FHWA and its partners that are available on the web, such as software tools or resource portals. This department is one page in length and does not require the longer lead time needed for lengthier pieces. See table 3 for submission deadlines.

Requirements

Your What’s New draft must include the following:

- A title that introduces the theme or topic of the article.
- 500–550 words that describe the subject.
- A high-resolution image (300-dpi JPEG of 4 by 6 inches at a minimum), such as a photo or graph, that is related to your topic. Stock photos may be proposed if suitable imagery not available.

Requirements

Your Innovation Corner draft must include the following:

- A title that introduces the theme or topic of the article.
- 500–550 words that describe the subject.
- A high-resolution image (300-dpi JPEG of 4 by 6 inches at a minimum), such as a photo or graph, that is related to your topic. Stock photos may be proposed if suitable imagery not available.

Table 3 contains suggested deadlines for department submissions.

Along the Road

The Along the Road department provides short summaries about current and upcoming activities, developments, trends, and technology of interest to the highway community. The Along the Road department is a great place to share success stories and technical news. See table 3 for submission deadlines.

Training Update

The Training Update department is written by the National Highway Institute and is a one-page feature that provides details on course and training offerings. See table 3 for submission deadlines.

Table 3. Deadlines for department submissions.

Issue (Months)	Deadline for Content	Estimated Print Date
Winter (January–March)	September 1*	January
Spring (April–June)	January 1	April
Summer (July–September)	April 1	July
Autumn (October–December)	July 1	October

*Deadline is set earlier to ensure more time to complete the Winter issue before the Transportation Research Board Annual Meeting.

Requirements

Your Along the Road draft must include the following:

- A title that introduces the topic of your summary.
- 200–250 words that summarize the latest developments in your topic.
- A high-resolution image (300-dpi JPEG of 4 by 6 inches at a minimum) to accompany your summary.
- A URL or contact name and email address where readers can get more information.


Requirements

Your Training Update draft must include the following:

- A title that introduces the theme or topic of the article.
- 500–550 words that describe the subject.
- A high-resolution image (300-dpi JPEG of 4 by 6 inches at a minimum), such as a photo or graph, that is related to your topic. Stock photos may be proposed if suitable imagery not available.



Advertisements



One-page visual promotions
of a program or initiative

A one-page ad is a great way to promote a program or initiative in a more visual format. An ad does not need to be directly tied to an article in the issue. *Public Roads* has run ads to promote Work Zone Awareness Week, the Professional Development Program, Federal Aid Essentials, the Eisenhower Transportation Fellowship Program, CARMASM, the National Roadway Safety Awards, and National Roundabouts Week, among others. If your ad is tied to an observance month or week, it is best to run the ad in the issue printed closest to that date.

There is typically room for up to four ads per issue. Evergreen ads may be used throughout the year. The process of creating an ad is relatively simple and involves submitting content (see Requirements) to the editorial team, who will work with you

to design the ad. Content for ads is due at least three months prior to the print date of the issue. See table 4 for submission deadlines.

Requirements

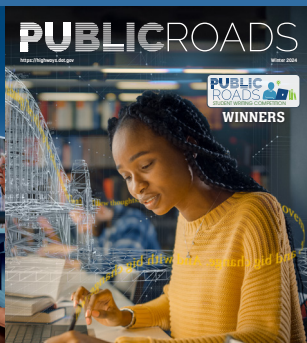
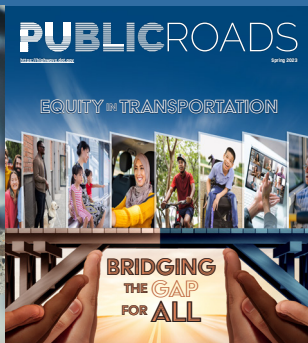
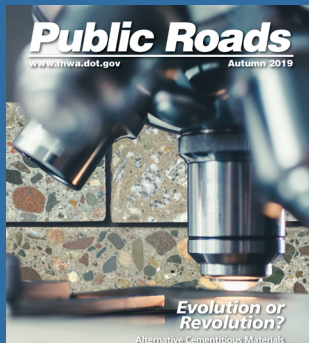
Your draft ad content must include the following:

- Bullet points—about four to six—highlighting the program, event, or reason for the ad.
- A URL that provides readers with further information.
- Several high-resolution images (300-dpi JPEGs of 4 by 6 inches at a minimum) that are original (preferred) and owned by FHWA or stock photography.
- High-resolution program or event logo(s), if applicable (be sure that your logo has been approved by Public Affairs before submission to the editorial team).

Table 4. Deadlines for advertisement submissions.

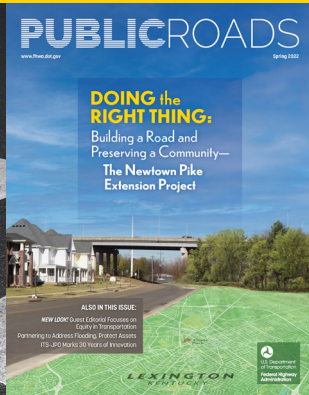
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Winter (January–March)	September 1*	January
Spring (April–June)	January 1	April
Summer (July–September)	April 1	July
Autumn (October–December)	July 1	October

*Deadline is set earlier to ensure time to complete the Winter issue before the Transportation Research Board Annual Meeting in January.



Public Roads offers many options for writers, so there is surely an option best suited to your content or the information you would like to share. If you are interested in writing an article or contributing to a department, send your content to PublicRoads@dot.gov.

We look forward to working with you!



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