

*Interesting MPO Practices at CDTC*

**Capital District Transportation Committee**

**One Park Place**

**Albany, NY 12205**

**518-458-2161**

**[www.cdcmpo.org](http://www.cdcmpo.org)**

**March 2006**

# Contents

<b>Dynamic Membership Approach</b>	
<i>Expanding Participation to Include Key Public Stakeholders .....</i>	<i>1</i>
<b>Community and Transportation Planning Linkage Program</b>	
<i>Land Use Planning Assistance as a Critical Element of the Long-Range Plan .....</i>	<i>2</i>
<b>Backcasting</b>	
<i>Use of Policy-Based Traffic Forecasts to Achieve Results.....</i>	<i>3</i>
<b>Reaching and Implementing a Regional Vision through Collaboration</b>	
<i>Reaching Consensus at Multiple Tables.....</i>	<i>4</i>
<b>Regional Development Compact</b>	
<i>Collaboration between Public and Private Sector on Responsible Growth Issues .....</i>	<i>6</i>
<b>Public Participation</b>	
<i>An Organic Approach to Reflecting Public Concerns and Priorities.....</i>	<i>7</i>
<b>Host Agency Relationship</b>	
<i>Achieving MPO Staff Independence through Written Agreement .....</i>	<i>8</i>
<b>Collaborative Travel Demand Management Efforts</b>	
<i>Using Pilot Programs to Gain a Foothold for TDM .....</i>	<i>9</i>
<b>Spot Improvements for Bicycle and Pedestrian Access</b>	
<i>Stretching the Envelope of TIP Projects for Cost Efficiency.....</i>	<i>10</i>
<b>Long-Range Plan Budgets Used in TIP Development</b>	
<i>Plan Implementation Through “Steady Progress” Principle .....</i>	<i>11</i>
<b>Airport Area Mitigation Fee Program</b>	
<i>MPO Leadership in Public-Private Financing.....</i>	<i>12</i>

**Capital District Transportation Committee**  
**Dynamic Membership Approach**  
*Expanding Participation to Include Key Public Stakeholders*

CDTC was established through written agreements signed in 1964 between New York State and every town, village, city and county in Albany, Rensselaer, Saratoga and Schenectady counties. As with most of its counterparts in New York, initial membership was limited to the counties and cities, along with the state.

CDTC early demonstrated a willingness to modify its policy structure, adding the Capital District Regional Planning Commission (CDRPC) and the Capital District Transportation Authority (CDTA) in the early 1970's. When county executive positions were created in Albany and Rensselaer counties in the mid-1970's, CDTC expanded its policy membership to include both legislative and executive branch officials. At the same time, CDTC created two "at large" representatives for towns and villages (providing for one member or alternate position in each of the four counties at all times). These at large positions are elected by CDTC annually and are used to introduce town and village elected officials – particularly those key suburban communities – to the CDTC process and to gain a lasting sense of ownership in CDTC decisions. Over 30 years, the at large positions have involved all of the inner suburban communities as members of CDTC's policy board, as well as many outlying communities. Key towns and villages have had many tours of duty.

In the 1990's, CDTC responded to the expanded challenges of ISTEA by adding the New York State Thruway Authority and later, the Albany County Airport Authority and the Albany Port District Commission to the policy structure. The possibility of extending membership to the private sector or to citizen advocates was considered at the time and rejected. CDTC's preference was to preserve the "mutual veto" power of each member over CDTC's actions by limiting membership to elected officials and other public agencies with public accountability.

In 2003, CDTC examined the status of the town of Colonie on the board. Colonie, with a population of 80,000, is both the region's second-largest city or town (after Albany) and the region's most centrally-located community, housing the regional airport. Limiting Colonie's formal role at CDTC to the rotating at-large membership was considered inadequate by CDTC. A new policy was adopted, offering permanent membership to any municipality exceeding 50,000 population. The 50,000 threshold was selected because that is the urbanized population threshold that triggers the requirement for an MPO process; the logic being that if an area of 50,000 requires an MPO, then a municipality of 50,000 deserves a permanent seat on the MPO.

Most recently, CDTC expanded its at-large representation at the technical level (Planning Committee) by extending continuing member or alternate member status to each municipality with a professional planning staff. The Planning Committee now includes the direct participation of four counties, eight cities, and eleven towns and villages along with five public transportation agencies (NYSDOT, CDTA, Thruway, Airport and Port) and CDRPC.

The effect of the dynamic membership approach has been to establish broad respect and stature for the MPO and to ensure an environment of collective ownership which is not dominated by the perspective or wishes of one or two members.

**Capital District Transportation Committee**  
**Community and Transportation Planning Linkage Program**  
*Land Use Planning Assistance as a Critical Element of the Long-Range Plan*

A strong regional consensus emerged in the mid-1990's that the region's quality of life, mobility and economic vitality is dependent upon improved local land use planning and on better integration of land use development and the transportation system. Using a technique called "back-casting", CDTC determined that the region could meet its social, economic and environmental goals in the future only if transportation service and facility actions were accompanied by a dampening of vehicular trip growth. The adopted regional plan (New Visions) calls for a reduction in the growth in vehicular travel by one-third from trend forecasts – largely through altering the form and location of growth and its accompanying transportation systems.

The core of the Capital District's regional transportation – land use policy is reflected in eleven adopted principles (from CDTC's full set of 25 adopted planning and investment principles). The policy thrust is that good site and community design *can* help realize the region's potential and that transportation actions *will* play a role. CDTC established its Community and Transportation Linkage Planning Program to provide funding to convert the promise of sound land use planning into reality.

Since 2000, CDTC has funded 50 separate Linkage programs in 28 municipalities. The number of studies and the number of municipalities engaged by CDTC in cooperative planning effort have few parallels in the nation. The magnitude of funding commitment – over \$3,000,000 in federal funds (mostly from FHWA "PL" funds, but also with TIP project-related CMAQ and STP funds), state and local cash and in-kind work – makes CDTC's per capita MPO investment in land use planning at the leading edge nationally.

Critical and unique aspects of this region-wide (urban, suburban, rural) planning effort are:

- Use of the MPO to hold the consultant contract for local planning
- Influence of MPO staff on the local planning agenda and adherence of study scopes to adopted regional MPO policy
- Use of streamlined consultant selection procedures to minimize effort
- A "fair access" consultant policy which has led to use of over 20 different consultant firms
- A high level of local funding commitment (the 2005-06 Linkage program of over \$440,000 in studies reflects a local cash contribution averaging 42% of the total budget)
- Regional planning engagement in the critical planning issues of nearly every city and nearly every growing suburb as well as those of a number of rural communities.
- Development of a set of projects for TIP consideration that reflect reasonable, measured and locally-supported plans.

When coupled with CDTC's adopted principles that require local planning as a pre-requisite to TIP consideration, the Capital District has matured to the point that the only (non-rehab, non-management) projects considered at the TIP table are products of past Linkage studies.

**Capital District Transportation Committee**  
**Backcasting**

*Use of Policy-Based Traffic Forecasts to Achieve Results*

In the development of its New Visions regional transportation plan (adopted 1997), CDTC established a short list of core performance goals derived from an inclusive, comprehensive planning process. These are:

- ◆ Maintain or improve overall service quality from current conditions.
- ◆ Enhance the quality of life in the region.
- ◆ Reduce the per-capita resource requirements related to provision, operation, use and mitigation of the impacts of the transportation system from current per capita costs.
- ◆ Reduce the per capita cost of accidents (crashes).
- ◆ Build strong urban, suburban and rural communities.
- ◆ Knit them together into a cohesive metropolitan area.
- ◆ Support economic and social interactions that accommodate population, household, employment and commercial and industrial growth while improving environmental quality and enhancing the natural and built environment.

Technical analysis indicated that these goals could not be achieved by 2015 at anticipated growth and through transportation actions at expected funding levels. However, CDTC found that if the planned and affordable transportation actions were combined with aggressive land use and demand management actions, the goals could be achieved. Congestion might worsen somewhat, but reliability would improve and access to alternative modes would increase; safety would improve and environmental damage decrease; community revitalization would be produced by planned projects.

The net positive result is dependent upon tempering the growth in vehicular travel – reducing expected 1995 to 2015 vmt growth by one-third to one-half from trend forecasts. Technically, this is considered “backcasting” – determining the steps needed to achieve a particular outcome. By using the vision-based backcasting approach, the plan has strong policies regarding land use planning, site design and demand management. CDTC’s Linkage program of local planning support is a direct result of the backcasting.

In its plan (reaffirmed and extended in 2000 and 2004), CDTC assumes that the desired outcome will be achieved by the set of land use and transportation actions in the plan. CDTC thus embraces its tempered, policy-based traffic forecasts for all planning and design work – not the trend forecasts. As a result, TIP projects are implemented in the Capital District at scopes and with design details that reflect the desired outcome.

**Capital District Transportation Committee**  
**Reaching and Implementing a Regional Vision through Collaboration**  
*Reaching Consensus at Multiple Tables*

At no time in the past thirty years have so many local leaders, and so many of the region's residents, been voluntarily engaged in thinking about the region's future. Because of explicit effort to have many individuals and institutions participate at multiple discussion tables, the individual initiatives have grown to become a strong collaboration. The choice has been made to encourage a high level of overlap and coordination of initiatives rather than force an integration into a single effort. This type of collaboration has been extremely successful in forging a common agenda while maintaining creativity and achievement within each of the initiatives. The key regional initiatives are:

Capital District Transportation Committee / Capital District Regional Planning Commission: "New Visions for a Quality Region" effort. Jointly-staffed, multi-disciplined task force working within structure of the established regional planning entities. Published a landmark document, "Pursuing Quality in the Capital Region in 2003"; followed up with work by seven task forces on issues of common interest best led by the MPO – alternative growth scenarios; the future of the expressway system; “big idea” and “big ticket” concepts; larger-than-regional policy issues; and improving local planning in a regional context.

Business/ Higher Education Roundtable. University presidents and corporate CEOs working with local government leaders on the future of the region. Subjects include local planning processes, high tech opportunities, workforce development, the regional transportation system, and structural issues affecting the ability of Upstate New York to compete in a global marketplace.

Center for Economic Growth. “Regional Development Strategy.” Private-sector initiative to expose, train regional leaders in high tech development opportunities, issues. The initiative has led to efforts to foster intelligent local planning; the creation of a regional “cabinet” of CEG, CDTC, CDRPC and the Tech Valley Chamber Coalition; a Regional Development Coordinating Council of all multi-county public and private entities; and promotion of a regional development compact. In 2006, a joint CDTC/CDRPC/CEG/University of Albany study will articulate the fiscal impacts of alternative growth scenarios on transportation, sewer, water, public protection and schools.

Tech Valley Chamber Coalition. Coalition of seventeen counties' chambers (well beyond the traditional metropolitan core) engaged in exploring ways of capitalizing on high tech growth for benefits throughout the region. In cooperation with other regional partners, has pursued regional “branding”, has developed a region web portal and has embraced the “quality of life” aspirations developed in the other initiatives.

ARISE. Four-county faith, neighborhood and labor-based group with smart growth, urban revitalization, inner-city housing, workforce development and other planning-related focal areas. Has sponsored regional summits on sprawl (funded in large part by CDTC) and has created a statewide network to seek state planning legislation.

The high level of interest and energy by regional leaders and others engaged in these efforts is unprecedented. It is also a cause for celebration.

If one moves past the differing languages of the economic development community, the planning community and the faith community, the general visions articulated by the various regional initiatives have become, over time, remarkably similar. They all share the following elements:

1. All reflect a belief that there is a need for some degree of economic growth in the region in order to sustain and enhance the region's quality of life.
2. All assert that, along with nurturing heritage tourism and retaining current industry, growth in the high tech sector offers opportunities to the region for developing a local economy with a range of career-type jobs.
3. All the initiatives seek to revitalize the region's older urban areas through economic development.
4. All the initiatives recognize that much of the growth will occur in suburban areas, and seek to have that growth help construct communities that are stronger and better than what was there before, while retaining the character of the community that brought the residents there.
5. All the initiatives seek to have growth benefit all the region's residents through adequate access to jobs, education and training.
6. Regarding transportation, all have expressed a desire to find ways to prevent serious loss of the highway mobility that is part of the region's quality of life. All have articulated a desire to use public transportation, walkable communities and alternate modes to the maximum degree feasible to assure access and travel options.

The fact that the business community, environmental community, state and local governments, transportation agencies, the faith community and neighborhood and environmental associations desire (broadly) the same outcome is remarkable and highly unusual. It is a testimony to the extensive efforts to carry out discussions and explorations at multiple tables while ensuring participation of all perspectives at each table. The result of this collaboration is convergence on a set of objectives that resonates broadly throughout the region, reflects the legitimate interest of a wide range of parties, and allows various parties to work on those aspects of a joint agenda that are most appropriate to each party.

**Capital District Transportation Committee  
Regional Development Compact**

*Collaboration between Public and Private Sector on Responsible Growth Issues*

The Capital District Transportation Committee has long enjoyed a cooperative relationship with the Capital District Regional Planning Commission. Access to CDRPC staff resources has allowed CDTC to “outsource” demographic and land use data collection and forecasting to CDRPC on a contractual basis and has allowed CDRPC to maintain staff resources. The Capital District also is unique in having the equivalent of a “private MPO” – the Center for Economic Growth (CEG).

CEG maintains a Local Government Council of chief elected officials (with a significant overlap with CDTC’s Policy Board) and engages not only in regional marketing but also in subjects of regional growth patterns, suburban sprawl, workforce development and urban revitalization. Rather than challenge or compete with CEG, CDTC’s approach has been to partner with CEG and increase the scale of resources directed at areas of common concern.

Aware that CDTC had established strong regional planning and investment principles, CEG led an effort in 2003 to take regional planning another step by creating a Regional Development Strategy (RDS). Among other items, the RDS called for creation of a Regional Development Coordinating Council (RDCC) of all regional entities, guided by a “cabinet” composed of the chief policy official and chief staff member of CEG, CDTC, CDRPC and the 17-county Tech Valley Chamber Coalition. Another recommendation in 2003 was development of a Regional Development Compact.

CDTC has collaborated with CEG on this initiative over the past 18 months. Draft CEG language for the Regional Development Compact was modified to reflect revisions by CDTC and CDRPC staff in March of 2005. The compact, adopted at the local level by individual municipalities, commits to comprehensive planning and implementation that includes training of local officials; cooperative and inclusive processes; respect for community character, historic and natural resources; protection of open space and a focus on infill development and use of existing infrastructure and facilities.

CEG has used the revised language in its efforts to gain voluntary signatories to the compact. Within a few months, more than a dozen urban, suburban and outlying communities had formally adopted the compact. CEG will continue to take the lead as a “circuit rider” in advocating for more communities to sign on. At the same time, CDTC is reviewing its policies to consider requiring adoption of the compact as a pre-requisite to access to certain planning (Linkage) or TIP funds. .

When combined with CDTC’s strong regional policies and the Linkage planning program, the private-sector-initiated Regional Development Compact constitutes the core of a new model of regional planning that respects the reality of home rule.

**Capital District Transportation Committee**  
**Public Participation**

*An Organic Approach to Reflecting Public Concerns and Priorities*

CDTC takes an “organic” approach to public participation. Discussion of an MPO’s long-range plan or the TIP is not likely to engage a wide range of participants. Typically, issues vital to a member of the public are either very local and specific (traffic in front of my house) or broad and visionary (why don’t we build a monorail?). These have a hard time finding a place in an already-defined MPO process. To address this, CDTC has increasingly emphasized participation in multiple forums – heavy reliance on localized planning, continuous consideration of “big picture” ideas at the MPO table, and involvement in forums outside the MPO table. The goal is to assure residents and other stakeholders that their involvement has an influence on the outcome.

Heavy reliance on localized planning. CDTC’s Linkage program provides for extensive public participation in MPO-guided and funded but locally-administered land use – transportation planning activities. This means that public workshops, charettes, newsletters and flyers, surveys, advisory committees, web sites and documents have directly engaged thousands of residents and other stakeholders at the local level in over 40 locations in 25 municipalities. CDTC’s plans and policies have been brought to and influenced by these individuals, building mutual consensus and support.

Continuous consideration of “big picture” ideas. CDTC’s New Visions process began in 1993. Four years later a new plan (including 25 principles) was adopted as the result of work by nine inclusive task forces, several public workshops and extensive public dialogue on “big picture” issues ranging from rail transit to land use patterns and urban decay. This “big picture” emphasis has continued. Five inclusive working groups are completing landmark research (published for comment on the web) on big-budget concepts, regionalism, expressway options, alternative growth scenarios and new models for local planning. CDTC approaches big picture issues with no holds barred, asserting that all issues are fair game while reminding all that only compelling ideas that reflect emerging, common-sense consensus will gain policy traction.

Involvement in forums outside the MPO table. CDTC’s organic approach also relies on staff and member participation in other forums. CDTC underwrote the cost of a “regional summit” on sprawl organized by ARISE (an urban empowerment group) which gathered over 200 individuals who had never participated at CDTC. Likewise, CDTC’s active support for the Center for Economic Growth’s Regional Development Strategy informs the business community and brings their concerns back to the CDTC process. By hearing issues expressed by people in their own settings, CDTC staff and members are best able to reflect these concerns in MPO actions.

The primary result of this effort is widespread support for the MPO and a set of MPO plans and policies that reflects the perspectives of a wide range of groups and individuals in the region. The organic nature of this approach also provides for an easy, natural consideration of issues that are identified as “mandates” at the federal level. For example, CDTC’s Environmental Justice / Title VI documentation is merely a report on the natural reflection of urban, minority and low income community issues in CDTC’s plans and programs. Twenty-eight of the first 34 Linkage studies included EJ neighborhoods; a majority were within cities; and the region’s largest corridor commitment – to NY 5 BRT, ITS, and revitalization – addresses numerous EJ neighborhoods.

**Capital District Transportation Committee**  
**Host Agency Relationship**  
*Achieving MPO Staff Independence through Written Agreement*

MPO staff operations in New York are faced with a challenge in obtaining sufficient authority to make decisions in the best interest of the MPO institution. The simplest means of providing “hosting” arrangements is to treat the MPO staff as an element of the host agency. The danger in this approach is that the MPO is subjected to hiring or salary freezes, purchasing or travel directives or other cost-containment measures of the host that are not always necessary or desirable for the MPO. Complete independence of the MPO would require adequate upfront financing of the MPO from some source, due to MPOs operating nearly exclusively on reimbursement funding.

CDTC has long enjoyed perhaps the most successful MPO-host agency relationship in New York. This is due to the host (the Capital District Transportation Authority) asserting a strong desire when it assumed host duties in 1982 to influence CDTC operational decisions *only* as a member of CDTC’s board. CDTA provides CDTC broad latitude with regard to office location, consultant selection, staff size and grade, salary schedules, annual adjustments, definition of leave, health insurance and other items. In exchange, CDTA asks for CDTC’s official adoption of internal procedures for and policy board management of these items. CDTA’s only “veto” power over CDTC operational decisions is limited to actions that would threaten to significantly increase the size of CDTA’s pre-financing of CDTC operations.

As part of the written procedures, CDTC authored a description of the division of responsibilities between CDTA and CDTC for financial recordkeeping, grants management, billing and other activities. CDTC also adopted consultant selection procedures, hiring and salary procedures, administrative procedures and other internal documents.

Essentially, CDTA serves as the legal “parent” to CDTC, processing payroll expenses and making benefits payments, maintaining bank accounts, cutting checks for vouchered expenses and entering into contracts on behalf of CDTC. CDTC maintains all timesheet and grants management records, adopts and maintains line item accounts, processes reimbursement bills to NYSDOT and others, selects consultants, makes purchases, reviews and authorizes payment to consultants and other vendors, and annually closes out all books and reconciles fringe and indirect rates against actual expenses.

CDTC pays CDTA \$45,000 annually to cover the approximate staff cost to CDTA for the work they do on behalf of CDTA. The payment also helps CDTA justify the cost of absorbing CDTC’s pre-financing needs which range up to \$500,000 at any given time. CDTA also initiates an annual compliance audit of both CDTA and CDTC; CDTC’s report is kept distinct from CDTA’s and CDTC reimburses CDTA for the cost of the CDTC piece.

A critical element of the success of this arrangement is CDTC’s use of an Administrative & Financial Standing Subcommittee. The Subcommittee is composed of CDTC Policy Board members (including the CDTA member on CDTC’s board), annually appointed by CDTC’s chairman. The Subcommittee has full authority to make all decisions related to CDTC’s operations, within the framework of CDTC’s overall Unified Planning Work Program.

**Capital District Transportation Committee**  
**Collaborative Travel Demand Management Efforts**  
*Using Pilot Programs to Gain a Foothold for TDM*

CDTC's long-range plan includes a budget line for travel demand management (TDM). Beginning in 1997, CDTC has carried a TIP entry of up to \$525,000 annually for TDM. The Capital District Transportation Authority (CDTA) is the designated lead agency for the initiative, and CDTC and CDTA partner in designing, implementing and evaluating TDM efforts.

Among the TDM initiatives that CDTC and CDTA have developed and maintained for a number of years are CDTC's Commuter Register carpool matching and transit / park & ride information web site; a Guaranteed Ride Home program for CDTA's transit pass (Swiper) holders; a Guaranteed Ride Home program through CDTC for carpoolers and private transit users; a free transfer program between private operators and CDTA services; and a Swiper pass discount program through the state employee unions.

Two major initiatives have been advanced jointly by CDTC and CDTA that have demonstrated the benefits of TDM incentives and initiated continuing TDM efforts. One was a project with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation in conjunction with DEC's relocation of its main office to downtown Albany. Through a direct subsidy of \$17 per month, DEC employees in service areas supplied by private operators were encouraged to initiate a habit of taking transit to work. The program accomplished its goal: 12% of workers in the Schoharie service area participated, along with 14% of Brown Coach (Montgomery County) and 21% of Upstate Transit (Saratoga County) workers. In parallel, CDTA offered a 35% discount on Swiper passes. Close involvement of these private operators with CDTC and CDTA was required, establishing continuing relationships regarding service design, fares and alternative fuel vehicle discussions.

A second phase tested the ability of the program to reduce parking requirements; participants relinquished their NYS subsidized parking permit in order to receive a subsidy; an "occasional use" permit was offered. About 60% of participants continued in the program without a parking pass.

The program ended after three years after an expenditure of only \$100,000 with an overall B/C ratio exceeding 21 to 1, with over 1.5 million vehicle miles eliminated and with convincing documentation for New York State of the system benefits of a permanently-instituted commuter incentive program, which was later incorporated into union agreements.

A second major initiative (Commuter Ca\$h) extended the pilot subsidy approach to all employees in the downtown Albany Business Improvement District – approximately 12,000. A \$20 monthly subsidy was offered on six private operators as well as on CDTA for a period of six months. Over 1,300 employees participated in the program; 480 were not regular bus riders before the program. At the end of the program, surveys indicate that 56% of the new riders permanently switched modes; another 26% are unsure. A number of employers also initiated commuter subsidy programs as a result of the pilot effort.

In both the NYSDEC and Commuter Ca\$h programs, CDTC and CDTA worked in partnership, with CDTC handling the private operators' vouchers and CDTA handling Swiper pass aspects.

**Capital District Transportation Committee**  
**Spot Improvements for Bicycle and Pedestrian Access**  
*Stretching the Envelope of TIP Projects for Cost Efficiency*

One of the recommendations of CDTC's Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Task Force for CDTC's "New Visions" regional transportation plan was to pursue a program of funding for "spot improvements." Upon adoption of the New Visions plan in 1997, CDTC established a regional set-aside project in the TIP (RG41) called "Spot Improvements for Bicycle and Pedestrian Access", with a \$100,000 (matched) annual STP budget.

The spot program draws from the successful experience in Portland, Oregon in which residents suggest small-scale bike or pedestrian actions on a continuous basis. The city budget contains a small budget to respond to worthwhile requests. CDTC's program was an experiment in extending the concept to the metropolitan level. After considering alternative ways of administering the program, CDTC determined that a single solicitation of small-scale bike/ped actions every couple of years is more practical than an on-call program. The formal solicitation and associated project evaluation process helps with prioritization of applications.

CDTC's history with the spot program has been successful. Three separate region-wide municipal solicitations have been made (2000, 2002, 2004), each during a period in which the overall TIP was *not* in the process of being updated. This timing avoids confusion with the normal TIP solicitation process and allows communities and CDTC staff and Planning Committee to give the spot program adequate attention. Each of the solicitations has pooled three years' funding (for a total of \$300,000) and assigned funds to specific spot projects. (In each TIP update, CDTC has chosen to replenish full funding to the spot program, effectively allowing CDTC to program three years' funding every two years.)

Through three rounds of Spot Improvements, CDTC has funded 31 of 57 projects funded for a grand total exceeding \$900,000. All Spot Improvement projects are funded with a maximum of 80% federal funds and are capped at the time of project programming. In cases where sponsors committed more than the minimum required 20% local match, the project was capped at the amount of federal funding requested.

Projects funded through the program have included on-street and on-bus bike racks, crosswalk and signage improvements, pedestrian actuation for signals, short sidewalk "gap" construction, minor streetscaping, trail implementation, and trail repair and repaving. The average project cost has been approximately \$30,000 – well below the level typically considered cost-effective for the use of federal funds. Innovative aspects include the option (for project recipients with other projects on the TIP) to "bundle" the spot project with another TIP project to minimize administrative effort. NYSDOT Region 1 and CDTC staff hold a briefing session with successful applicants to introduce them to the process of implementation of federal-aid projects. Region 1 has also proven to be a collaborative partner with CDTC and the municipalities by streamlining the administrative process to the maximum extent possible.

Success of the program can be seen in CDTC's 2005-10 TIP – a fourth round of spot projects will be solicited in 2006 for the use of \$300,000 in newly replenished funds.

**Capital District Transportation Committee**  
**Long-Range Plan Budgets Used in TIP Development**  
*Plan Implementation Through “Steady Progress” Principle*

CDTC’s New Visions long-range plan budget calls for *steady progress across all improvement categories* at any funding level that exceeds the funding needs of a tightly-defined system preservation category. That is, steady progress is possible at all times – at faster rate if funding is higher, slower if it is lower.

To implement this policy, CDTC uses categorical budgets in the New Visions plan directly in the TIP update process. There are 17 project categories in the plan (such as highway operations, ITS capital investment, stand-alone goods movement actions, intermodal facility capital investment, and others). Early during a TIP update, CDTC will compare the overall New Visions budget emphasis by category to the budget emphasis represented by existing commitments on the TIP. If funding is sufficient to widely solicit new project candidates, CDTC will make funding available for new TIP projects primarily for categories that are *under-represented in the existing TIP*.

For example, in the 1997 TIP update, \$55 M of \$90 M of funds available for new projects was allocated across only those categories that were under-represented in the initial TIP – pavement, bridge, transit, ITS, bike/ped. The highest ranking projects in these categories (based on cost-effectiveness and relationship to New Visions “priority networks” for ITS, transit, goods movement or bike/ped travel) were selected for funding in “round one”, regardless of sponsor or geography. Approximately \$30 M was used to address compelling arguments to fund projects that do not easily respond to quantitative ranking, and to assure geographic balance. (A remaining \$5 M was reserved to respond to public comment on the draft TIP.) For another example, in 2003 CDTC committed the first \$50 M in round one to only certain categories (ITS, pavement, bridge, bike/ped, safety), assigning to the top-ranked projects regardless of location or sponsor.

Notably, given the pre-existing set of highway capacity commitments on the TIP prior to 1997, CDTC has not earmarked any TIP funds for the highway capacity expansion budget category in any of the past five TIP updates.

The effect of this approach has been the following:

- Equal access to funding based on need, rather than ownership
- A shift away from large-scale capacity projects
- A swift shift to a balanced set of projects with significant impact
- Rapid implementation of ITS, transit, bike/ped and other components of the plan
- Real-world results that reflect the comprehensive principles of the plan

After eight years of this plan-TIP connection, success is visible. The Capital District has among the most advanced technology sets on highway and transit systems; urban reconstruction projects have helped revitalize downtowns; and pavement conditions on both state and non-state systems are stable.

**Capital District Transportation Committee**  
**Airport Area Mitigation Fee Program**  
*MPO Leadership in Public-Private Financing*

CDTC adopted its Public-Private Highway Financing Policy in 1989 and completed its Wolf Road and Airport Area studies by 1990, addressing existing and future congestion in a key commercial and retail center near the regional airport. The town of Colonie and Albany County then jointly conducted a Generic Environmental Impact Study (GEIS) in 1991 to refine the land use plan for the Wolf Road/Airport area and establish an implementation plan for highway and other infrastructure elements. CDTC staff helped craft the GEIS statement of findings by leading the town in identifying the maximum feasible and desirable transportation plan, and scaling the amount of development over the next fifteen years to fit that plan's capacity. The plan calls for some projects to be publicly financed, some privately and some jointly.

The town of Colonie pioneered the use of GEIS mitigation fees for implementation of the plan. Using SEQR as the legal basis for the fees and carefully calculating each development's contribution to the need for mitigation allows Colonie to avoid the legal prohibition (established in the Guilderland case in the 1980's) against generic "impact fees". The approach also eliminates the need for significant traffic mitigation studies of each and every development in the area.

Mitigation fees are calculated based on the development's percentage consumption of new peak-hour, peak-direction traffic capacity by link and the cost by link of creating that capacity. An even-handed application of this process has included Colonie assessing itself mitigation fees when it constructed two town buildings in the GEIS area.

Innovative features of the mitigation fee program include CDTC staff involvement in the review of each development application in the study area (under an annual contract to the town), and CDTC staff calculation of the appropriate transportation mitigation fee for use by the town. The staff also identifies arterial management actions and site circulation issues, thus linking MPO principles to real-world implementation. Demand management is also incentivized. Other areas of Colonie have since benefited from the GEIS approach.

Over nearly fifteen years:

- CDTC has conducted over 240 traffic mitigation reviews for the town.
- Resulting mitigation fee assessments exceed \$12,000,000.
- New public collector roads and service roads have been built using mitigation fees.
- CDTA shuttle service in the area has been funded partially with mitigation fees.
- Mitigation fees have been used to "over-match" more than \$30 M in TIP projects.
- Total improvements (TIP and private-funded) will eventually exceed \$80 M.
- Development is continuing at roughly the pace compatible with the plan.
- Improved airport access has contributed to Southwest Airlines' commitment to invest in a significant presence at the Albany International Airport.