

The Community and Transportation Linkage Planning Program for 2010-11

Introduction

The Community and Transportation Linkage Planning Program (Linkage Program) was initiated in the year 2000 by the Capital District Transportation Committee (CDTC), the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Capital Region (www.cdtempo.org). The program evolved out of the adopted policies of the regional long range metropolitan transportation plan, known today as *New Visions 2030*. There is a strong regional consensus reflected in adopted policy that indicates the Capital Region's quality of life, mobility and economic vitality are dependent upon improved local land use planning and on better integration of land use development and the transportation system.

New Visions 2030 principles follow four themes: to preserve and manage the existing investment in the region's transportation system, to develop the region's potential to grow into a uniquely attractive, vibrant and diverse metropolitan area, to link transportation and land use planning to meet the Plan's goals for urban reinvestment, concentrated development patterns and smart economic growth, and to plan and build for all modes of transportation, including pedestrian, bicycle, public transit, cars and trucks.

The Linkage Program is designed to fulfill the adopted principles and strategies in *New Visions 2030* by providing assistance to communities undertaking local planning initiatives that integrate land use and transportation. Since the program was initiated in 2000, CDTC has funded 61 planning studies in 37 Capital Region communities ranging from the largest city to some of the smallest towns and villages.

After ten years of experience with the Linkage program, CDTC has reviewed the implementation status of a wide variety of Linkage studies. Although there are many success stories throughout the Capital Region, there is still more work to be done. The 2010-2011 Linkage Program intends to offer communities the opportunity to implement aspects of their local plans by assisting with the codification of Linkage Study concepts. CDTC will also continue to offer communities the opportunity to pursue local planning work in keeping with the Linkage Program strategies.

Eligible Initiatives

Eligible initiatives include planning work that is related to the Linkage Program strategies or activities that assist communities in implementing Linkage Study concepts. The more strategies a proposed study incorporates, the greater the funding priority. Linkage Program funds can be used to support the transportation and land use components of a municipal wide Comprehensive Plan or Generic Environmental Impact Statement (GEIS) but can not be used for such plans in their entirety.

Planning Studies

For conceptual planning work, CDTC requires potential sponsors to integrate sound planning principles that consider both land use and transportation issues in their project applications. The Linkage Program emphasizes seven broad planning strategies that are consistent with the adopted *New Visions 2030* principles as well as other initiatives such as sustainable development, complete streets and the national Smart Growth movement. Submissions will be screened as part of the evaluation process as to how well they incorporate the program strategies. The more program strategies incorporated, the higher the priority. The seven strategies are to:

- Support urban revitalization and redevelopment of existing commercial/residential areas;
- Improve street connectivity and reduce driveway conflicts through access management;
- Enhance and develop activity centers and town centers;
- Enhance and develop transit corridors and transit supportive built environments;
- Encourage a greater mix and intensity of land uses;
- Develop bicycle and pedestrian-friendly design standards;
- Create an integrated multi-modal transportation network.

Implementation Activities

New for 2010-2011, the Linkage Program will offer sponsors of completed Linkage studies and/or similar planning work the opportunity to undertake implementation activities related to those plans. Specifically, communities can apply for follow up work related to strategic zoning code changes, zoning code overlays, the development or revision of design standards, operational modeling, assistance with SEQRA documentation toward the adoption of Linkage Program plans, etc. The assistance must be tied directly to the original scope and recommendations of the relevant planning study.

Funding priority for both planning and implementation activities will be determined through the use of study selection criteria as outlined below.

Ineligible Initiatives

Linkage Program planning initiatives are conceptual in nature and *funding is for planning assistance only*. Linkage Program funds are not available to cover the cost of municipal employees. The following are not eligible for Linkage Program funds.

- Right-of-way acquisition
- Detailed engineering
- Surveying
- Storm water/sewer system design
- Construction of transportation system facilities
- Municipal wide zoning code development or changes
- Municipal wide design standards/guidelines

Examples of Previously Funded Planning Work:

- **Schenectady Transit Oriented Development, Mixed Use Catalyst Project Study (103,500 consultant effort):** This study created a concept plan for transit oriented development in the Hamilton Hill and Vale neighborhoods in the City of Schenectady that supports the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system being developed on State Street (Route 5). Key aspects included analysis of economic development opportunities focused around transit-oriented development, the location of the proposed BRT stations in the study area, the design of State Street, and the pedestrian environment in the neighborhoods.
- **Guilderland/Princetown Land Use and Transportation Study for Route 20 (\$32,000 consultant effort):** This inter-municipal effort examined the land resources and current zoning in the Route 20 corridor from NY 158 to Duanesburg, focusing on the development of mixed use country hamlet and rural zones. The study also determined the feasibility of infrastructure modifications with the prospect of creating an economically and aesthetically enhanced Route 20 corridor in the two municipalities.
- **Village of Colonie Streetscape Guidelines & Architectural Design Standards (\$25,000 consultant effort):** This study developed streetscape guidelines and architectural design standards for the Village. Study activities included an environmental survey, community meetings to develop a vision for the Village, and the development of a document containing the recommendations made in public meetings and the streetscape and architectural design concepts for the Village.
- **Clifton Park/Halfmoon Exit 9 Land Use and Transportation Plan (\$65,000 consultant effort):** This study developed a comprehensive multi-modal transport improvement plan for the Towns of Clifton Park and Halfmoon. It also developed concepts to integrate land use and transportation in the Exit 9 area to create a sense of place and identity for both Towns in a pedestrian friendly, mixed use environment. The Plan represents a long-term vision for the area and recommends a number of short, medium and long-term transportation and land use strategies for achieving this vision.

For a complete list of past studies and summaries of those studies, please visit <http://www.cdtcmppo.org/linkage.htm>

Eligible Applicants

Applicants must be entities within CDTC's planning area of Albany, Rensselaer, Schenectady and Saratoga County (with the exception of the town of Moreau). Preferred eligible applicants are units of local government (town, city, village) and counties. Non-governmental entities such as not-for-profits and public authorities are also eligible if the submission includes a letter of support from the municipality or municipalities in which the study is focused. Joint submissions by multiple jurisdictions or multiple parties for inter-municipal efforts are encouraged.

Requested Assistance

Assistance can be provided in one of three ways:

- Through consultant work done under contract to CDTC.
- Through consultant work done under contract to a municipality or other unit of government (only considered for large scale studies – generally those totalling over \$100,000 between Linkage and other funds).
- Through CDTC staff technical assistance (limited to no more than \$10,000 of staff time)

Proposals may specify which method appears most appropriate to the applicant or request that CDTC suggest the most appropriate method. If the submission is favorably evaluated by CDTC, the determination of the most appropriate method will be made by CDTC with sponsor consent.

Funding

CDTC will be reserving up to \$100,000 in staff time and up to \$200,000 in consultant budget authority from federal planning funds to support the Linkage Program from April 2010 through March 2011 in its proposed 2010-12 Unified Planning Work Program. That means funds for the 2010-11 Linkage Program will not be available for use until after April 1, 2010. It should be noted that due to uncertainty regarding the availability of federal planning funds in 2010, CDTC will reserve the right to cancel a Linkage Program project funded through this solicitation at any time prior to contracting with a consultant for that project. Should CDTC need to cancel a funded project prior to its initiation, said study will be given the first opportunity to compete for funds in the next funding year.

Match Requirement

Funding for consultant support is available on a reimbursement basis with a minimum 25% local cash match. A letter of intent will be required to document the availability of the local cash match. Additional consideration will be given to submissions with a commitment of local in-kind staff services or that intend to provide an overmatch of local funds. However, in-kind service cannot be used to meet the minimum 25% local cash match requirement. For example, if an \$80,000 consultant study is intended, the applicant must provide \$20,000 in cash to match \$60,000 in federal funds. *CDTC may waive the local match requirement for small-scale CDTC staff (not consultant) assistance or in special circumstances.*

Cost Estimates

Sponsors are asked to provide a cost estimate for the planning study or implementation activity in their submissions. The cost estimate is to be broken down by federal funds requested and the local cash match contribution (a minimum of 25% of the total study cost).

For Planning Studies in 2010-2011:

- The minimum total study cost for a consultant effort is \$30,000 (this represents a \$22,500 request for federal funds matched with \$7,500 in local cash). Exceptions for smaller consultant efforts may be made if the effort is extremely focused on a specific issue.
- The maximum total study cost is \$100,000 (\$75,000 in federal funds matched with \$25,000 in local cash). Total study costs may exceed \$100,000 IF the sponsor provides an overmatch of local funds or combines linkage planning funds with other fund sources.
- The maximum request for CDTC staff assistance is \$10,000 for small scale, non-consultant efforts.

For Implementation Activities:

- There is no set minimum size for requests.
- The maximum total study cost is \$50,000 (\$37,500 in federal funds matched with \$12,500 in local cash match). Total study costs may exceed \$50,000 IF the sponsor provides an overmatch of local funds or combines linkage planning funds with other fund sources.
- The maximum request for CDTC staff assistance is \$10,000 for small scale, non-consultant efforts.

For Both Planning Studies and Implementation Activities:

Pooling of Linkage funds with funds from other grants is permitted to allow for greater impact through a larger, integrated study. Such local resources should be identified in the study application along with the estimated dollar value of any additional CDTC staff assistance requested, if any.

CDTC reserves the right to confirm or modify all cost estimates based on past experience with Linkage Program studies. For 2010-11, this action will be undertaken as step one of the evaluation process (see the project selection procedure below for complete details).

National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA)

According to NYSDOT's Environmental Procedures Manual, certain types of federal aid projects are considered categorical exclusions under NEPA (visit the NYSDOT website at <https://www.nysdot.gov/divisions/engineering/environmental-analysis/manuals-and-guidance/epm/repository/catex.pdf> for more information). Automatic categorical exclusions include planning and technical studies which do not involve or lead directly to the construction of a project. CDTC's Linkage Program studies generally fall into this category. However it is important for Linkage studies to adequately screen the study area and document potential environmental issues per CDTC's environmental mitigation procedures, document the assumptions and data inputs used, document any technical analysis performed (including

methodology and results) and document the public outreach process as potential projects investigated as part of a Linkage study may be subject to NEPA.

Linkage planning studies may not be categorically exempted when there are “unusual circumstances” as defined by law (23 CFR 771.117(b)). Such unusual circumstances include significant environmental impacts; substantial controversy on environmental grounds; significant impact on properties protected by Section 4(f) of the USDOT Act (23 CFR 771.135) or Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act; or inconsistencies with any Federal, State or local law, requirement or administrative determination relating to the environmental aspects of the action.

That being said there are instances where a project sponsor may desire to generate a project directly from a Linkage Study. Therefore, sponsors should be aware that projects proposed to implement a Linkage study recommendation will be subject to NEPA if the project will be utilizing federal transportation funds for its design and construction. NYSDOT’s Instructions for NEPA Checklist explains the procedure for processing Categorical Exclusions under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for projects that are funded or permitted by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) See:

<https://www.nysdot.gov/divisions/engineering/environmental-analysis/manuals-and-guidance/epm/repository/catex.pdf>.

Local Action and State Environmental Quality Review (SEQR)

Formal adoption of the study recommendations by the affected municipality(ies) is highly encouraged. This may be done through a resolution, adoption of the study as a stand alone plan, as an amendment to a municipal comprehensive plan and through other means as appropriate. Study sponsors should be aware that SEQR applies to local actions that involve a change in land use such as changes to a zoning code. Although Linkage Program studies are not municipal wide comprehensive plans, they are considered comprehensive in nature and are subject to SEQR if the municipality is considering formal action. SEQR procedures are the responsibility of study sponsors and if formal action is desired by the municipality, it should be expressed in the project application (see item 4 under application instructions). Sponsors may also consider formally endorsing or accepting the recommendations of the planning effort at the local level. Such action indicates the sponsors’ willingness to continue to work through important planning processes, such as zoning code updates, to implement the recommendations of the plan (processes which are also subject to SEQR).

Project Selection

The Linkage Program project selection process is competitive and will involve a two step process. As a first step, CDTC staff will review the scope of work for each project and the estimated budget. If the budget is not adequate for the desired scope of work, CDTC staff will develop an appropriate budget for the study and will reach out to the study sponsor with two choices: 1) increase the local match in proportion to the revised study cost to complete the desired scope of work or 2) reduce the desired scope of work to fit the study budget originally proposed. Project budgets will be confirmed based on CDTC’s extensive experience with

Linkage Planning studies and consultant work. Once study budgets and scopes have been confirmed for all projects, the submissions will be forwarded on to the review committee for full evaluation.

It should be noted that both planning and implementation applications will be reviewed using the same criteria. There will be no set-aside of funds or separate evaluation process for implementation activities.

CDTC, CDRPC (Capital District Regional Planning Commission) and NYSDOT staff will then evaluate the submissions. CDTC's Planning Committee will be provided with the evaluation results and a funding recommendation at its January 2010 meeting. Once approved by the Planning Committee, CDTC's Policy Board will take action on the recommended package of studies in March for incorporation into the 2010-12 Unified Planning Work Program. The likelihood of a study receiving funds will not be known until submissions have been received and evaluated. The evaluation criteria presented below are not presented in order of importance however an indication of their relative importance is noted for each.

Evaluation Criteria:

1. What is the need for the project? What is the issue(s) the project is trying to address? (mandatory)
2. Is the submission complete and does it meet all program requirements as listed in this program summary? (mandatory)
3. How are the goals of the effort consistent with New Visions 2030 principles (<http://www.cdcmpo.org/rtp2030/principles.pdf>)? Explain. (mandatory)
4. Is the submission supported locally through complementary activities and/or funding commitments beyond the minimum match requirements? A letter of intent will be required to document the availability of the local cash match. (improves priority)
5. Is there an adopted Comprehensive Plan, adopted Linkage Study or other adopted local planning work that this project would help to implement? (improves priority)
6. For past sponsors of Linkage studies: Was the sponsor's performance adequate and appropriate as determined by CDTC staff? (improves priority)

All efforts are required to meet the first three criteria. Submissions will be screened under criterion four as to how well they incorporate the program strategies. The more program strategies incorporated, the higher the priority for funding. Additional priority will be given to efforts that demonstrate a local commitment to the study as described under criterion five and six. Criterion seven will be used to ensure that if a sponsor is requesting follow up work or is requesting another Linkage study that their past experience with the Linkage Program was appropriate. Submissions that best meet the evaluation criteria will be considered first for funding. However, if there are more worthy submissions than available funding, the recommended package of studies will consider geographic balance and project type.

Application Instructions

The formal application should be approximately three pages in length and can be provided in the form of a letter. Three copies are required. The applicant is required to provide a study area map and can include supporting material (excerpts from comprehensive plans, etc.) as an appendix to the submission to help CDTC understand the status of, context of and local commitment to the proposed planning study.

Deadline for receipt of completed applications is the close of business, Friday, November 20, 2009. Incomplete submissions will not be considered for funding. The following nine items must be included in all submissions.

1. Name and address of applicant along with the name, title, address and phone number of the contact person for the study (if different than the applicant).
2. Title and description of the proposed study including the current need for the study and what issue(s) the study is trying to address.
3. A map indicating the boundaries of the proposed study area.
4. Submissions must clearly describe the relationship of the proposed study to CDTC's Linkage Program strategies, New Visions 2030 regional planning principles, and should consider the evaluation criteria on page six.
5. Estimated cost of the study including a clear break down of study costs by federal funds requested. Refer to the information on page four and five of this solicitation for details regarding project costs.
6. Provide evidence as to the availability of the local cash match (i.e. letter of intent) including documentation as to any overmatch or any additional funds from other sources.
7. The sponsor's current judgment on the method of assistance that appears most appropriate and desirable: CDTC administration of a consultant; sponsor administration of a consultant (only considered for large scale studies – generally those over \$100,000) or CDTC staff assistance (limited to no more than \$10,000 of staff time). A combination of staff and consultant assistance may be requested.
8. For proposals from non-governmental entities, a letter of support from the municipality or municipalities in which the study is focused.
9. Estimated timeframe for the study and indication that it will be completed in a timely manner.

Notification of Award

Following approval by CDTC's Planning Committee in January 2010, all project sponsors will be notified in writing as to the status of their submissions by February 1, 2010. In March 2010, following Policy Board approval, activities awarded funding will receive CDTC's *Guide to Linkage Study Administration* and will be asked to sign a Memorandum of Understanding

(MOU) before Linkage funds are released for use on the study on April 1, 2010. The MOU is between CDTC and the study sponsor(s) and will articulate the roles and responsibilities of all parties throughout the study process. The MOU will be tied to the chosen method of assistance. **Please note that the ability of these studies to move forward after April 1, 2010 (when the federal funds become available) will be dependent on the progress of current studies and the availability of CDTC staff.**

Consultant Activity Guidelines

To satisfy federal and state requirements, use of an appropriate means of consultant solicitation and selection will be required prior to designation of a consultant. CDTC uses an abbreviated approach to consultant selection. Sponsors should be aware that if consultant assistance is used in the preparation of a Linkage Program submission or in the development of the scope of work for the study, that consultant will not be eligible for the contract. In addition, a consultant on retainer to a municipality is not guaranteed a Linkage study contract. The consultant selection process is required to be competitive.

CDTC may be able to administer small-scale consultant studies to minimize the administrative burden on the municipality. However, if a large consultant effort is intended (\$100,000 or above using CDTC and other fund sources), the municipality may be required to select the consultant and administer the contract directly. In this case, the municipality will be required to execute necessary agreements with the New York State Department of Transportation in order to be reimbursed for the study costs.

CDTC reserves the right to modify the program without prior notice.

For questions regarding the Linkage Program, contact Sandy Misiewicz, AICP of the CDTC staff at (518) 458-2161 or email smisiewicz@cdtempo.org.