

## **The Community and Transportation Linkage Planning Program for 2012-13**

### **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.cdncmpo.org](http://www.cdncmpo.org)). The Program is designed to fulfill the adopted principles and strategies in *New Visions 2035*, the long range regional transportation plan, by providing integrated land use and transportation planning assistance to local communities. CDTC's adopted policies reflect a strong regional consensus indicating that the 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.

Since the program was initiated, CDTC has funded 71 planning studies in 40 Capital Region communities ranging from the largest city to some of the smallest towns and villages. Although there are many successes regarding the implementation of these studies, there is still more work to be done.

### **Linkage Program Strategies**

The Linkage Program emphasizes seven broad planning strategies that are consistent with the *New Visions 2035* principles. *New Visions* 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.

Submissions will be screened as part of the evaluation process for consistency with the Linkage Program strategies. 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.

## Eligible Initiatives for 2012-2013

For the 2012-2013 Linkage Program, the program will be entirely focused on implementation activities related to completed Linkage Program plans or other completed local planning work (i.e. Comprehensive Plans, Waterfront Redevelopment Plans, etc.). The initiatives must be tied directly to the recommendations of the relevant study and documented in the submission and must have a clear and direct connection to transportation issues. In addition, the initiative must be consistent with the Linkage Program and New Visions 2035 principles and strategies. Communities will be able to apply for, but are not limited to, the following:

- Strategic zoning code changes/zoning code overlays
- Site design standards or guidelines
- Official mapping
- Operational modeling

Other types of follow up planning work related to implementing a Linkage Planning study or other local planning work is eligible but will only be considered after all worthy candidate projects related to the above four activities have been funded. Engineering related work is not eligible and municipal wide initiatives are limited. Large scale comprehensive updates of zoning codes or site design standards are not eligible unless local sponsors pool financial or other resources to undertake larger initiatives. Federal funds for Linkage Program implementation activities will be capped (see page four on cost estimates).

## 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
- Capital oriented implementation actions

## Examples of Previously Funded Implementation Planning Work:

- **City of Albany Bike Share and Signage Strategy (\$70,000 consultant effort):** This study will explore the feasibility of a bike share program and develop a bike share and a bicycle-oriented signage strategy and implementation plan. Considerations include the identification of bike share station locations, station types, bicycle types and operational models. The related bike signage system should easily integrate with bicycle route maps and address features such as route confirmation, route intersections, advance route signing, destinations, directions, distances (or time) and amenities. This effort implements a recommendation from the Albany Bicycle Master Plan.

- **Town of East Greenbush Site Design Standards (\$40,000 consultant effort):** This study will assist the town of East Greenbush with the development and adoption of multi-modal, higher-density, pedestrian-friendly design standards that will be enforceable in the Town's Comprehensive Zoning Law. The design standards will be developed for the US 4 and the US 9 & 20 corridors, implementing recommendations from two previously completed Linkage studies and the town's Comprehensive Zoning Law.
- **Town of Malta Downtown Master Plan Implementation (\$90,000 consultant effort):** This initiative will assist the town of Malta with the implementation of the Downtown Master Plan in a manner that is consistent with previous Linkage Program studies in the area. The Downtown Master Plan will essentially update the Town's Comprehensive Master Plan by refining the description for Neighborhood 6 known as Downtown Malta. This initiative will develop a form based code, an official map, and a complete street plan including streetscape and design standards for Downtown Malta.
- **City of Schenectady Gateway Plaza Implementation Plan (\$70,000 consultant effort):** This initiative will assist the city with the development of a conceptual re-design and expansion plan for Liberty Park and the area immediately surrounding it, including traffic configuration and landscaping plans. This initiative will further advance key recommendations of the Route 5 Transit Gateway Linkage Study. The effort will consider pedestrian, bicycle and transit access, quality of life and safety

For a complete list of past Linkage Program 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.

### **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 with budgets totaling more than \$100,000 that combine funds from other sources).
- 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 reserved up to \$100,000 in staff time and up to \$150,000 in consultant budget authority from federal planning funds to support the Linkage Program from April 2012 through March 2013 in its 2012-14 Unified Planning Work Program. That means funds for the 2012-13 Linkage Program will not be available for use until after April 1, 2012. It should be noted that due to uncertainty regarding the availability of federal planning funds in 2012, 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 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).

- There is no set minimum size for requests.
- The maximum total study cost is \$90,000 (\$67,500 in federal funds matched with \$22,500 in local cash match). Total study costs may exceed \$90,000 IF the sponsor provides an overmatch of local funds or pools Linkage funds with funds from other grant sources. Such local sources should be identified in the study submission. If additional CDTC staff assistance is requested along with the consultant effort, the estimated dollar value of that assistance should be documented in the submission and is capped at \$10,000.
- The maximum request for CDTC staff assistance is \$10,000 for small scale, non-consultant efforts.

CDTC reserves the right to confirm or modify all cost estimates based on past experience with Linkage Program studies. For 2012-13, this action will be undertaken as step one of the evaluation process (see the project selection procedure on page seven for complete details).

## **National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA)**

Linking Planning with NEPA: Linkage Program study sponsors often advance transportation projects that were recommended through the Linkage Program planning process. Sponsors should be aware that projects proposed as a result of Linkage study recommendations will be subject to NEPA if the project will be utilizing federal transportation funds for its design and construction. For Linkage Program planning efforts, consideration should be given to following Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) guidance on linking the transportation planning process (Linkage Program plans) with NEPA. For details on the program visit <http://www.environment.fhwa.dot.gov/integ/edc.asp> and for a NEPA/planning linkages checklist visit [http://www.environment.fhwa.dot.gov/integ/pel\\_quest.asp](http://www.environment.fhwa.dot.gov/integ/pel_quest.asp)

FHWA guidance encourages the planning process to inform the purpose and need statement, scoping and alternatives identification, evaluation and/or elimination of alternatives, and indirect and cumulative impacts assessment of a transportation project. Engaging specific stakeholders (i.e. Federal, Tribal, State, and local environmental, regulatory, resource agencies and the public) and documenting planning decisions in a format that can easily be appended to the NEPA document or incorporated by reference are essential for linking planning with NEPA. To have standing in the NEPA process and its additional analyses, transportation planning information, analyses, documents, and decisions must be well documented and provided for examination during project scoping.

NEPA Categorical Exclusions: 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 when a project sponsor may desire to generate a project directly from a Linkage Study. Therefore, sponsors should be aware that capital 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)

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

### **State Environmental Quality Review (SEQR)**

SEQR procedures are the responsibility of the local municipality. If formal action is desired or required under SEQR by the municipality for the initiative, it should be expressed in the project submission (see item four under submission instructions on page six). Submissions should note who will be responsible for preparing the required documentation (meaning the consultant as part of the Linkage Program project or the municipal staff as an in-kind contribution to the effort). This is critical for implementation activities. Changes in land use such as changes to a zoning code must consider SEQR requirements.

Formal adoption of conceptual planning study recommendations by the affected municipality (ies) is highly encouraged. 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. Methods of formal action include 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.

Sponsors may also consider formally endorsing or accepting the recommendations of the planning effort. 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 likely subject to SEQR).

### **Submission Instructions**

The submission (excluding the letter of intent, maps and supporting documents) should be no more than three pages in length. **Deadline for receipt of completed submissions is the close of business (5 PM EST), Friday, January 6, 2012.** Five hard copies are required plus one electronic copy. Submissions should be sent to the Capital District Transportation Committee, Attn: Sandy Misiewicz, One Park Place, Albany, NY 12205. Incomplete submissions will not be considered for funding. The following eight items must be included in all submissions:

1. A letter of intent which documents the availability of the local cash match and commits the community/sponsor to the project. For proposals from non-governmental entities, a letter of support from the municipality in which the study is focused is required.
2. Name, title, street address, email address and phone number of the contact person for the effort
3. Study area map.
4. Project title and a description including what local planning study recommendation(s) are to be explored for implementation, the need for the project

at this time, how the project is to be implemented (is SEQR documentation required, for example?) and how the project is connected to transportation issues.

5. An outline of tasks for the scope of work including a description of desired deliverables.
6. A description of the relationship between the implementation effort and CDTC's Linkage Program strategies.
7. The sponsor's judgment on the method of assistance that appears most appropriate: 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. Estimated cost of the study following the guidelines on page four and using the following format:

Total consultant budget:	\$80,000
Linkage funds requested:	\$60,000
Local cash match (25% minimum):	\$20,000
Additional cash match (if applicable):	\$0
CDTC staff technical assistance (if applicable):	\$5,000

Also document any additional grant resources (beyond cash match) to be pooled with Linkage funds for a larger effort and any in-kind staff contributions. In-kind staff contributions may not be used toward the local cash match requirement.

The applicant can include supporting material (excerpts from comprehensive plans, previous Linkage planning work, etc.) as an appendix to the submission to help CDTC understand the status of, context of and local commitment to the proposed project.

## **Project Selection**

The Linkage Program is competitive and will involve a three step project selection process:

**Step 1:** Submissions will be screened to ensure they are complete and meet all program requirements as listed in this program summary. Incomplete submissions and those that do not meet the program requirements will not be considered for funding.

**Step 2:** CDTC staff will review the scope of work tasks proposed 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 project 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 studies and consultant work. Once study budgets and scopes have been confirmed for all projects, the submissions will be forwarded on to a review committee for full evaluation.

Step 3: CDTC, CDRPC (Capital District Regional Planning Commission), CDTA (Capital District Transportation Authority) and NYSDOT staff will then evaluate the submissions. CDTC's Planning Committee will be provided with the evaluation results and funding options at its February 2012 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 2012-14 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 criterion.

Evaluation Criteria:

1. What is the need for the project? Is there a sense of urgency? Does the project address one of the four prioritized project types (mandatory):
  - Strategic zoning code changes/zoning code overlays
  - Site design standards or guidelines
  - Official mapping
  - Operational modeling

Other types of follow up planning work related to implementing a Linkage Planning study or other local planning work is eligible but will only be considered after all worthy candidate projects related to the above four activities have been funded.
2. Is the effort consistent with CDTC's Linkage Program strategies and New Visions 2035 (<http://www.cdtcmpr.org/rtp2035/2035.htm>) regional planning principles and strategies? (mandatory)
3. What is the sponsors' plan for implementation? Does the proposal indicate a path for success? (improves priority)
4. Will the project have a positive impact on the transportation system when implemented? Is the project located on one or more of CDTC's Priority Networks (<http://www.cdtcmpr.org/maps.htm>, scroll to priority networks)? (improves priority)
5. Is the submission supported locally through complementary activities and/or funding commitments beyond the minimum match requirements? (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 two criteria. Addressing the remaining four criteria will help improve the priority of the submission. Submissions that best meet all six evaluation criteria will be considered first for funding. If there are more worthy submissions than available funding, funding options will consider geographic balance and project type.

## **Notification of Award**

Following approval by CDTC's Planning Committee in February 2012, all project sponsors will be notified in writing as to the status of their submissions by February 24, 2012. In March 2012, 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). The MOU must be signed before Linkage funds may be accessed. Linkage funds become available for use after April 1, 2012. The MOU is between CDTC and the study sponsor(s) and articulates 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, 2012 (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](mailto:smisiewicz@cdtempo.org).