

The Community and Transportation Linkage Planning Program for 2008-09

Introduction

In the mid-1990's, a strong regional consensus emerged which indicated that the Capital District'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. This regional consensus is reflected as policy in the Capital District Transportation Committee's official regional transportation plan *New Visions*. The Community and Transportation Linkage Planning Program (referred to as the Linkage Program) is designed to fulfill the adopted principles and strategies in *New Visions* by providing assistance to communities undertaking local planning initiatives that integrate land use and transportation.

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 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. The Linkage Program is intended to convert the promise of sound land use planning into reality. The relevant policy principles behind the program are to **link transportation and land use** and to **plan and build for all modes**.

Program Strategies

CDTC is encouraging potential sponsors to integrate sound planning principles that consider both land use and transportation issues in their submissions. To assist potential sponsors for 2008-09, CDTC has developed seven broad strategies for the Linkage Program that are consistent with the adopted *New Visions* principles as well as other initiatives such as the New York State Quality Communities initiative 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;
- 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.

Additional priority will be given to submissions that represent inter-municipal efforts. For non-inter-municipal efforts, additional priority will be given to submissions that demonstrate a local

commitment to the study (as represented by the commitment of in-kind staff services, an overmatch of local funds or complementary local activities). Funding priority will be determined through the use of study selection criteria as outlined below.

Eligible Initiatives

Eligible initiatives include those that are related to the Linkage Program strategies. 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. Linkage studies that best exemplify the program strategies are:

- **Halfmoon Center Master Plan:** Consultant study to develop the concept of a mixed-use “Town Center” and a connector road system as identified in the Town of Halfmoon’s Draft Comprehensive Plan. Plan elements include mixed use development, higher density development, opportunities to increase non-vehicular travel and opportunities to improve vehicular access through the study area.
- **Freemans Bridge Road/Dutch Meadows Master Plan:** Consultant study to develop a comprehensive land use plan, design strategy, and transportation and open space plan for the Freemans Bridge Road area in the Town of Glenville. Plan elements include the integration of intermodal transportation and land use options, the creation of public open space and parks, an assessment of current infrastructure and urban design guidelines.
- **Rensselaer Route 20 Corridor Study:** Consultant study to develop a comprehensive land use and transportation corridor plan for the Route 20 corridor in the City of Rensselaer. Plan elements include urban revitalization, development of an integrated multi-modal transportation system, land use recommendations including potential zoning changes and opportunities for traffic calming.
- **Village of Colonie Streetscape Guidelines & Architectural Design Standards:** Consultant study to develop streetscape guidelines and architectural design standards for the Village. Study activities include 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.

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

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

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 over \$100,000).
- 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 to support the Linkage Program from April 2008 through March 2009 in its upcoming 2008-10 Unified Planning Work Program. **That means that the funds for the 2008-09 Linkage Program will not be available for use until after April 1, 2008.**

Of the \$200,000, \$50,000 will be reserved for submissions that represent inter-municipal efforts. An inter-municipal effort is defined as the joint effort of two or more municipalities to address a common issue. Only high quality submissions (those that incorporate a large number of the program strategies) will be considered for these reserved funds. In the event that the reserved \$50,000 can not be used in its entirety for such efforts, the remaining reserved funds will be made available for other study types.

In addition, CDTC will reserve \$92,000 in transit planning funds for studies that specifically link land use planning with transit development (this is beyond the \$100,000 in CDTC staff time and \$200,000 in consultant budget authority described above for the program).

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 a \$65,000 consultant study is intended, the applicant must provide \$16,250 in cash to match \$48,750 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 study 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 size for requests is \$50,000 (that is the federal share excluding the required 25% local cash match) for consultant efforts and \$10,000 for CDTC staff efforts. 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.**

Study Selection

The Linkage Program submission process is competitive. CDTC and CDRPC (Capital District Regional Planning Commission) staff will evaluate the submissions. CDTC's Planning Committee will be provided with the evaluation results and a funding recommendation at its November 2007 meeting. Once approved by the Planning Committee, CDTC's Policy Board will take action on the recommended package of studies in December for incorporation into the 2008-10 Unified Planning Work Program. The likelihood of a study receiving funds will not be known until submissions have been received and evaluated. The evaluation will be based on the following criteria:

1. Is there a demonstrated need for the study? (mandatory)
2. Is the submission complete and does it meet all program requirements as listed in this program summary? (mandatory)
3. For past sponsors of Linkage studies: was the sponsor's performance and follow-up adequate and appropriate? (mandatory)
4. How many of the seven program strategies are incorporated in the submission? (This criterion will receive the greatest weight and will be used as a screening tool when considering the quality of proposed efforts.)
5. Does the submission represent an inter-municipal effort? An inter-municipal effort is defined as the joint effort of two or more municipalities to address a common issue (Inter-municipal efforts will receive a higher priority if they are of high quality as determined in criterion number four.)
6. 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)

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 those that represent inter-municipal efforts under criterion five. Additional priority will also be given to inter-municipal and non inter-municipal efforts that demonstrate a local commitment to the study as described under criterion six.** 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.

Please note that \$50,000 of consultant budget authority has been reserved for inter-municipal efforts. Only high quality submissions (those that incorporate a large number of the program strategies) will be considered for these reserved funds. In the event that the reserved \$50,000 can not be used in its entirety for such efforts, the remaining reserved funds will be made available for other study types.

Application Instructions

The formal application should be approximately three pages in length and can be provided in the form of a letter. Only one copy is 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, September 28, 2007. Incomplete submissions will not be considered for funding. The following 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.
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 as described in this program summary. The discussion should provide an indication as to how the project would advance local community planning goals and initiatives as well as being supportive of regional principles and policies. Inter-municipal efforts should be noted, if applicable.
5. Estimated cost of the study including a clear break down of study costs by federal funds requested (maximum of \$50,000 excluding the local cash match) and local cash match commitment (minimum of 25% of the total study cost). In addition, any requested CDTC staff assistance and any additional local commitment beyond the required local cash match should be noted.
6. 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.

7. Provide evidence as to the availability of the local cash match (i.e. letter of intent).
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 Policy Board in December 2007, all project sponsors will be notified in writing as to the status of their submissions by January 15, 2008. In March 2008, those 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, 2008. 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, 2008 (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 has developed an abbreviated approach to consultant selection for the 2008-09 Linkage Program. 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.

State Environmental Quality Review (SEQR)

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 may be considered comprehensive in nature and therefore may be subject to SEQR. SEQR procedures are the responsibility of study sponsors if formal action, perhaps in the form of adoption, is undertaken by the municipality.

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

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