

Planning Committee Report on 2007-12 TIP Discussions

Background

At its June 7, 2007 meeting, the CDTC Policy Board deferred action on the Planning Committee's recommended draft 2007-12 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The Planning Committee was asked to resume discussion on the draft TIP to see if a consensus recommendation is possible that addresses:

1. NYSDOT Region 1's reservations (based on the eight-county Region 1 fiscal constraint issues) over listing three HBRR bridge projects (A 431, A467, SA220) and two NHS pavement projects (R254, S177) in the first three years of the TIP; and,
2. Resolution of NYSDOT's proposal to reflect the State Finance Plan's use of "advance construction" funds to cover shortfalls of State Dedicated Fund (SDF) projects with federal-aid. The key projects for which federal-aid was sought by NYSDOT are:
 - 1) NY 5 (Central Avenue) from Fuller Road to Wolf Road and Woolard Avenue to NY 155 (New Karner Road) Resurfacing. The project includes milling and \$1M of intersection work at each of the NY 5/Fuller Road and NY 5/NY 155 intersections. Only the construction phase was requested, making the cost on the TIP about \$7.4M.
 - 2) NY 2 from the Brunswick Town Line to the Grafton State Park, Resurfacing. Only the construction phase was requested, making the cost on the TIP about \$5.4M.

Process and Outcome

The Planning Committee met on June 15 and June 27 to address the Policy Board's request. Considerable attention was paid to the fact that the SDF-to-STP switch amounts to programming highly-desirable Surface Transportation Program (STP) funds to new federal-aid projects without a system-wide solicitation and competitive evaluation. This is in direct conflict with one of CDTC's adopted principles, recently reaffirmed in the draft New Visions 2030 action, that states that access to funds will be based on function and need and not ownership.

Options discussed included undertaking a full solicitation, exploring the potential to use the advance construction funds to support existing TIP projects, and other approaches.

At the June 15 meeting, the staff was directed to evaluate the proposed SDF-to-STP projects in the same manner that they would be evaluated in a general solicitation. Full fact sheets were prepared and overall merit results were shared with the Planning Committee along with reference values for successful and unsuccessful project submissions from broader solicitations in 2003

and 2005. Additionally, NYSDOT Region 1, CDTC, CDTA, Town of Colonie and Village of Colonie staff met June 22 to explore scope options and the relationship of the Central Avenue project to regional and local plans.

The Central Avenue project scored very well in the quantitative analysis, but the scope offers little opportunity to implement features from the NY 5 Land Use and Transportation Plan, BRT Plan, Village of Colonie Streetscape Plan, and Town of Colonie Comprehensive Plan. These features were required of the City of Albany in its Central Avenue project and are generally expected in federal-aid projects on NY 5.

The NY 2 project scored more modestly, as expected for a rural project.

Further discussion of the two projects took place at the Planning Committee meeting of June 27. Scope and process options were explored further and the projects' merit was examined relative to past project candidates.

After discussion, the Planning Committee took action to recommend Policy Board adoption of the draft 2007-12 TIP, incorporating the following recommendations developed as directed by the Policy Board.

- 1) The two NHS and three HBRR projects are recommended to remain in the first three years of the 2007-12 TIP as previously recommended by the Planning Committee. It is CDTC's understanding that Region 1 is being provided some relief in its eight-county fiscal constraint to allow this.
- 2) The two SDF-to-STP (and one SDF-to-HBRR) projects proposed by NYSDOT Region 1 for use of advance construction funds are recommended for addition to the draft 2007-12 TIP as requested by NYSDOT. It is the intent of CDTC that this be the final occurrence of federal funding being made available solely for the projects of one sponsor. The first time this was done was for the NY 7 Reconstruction/Resurfacing project in Schenectady (S172) in June 2004.
- 3) It is recommended that CDTC submit its strong concerns on the conflict between CDTC's principles and New York State's use of advance construction funding to cover shortfalls in SDF funding for state projects. The subsequent problems associated with this use of advance construction were substantial for CDTC as an institution and NYSDOT Region 1 as a key participant.

Additionally, the Central Avenue project was approved with the following understandings:

- 1) A steering committee will be appointed that will have input into the project design.

- 2) NYSDOT will try to accommodate some New Visions/ NY5 Land Use and Transportation Plan / BRT / Village streetscape design features between curbs. The project will not be re-scoped, but consideration will be given to these features.
- 3) A second phase of this project can be introduced as a project candidate (without prejudicial status) at the next project solicitation. The second phase could be for New Visions design features not incorporated into the project approved at the 2007-12 TIP Update (phase one), and would be evaluated along with phase one as one project. The costs and benefits would be combined into one project for the purpose of evaluation and consideration against other candidates.
- 4) A (\$230,000) Corridor Management Initiative project (RG 31) will be initiated to identify an access management plan for the NY 5 corridor.

With these recommended changes, the draft 2007-12 TIP is returned to the Policy Board for its consideration.