

New Visions 2030 Adoption

The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act, A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), the current federal transportation legislation, includes additional planning requirements for MPOs to meet. The deadline for MPOs to become compliant with the new regulations is July 1, 2007. SAFETEA-LU states that for items such as the TIP to be compliant, they must be derived from a compliant long range plan. With this, the CDTC staff and Planning Committee has been working to allow CDTC's adoption of the *New Visions 2030 Plan* to meet the SAFETEA-LU deadline.

Approach

The New Visions 2030 effort has been underway for a number of years, with continuous refinement and expansion of subject matter. Public involvement has ranged from engagement in dozens of "Linkage" studies at the local level to the recent Center for Economic Growth / SUNYA / CDTC / CDRPC work on the fiscal impact of alternative growth scenarios.

Over the past several months, the policy and fiscal aspects of the multitude of these New Visions activities have been reviewed and highlighted. One by one, the Planning Committee has examined each of over a dozen pieces and helped articulate language to represent draft regional policy on issues ranging from human service transportation coordination to "big ticket" initiatives. The recommended language is summarized in the following material for Policy Board consideration.

If acceptable to CDTC's Policy Board, these new policy commitments – which include a handful of new planning and investment principles and a new financial plan, among other items – will be posted and circulated for public comment between now and September. During the summer, CDTC staff will work with the Quality Region Task Force to look for gaps in the new material and to help develop more polished summary materials. At its September Policy Board meeting, CDTC would then be asked to either adopt New Visions 2030, extend the public comment period, or both. The type of action would be dictated both by public comment received and by the work carried out with the Quality Region Task Force over the summer. The new plan will fully reflect the new planning requirements of SAFETEA-LU and ensure CDTC's full compliance with federal law. (According to CDTC's practice, the air quality conformity determination for the draft 2007-12 TIP and New Visions 2030 have been performed jointly.)

Substance

Review of the subject summaries is encouraged prior to Policy Board action. Each summary derives from a thorough exploration of the subject; complete reports are available on CDTC's web site by clicking on the "Policy Board" link on CDTC's home page.

It is important to note that New Visions 2030 adoption reflects a significant milestone along a long path. The bulk of the underlying philosophy was first fully articulated in the original New Visions plan in 1997. Since that time, CDTC and its members have been seriously engaged in implementing and refining the plan. In contrast to many other metro areas, the Capital District's physical landscape increasingly reflects the regional planning philosophy. CDTC's TIP reflects the plan and joint land use – transportation plans have been developed in nearly 30 municipalities since the original New Visions adoption.

The new plan broadens the scope and deepens the treatment of many issues. The incorporation of alternative growth and development scenarios into the plan has few parallels in the nation. The consideration of “big ticket” initiatives carefully frames a simultaneously cautious and creative policy framework to ensure that the Capital District maintains vision during periods of financial constraint.

New official principles for the region are articulated for critical issues of safety, security and community context; consideration of roundabouts; tradeoffs between capacity and other project considerations; and a commitment to “managing” any new capacity considered on the expressway system. These, like the existing planning and investment principles, will not only keep transportation decisions in the Capital District focused on collective goals but will also serve as model statements for consideration elsewhere.

Adoption of the plan – after further public review – will officially end one chapter and initiate a new one in the New Visions saga. New work is called for in the plan. Not the least of the next steps is joint effort at all levels of government to ensure that the modest, steady growth in real resources required by the plan is a reality.