

## Summary of CDTC/CDRPC Tasks and Potential Opportunities for Enhancing Local Planning

CDTC and CDRPC offer Capital District municipalities a wide range of technical assistance opportunities and a number of resources that can be used to enhance local planning and project development activities. All of the CDTC/CDRPC activities that are funded using federal planning funds are included in the annual Unified Planning Work Program produced by CDTC. However, local governments (especially those that lack direct involvement with these agencies) may be unaware of some of the resources available to them. Many may also be unaware of the *New Visions* principles CDTC follows on a daily basis. To assist Group E, many of most relevant policies and practices that could enhance local planning are summarized below for both CDTC and CDRPC and are followed by opportunities for enhancing local planning.

### Existing Data Sources:

- 1) **Census Data:** As a data affiliate for the U.S. Census Bureau, CDRPC provides public access to all the available local and regional data collected by the Census Bureau. Data on population, demographics, employment, businesses and the economy are posted on the CDRPC web site ([www.cdrpc.org](http://www.cdrpc.org)), and are made available for review at the CDRPC office. Special regional and local data tabulations are performed on request. In addition, population projections are calculated and made available to assist local planning efforts.

**Opportunity?** CDRPC already provides much of their data on-line. Is there more that could be done?

- 2) **Community Compatibility Measures.** Traditional focus on delay and level-of-service (LOS) is balanced by CDTC's use of comparable measures for community compatibility. "Level of compatibility" measures ranging from A to F are used at the system level and at the TIP project development level to elevate the importance of reducing conflict between residential land use and through traffic, and between commercial access and through traffic.

**Opportunity?** The community compatibility measures could be more broadly used by all units of local government. The data collected does not reflect every Capital District roadway but does reflect a representative sample of roadways with various land use types throughout the region.

- 3) **Safety Data.** CDTC staff employs GIS-based crash histories to produce or approximate project-level safety benefit calculations of all TIP candidate projects as part of a merit evaluation.

**Opportunity?** Although primarily used for TIP project evaluation and some project development work, the safety data could be an invaluable resource for planning at the local level. CDTC has crash data for both the numeric state routes and the entire local road network over an eight year period (1994 through 2001 for the local data, 1990 through 2001 for the state data). As part of *New Visions*, a safety management system for the local roadways was to be developed as part of the Unified Planning Work Program. Due to delays in obtaining crash data from NYSDOT and the NYS Department of Motor Vehicles (note that the most recent data is three years old), this effort has never been fully pursued. CDTC staff has begun to summarize the crash data for various crash types including those involving bicycles and pedestrians. CDTC staff could complete the review of crash data for the available years to be used by those at the local level in planning exercises.

- 4) **Priority Networks.** The plan defines priority networks for freight, transit, bicycle-pedestrian and ITS actions. CDTC's TIP project evaluation procedures include filtering candidates both by overall merit and priority network status. Funded projects are thus not only good projects, but important contributions to implementation of the plan.

**Opportunity?** The priority networks have largely been documented in GIS maps. Perhaps this package should be provided to local communities for use in their planning activities as well as for documentation in their comprehensive plans whenever possible.

- 5) **Social Equity and Environmental Justice.** CDTC reviews its activities to ensure that there is adequate access to the process from all population groups and geographic areas; that the outcome of the process is equitable; and that impacts of plans and programs are fairly distributed. As a result of this attention, a 2004 report found that 65% of bicycle and pedestrian improvements, 54% of highway and bridge rehab and streetscape projects, and 83% of transportation – land use compatibility planning efforts serve identified areas of low income and minority population. Further, the single large transit corridor improvement project in the plan and TIP is located along an urban corridor with a 25% transit-dependent population.

**Opportunity?** This reference material should be packaged and provided to each municipality for its use. (The material is largely already packaged, it just needs to be distributed or uploaded onto CDTC's website.)

- 6) **Time-Series Measurement of Public Attitudes.** CDTC contracts with the University at Albany for an annual survey of public perceptions of highway quality, transit quality, exposure and impact of congestion on location and travel decisions, the effect of transit accessibility on location and travel decisions and other factors. Attitudes are assessed for trends, internal correlations and correlations with objective performance indicators.

**Opportunity?** This material is summarized and available for use by the local communities. It should be made available on-line for their use.

- 7) **Traffic Volume Report and Intersection Specific Data.** CDTC staff maintains a traffic volume report of all state, county and local roads functionally classified as collector or higher. The report is updated bi-annually. CDTC staff has also collected detailed intersection configuration, turn movement and signal cycle details for the 400 busiest intersections in the region with much of the data collected 15 years ago. Capacity and delay analyses for these intersections identified both operational and capital actions to address delay. The analyses also fed the calibration of sensitive intersection modeling at the regional level. In recent years, staff has updated data and expanded the data set to include pedestrian accommodations and usage.

**Opportunity?** Some local communities know CDTC collects and maintains traffic volume data but many do not. Further, some local communities collect their own data, including the counties, which could be shared with CDTC. Communities that collect data for themselves could annually and automatically transfer their data to CDTC for use in the report. The intersection volume inventory should be updated and requests from local communities to gather such data should be honored. The pedestrian friendliness inventory, although subjective, should also be further documented and analyzed to assist local planners in their design of pedestrian facilities.

- 8) **Locally Determined Trip Generation Rates.** CDTC has collected extensive field information on site-based trip generation rates to permit a significant refinement in site impact assessment from the use of nationwide averages.

**Opportunity?** CDTC is currently summarizing the existing trip generation data inventory into one document for use by those at the local level.

- 9) **Modeling of Bicycle Facility Market Strength.** The regional traffic model has been modified to produce a version that estimates the relative bicycling demand for candidate bicycle accommodation projects.

**Opportunity?** Although developed for use in the TIP evaluation process, is there an application for using such a model at the local level as bicycle/pedestrian networks are planned? It would seem that if the model can tell planners something about the potential market for switching travelers from auto to bicycle and pedestrian modes that this information could be valuable for planning activities.

**10) Pavement Condition Measurement.** CDTC staff has regularly assessed pavement conditions on the federal-aid system (every two years) and across the locally-classified roads and streets (every four years). Pavement condition trends are a consideration in plan and TIP development; pavement inventory information is used in TIP candidate merit analysis.

**Opportunity?** Pavement condition ratings were once summarized into a document for those at the local level. In recent years, this practice has ceased. CDTC staff should continue to maintain an easy reference to pavement condition data for use by those at the local level.

**11) Functional Classification Data.** CDTC staff works with NYSDOT and others to update the functional classification system for regional roadways. This information is a critical component to the evaluation of candidate TIP projects.

**Opportunity?** This information should also be made available to those at the local level.

**12) Geographic Information System (GIS):** CDRPC has developed a robust GIS system that is utilized to perform local and regional spatial analysis and mapping. Data and maps are made available to local governments and special analysis/maps can be created on request. CDTC's GIS system complements the CDRPC system by focusing on more transportation related mapping such as for crash data and bicycle maps.

**Opportunity?** Could local communities request on-call assistance for GIS data or mapping activities? Could current efforts be expanded? CDRPC is already doing this.

#### **Staff Technical Assistance:**

**1) Quality Region Initiative:** CDRPC, in partnership with CDTC, has analyzed and documented regional land use patterns and trends and has developed a series of public presentations on these topics. Numerous presentations have been made to local and regional groups in an effort to educate public officials and residents about land use issues and sustainable development.

**Opportunity?** CDRPC staff could partner with CDTC staff in assisting local governments with planning activities, particularly in the development and implementation of local linkage plans and projects.

**2) Inclusion of local land use planning support as a financial element of the long-range plan and the TIP.** Improved local planning and decision-making is identified as a critical element of the plan and is relied upon for significant dampening of trends in traffic growth. Planning support is one of seventeen explicit budget elements of the long-range transportation plan. As part of its evaluation criteria, CDTC considered whether or not a local land use plan has been developed, particularly for projects involving capacity expansions.

**Opportunity?** CDTC has provided significant planning assistance through its Linkage program and through other corridor initiatives. The opportunity could be in further expanding the Linkage program to encompass an even larger percentage of federal planning funds or using some planning money to set up an on-call service for both CDTC and CDRPC staff to respond to specific questions from those at the local level. Is there also an opportunity to further involve CDRPC staff in developing the scope of work for each project and for inclusion on study advisory committees? Can the language relating local land use planning to TIP projects be strengthened?

**3) Funding for land use planning:** Approximately 30 – 40% of CDTC's FHWA PL funding is devoted to local land use planning and transportation integration. Over four years, 36 projects totaling \$1.6 M have been advanced in 23 separate municipalities.

**Opportunity?** This specifically refers to the Linkage program. Aside from additional financial resources, the program could be further enhanced by creating a guidebook for project sponsors that clearly articulates the goals and objectives, evaluation criteria and the New Visions principles to be considered when developing a planning activity. Should CDTC and CDRPC staff consider developing a workshop for potential linkage program sponsors either before or after projects are selected for funding. Can the urban service area be utilized to dedicate some portion of the money for studies within those areas?

- 4) **Economic Development:** CDRPC is responsible for developing and maintaining a continuing planning process for regional economic development pursuant to federal guidelines set forth by the Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration. As part of its economic development functions, CDRPC maintains regional economic databases, performs economic analysis studies, administers the federal Foreign Trade Zone program, provides federal EDA grants to local qualifying projects, and assists with federal EDA grant applications.

**Opportunity?** Is this known to the local communities and can these efforts be further enhanced?

- 5) **Water Quality Planning:** CDRPC develops local and regional water quality plans as part of its "604b" water quality grant program, which is a federal EPA program administered by the NYS DEC. As part of this program, CDRPC also provides technical assistance to local governments in planning and implementing local water initiatives, particularly the "MS4" stormwater pollution prevention plans required under the federal Clean Water Act.

**Opportunity?** Is this known to the local communities and can these efforts be further enhanced?

- 6) **Site impact assessment contractual arrangement:** CDTC staff provides site impact review assistance on request to municipalities; in one town, an ongoing contractual relationship gives the CDTC staff responsibility to review proposals and identify appropriate mitigation fees. (The town of Colonie has a contractual arrangement with CDTC staff to participate in the assessment of mitigation fees through site reviews within the Airport Area and Lisha Kill Area GEIS study areas. Mitigation fees are assessed on a direct impact basis, not on a dollars/square foot basis.)

**Opportunity?** Additional on-call assistance could be created through the Linkage program or through the use of additional planning resources. The contractual opportunity could also be made available to other municipalities in the region and could also incorporate CDRPC's efforts.

- 7) **A "spot" improvement program for bike/ped actions, using federal funds.** To implement recommendations of its plan, CDTC has established an ongoing spot improvement program to fund small, cost-effective actions to improve bicyclist or pedestrian safety and convenience. With the cooperation of the state DOT in streamlining the federal aid process, the program has funded 19 projects totaling \$600,000 in two rounds; a third round of projects will be defined in 2004.

**Opportunity?** This is one of the few funding opportunities available for small scale projects in the TIP. Could this be expanded to include other categories of projects under different names than just the SPOT improvement projects? Can a dedicated source of funds from the TIP for smart growth projects be defined? (This could be as simple as renaming the community compatibility/economic development category as smart growth projects).

- 8) **Education and Outreach (CDTC).** The MPO staff hosts regular internet and conference-call based professional development seminars sponsored by the American Planning Association and other groups. A typical two-hour real-time planning workshop will draw 15 or more local planners, far exceeding the exposure likely through a formal multi-day training program. The MPO has also facilitated numerous audits of bicycle and pedestrian accommodations in local communities and developed training materials in access management.

**Opportunity?** CDTC has worked with the CDRPC, the Capital District Planners Association and others on professional development activities. This relationship should continue and expand to include some other aspects of professional development and training to local governments included in the New Visions plan. These include local training for arterial management (including the creation of a reference guide or even design guidelines), bike/ped accommodation (formerly pedestrian roadshows, this could be repackaged into a different training program) and traffic calming (could be included in the other two).

- 9) **Education and Outreach (CDRPC):** CDRPC, in partnership with the NYS Department of State, sponsors daylong local government planning workshops on a biannual basis. The workshops are geared toward planning boards, zoning boards, and local elected officials, and cover such topics as the duties and responsibilities of planning boards, the duties and responsibilities of ZBAs, local government land use statutes and case law, SEQR, open meetings law, water quality planning, smart growth, and numerous other contemporary planning topics.

**Opportunity?** CDRPC's workshops with the NYS DOS have been very successful. Is there an opportunity to conduct such workshops more frequently, in partnership with the MPO or with a specific focus on transportation/land use issues?

- 10) Site impact analysis and review handbook.** For many years until 2001, CDTC carried the development of this handbook as one of its planning activities in the Unified Planning Work Program. It was deferred indefinitely in 2001 to allow for other planning initiatives to move forward.

**Opportunity?** The production of this handbook has been delayed for many years. Through the work of Group E in the New Visions 2030 update, this task should probably be revived as a joint CDTC/CDRPC activity.

- 11) NYSDOT Region 1 reference materials.** Materials should be developed by NYSDOT and CDTC staff for use by local governments in the facility design process. These materials should consider all modes in facility design and provide guidance on the best practices. Bike design guidelines have been established by CDTC and the same should be done for the remainder of the system.

**Opportunity?** Although these materials have not yet been developed, there is growing regional experience in innovative roadway designs such as the raised medians on US 9 in Saratoga Springs, the Voorheesville roundabout and the complete redesign of the Albany Shaker Road area. The need for further analysis of these projects and guidance as to whether or not they could be pursued on other Capital District roadways remains to be seen. The statewide integrated design initiative should start CDTC in the right direction. CDTC staff will likely be updating its arterial management guidelines at some point in the future. The current guidelines should be made available to local communities.

- 12) Joint efforts on demand management pilot programs.** Travel demand management is a central element of the plan, and appears as one of the 17 budget categories in the plan. Numerous TDM initiatives have been jointly administered by the MPO staff and the transit authority, including a web-based carpool matching program, free transfers between public and private transit services, guaranteed ride home program for transit users and carpoolers, a cash subsidy for transit passes through public employee unions, a cash subsidy toward public or private transit services as part of a state agency relocation and a six-month cash subsidy toward public or private transit services to encourage downtown employers to establish commuter programs.

**Opportunity?** Would local governments have an interest in or would be willing to pursue transportation demand management activities? These could greatly enhance regional travel.

**Principles encouraged for use at the local level:**

- 1) Congestion management principles:** CDTC follows adopted Congestion Management System principles that insist upon demand management prior to consideration of highway capacity projects, and insist upon local land use management agreements as a pre-requisite to capacity work.

**Opportunity?** These principles should be part of the standard package of items for consideration in the Linkage program projects and through project development. The principles should be common knowledge to local communities as they pursue their planning work.

- 2) Public-private highway financing policies:** CDTC maintains a strong policy that differentiates public responsibility from private responsibility for highway plans that mitigate and accommodate local development. Between 1990 and 2010, total mitigation fees assessed in the rapidly-growing area around the region's airport will total \$15 million as part of a public-private highway, transit and travel demand management (TDM) plan.

**Opportunity?** Summarize and further describe the mitigation fee process used by the Town of Colonie as a model for what other communities can do. (The town of Colonie has a contractual arrangement with CDTC staff to participate in the assessment of mitigation fees through site

reviews within the Airport Area and Lisha Kill Area GEIS study areas. Mitigation fees are assessed on a direct impact basis, not on a dollars/square foot basis.)

- 3) **Priority treatment of urban revitalization needs.** Revitalization of existing urban areas is critical to achieve the desired outcome of the regional transportation plan. One of the 17 budget categories in the plan is “economic development / community compatibility”. This set of resources and the jurisdiction-blind funding policies (related to the ownership of the roadway) have steered considerable resources to reconstructing and redesigning urban streets explicitly to facilitate economic revival.

**Opportunity?** Further enhance this priority treatment of urban projects in the TIP process. Consider renaming these projects as smart growth or quality community type projects. Find a way to more carefully integrate CDTC staff into the project development process so that they can confirm that New Visions principles are being considered in project design.

- 4) **Support for risk assessment or tradeoff analysis in project design.** State DOT design processes generally direct designers to provide adequate LOS through the design year whenever feasible. CDTC has adopted a principle urging a common sense tradeoff analysis whenever capacity additions are considered in the context of an infrastructure replacement project. This principle recognizes funding limitations and the relatively low regional priority for building capacity today for congestion that is not anticipated to appear for ten or twenty years.

**Opportunity?** Continue to educate local communities on this principle and the impact that local decisions can have on the entire system.

- 5) **Supplemental support for bike and pedestrian projects.** Supplemental bicyclist and pedestrian investments are one of the 17 budget categories in the plan. In addition to a spot improvement program, the MPO’s initiatives have included TIP funding for bike/ped projects (at a scale roughly double that funded separately through the “Enhancement” program) and a local second-chance Enhancement program, that funded additional projects not selected in the statewide competition.

**Opportunity?** Creatively link the outcome of Linkage planning studies to funding opportunities such as this.