Community Planner Forum

April 22, 2020 Meeting Notes

Attendance:

Lauren Alpert, City of Albany
Chris Bauer, CDTC
Lindsay Buck, Town of Stillwater
Tina Carton, City of Saratoga Springs
Mark Castiglione, CDRPC
Melissa Cherubino, Town of Glenville
Peter Comenzo, Town of Rotterdam
Kristin Diotte, City of Schenectady
Tara Donadio, CDRPC
Avi Epstein, City of Schenectady
Todd Fabozzi, CDRPC
Ross Farrell, CDTA
Floria Huizinga, Town of Malta
Brent Irving, CDTA
Liz Kormos, Village of Ballston Spa
Kate Maynard, CDRPC
Randy Milano, City of Albany

Sandy Misiewicz, CDTC
Chris O'Neill, CDTC
Jamie O'Neill, Town of Malta
Ryan Riper, Town of Wilton
Joanne Ryan, NYSDOS
John Scavo, Town of Clifton Park
Joe Seman-Graves, City of Cohoes
Rima Shamieh, CDTC
Matt Smith, City of Schenectady
Jordan Solano-Reed, CDTC
Chris Spencer, City of Albany
Mark Surdam, Town of Hoosick
Mike Valentine, Saratoga County
Jen Viggiani, Town of Clifton Park
Monique Wahba, Town of Colonie
Mike Williams, CDTA
Adam Yagelski, Town of East Greenbush

1. Welcome and Introductions

2. New York Stretch Energy Code

Tara Donadio, Capital District Regional Planning Commission (CDRPC) Sustainability Planner, presented the 2020 New York Stretch Energy Code. Per article 11 of the New York State energy law, jurisdictions are able to adopt a local energy code that's more efficient than the state's baseline energy code. New York Stretch Code requirements relate to the building envelope, lighting/electrical infrastructure and renewable and electric vehicle readiness. The Stretch Code is 11% more efficient than the baseline energy code.

Community benefits of the Stretch Code include saving energy and money for residents and business owners, creating green jobs, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, reducing reliance on fossil fuels, increasing community attractiveness and supporting state climate goals. The Code applies to major renovation projects as well as new construction. New York City and the City of Beacon have recently adopted NY Stretch Codes. NYSERDA's website provides resources on the Code including Stretch Code language, template legislation and resolutions, data, etc. Communities can reach out to Mike DeWein from North Branch Services with questions and he is available to speak to code enforcement officers and community leaders.

Chris Spencer from the City of Albany corrected information in the presentation by stating that the City is not looking to adopt New York Stretch at this time but the City's Sustainability Advisory Committee is discussing it. The City would like to first see what the additional development cost might be and then make it optional rather than mandatory. Tina Carton asked if NYSERDA had studies on the potential for additional development costs. Tara noted that studies are available on the NYSERDA website at www.nyserda.ny.gov/All-Programs/Programs/Energy-Code-Training/NYStretch-Energy-Code-2020

3. CDTC New Visions 2050 Regional Transportation Plan – Draft for Public Review

Sandy Misiewicz presented CDTC's Draft Regional Transportation Plan available for public review. Called New Visions 2050, the plan takes a long range view of regional transportation and development issues to identify strategies, policies and projects that can create the transportation system the region wants. The plan provides information on planning practices that create desired development patterns and helps guide CDTC's programming of federal transportation dollars for capital projects.

The Executive Summary is the core of the plan and is supported by a System Performance Report, Public Participation Plan, eleven technical area white papers and a Financial Plan. New Visions advances the concept of a quality region which considers health, the economy and the environment in an overall framework of land-use planning and multi-modal transportation policies. The plan is responsive to urban, suburban and rural community needs, encourages concentrated development patterns and smart economic growth, links transportation planning with land-use planning, improves quality of life and protects the environment.

New Visions is also flexible given uncertainty with technology, the role that automated vehicles might play in the future, societal changes, cultural changes and currently the pandemic. Recent data show a clear decline in traffic and transit use when New York went on Pause in mid-March. The pandemic illustrates how difficult it is to plan even in the short term, supporting the need to position the plan to be responsive to a range of potential future scenarios. .

CDTC staff is available to present the plan virtually to local government boards, community groups and anyone else who might be interested. For additional information visit the New Visions 2050 webpage at www.cdtcmpo.org/nv2050.

The group discussion following the presentation covered a range of topics including the potential of telecommuting and virtual meetings to reduce traffic, reduce greenhouse gases and reduce the cost of transportation. The impact of the pandemic on concentrated development patterns and density, the use of streets including additional walking, biking and delivery activity, and curb management were also discussed.

4. Public Meetings and COVID-19

The lack of in-person public meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic was discussed. Town board and City Council meetings, planning and zoning board meetings, and numerous other meetings have been postponed or held virtually. The group discussed the pros and cons of virtual meetings as well as what's working and what isn't working. One of the main challenges is maintaining control of the meeting. The use of webinar, pre-registration or other measures are essential to avoiding inappropriate disruptions.

For some local governments, using virtual tools has been a bit of a learning curve. Information for local governments is available from CDRPC on how to host a remote public meeting. Additional resources are available from CDRPC at https://cdrpc.org/capital-region-coronavirus-update-regional-resources. CDTC also has COVID resources specific to transportation available at www.cdtcmpo.org/covid19.

5. Planning Updates

CDTC's Linkage Program is turning 20 and to celebrate, CDTC's newsletter is running a series highlighting the past, present and future of the program and the many completed community plans. Three new Linkage plans were funded for the 2020-2021 fiscal year:

1) Village of Scotia Downtown Connections Plan

2) Village of Ballston Spa Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan and Linkage Study

3) Village of Menands Land Use Regulations Update

Open CDTC solicitations:

1) Community Planning Technical Assistance Program in partnership with CDRPC. The submission deadline was extended to May 1st due to the pandemic.

2) ADA transition plan funding. Applications are due on June 15th.

3) Complete Streets Workshop Series is accepting applications through June 19th from communities to further develop community complete street programs and policies.

Additional Community Resources

1) Capital Region Indicators provides access to a variety of Census and community data.

2) May is National Bike Month and CDTC is holding a Pledge to Ride event between May 1st and June 5th. The Bike to Work day event will be held in the fall.

3) The Municipal Smart City Street Light Conversion and Evolving Technology Guidebook is now available.

4) A Directory of Transportation Options for Senior Adults is now available.

5) Rensselaer, Saratoga and Schenectady counties are eligible to apply for Northern Border Regional Commission funding. Contact CDRPC for more information.

6. Training and Workshops

1) CDTC's Bicycle and Pedestrian Webinar Series

2) CDRPC's Spring Workshop was postponed and converted to an online webinar series.

3) NY Upstate Chapter of the American Planning Association webinar sessions.

7. Next Meeting

Thursday, June 18th at 9:30 a.m.