New Visions 2050
Infrastructure White Paper

Summary

The Capital District’s transportation system is comprised of critically important highways and bridges, along with intermodal and multimodal facilities including ports, airports, railways, sidewalks, and trails. This infrastructure is the essential substrate of the regional economy and maintaining it in a condition of good repair is vital for New York State and the Capital District to remain economically competitive in the future.

Much of the region's highway and bridge infrastructure was constructed during a period of build-out in the mid-20th century. During this period, federal spending on infrastructure as a percentage of total federal spending was twice what it is today. Highways and bridges built during this period will soon reach (or already have reached) the end of their intended service life. Preservation and repair projects may extend the usable life of these assets, but ultimately each must be replaced – or the region will lose a key link in its transportation network.

The principle of preserving and managing the region’s transportation system continues to be CDTC’s highest stated priority. CDTC’s investment strategies indicate that preservation has higher priority than investment in expanded capacity and has the first claim on available resources.

Infrastructure Planning and Investment Principal:

Infrastructure – Transportation funding must be sufficient to both repair and sometimes replace our highway, bridge, and transit infrastructure. New Visions has made a strong commitment to keeping the region’s transportation system functioning and in good condition. CDTC remains committed to the maintenance, repair, and renewal of the existing passenger and freight transportation facilities in a cost-effective manner that protects and enhances rideability, public safety, accessibility, and serviceability.

Currently the needs for repairing/reconstructing bridges and pavement, and investing in transit and port facilities outweigh available resources. Renewing existing infrastructure in our communities is fiscally responsible and consistent with New York’s Smart Growth policy.

CDTC needs to ensure that system preservation and system renewal are balanced, and that roads and bridges in our cities and rural communities are equitably considered. Continued capital investment in the region’s transit system, port, and airport – and their connections to other surface transport – will remain a priority.

CDTC’s Approach and Strategies

CDTC recommends integrating the following strategies and future actions into the planning process to meet the regional and statewide goals for the future of transportation infrastructure.
• Devote significant TIP resources to infrastructure preservation and renewal, including continued local and State investment in routine maintenance.

• Support less costly and shorter-lasting road and bridge repairs for the foreseeable future. This maximizes the investments in pavement and bridges in the short term.

• Evaluate TIP projects according to CDTC identified merit categories. Criteria identified in the appropriate infrastructure merit category prioritize projects that propose preservation and renewal of existing infrastructure. **New Strategy**

• Encourage the use of alternative funding approaches, especially local funding mechanisms and small-scale public-private financing opportunities. In this constrained funding environment, undertaking major highway or transit initiatives must include local and private investment. The use of mitigation cost, developed through the GEIS process, can free-up public resources for more routine kinds of projects.

• Encourage technology innovation within New York State. Although it may take years to adopt new technologies and new ways of designing and building our bridges and highways, the long-term savings cannot be minimized.

• Encourage sidewalk repairs, transition plan implementation, and connecting gaps in the existing bicycle and pedestrian network before extending new bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. **New Strategy**

• Support the integration of complete street features in preservation and renewal treatments wherever possible and heavily consider community context regardless of facility ownership.

• Support the integration of non-required ADA accessibility elements in pavement and bridge preservation and renewal treatments wherever possible.

• Support NYSDOT efforts to expand coverage of weigh-in-motion (WIM) and e-screening technologies on the State Freight Core Network. **New Strategy**

• CDTC will evaluate re-establishing both the bridge and pavement goals originally developed in 1995 relative to current needs and funding. As part of this process CDTC will re-evaluate pavement and bridge Performance Measure categories. **New Future Action**

• CDTC will evaluate resources needed to collect and maintain better data on regional costs of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure construction and maintenance. **New Future Action**

• CDTC will evaluate resources needed to collect and maintain a regional traffic signal inventory, documenting the quantity and condition of the traffic signals in the Capital District. **New Future Action**

• CDTC will evaluate the needs of emerging vehicle technologies like Automated and Electric Vehicles (AVs and EVs) and assess the impacts they might have on the physical transportation infrastructure as their total market share increases. **New Future Action**

• CDTC will evaluate scenarios to determine the most cost effective mix of preservation and renewal treatments using HCPM and other available models. We know that the region cannot continue to rely on preservation treatments to improve overall pavement and bridge conditions. More significant reconstruction strategies that result in longer useful life will be necessary in the future.