

Getting Started

This *Dialogue Guide* is meant to help meeting-in-a-box facilitators lead small groups through a discussion of the ideas and policy recommendations in the Draft New Visions 2050 Plan. Facilitators are welcome to modify the discussion guidance as necessary or appropriate for the participants they have invited to their meeting. Small groups of 6- 8 people are ideal. If there are more than 8 participants, you might consider breaking into smaller groups and assigning a facilitator to each.

Your Role as the Facilitator

- ◆ Be sure to prepare participants by pointing out [where they can find all Draft New Visions 2050 materials and Plan documents](#). Ask participants to review the [Draft New Visions 2050 Plan Summary](#) prior to the meeting.
 - ◆ Think about where your meeting will be held and how you might set it up to optimize learning and discussion.
 - Will participants be facing each other?
 - Will all participants be able to hear each other?
 - Do you need tables or extra chairs?
 - What additional meeting materials do you think your group needs? Example: extra pens, post-it notes, crayons, etc.
 - ◆ Be sure you have all the materials you need within reach (ex. Map Packet, Glossary, etc.).
 - ◆ Encourage learning and sharing by welcoming ideas and helping every participant feel a part of the process.
 - ◆ Do not answer questions or give your own opinions. Think of yourself as a “Guide on the Side” and not a “Sage on the Stage.”
 - ◆ Keep the process moving.
 - ◆ Complete the MIAB Checklist and submit to CDTC.
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Prepare for Your Meeting

- ◆ Review the materials in advance so you are familiar with them.
- ◆ Get a feel for the metaphorical journey the group will be taking by understanding the key questions and learning points along the way:
- ◆ Seeing the bigger picture: How do the New Visions policies and ideas affect the *whole* region?
- ◆ Picturing your life in the future: How will the transportation system work for you if your physical, parental, social, professional, financial, or other personal situation in life were to change? How might it change between today and 2050?
- ◆ Walking a mile in someone else's shoes: Consider the perspective of other residents of the Capital Region. Think about all the people and places in the region, where you visit daily, and how the goods and labor are able to get there each day. How does the transportation system need to work to serve the equitable and efficient movement of people and goods throughout the region, regardless of income or ability?
- ◆ Focus on what's important: The Draft New Visions 2050 goals are to build a future transportation system that is safe, resilient, accessible, equitable, and technologically-advanced.

During the Session

- ◆ **Engage the full group** – don't let one or two participants dominate the discussion. You can change the group dynamics by avoiding eye contact with the more vocal members and engaging less active participants by asking non-threatening questions like “What do you think about that?”
- ◆ **Stay focused on the question(s) asked** – maintain gentle control. If a participant wanders off topic, ask the reader to repeat the question to get them back on course.
- ◆ **Explore open-ended statements** – Some participants may be reluctant to share their ideas, encourage them to elaborate by asking questions such as “Can you tell us what you mean by that?”
- ◆ **At times, be a silent observer** – the more a facilitator talks, the less each group member can participate. Your role is to encourage members to express their views and *guide* the discussions.

Time to Facilitate

Start the Meeting

1. **Provide a brief overview** – Have participants sign-in. Briefly review why your meeting attendees are participating in this exercise and provide context. Also, explain your role as the facilitator and the ground rules you expect participants to uphold for the meeting.

Overview

“The Capital District Transportation Committee is the Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Albany-Schenectady-Troy and Saratoga Springs metropolitan areas. Their job is to program federal transportation funds for local transportation projects and develop the long range plans and initiatives that prioritize transportation projects that will create the most benefit to the Capital Region.

CDTC has released the Draft New Visions 2050 Plan for public comment. It is important to CDTC that the community has a voice in the adoption of the New Visions 2050 Plan.”

Ground Rules

- ◆ Everyone who wants to should participate, no one dominate
- ◆ One speaker at a time
- ◆ Disagree without being disagreeable
- ◆ Share your unique perspective
- ◆ Respect teach others’ thinking and value their contributions
- ◆ Articulate hidden assumptions
- ◆ Participate 100%
- ◆ There are no wrong answers
- ◆ All opinions/feedback shared and submitted to CDTC will be kept anonymous

2. **Ask for a volunteer to read aloud** – Ask for a volunteer to read the first section of the workbook, “Investing in a Quality Region.” Continue the meeting by encouraging the group to share in the reading of the workbook so everyone who wants to, has a chance to speak.
 3. **Be time-wise** – The suggested run-time for your meeting is 1.5 hours, be sure to respect your participants’ time. If you do not have 1.5 hours, adjust your meeting to fit the time available.
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Funding Poll

“One of the major products CDTC is tasked with is the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The TIP is a multi-year program of transportation projects that implements the products of the planning process described in New Visions. Programming the TIP is a careful process where CDTC reviews individual project proposals and evaluates them for their benefit and consistency with the New Visions Planning & Investment Principles. By law, the TIP is updated every four years. The most recent TIP was updated in 2019 and covers the five-year period from October 1, 2019 to September 30, 2024.

TIP projects are programmed by category (ex. bridge replacement, highway maintenance, bicycle and pedestrian, etc.). Funds are allocated or “set-aside” for different programs and the projects that rate the highest, according to CDTC’s evaluation methodology are prioritized for funding.” Generally, set-asides are allocated based on priority and need.

This funding poll exercise asks participants to spend \$100 to improve the transportation system. CDTC determines how federal transportation funds are spent through the TIP and this is an engaging tool that asks the public how they would prioritize funds. Divide your money among all the categories, choose a few categories, or invest it all in one, as long as you’re using round numbers there are no wrong answers.”

Visioning Exercise

This section includes 5 separate “visions.” These are all invented people, but the way the transportation system influences their decisions and affects their lives are realistic. These visions are tools to help participants visualize how the transportation system impacts their daily lives while also encouraging them to think about how it might impact them in the future or if their personal life were to change. The visions include descriptions of infrastructure, land uses, transportation services, and technologies that are recommended in the Draft New Visions 2050 Plan.

If time allows, discuss each vision before answering the questions related to it in the workbook. Some questions you might lead the discussion with include:

- ◆ Does this neighborhood or community already exist in the Capital Region?
 - ◆ How do you relate to his vision?
 - ◆ How would the infrastructure, land uses, transportation services, or technology highlighted in the vision change your current travel behavior?
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Planning & Investment Principles

These principles are the core of New Visions. They influence how CDTC evaluates proposed transportation projects (ex. bridge replacement, road resurfacing, trail, sidewalk, etc.). The spirit of the Planning & Investment Principles can also be found throughout all of CDTC’s planning initiatives. If your community has received a Transportation and Community Linkage grant to study transportation and/or land use, you may already be familiar with them.

Each of the principles is explained, in great detail, in each of the New Visions technical/white papers.

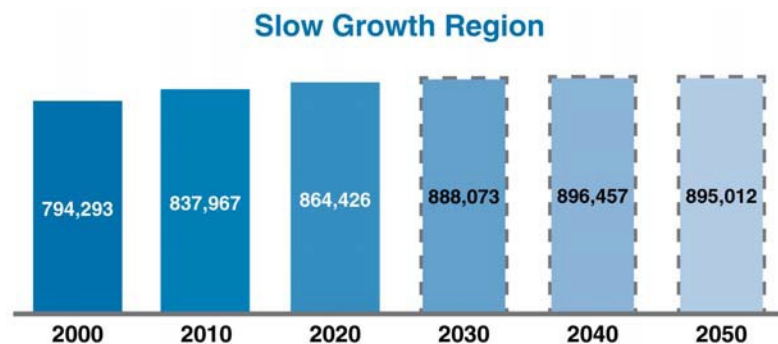
Meeting attendees should think about how these principles might be applied to the types of transportation projects and programs they feel are needed in the Capital Region to build a next generation transportation system.

Choosing Our Future

“Rapidly changing technology, an aging population, and a changing climate and economy make the future more uncertain than ever before. Given this level of uncertainty, the region will need to weigh the tradeoffs and opportunities between many conflicting and competing transportation system investments. Understanding the level of priority of each of the items, listed in the table on this page, to Capital Region residents, will help CDTC balance planning and programming.”

Some guiding facts and data points to help put things in perspective:

- ◆ While the region has experienced new development and constructed new roads, bridges, and other infrastructure, it has experienced *very little growth*.



- ◆ Multi-unit housing development is outpacing construction of new single family houses in the Capital Region (this is comparable to national trends).

- ◆ The Capital Region has: 14,289 lane-miles, over 1,000 bridges, 1,200 miles of sidewalk, 150 miles of trails, and 33 miles of bike lanes.
- ◆ Transportation is the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions (40%), the driver of climate change, compared to residential (17%), industrial (15%) and commercial (14%) sources.
- ◆ According to the National Household Transportation Survey, 80% of Capital Region residents drive alone to work and 10% walk or bike.
- ◆ 49% of all trips in region are less than 3 miles and 28% are less than 1 mile.
- ◆ Total CDTA ridership for 2019 was 15,687,239
- ◆ CDPHP Cycle! (bike share) members have taken 76,531 trips since 2017

- ◆ There are 346 publicly-accessible electric vehicle charging plugs in the region.
- ◆ 270,000 vehicles cross the Hudson River and 230,000 cross the Mohawk River daily.
- ◆ 17 miles of Bus Rapid Transit (BusPlus) have been constructed and 40 more miles are planned.
- ◆ Capital CarShare, a nonprofit carsharing organization currently operates in Albany and Troy.
- ◆ Fatal crash and injury rates are trending downward while non-motorized (bicycle and pedestrian) crashes are trending upward.
- ◆ Speeding was the largest traffic ticket type issued (30%) to drivers in the Capital Region in 2018.
- ◆ The daily, regional, vehicle miles traveled = 22.7 million.
- ◆ The Albany International Airport generates \$750M annually in economic activity
- ◆ The Port of Albany generates \$813M annually in economic activity.

New Visions 2050 uses the term “*Quality Region*” to describe the Capital Region. For CDTC, this means transportation choices, strong urban areas, affordable and diverse housing options, ease of mobility, modern air and rail transportation facilities, cultural and recreational opportunities, and a clean environment. These are criteria for people and businesses when making location decisions and it’s important that the region maintain or improve these in order for its economy to continue to grow and create new opportunities for all residents. CDTC asks meeting participants to describe what a “quality region” means to them. This might mean what made them choose to locate here, what qualities persuaded them to purchase their home in the neighborhood and community that they live in, what will allow their children or other family members to remain or move nearby, or what would keep them in the Capital Region even if given the opportunity to relocate.

Major Policy Choices

This section of workbook describes some of the major policy recommendations found in the Draft New Visions 2050 Plan. Some of these policies have been practiced and endorsed by CDTC's Policy Board for over a decade, like smart land use planning and Complete Streets. However, some of the ideas and strategies for implementing these policies have evolved over the years. Additionally, other policies like "Vision Zero" are being implemented elsewhere but haven't had support in the Capital Region. Is CDTC headed in the right direction with these policy recommendations?

Discussion questions for each policy:

- ◆ How could this policy impact my neighborhood/community/town/village/city?
 - ◆ How could this policy affect my commute to work or my ability to get to medical appointments, visit family, etc.?
 - ◆ Will the policy affect your quality of life?
 - ◆ If the policy doesn't affect you, who *will* it affect?
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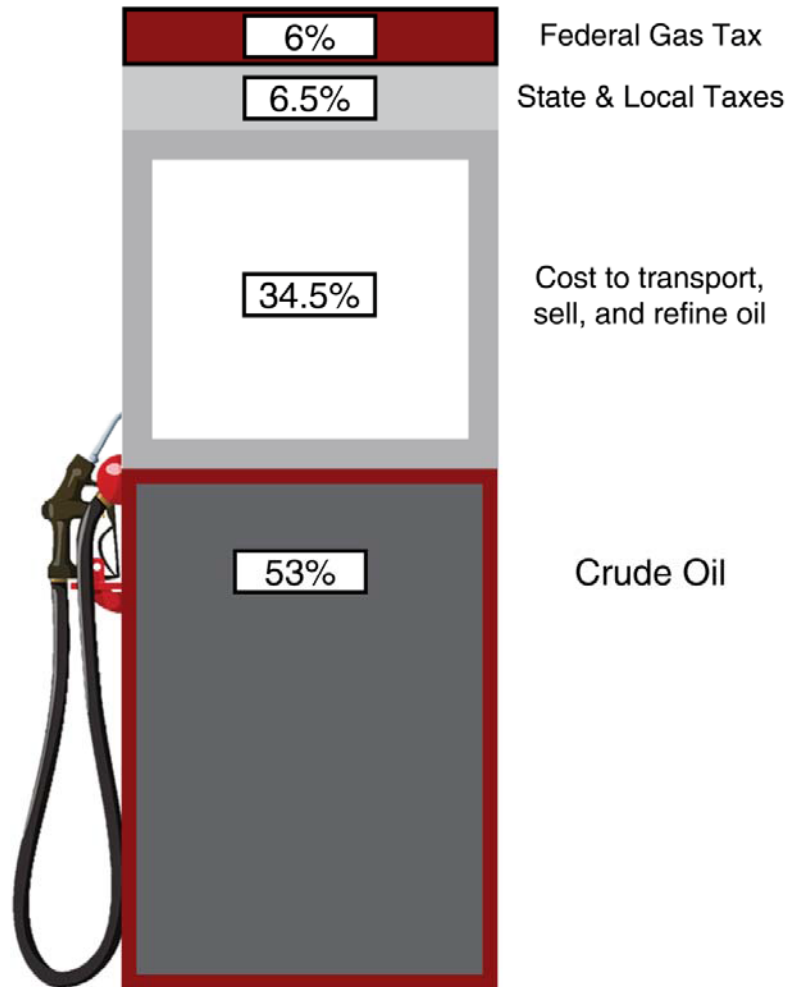
Budget & Priorities

Now that your group has become familiar with the ideas and policy recommendations in New Visions 2050, this section is asking participants to think about how much, if any, federal resources should be spent on them. If the region doesn't have enough federal resources (and any increase in funding should be assumed to be infeasible without a new revenue source/funding stream), where should it seek additional funding from?

For context, CDTC receives funding mainly from the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Trail Administration. Full details and descriptions of all funding sources are outlined in [CDTC's Unified Planning Work Program \(UPWP\)](#), which is another federally required product that CDTC develops every two years. The amount of funding received is calculated based on formulas developed in coordination with the New York State Department of Transportation.

WHAT ARE YOU PAYING FOR AT THE PUMP?

NY Average Gas Price: \$3.076/gallon



These federal transportation funds are raised through the Highway Trust Fund, or the federal gas tax. The Highway Trust Fund finances most federal government spending for highways and mass transit. In recent years, the trust fund has required significant transfers of general revenues to remain solvent. Since 2008, Congress has sustained highway spending by transferring \$140 billion of general revenues to the fund. Those transfers will enable the trust fund to meet spending obligations through 2020, but projected shortfalls will appear again by the end of 2021. The Congressional Budget Office projects that outlays from the Highway Trust Fund will exceed trust fund reserves by a cumulative \$119 billion for the highway account and by \$42 billion for the mass transit account by 2028, even if expiring trust fund taxes are extended.

Currently, consumers pay a federal gas tax of \$0.184/gallon for gasoline and \$0.244/gallon for diesel. The federal gas tax has not increased since 1993. On the other hand, the cost of concrete, asphalt, machinery and labor have increased. Additionally, less gas is being used in more fuel efficient cars and the growth of battery-electric vehicles. Simply put, the purchasing power of the gas tax has been sliced by more than half.

What needs to be done to maintain infrastructure conditions while strategically investing in transformative projects that improve quality of life for residents in the Capital Region?

Tell Us About Yourself

You're almost done!

In an effort to not scare anyone off, we've left this for the end. CDTC has set an ambitious goal for public engagement and feedback. The goal of public participation is to ensure the community has a voice in the development of *New Visions 2050*. Opportunities and tools have been thoughtfully developed to inform and engage the public throughout the process in a way that is convenient and understandable. CDTC is committed to a thorough, inclusive, creative, and continuous process and is tracking participants to measure it's success in meeting its goals. Please help us by having participants complete this final section.

Below is a table of the different geographies and population types in the region that CDTC is targeting:

| Category | Regional Rate |
|------------------------------|---------------|
| Albany County Residents | 36.3% |
| Rensselaer County Residents | 19% |
| Saratoga County Residents | 26.2% |
| Schenectady County Residents | 18.5% |
| Disability | 11.7% |
| Low-income | 11% |
| Zero Vehicle Households | 9.7% |
| Minority | 19.3% |
| Limited English | 3% |

Ask participants to fill up the last page with anything they didn't get the chance to express through the survey. If they do not have any additional input on the Draft New Visions 2050 Plan or the region's transportation system, they might to include a comment about their thoughts on how to promote the New Visions 2050 Plan, how they prefer to provide input and feedback, or what worked well or not so well with this meeting-in-a-box concept.

After the Session

- ◆ **Answer Questions** – spend a few minutes discussing how and where to investigate any unresolved questions raised during the discussion.
 - ◆ **Explain next steps** – collect or copy the meeting participants’ workbooks. If children were part of your meeting group and want to share their workbook with us, we’d love to see it but we also understand that they may want to hang onto it.
 - ◆ Thank the group members for taking part and sharing their ideas.
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Optional

- ◆ Take a photo of your graph and submit it via email to NewVisions@cdtempo.org or post it to social media and tag CDTC on Twitter and/or Instagram (@MPOCDTC) and use the hashtag #NV2050
- ◆ Record videos of group discussions, individual stories about transportation challenges or an opportunity presented as a result of a transportation project in their neighborhood or community.
- ◆ Provide feedback on the meeting and materials developed by CDTC to aid facilitators. How can we improve?