

The Community and Transportation Linkage Planning Program for 2021-22

Introduction

The Community and Transportation Linkage Planning Program (Linkage Program) was initiated in the year 2000 by the Capital District Transportation Committee (CDTC), the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for Albany, Rensselaer, Saratoga and Schenectady Counties (with the exception of the Town of Moreau and the Village of South Glens Falls in Saratoga County). CDTC plans for the regional transportation system and created the Linkage Program to implement the adopted regional transportation plan, known as *New Visions 2050*, by providing integrated land use and transportation planning assistance to local communities. *New Visions 2050* reaffirms long standing thinking that the region's quality of life, mobility and economic vitality are dependent upon improved local land use planning and on better integration of land development and the transportation system.

Since the Linkage Program was initiated, CDTC has funded 92 planning studies in 41 communities including all eight cities, large and small towns and villages. Although there are many successes regarding the implementation of these studies, there is still more work to be done. Visit the Linkage Program webpage at <https://www.cdtcmpo.org/programs/linkage> for more information on completed Linkage Program plans, the status of current initiatives and additional planning resources.

Linkage Program Strategies

The Linkage Program emphasizes seven broad planning strategies that are consistent with the [*New Visions 2050*](#) planning and investment principles. Submissions will be screened as part of the evaluation process for consistency with the Linkage Program strategies.

The seven strategies are to:

- Create a connected and integrated multi-modal transportation network.
- Support urban revitalization and redevelopment of existing commercial/residential areas.
- Enhance and develop activity centers and town centers.
- Enhance and develop transit corridors and transit supportive built environments.
- Encourage a greater mix and intensity of land uses in municipal centers.
- Develop bicycle and pedestrian-friendly community and site design standards.
- Reduce driveway conflicts through access management.

Eligible Initiatives for 2021-2022

To be eligible for this program, the proposed initiative must:

- Be directly related to a recommendation of a completed Linkage study or other adopted local plan and/or an adopted local policy (i.e. complete streets resolution).
- Have a clear and direct connection to transportation issues.
- Be consistent with the Linkage Program strategies and the *New Visions 2050* principles.

Inter-municipal initiatives are highly encouraged, especially for implementation initiatives or follow up planning work dependent on inter-municipal cooperation to be effective. Tactical urbanism or demonstration projects to test a road configuration are eligible as long as the installation is in place for less than one month. Longer term installations (those intended to be in place for more than a month) are considered capital projects and will not be eligible. Engineering related work is not eligible and municipal wide initiatives are limited. Municipal wide updates of zoning codes or site design standards are not eligible unless local sponsors pool financial or other resources to undertake larger initiatives. Federal funds for Linkage Program implementation activities will be capped (see page five (5) on cost estimates).

Eligible projects must also fit into one of the following categories:

1) *Implementation activities related to completed Linkage Program plans or other completed local planning work (i.e. Comprehensive Plans, Waterfront Revitalization Plans, etc.)*

Implementation activities may include the exploration of the feasibility of a transportation concept (i.e. road diets (travel lane reductions), complete streets (streets designed and operated for all users including bicyclists, pedestrians, motorists, transit users, freight deliveries, the disabled, seniors, children, etc.), on street bicycle infrastructure, etc.), development or refinement of a portion of a local zoning code (i.e. overlay or innovative zoning in a subarea of a community), development or refinement of community site design guidelines, or other related initiatives. Transportation concept studies in corridors with a funding commitment to a federal, state or local pavement project or other multi-modal transportation project in the next three years will receive additional priority.

The funding commitment to a pavement or other capital project type must be demonstrated through the provision of State Transportation Improvement Program listings, resolutions, project award letters, local bonds, links to local websites with approved capital program project lists, etc. Evaluating the feasibility of a transportation concept identified in a Linkage study or other adopted local plan or adopted local policy at the time a facility is entering the design process, even for a simple repaving project, can lead to better coordination between the facility owner and the community. This coordination will likely result in project designs that better fit the context of the community. Given the emphasis on pavement preservation projects statewide, implementation actions may be as low cost as restriping a facility to create a more multi-modal corridor.

NYS DOT will do its best to share its state funded paving program with CDTC and project sponsors at the time of Linkage project programming. However, the state paving program changes quickly and a comprehensive schedule of paving projects in the next two to three years may not be available.

2) *Updates of Linkage Program plans completed before 2011.*

Best practice comprehensive planning has shown that once a plan reaches ten years of age, an update should be considered. CDTC and our community partners have completed over 60 Linkage Program plans between 2000 and 2010. As local conditions have changed, strategic updates of Linkage Program plans to bring in current thinking on transportation and land use planning issues will be eligible.

3) *New plans, particularly in communities that have not participated in the Linkage Program before. Priority will be given to the following:*

- Complete streets guidelines or complete streets feasibility studies – more detailed exploration of complete streets design treatments in communities with adopted complete streets policies and/or looking to implement a complete streets concept in a specific transportation corridor.
- Strategic zoning code changes/overlays and/or site design guidelines – zoning and/or site design guidelines that aid in the implementation of regulatory changes in how land is developed in a community, consistent with the vision set forth in a Linkage Study or other adopted local plan.
- Official mapping – identifying or codifying new local streets to aid in the implementation of town centers, the creation of new connected street networks and access management.
- Bicycle/pedestrian planning – examples include trail feasibility studies, pedestrian safety initiatives, on road bike plans, etc.
- Traditional transportation planning activities – quantitative assessment of specific transportation planning issues including operational studies, cumulative transportation impacts of land development, safety studies, etc.

For questions regarding the eligibility of a potential project, please contact Sandy Misiewicz of the CDTC at (518) 458-2161 or email cdtclinkage@cdtcmpo.org.

Ineligible Initiatives

Linkage Program planning initiatives are conceptual in nature and funding is for planning assistance only. Linkage Program funds are not available to cover the cost of municipal employees. The following are not eligible for Linkage Program funds.

- Right-of-way acquisition
- Detailed engineering
- Surveying
- Storm water/sewer system design
- Construction of transportation system facilities
- Capital projects

Examples of Previously Funded Linkage Program Planning Work:

- **City of Albany Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan (\$90,000 consultant effort):** The City of Albany is updating its Bicycle Master Plan from 2009 and expanding its scope to include master planning for pedestrians. The project included two demonstration projects. Learn more at: <https://vizcomm.wixsite.com/albanybikepedplan>.
- **Town of Schodack Town Center Form Based Zoning (\$45,000 consultant effort):** To support the implementation of the 2014 Town Center Plan, the Town of Schodack developed a form-based zoning code to allow and encourage redevelopment consistent with the “town center” vision. The draft code language is available at: https://www.cdtcmpo.org/images/linkage_program/RenCoFinal/Schodack_FBC_FinalCombined_Cvr_Rpt_Apendsmall.pdf.

- **Town of Malta Route 9 Feasibility Study (\$40,000 consultant effort):** The feasibility of redesigning Route 9 from its current highway style configuration to a complete street in the Town Center was evaluated. The study focused on the section from Cramer Road to Knabner Road and was a follow up activity to the Town's 2013 Downtown Master Plan. Review the study at: https://www.cdtcmpo.org/images/linkage_program/SarCoFinal/Malta9CSSStudyweb.pdf
- **Town of Glenville Freemans Bridge Road Complete Streets Concept Plan (\$50,000 consultant effort):** A detailed framework and a set of transportation and land use recommendations for implementing Complete Streets within the Freemans Bridge Road (NY Route 911F) corridor were developed to enable safe, attractive, and comfortable access and travel options for all users of Freemans Bridge Road.

For an interactive map and to review the final reports from completed Linkage Program initiatives, visit <https://www.cdtcmpo.org/transportation-plans/completed-linkage-program-plans>.

Eligible Project Sponsors

Eligible sponsors must be public entities within CDTC's planning area of Albany, Rensselaer, Schenectady and Saratoga Counties (with the exception of the Town of Moreau and the Village of South Glens Falls). The following are eligible to apply for funding:

- Preferred sponsors are towns, cities, villages and counties
- Other sponsors may include State agencies or non-governmental entities such as not-for-profits and public authorities (with a letter of support from the municipality or municipalities in which the study is located)
- Inter-municipal initiatives are encouraged.

Planning Assistance

Planning assistance will be provided through a consultant under contract to CDTC. The consultant will be solicited by CDTC on behalf of the project sponsor following joint development of a detailed scope of work. CDTC staff will administer the consultant contract and will provide technical support throughout the planning process. Municipality or other unit of government administration of a consultant will only be considered for large scale studies with total study costs exceeding \$95,000, achieved by combining funds from other sources. All funding sources must be identified in the application.

Additional CDTC staff technical assistance (limited to no more than \$10,000) may be requested in the application for small scale planning tasks such as existing conditions data collection and analysis, existing conditions documentation, public involvement, highway capacity analysis, modeling, etc.

Project sponsors must document in-kind staff services on tasks including meeting coordination, the public involvement process, document review, etc. including the number of hours and hourly rates.

Funding Availability and Timing

CDTC is proposing to fund no more than three Linkage Program projects in the April 2021 through March 2022 fiscal year. CDTC has reserved up to \$100,000 in staff time and up to \$175,000 in consultant

budget authority from federal planning funds to support the Linkage Program in CDTC's 2020-22 Unified Planning Work Program. Funds awarded for the 2021-22 Linkage Program will not be available for use until after April 1, 2021. **If the project sponsor does not execute the Memorandum of Understanding with CDTC by March 31, 2022, Linkage funds will be forfeited.**

Linkage planning studies must be completed within 20 months beginning April 1, 2021. Should the project be delayed, the following milestones will apply:

1. Within 1 year – hire a study consultant and have a kick-off meeting.
2. Within 2 years – 50% of the study scope of work completed by the consultant.
3. Within 3 years – 100% of the study scope of work completed by the consultant. This does not include legislative adoption of the study findings.

If a sponsor fails to meet the project milestones, an explanation for the delay and a request for an extension must be provided to CDTC's Planning Committee. If a sponsor fails to make this request, Linkage funds will be forfeited. In addition, the study sponsor will not be allowed to submit for a new Linkage Program study while the delayed study is incomplete.

Due to uncertainty regarding the availability of federal planning funds in 2021, CDTC reserves the right to cancel Linkage Program projects funded through this solicitation at any time prior to contracting with a consultant. Should CDTC cancel a funded project, that project will be given the first opportunity to compete for funds in the next funding year.

Cost Estimates and Match Requirement

Sponsors must provide a cost estimate for the planning activity in their submissions. The maximum total study cost for consultant efforts is \$95,000 including a minimum 25% local match (\$71,250 in federal funds matched with \$23,750, in local match). Local cash is preferred to achieve the 25% local match requirement. In-kind services will be considered on a case by case basis to supplement up to 15% of the local match requirement with a minimum of 10% required to be provided by local cash. Any local in-kind support for the study including meeting coordination, the public participation process, document review, etc. must be documented and provided to CDTC including the number of hours and hourly rates per person. There is no minimum total study cost and federal funds are capped. Note:

- The availability of the local cash match must be documented in the letter of intent to be included with the submission (see page 8). If the sponsor(s) is unable to provide the 25% match in cash, the support letter must document how the maximum of 15% local in-kind support will be provided with a minimum of 10% in local cash. Sponsors should ensure the agreed to local cash match is in their 2021 budgets as the local share will be invoiced by CDTC and due no later than December 1, 2021.
- Overmatches may be provided in the form of additional local cash or in-kind services. Additional credit will be given to projects with overmatches in the project selection process.
- If additional CDTC staff assistance is requested along with the consultant effort, the estimated dollar value and the type of requested assistance should be documented in the submission and is capped at \$10,000.

- Total consultant study costs may exceed \$95,000 if the sponsor pools Linkage funds with funds from other grant sources. Such grant sources should be identified in the study submission. Larger consultant efforts exceeding \$95,000 may require the municipality to select the consultant and administer the contract directly.

CDTC reserves the right to confirm or modify all cost estimates based on past experience with Linkage Program studies. For 2021-22, this action will be undertaken as step two of the evaluation process (see the project selection section on page 9 for details).

Local Action on Study Findings

A formal resolution from the legislative body adopting the study findings is preferred by CDTC. Such action indicates the sponsors' willingness to continue to work through important planning processes, such as zoning code updates, to implement the findings of the plan (processes which are likely subject to New York State Environmental Quality Review ([SEQR](#)) regulations). Sponsors may also consider formally endorsing or accepting the findings of the planning effort. Endorsing or accepting the findings of a plan does not carry the same weight with operational entities such as the New York State Department of Transportation as adoption does for project implementation.

State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQR)

Meeting SEQR regulations is the responsibility of the local municipality. If formal action is desired or required under SEQR for the initiative, all documentation, public hearings and other SEQR related materials are outside the budget of Linkage Program planning efforts. Changes in land use such as changes to a zoning code must consider SEQR requirements. Although Linkage Program studies are not municipal wide comprehensive plans, they are considered comprehensive in nature and are subject to SEQR if the municipality is considering formal action. Methods of formal action include a resolution, adoption of the study as a strategic plan, as an amendment to a municipal comprehensive plan and through other means as appropriate.

National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA)

Linking Planning with NEPA: Linkage Program study sponsors often advance transportation projects that were recommended through the Linkage Program planning process. Sponsors should be aware that projects proposed as a result of Linkage study concepts will be subject to NEPA if the project will be utilizing federal transportation funds for its design and construction. For Linkage Program planning efforts, consideration should be given to following Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) guidance on linking the transportation planning process (Linkage Program plans) with NEPA. For details on the program visit www.environment.fhwa.dot.gov/env_initiatives/pel.aspx and for the NEPA/planning linkages checklist visit www.environment.fhwa.dot.gov/env_initiatives/pel/pel_quest.aspx

FHWA guidance encourages the planning process to inform the purpose and need statement, scoping and alternatives identification, evaluation and/or elimination of alternatives, and indirect and cumulative impacts assessment of a transportation project. Engaging specific stakeholders (i.e. Federal, Tribal, State, and local environmental, regulatory, resource agencies and the public) and documenting planning decisions in a format that can easily be appended to the NEPA document or incorporated by reference are essential for linking planning with NEPA. To have standing in the NEPA process and its

additional analyses, transportation planning information, analyses, documents, and decisions must be well documented and provided for examination during project scoping.

NEPA Categorical Exclusions: According to NYSDOT’s Environmental Procedures Manual, certain types of federal aid projects are considered categorical exclusions under NEPA (visit the NYSDOT website at www.dot.ny.gov/divisions/engineering/environmental-analysis/manuals-and-guidance/epm/chapter-2 and the federal code www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?rgn=div8&node=23:1.0.1.8.43.0.1.9 for more information). Automatic categorical exclusions include planning and technical studies which do not involve or lead directly to the construction of a project. CDTC’s Linkage Program studies generally fall into this category. However it is important for Linkage studies to adequately screen the study area and document potential environmental issues per CDTC’s environmental mitigation procedures, document the assumptions and data inputs used, document any technical analysis performed (including methodology and results) and document the public outreach process as potential projects investigated as part of a Linkage study may be subject to NEPA.

Linkage planning studies may not be categorically exempted when there are “unusual circumstances” as defined by law (23 CFR 771.117(b)). Such unusual circumstances include significant environmental impacts; substantial controversy on environmental grounds; significant impact on properties protected by Section 4(f) of the USDOT Act (23 CFR 771.135) or Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act; or inconsistencies with any Federal, State or local law, requirement or administrative determination relating to the environmental aspects of the action.

There are instances when a project sponsor may desire to generate a project directly from a Linkage Study. Therefore, sponsors should be aware that capital projects proposed to implement a Linkage study concept will be subject to NEPA if the project will be utilizing federal transportation funds for its design and construction. NYSDOT’s Federal Environmental Approvals Worksheet Engineering Bulletin explains the procedure for processing Categorical Exclusions under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for projects that are funded or permitted by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). Follow the link below for more information. The contents of this Engineering Bulletin are to be incorporated in the next update of the NYSDOT Environmental Manual Chapter 4, the Project Development Manual Chapter 4 and the Procedures for Locally Administered Federal-Aid Projects Manual Chapter 7. www.dot.ny.gov/portal/pls/portal/mexis_app.pa_ei_eb_admin_app.show_pdf?id=12041

Submission Instructions

The submission (excluding the letter of intent, maps and supporting documents) should be no more than three pages in length. **Deadline for receipt of completed submissions is the close of business (5:00 PM EST), Wednesday, December 16, 2020. One original hard copy plus one electronic copy via email to cdtclinkage@cdtcmpo.org or on a flash drive/CD are required.** Submissions should be sent to the Capital District Transportation Committee, Attn: Sandy Misiewicz, AICP, One Park Place, Albany, NY 12205. Incomplete submissions will not be considered for funding.

The following must be included in all submissions:

1. A letter of intent which commits the community/sponsor(s) to the 25% local match and to the project, signed by the lead elected official.
2. Project Name.

3. Primary contact person information including name, title, street address, email address and phone number.
4. Study area map.
5. A detailed project description including:
 - The purpose and need for the project including its relationship to transportation and how the project might impact the transportation system.
 - The relationship of the proposal to the Linkage Program Strategies and the [New Visions 2050](#) principles.
 - An outline of the scope of work including a task list, desired deliverables and a discussion as to how the project is to be implemented. Note whether or not the sponsor intends to adopt the product or take another local action to endorse or accept the study findings (SEQRA requirements are outside the scope of Linkage Program planning efforts).
6. Disadvantaged populations (i.e. minority, low income, disabled, older residents, etc.) must be engaged in the planning process based on the demographics of the study area. Describe the populations present in the study area and what steps will be taken to include them in the planning process.
7. If the proposal is for follow-up planning work related to a completed Linkage Program plan or other adopted local planning study, provide the name of the plan and a description of the specific recommendation(s) to be further explored. Also note whether or not the community has an adopted complete streets policy and how, if applicable, the proposed effort will support complete streets implementation.
8. Provide documentation, if applicable, to demonstrate a funding commitment for an upcoming capital project or other fund source to implement some or all of the recommendations of transportation feasibility studies. See Page 2 for additional information.
9. Sponsors may request a combination of consultant and CDTC staff technical assistance. Describe the need for additional CDTC staff technical assistance (limited to no more than \$10,000) and the specific tasks for which that assistance is being requested.
10. Provide the estimated cost of the study using the sample format on page nine (9). Refer to the guidelines on page five (5) for additional information. All fund sources in section 2 should be identified. If the project is asking for both consultant and CDTC staff technical assistance, fill in all relevant sections. A 25% local cash match is preferred for Linkage Program studies. If the sponsor(s) is unable to provide the 25% local match in cash, the submission should document how the 15% of in-kind local support will be provided. Sponsors should ensure the agreed to local cash match is in their 2021 budgets as the local share will be invoiced by CDTC and due no later than December 1, 2021.

11. Include in an appendix supporting material (evidence of related past planning study adoption, resolutions in support of the study, excerpts from comprehensive plans or Linkage planning studies, etc.) to help CDTC understand the status of, context of and local commitment to the proposed project.

Sample Project Budget Documentation:

1. Consultant Budget Requested from CDTC	
Federal planning funds requested (75%)	\$60,000
Local match - 25% required, cash preferred	
Cash (10% minimum)	\$8,000
In-kind (15% maximum) – describe how the in-kind match is to be provided by the sponsor	\$12,000
Section 1 Total	\$80,000
2. Add-On/Overmatch (if applicable)	
Additional cash match Source: City Budget	\$10,000
Additional in-kind match Source: (list individuals and tasks for which additional in-kind will be provided)	\$0
Additional grant funds to be pooled for a larger effort Source:	\$0
Section 2 Total	\$10,000
Total Consultant Budget (sum of Sections 1 and 2)	\$90,000
3. CDTC staff technical assistance requested (\$10,000 maximum)	\$5,000

Project Selection

The Linkage Program is competitive and will involve a three step project selection process:

- Step 1: Submissions will be screened to ensure they are complete and meet all program requirements as described in this solicitation. A review of the local match requirement will be undertaken and confirmed with the sponsor(s). Incomplete submissions and those that do not meet the program requirements will not be considered for funding.
- Step 2: CDTC staff will review the project description proposed for each project and the estimated budget. If the budget is not adequate for the desired scope of work, CDTC staff will develop an appropriate budget for the project and will reach out to the study sponsor with two choices: 1) increase the local match in proportion to the revised study cost to complete the desired scope of work or 2) reduce the desired scope of work to fit the study budget originally proposed. Project budgets will be confirmed based on CDTC’s extensive experience with Linkage planning study and consultant work. Once study budgets and scopes have been

confirmed for all projects, the submissions will be forwarded on to a review committee for full evaluation.

Step 3: CDTC, CDRPC (Capital District Regional Planning Commission), CDTA (Capital District Transportation Authority) and NYSDOT staff will then evaluate the submissions. CDTC's Planning Committee will review the evaluation results and funding options at its February 2021 meeting. Once approved by the Planning Committee, CDTC's Policy Board will take action on the recommended package of studies in March for incorporation into the 2020-2022 Unified Planning Work Program. The likelihood of a study receiving funds will not be known until submissions have been received and evaluated. The evaluation criteria presented below are not presented in order of importance however an indication of their relative importance is noted for each criterion.

Evaluation Criteria:

1. Is the initiative eligible and consistent with the Linkage Program strategies? What is the need for the project? Is there a sense of urgency? (mandatory and improves priority)
2. Is the proposed scope of work reasonable for the proposed budget? (mandatory)
3. Is funding available for a related capital transportation project? Is there a completed Linkage Study, other locally adopted plan or adopted complete streets policy in place related to the effort? (improves priority)
4. Is the sponsor's plan for engaging disadvantaged populations in the study per the demographics of the study area reasonable? (Improves priority)
5. What is the sponsors' plan for implementation? Is the intent to adopt, endorse or accept the plan? Does the proposal indicate a path for success? (improves priority)
6. Will the project have a positive impact on the transportation system when implemented? (improves priority)
7. Is the proposal an inter-municipal initiative? (improves priority)
8. Is the local match being provided in cash? Is an overmatch of cash or in-kind support being provided? Are there complementary activities being undertaken to support the project? (improves priority)
9. New sponsors will receive additional consideration in project selection. For past sponsors, was the sponsor's performance adequate and appropriate as determined by CDTC staff? (improves priority)

All efforts are required to meet the first two criteria. Addressing the remaining seven criteria will help improve the priority of the submission. CDTC staff will use past history with Linkage Program studies to evaluate the scope of work versus budget and the sponsor's past performance. Submissions that best meet all nine evaluation criteria will be considered first for funding. If there are more worthy submissions than available funding, project selection will consider geographic balance and project type.

Notification of Award

Following approval by CDTC's Planning Committee in February 2021, all project sponsors will be notified in writing as to the status of their submissions by March 1, 2021. In March 2021, following Policy Board approval, sponsors awarded funding will receive CDTC's *Linkage Study Administration Procedures* and will be asked to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The MOU must be signed before Linkage funds may be accessed. Linkage funds become available for use after April 1, 2021.

The MOU is between CDTC and the study sponsor(s) and articulates the roles and responsibilities of all parties throughout the study process. The MOU will be tied to the chosen method of assistance. **If the project sponsor does not execute the MOU with CDTC by March 31, 2022, Linkage funds will be forfeited.** Please note that the ability of these studies to move forward after April 1, 2021 (when the federal funds become available) will be dependent on the progress of the Linkage Program efforts funded in previous years and the availability of CDTC staff.

Consultant Activity Guidelines

To satisfy federal and state requirements, use of an appropriate means of consultant solicitation and selection will be required prior to designation of a consultant. CDTC uses an abbreviated approach to consultant selection. Sponsors should be aware that if consultant assistance is used in the preparation of a Linkage Program submission or in the development of the scope of work for the study, that consultant will not be eligible for the contract. In addition, a consultant on retainer to a municipality is not guaranteed a Linkage study contract. The consultant selection process is required to be competitive.

CDTC will administer consultant studies with total study costs of \$95,000 or less to minimize the administrative burden on the municipality. However, if a large consultant effort is intended (over \$95,000 using CDTC and other fund sources), the municipality may be required to select the consultant and administer the contract directly. In this case, the municipality will be required to execute necessary agreements with the New York State Department of Transportation in order to be reimbursed for the study costs.

CDTC reserves the right to modify the program without prior notice.

For questions regarding the Linkage Program, contact Sandy Misiewicz, AICP of the CDTC staff at (518) 458-2161 or email cdtclinkage@cdtcmpo.org.