

Capital District  
Transportation Committee

February 23, 2023

## **Proposed Policy on Transportation Project Support Letters for Federal Discretionary Funds**

### **Introduction**

At the February 2, 2023 CDTC Planning Committee meeting, discussion was held and actions were taken related to providing CDTC support letters for federal discretionary funding programs. Two support letters were recommended by the Planning Committee for Policy Board approval along with a proposed policy related to support letters. The proposed policy was further discussed with CDTC's Administrative and Finance Standing Subcommittee and requires Policy Board discussion and approval.

### **Background**

Two support letters related to the federal RAISE (Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity) Discretionary Grant Program were requested from CDTC in January. The requests were made by NYSDOT for the replacement of the Dix Bridge between Saratoga and Washington Counties and by the City of Cohoes for its Saratoga Street Pedestrian Accessibility and Commercial Corridor Enhancements Project. While the scope and scale of these projects are very different, they are both consistent with CDTC's regional transportation plan, known as New Visions 2050, policies and priorities.

### **Planning Committee Discussion and Action**

The Planning Committee was provided with draft support letters at its February meeting for review and discussion. While the Planning Committee recommended the Policy Board approve these letters, there was additional discussion related to CDTC's overall role in offering support on federal discretionary grant program project applications. The following points were raised:

- Planning Committee members support sponsors applying for as much discretionary funding as possible. Every award benefits the region as a whole and allows project sponsors to obtain funding that goes beyond what is available directly through CDTC.
- The national approach to federal discretionary programs has created additional competition between CDTC's members, particularly between NYSDOT and local governments, for funding resources not previously available.

- Federal discretionary program application deadlines often do not align with CDTC's meeting dates, making timely action on support letters by the Planning Committee or Policy Board challenging.
- CDTC has no documented policy related to providing support letters for projects at the federal level. CDTC as a practice does not provide support letters for projects related to state administered transportation programs (i.e. TAP/CMAQ).
- Project sponsors that are not as involved with CDTC or that do not request a support letter may be seen at the federal level as not having the support of CDTC as the MPO for the region, reducing the competitiveness of the application.
- While CDTC successfully serves as a forum on many issues, it is sometimes difficult to obtain information from sponsors on federal discretionary program project applications, making coordination challenging.

The Planning Committee members proposed a policy that requires Policy Board discussion and approval related to how requests for letters of support should be handled by CDTC. Specifically, should letters of support be requested from CDTC for federal discretionary funding programs, authority would be delegated to CDTC's Executive Director to prepare and sign support letters on CDTC's behalf so long as the project meets grant requirements. A motion was made and carried to make this recommendation to the Policy Board.

### **Administrative and Financial Standing Subcommittee**

Per CDTC's operating policies, its Administrative and Financial Standing Subcommittee (the A&F) meets prior to each Policy Board meeting to discuss a range of CDTC administrative topics, including the upcoming Policy Board agenda. The proposed policy made by the Planning Committee related to support letters was discussed and the A&F concurred with the Planning Committee policy proposal, adding that a standardized support letter be developed by CDTC, so long as the proposed project is consistent with CDTC's planning priorities for the region.

### **Policy Board Recommendation**

The recommendation for Policy Board action is to authorize CDTC's Executive Director to prepare and sign standardized support letters upon request of sponsors for federal discretionary program project applications. The project must be consistent with CDTC's planning priorities and federal grant requirements. The support letters would not need Planning Committee or Policy Board approval unless the Executive Director determines a project is not consistent with CDTC's planning priorities or grant requirements. CDTC's Executive Director will inform the Planning Committee and the Policy Board members at their respective meetings as to what, if any, letters of support were written and for what projects and programs.