NEW MERIT EVALUATION SYSTEM FOR THE TIP PROJECT SELECTION PROCESS

As part of the development of our 5-year capital plan, referred to as the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), CDTC solicits and evaluates projects from all the municipalities in our 4-County region. These project evaluations are then used by the Committee to select projects for funding in our TIP. A description of the current project selection process can be found in our TIP document, Appendices G & H, which can be found on our website at http://www.cdtcmpo.org/tipdoc13/tip13.pdf.

Since the project costs are usually well known, our project evaluations focus on comparing costs to project benefits, which are either quantifiable or non-quantifiable.

CDTC has been calculating quantifiable benefits in our benefit/cost (B/C) ratio for many years, and we are one of the few MPOs that use our travel demand computer model to compare the before-construction and after-construction benefits of each project. For non-quantifiable benefits we were using a system of “filters” and “networks” that each project passed or failed. Unfortunately, these did not capture all of the non-quantifiable benefits.

With this in mind, several months ago we undertook a project to better determine or score the non-quantifiable project benefits. We understood members’ concerns and confusion regarding the use of “filters” and “networks” in previous TIP updates, and we also recognized that because of this confusion we sometimes relied too heavily on the B/C ratio. The objectives of the new merit evaluation criteria include:

- Providing a direct link between our New Visions 2040 long range plan principles, recommendations, and funding priorities and our TIP project selection so that project selection directly reflects the New Visions priorities, as required.
- Providing an easily adjustable evaluation system for when New Visions priorities change.
- Quantifying the non-quantifiable project benefits that are not included in the B/C ratio.
- Providing an explicit, transparent, easily understood and complete evaluation system that better reflects the project value.
- Replacing the use of “filters” and “networks” that were not easily understood in project evaluations and potentially biased the process against rural projects.
- Augmenting, but not replacing, the project B/C ratio.
- Providing incentives for sponsors to include beneficial project features in project scopes.

Early in the development of this new merit evaluation system, staff examined several precedents and MPO examples of best practices. We also examined the merit evaluation systems used by over 20 medium to large MPOs. Ten merit evaluation systems which used a point scoring system and were relevant, explicit, and transparent, were further analyzed. CDTC’s new merit evaluation system is very similar to the project evaluation systems used in:

- Nashville, Tennessee
- Boston, Massachusetts
- Seattle, Washington
- Syracuse, New York
- San Diego, California
- Richmond, Virginia
- Winston-Salem, N. Carolina
- Northern New Jersey
- Genesee Transportation Council (Rochester, NY)
- Mid-Ohio (Columbus)

Our new merit evaluation system measures non-quantifiable project benefits by using a point scoring system for each of the following 11 categories:

- Regional Benefit
- Community Quality of Life & Equity
- Appropriate Infrastructure
- Multi-Modalism
- Environment & Health
- Economic Development
- Safety & Security
- Operations & Technology

(Continued on page 6)
In November 2014, CDTC in partnership with the Town of Guilderland initiated the Westmere Corridor Study. The Westmere Corridor Study is intended to develop a neighborhood plan for area along Western Avenue between Church Street on the east and State Farm Road and New Karner Road on the west, building on the recommendations included in the Guilderland Comprehensive Plan.

The Westmere Corridor differs from others in the Town of Guilderland in that it connects the Town to the intensive urban land uses around Crossgates Mall, the University at Albany, the State Office Campus, and on into downtown Albany, making it a critical transportation corridor to access jobs, education, shopping, medical and other services. Because of this, it has unique issues, problems, characteristics, and opportunities, like the potential for a larger role for transit, walking, and bicycling in the corridor’s transportation system.

The study objectives include: Articulate a long term vision for the corridor but also propose specific shorter term improvements; Protect adjoining neighborhoods from incompatible land uses and project the continued use and redevelopment of small frontage lots for professional uses; Connect residential neighborhoods with commercial area through improved sidewalks, crosswalks, and paths to promote a more pedestrian friendly environment; and Improve facilities for bicyclists including bike lanes, multi-use paths, and parking.

A second public open house is planned for January to receive public comments on Study recommendations.

CDTC ANNOUNCES THE 2016-2017 LINKAGE PROGRAM SOLICITATION

CDTC is currently soliciting planning initiatives for its 2016-2017 Community and Transportation Linkage Planning Program. Implementation activities related to completed Linkage Program plans or other adopted local planning work (i.e. comprehensive plans, waterfront redevelopment plans, etc.) are strongly encouraged. CDTC prioritizes programming Linkage Studies following three tiers of eligibility:

**Tier 1:** Transportation concept feasibility studies in corridors with a funding commitment for a federal, state or local pavement project or other multi-modal transportation project in the next three years.

**Tier 2:** Transportation feasibility studies, complete streets guidelines, strategic zoning code changes/zoning code overlays and/or site design guidelines or official mapping initiatives that do not have a funding commitment for a related construction project.

**Tier 3:** Other types of planning work

Only two initiatives will receive funding in the 2016-2017 Program and a maximum of $100,000 in federal planning funds have been reserved to support consultant led efforts. The maximum total study cost including a required minimum 25% cash match is $90,000 (75% federal funds/25% local cash). The submission deadline is December 18, 2018 and awardees will be announced in the new year.
Regional Freight & Goods Movement Study

CDTC’s Draft Regional Freight & Goods Movement Study is currently available for review. As the entity responsible for both near term and long range transportation planning, CDTC chose to undertake the Freight & Goods Movement Study to better understand the role and profile of freight transportation throughout the region. This will contribute to making appropriate investments to support the efficiency and safety of goods movement. Highlighted below are some of the efforts undertaken by the Study:

The Existing Conditions, Trends, and Forecasts analysis provides details on existing and projected freight movements in the CDTC region by mode, as well as for the various commodities moving to, from, and within the region. Providing a transportation system that facilitates cost-effective freight mobility requires an understanding of supply chain and logistics behaviors and an evaluation of existing freight movement patterns. Available data for all modes of freight (truck, rail, air, water, and pipeline) were collected and analyzed to help better understand existing and future forecasted conditions.

One of the most important aspects of Freight Planning is gathering information and viewpoints from the providers and users of the freight system. An extensive Stakeholder Engagement Plan was developed and executed as part of the Study process. Stakeholders included manufacturers, representatives from all modes of freight transport, public agencies (ex: planning departments, chambers of commerce, local governments), distribution centers, and industrial parks. The engagement plan included focus groups, individual interviews, targeted group meetings, and presentations.

The Freight Priority Network (FPN), first created in 1997, is intended to help the CDTC and its planning partners identify and prioritize transportation investments related to helping freight and goods move efficiently and safely. The proposed update of the FPN includes the three new categories of FPN facilities (major, minor, connect- or) and also identifies where major freight-supportive land uses currently exist around the region.

As with all of CDTC’s planning efforts, there is an emphasis on collaborative and cooperative regional transportation and land use planning, and residents’ quality of life. Regional growth affects economic development and the demand for freight and goods movement. The Study identifies types of freight-supportive land uses that local governments could use in planning, economic development, zoning, and capital programming. Applying these land use categories in planning, as well as the suggested zoning and regulatory guidelines, will help mitigate the negative community-level impacts of freight movement and facilitate more efficient, safe, and economical logistics operations.

Recommendations fall into two categories: (1) Projects and (2) Programs, Policies, and Studies. Projects involve construction, reconstruction and/or changes to physical transportation infrastructure. This study divides projects into early-action projects and long-range projects. Programs, Policies, and Studies are non-capital initiatives that seek to employ regulatory, guidance and/or planning tools to facilitate more cost-effective and efficient use of existing and planned transportation infrastructure.

The draft Study documents can be found at http://www.cdtcmpo.org/goodsstf.htm. Comments can be sent to cbauer@cdtcmpo.org.

Route 50 over I-87

NYSDOT is finishing construction of a $5.1 million project to repair the Route 50 bridge over I-87, adding full turning lanes in each direction. The bridge is located at Exit 15, adjacent to Excelsior Avenue in Saratoga Springs and close to the Wilton Mall. Prior to construction, Route 50 at the bridge did not allow pedestrians or bicyclists. However, the project is adding a 10-foot wide multi-use path on the south side of Route 50 for pedestrians and bicyclists. On the west side of the bridge, this path will connect to Excelsior Avenue’s sidewalks. The multi-use path will end just east of the bridge.

Rexford Bridge

This $32.5 million NYSDOT project is expected to be complete by the end of 2017. It will reconstruct the Rexford Bridge, Route 146 over the Mohawk River. The project will widen the bridge and its approaches from two lanes to four lanes between the intersections at Riverview Road and Aqueduct Road, both of which will be reconstructed. Once complete, the bridge and roadway within the project limits will have four 11-foot travel lanes, a 4-foot paved shoulder on each side, a 4-foot median, and a 10 foot shared-use path separated from vehicular traffic by a concrete barrier.
helderberg rail trail

This $3.6 million project will create an off-road, public recreational trail from a nine-mile stretch of the old Delaware & Hudson (D&H) Railroad between the Port of Albany and Voorheesville. Once completed, the Rail Trail will link municipalities along a safe and accessible pedestrian and bicycle route.

Tools of the Trade Workshop for Human Service Agencies

The Capital District is home to over 90,000 people with reported disabilities and a growing senior population, resulting in significant numbers of people for whom transportation choices can be limited. As mobility service needs of individuals with disabilities, seniors and low income residents continue to grow and change around the region, better communication and collaboration among human service agencies and other providers of transportation is increasingly important. Public, private and not for profit transportation providers can benefit from collaboration and coordination activities in terms of better service and cost savings.

To help identify current gaps and overlaps in service and recommendations for improvements, the Capital Region’s Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan was recently updated. The Regional Transportation Coordination Committee or RTCC assisted with the plan update and identified plan recommendations.

One key plan recommendation is to hold a “Tools of the Trade” Workshop focused on Human Service Agency transportation providers. The purpose is to provide information and examples of currently available coordination and collaboration initiatives and to foster networking and information sharing that may lead to additional coordination activities.

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Interactive group discussions will be organized to help attendees share information regarding the “how, what and where” of their services. This networking and information sharing session can assist partners for future coordination and collaboration activities for transportation services or other agency needs. Volunteers from the RTCC will be meeting in December to help CDTC staff with workshop planning - Stay Tuned!

capital coexist mini grants

CDTC launched Capital Coexist, a bicycle and pedestrian safety campaign, in 2010 in response to overwhelming public feedback that traffic safety education is needed for all road users in the Capital Region. CDTC has developed various educational resources including rack cards, posters, and walking and bicycling guides as part of its efforts to improve bicycle and pedestrian safety.

The new Traffic Safety Ambassador Program will utilize $20,000 in federal planning funds for capacity building projects designed to assist public, private, and non-profit organizations in the region in providing bicycle and pedestrian safety education and training.

Project examples include bike rides, helmet giveaways, bike skills trainings, or educational “pop-up” events. The grant can cover up to 75% of the project cost with a maximum grant award of $5,000. Projects must be completed before the end of 2016. More information can be found at www.cdtcmpo.org. Applications are due January 15.
The Capital District Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Station Plan is part of a cooperative effort of the Upstate New York Clean Cities Coalitions and Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) to support electric vehicle (EV) travel within and in between metropolitan areas along the I-90 Corridor. The study is jointly funded by the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) and New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) under the program entitled “Institutionalizing Integrated Solutions Supporting Accessible Multimodal Transportation Networks.”

For a new technology such as the EV, which requires coordinated construction of infrastructure and widespread education and outreach, careful planning is essential. Public charging stations are important for EV drivers to have the ability and confidence to use their vehicle throughout New York State. Incorporating EV infrastructure planning into broader local and regional planning processes can help ease the adoption of the new technology. A number of initiatives have recently been undertaken to support EV readiness nationally through the Department of Energy, within New York State through NYSERDA and locally through Capital District Clean Communities.

At the end of 2014, there were 710 EVs registered in the Capital Region. While this is a small fraction of all registered vehicles, it is growing. There are upwards of 75 charging stations throughout the region, mostly located at retailers like Price Chopper and Kohls, hotels, and universities.

Ninety-six percent of commuters in the Capital Region have a round-trip commute less than 60 miles, which is within the range of an EV charged overnight at home. Compared to gasoline-powered cars, EVs are more energy efficient and cost about 50-70% less to operate per mile.

The EV Charging Station Plan identifies gaps where public charging stations are not available to support current and potential EV drivers. Five communities have been identified as “key locations” for expanding EV charging. These communities include the Cities of Albany, Saratoga Springs, Schenectady, Troy, and the Town of Colonie. These were ranked as the highest priority based on proximity to high volume roads, population and population shifts that occur as activity and employment centers, and existing EV infrastructure. Another five communities that were identified as having good potential for charging infrastructure were Clifton Park, Bethlehem, Malta, Guilderland, and Niskayuna.

The plan also outlines tools planners and policymakers can use to make their communities more “EV-Ready,” such as zoning, parking ordinances, building codes, streamlined permitting, and design guidelines.

It identifies barriers to EV deployment in the Capital Region, which aren’t exclusive to the area but are predominant. The barriers identified are a lack of car dealership support for EVs, no fast charging infrastructure for non-Tesla owners, myths and misinformation about the cost of owning an EV and the technology, absence of on-street charging infrastructure in urban centers, and a lack of information among elected officials on the value of being an EV-Friendly community.

In addition to the Capital Region, plans have been developed for the Mohawk Valley, Central New York, Genesee, and Western New York regions. Each plan was directed by a working group consisting of MPO members, developers, utilities, retailers, employers, universities, and local EV drivers.

Final plans will be released by the end of the year and Clean Cities Coalitions will begin meeting with key stakeholders to develop action plans beginning early 2016. For more information about electric vehicles and the plan please visit www.capitalcleancommunities.org.
NEW TIP MERIT EVALUATION (CONT.)

(Continued from page 1)

- Freight
- Innovation
- Project Delivery

Each point in each category is clearly defined so that project sponsors can accurately estimate the score for each project, and project raters can accurately and consistently score each project. The final merit category score assigned to each project can range from a 21 to +50 points. This score is added to the benefit/cost ratio (maximum of 50 points) so that each project can receive a total score ranging from -21 to +100 points. A copy of our new merit evaluation system can be found by clicking on the “Merit Categories Scoresheet” at the top of the following webpage: http://www.cdtcmpo.org/tipdoc16/solicitation/solicitation.htm.

CDTC's new draft merit evaluation system was submitted to our Planning Committee for their review. Based on their input, several adjustments were made, and the new system was tested using 15 representative past projects and 11 possible future projects. The tests confirmed the accuracy and effectiveness of the new evaluation system.

CDTC will be using our new merit evaluation system and the merit categories scoresheet to evaluate new projects for our new 2016-2021 TIP. Project solicitation letters for our 2016-2021 TIP were sent to all the municipalities in our 4-County region on December 11, 2015 and new project applications are due January 22, 2016.

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<td>NUMERIC VALUES</td>
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<td>Merit Categories + B/C Value</td>
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TIP Update

One of CDTC’s most important responsibilities is the development of a multi-modal program of transportation projects that implements recommendations of the planning process, particularly those found in the region’s long-range regional transportation plan called New Visions 2040 (www.cdtcnewvisions.com).

This program of projects is known as the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) (www.cdtcmpo.org/tip.htm) and represents a multi-year comprehensive program of federally-aided highway and transit projects in the Capital District’s metropolitan area.

The Capital District Transportation Committee, as the federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the four-county Capital District region, prepares and adopts the TIP typically once every two or three years.

All transportation projects – highway, bridge, transit, bicycle, pedestrian – that use federal funding or require federal action are part of the TIP. All projects included in CDTC’s TIP must be consistent with the planning and investment principles and recommendations contained in CDTC’s adopted New Visions Plan.

CDTC’s TIP also serves as the source of all federal aid Capital District projects to be included in the New York State Department of Transportation’s State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) that covers the first four years of CDTC’s five-year TIP. Projects must be on the STIP to have access to federal funds.

On December 4, 2015, President Obama signed into law the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act, or “FAST Act.” It is the first law enacted in over ten years that provides long-term funding certainty for surface transportation, meaning States and local governments can move forward with critical transportation projects with the confidence that they will have a Federal partner over the long term.

Early estimates from the FAST Act indicate that New York State is likely to receive over $8.8 B over the five years of the legislation with the Capital District anticipating a direct share of Surface Transportation Block Grant funds at roughly $7 M annually over the next five years.

The FAST Act largely maintains current program structures and funding shares between highways and transit. The law also makes changes and reforms to many Federal transportation programs, including streamlining the approval processes for new transportation projects, providing new safety tools, and establishing new programs to advance critical freight projects.

CDTC is now in the process of updating the TIP to cover the federal fiscal years (FFY) 2016-17 to 2020-21 which are covered via the FAST Act. (A FFY begins on October 1 and ends on September 30 of the next year.) As part of the update process, CDTC must estimate how much will be available for the duration of the new TIP.

CDTC is in the process of identifying existing commitments in the current TIP that will not be completed before the start of the 2016-17 FFY. From those numbers, CDTC can estimate how much is available to fund new projects in the 2016-21 TIP.

As a first step, CDTC will work with project sponsors to identify existing commitments in the current TIP that will not be completed before the start of the 2016-17 FFY. From those numbers, CDTC can estimate how much is available to fund new projects in the 2016-21 TIP.

Bikeshare Task Force

CDTC and the City of Albany sponsored a “City of Albany Bikeshare Feasibility Study” completed in 2013. In the summer of 2014, CDTC sponsored 1-week bikeshare pilots in the Cities of Albany, Saratoga Springs, Schenectady, and Troy, which saw a combined approximately 250 uses, 900 rides, and 1800 in-person inquiries.

In early 2015, CDTC held a Bikeshare Symposium with about 80 representatives of potential program collaborators, such as Skidmore College, SEFCU, and the Golub Corporation. At this daylong meeting, attendees learned about “Benefits of Bikeshare in Smaller Markets” from Alta Planning+Design, Skidmore College’s Bikeshare Program Buffalo Bikeshare’s operations, and Motivate’s operation of such bikeshare systems as those in New York City and Boston.

CDTC has worked with partners and collaborators to form a Bikeshare Task Force to coordinate system planning. This includes all four Cities, CDTC, the Capital District Transportation Authority, and numerous other entities with specific interest in one or more of the above Cities.

The Task Force developed a Request for Expressions of Interest for bikeshare providers in order to clarify the options to bring a bike share system to the region. Task Force members reviewed the results in the Fall of 2015, and are now working on a formal Request for Proposals for bikeshare vendors.
**Calendar**

Please call CDTC to confirm

12/03/15  CDTC Policy Board @ 3:00 PM, CDTC Office
12/08/15  CDTC Bicycle-Pedestrian Advisory Committee @ 9:00 AM, CDTC Office
12/10/15  CDTC Linkage Forum @ 9:30 AM, CDTC Office
12/17/15  Clean Cities Quarterly Meeting @ 10:00 AM, CDTC Office
01/06/16  CDTC Planning Committee @ 9:30 AM, CDTC Office
01/12/16  CDTC Bicycle-Pedestrian Advisory Committee @ 9:00 AM, CDTC Office
01/20/16  CDTC Freight Advisory Committee @ 9:30 AM, CDTC Office
02/03/16  CDTC Planning Committee @ 9:30 AM, CDTC Office
02/09/16  CDTC Bicycle-Pedestrian Advisory Committee @ 9:00 AM, CDTC Office
03/02/16  CDTC Planning Committee @ 9:30 AM, CDTC Office
03/08/16  CDTC Bicycle-Pedestrian Advisory Committee @ 9:00 AM, CDTC Office
03/23/16  CDTC Linkage Forum @ 9:30 AM, CDTC Office
03/29/16  CDTC Policy Board @ 3:00 PM, CDTC Office

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**Editing and Layout: Carrie Ward**

Comments and requests to be added or deleted from the mailing list or to receive the newsletter electronically are welcome and should be sent to:

newsletter@cdtcmpo.org