

# STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

## [1] PRO-ACTIVELY PLAN VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

While recognizing that land use decisions are made locally, provide a regional framework to achieve regional goals. Maintain and increase proactive regional and local land use and transportation planning efforts. Emphasize consideration of potential impacts of development *before* specific projects are proposed so developers know what is expected. Use planning to focus growth to reinforce existing and create new mixed use, vibrant neighborhoods that are efficient to serve with transportation. Recognize and address situations where transportation design or use is incompatible with the surrounding neighborhood. Design projects that are sensitive to the communities through which they traverse. Improve site and access design practice to better accommodate pedestrians, bicycles, goods movement, transit, and auto access.

### Expected Benefits

Improvements are most noticeable in overall quality of life. Proactive planning results in improvements in compatibility between traffic and development and more sensitive placement of development (avoidance of agricultural and open space areas, and minimal disruption of adjoining houses and businesses. Continuing and expanding these efforts will be essential for protection of transportation investments.

There are many benefits to making the Capital District a vibrant place. There is a growing body of evidence that regions that are "special" places -- where visitors and residents alike feel community pride and activity -- are more likely to be strong economic regions as well. The nature of work is changing away from manufacturing towards technology and service intensive industries. Information-intensive businesses can locate anywhere. Regions that attract such businesses will do so because people want to live there.

*"For an increasingly large share of the economy, a particular business does not have to be anywhere in particular. Among other things, this means that today, more than in the past, jobs can follow people rather than the reverse. In the most rapidly growing sectors, in fact, the critical factors are human intelligence and skill in the form of technical innovators and entrepreneurs. Therefore, businesses are more likely to locate where these people want to live. Thus, the changes in the nation's economy have made it much **more important** that cities link economic development and quality of life. Cities that are not livable places are not likely to perform important economic functions in the future. Enhancing livability, therefore, should be a central*

*objective in every city's economic transition strategy, and the elements of livability should be employed as economic development tools."*<sup>1</sup>

Furthermore, the kinds of things that are done to increase liveliness -- such as increased pedestrian activity using mixed land uses -- provide direct benefits to the overall transportation system. These benefits are improved access, accessibility, congestion relief and flexibility from improving the "fit" between transportation and adjoining land uses. Positive impacts to resource requirements and external effects are also evident. This is primarily because many of the specific actions that implement this strategy are aimed at improving the availability and desirability of non-auto modes. Correspondingly, making the Capital Region a more bicycle- and pedestrian-friendly place improves overall quality of life, which has positive spillover benefits for the economy.

*Improving quality of life enhances our economic position.*

Improving site and access design reduces accident occurrence and severity, total transportation system costs, and energy consumption. The transportation system *works* better if all modes are accommodated, and transportation is less disruptive to communities.

### **Implications**

There are both budgetary and institutional implications of a more integrated land use and transportation planning process. Much of this strategy is a change in approach or philosophy. As such, institutional barriers can be expected. A regional land use plan that provides a framework for local decision-makers is a cornerstone of implementing this strategy. Getting it done will require a substantial cooperative process involving CDRPC, the State Commission on the Capital Region, local governments, and extensive outreach to the business community and citizenry.

Budgetary impacts primarily involve a shift in priorities, not necessarily an increase in funding levels. However, an increase in funding for planning would make success more likely. CDTC has integrated land use and transportation planning in a number of corridor studies completed or now underway. Comprehensive land use planning at the local level can be further encouraged and integrated with transportation planning through cooperation with local communities. Funding for comprehensive planning at both the regional and local level are addressed in the Budget chapter.

*More comprehensive land-use planning will be required.*

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<sup>1</sup> Robert H. McNulty. *Quality of Life and Amenities as Urban Investment in Interwoven Destinies: Cities and the Nation*. Henry G. Cisneros, Editor. W. W. Norton & Company, New York. 1993. Page 213.

## Actions

### 1) Prepare and maintain a comprehensive Regional Development Plan (RDP).

Local governments make land use and development decisions in the Capital Region, often showing little concern about long-term regional impacts. Municipalities weigh the costs of development and supporting infrastructure against the benefits of the taxes generated. Where public opposition to development exists, developers seek locations with the least barriers, which may not be the most desirable locations from a regional perspective. The result can be that development threatens the community character of suburban and rural areas, while cities decline. Further, that lack of predictability in the development process can discourage economic development.

All four counties of the region have been suburbanizing -- measured by both households and employment. Saratoga has been the fastest growing County. These trends have led to increasing traffic congestion in the suburbs, and notably in the Northway corridor. The CDTC Land Use Model examined alternative land use and development scenarios in the Capital District and the results show that it will be difficult to change regional patterns dramatically. For example, it is highly likely that Saratoga County will continue to experience the fastest growth under any scenario. The analysis of the impacts of different development scenarios is further described in the Growth Futures task force report *Evaluation of the Transportation Impacts of Land Use and Development Scenarios*.

*It will be difficult to alter regional development patterns.*

With this in mind, the RDP should be updated in a cooperative fashion that builds on the *New Visions Plan* and process. CDRPC would be the lead agency. The RDP will guide continuing public and private investment and transportation policy.

#### Key Transportation-related Components of a RDP

##### *Regional Development Vision*

The RDP must take the *New Visions* discussion and advance it to a clearer definition of a broad regional vision. This includes work to confirm the interconnections and interdependence of the four counties and work to clarify how mutual benefits will be derived from growing as a region, rather than as 70+ municipalities. From a transportation perspective, the interdependence is indisputable and cooperation is essential.

*A win-win vision would present unprecedented opportunities for growth.*

The RDP must also build a win-win vision for all communities. This vision should recognize the region's unique geographic arrangement of four central cities with suburban development *between* them. The region's high quality of life, educated work force, many livable

neighborhoods, availability of under-used industrial land, strategic location, and high-quality transportation system are other positive attributes. The opportunities that a cohesive vision and development strategy would present to the region by are nearly unlimited.

### *Economic Development and Urban Reinvestment*

Transportation investment can play a significant role in facilitating economic health and growth in the region. The RDP must identify a cohesive regional economic policy that leverages the strengths of the region in competing in a global marketplace. At the same time, the historic strengths of this region -- its cities -- are at risk. The RDP must also incorporate a clear message regarding how these communities can survive and prosper in the 21st Century. The *New Visions* effort positions CDTC to use transportation investment as a tool both for regional economic development and for urban revitalization.

Transportation benefits would accrue from more intense urban development. However, transportation policies alone will not stimulate urban reinvestment -- many other policies would be necessary. Many factors can be brought to bear to support the community quality of life in the central cities, inner suburbs, outer suburbs, small cities and villages, and rural towns of the Capital District. Strategies to reinvest in the region's cities and urban areas preserve community quality of life not only for the cities, but for the suburbs and rural towns as well. Transportation strategies are essential to pursue, but must be coordinated with other regional development policies to be most effective. Regional goals of compact development and optimal use of existing industrial land can be fostered by encouraging freight-intensive industries to locate along active rail lines.

### *Transit as a Tool*

There is an important relationship between land use patterns and transit. Investigation into the feasibility of fixed guideway transit options for the Capital District pointed to the paramount importance of a coordinated approach. Major transit investments can be a tool to encourage reinvestment in urban areas, but only if a regional land use and development vision includes additional supporting policies. The development of a comprehensive RDP will allow the Capital District to preserve and enhance its existing urban form, quality of place, and economic competitiveness.

*"The simple fact of the matter is that the Capital District cannot be a legitimate, growing urban area without a strong public transit system."*

Dennis Fitzgerald, Capital District Business Review, 6/3/96

### *Understanding Location Decisions*

Multimodal transportation investments can support the location of high tech and service industry firms in the Capital District, but only if a better understanding of decision-making factors is cultivated. A survey that identifies the requirements of firms regarding proximity to urban and suburban centers and industrial parks, arterial access needs, and transit needs should be part of updating the Regional Development Plan. Knowledge of the importance to firms of future investments in the Albany International Airport, Amtrak stations, high speed rail and/or Maglev, the Port of Albany, Selkirk Yards, and other intermodal facilities will help guide regional investment priorities. Knowledge of private sector requirements for technological innovations such as telecommuting and satellite office facilities is also important. The relative importance of non-transportation factors such as housing, education, and corporate and personal taxes need to be brought into the equation. Armed with this information, projects and strategies can be identified that best support and attract the location of high tech and service industry firms in the region.

### *Benefit Sharing*

Mechanisms to share the economic benefits (and costs) of regionally significant development projects regionally would encourage cooperation between local governments for "the good of the region". The State Commission on the Capital Region explored methods to "regionalize" various functions -- ranging from solid waste disposal to medical services to land use planning. A number of mechanisms have been implemented in other regions, including regional property tax sharing, shared-cost arrangements for consolidated purchasing, and corridor impact fees or assessment districts. Use of federal transportation funds for projects of regional significance can be viewed as a form of cost sharing and can be explored as a basis for benefit sharing. Further dialogue regarding these (and other) mechanisms will help the Capital Region function more as a region. A simple first step would be a policy to locate civic functions and buildings within the urban service area.

*"In place of destructive competition between cities, suburbs, and rural areas for private investment, the United States must establish a coordinated regional approach to economic development. The goal is to make sure that regional infrastructure is provided in the most efficient and timely manner. Decisions to grant private land development rights must be made at the regional level in order to tie them to planned infrastructure improvements and environmental concerns. Only a planned metropolitan development effort is capable of avoiding inter-jurisdictional tax competition, thereby strengthening the hand of local governments to collect tax revenues for critical public investments. A regional approach will maximize the efficiency of this public investment, thereby lowering the costs of living and the costs of doing business."<sup>2</sup>*

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<sup>2</sup> Elliott D. Sclar and Walter Hook. *The Importance of Cities to the National Economy in Interwoven Destinies: Cities and the Nation*. Henry G. Cisneros, Editor. W. W. Norton & Company, New York. 1993. Page 77.

There was a consensus within the *New Visions* Growth Futures task force that a Regional Development Plan (RDP) will require cooperation and dialogue among municipalities, as well as respect for community goals and values. Public support for a RDP is essential. Both the *New Visions* and State Commission on the Capital Region processes have demonstrated that there is positive support from the public for such a plan.

### Impacts

The impacts of the regional land use vision are positive across a variety of performance measures, including economic cost. Although the benefits are very high, implementation of

*A regional approach to land use has significant benefits -- but will be very hard to implement.*

the regional land use vision will be difficult, and the task of building public support and cooperation among municipalities will be a challenge. Access to transit and other modes would be supported by encouraging development to occur in urbanized areas near arterials with transit service. The urban reinvestment scenario tested by

the Growth Futures task force resulted in an 8 percent increase in trips considered transit accessible in the afternoon peak hour in year 2015. The scenario would also increase the number of trips that can be made by walking and cycling by virtue of locating more development in closer proximity to complementary uses. Accessibility in the region would increase by modest amounts. The largest travel-time savings under the urban reinvestment scenario were found in the Northway corridor, where travel-time savings of 5 minutes would be achieved in the afternoon peak direction. Infill and redevelopment of urban areas and compact development would moderately relieve regional congestion. The urban reinvestment strategy decreased PM vehicle hours of excess delay by 10 percent. The benefits would be most noticeable in suburban towns and the Northway corridor.

A regional land use vision provides significant support for economic growth by making this region attractive to developers. The protection and strengthening of community "livability" of the Capital District will enhance this region's competitive position into the 21st century. A regional land use vision would have traffic safety and energy benefits. Economic cost would include modest planning and implementation costs that would be offset by benefits to governments: user and societal cost savings could exceed those in the transportation sector. Air quality impacts would be moderately positive. Open space outside of the Urban Service Area (see below) would be protected through infill and redevelopment. Areas with insufficient water and sewer infrastructure would be protected from development that threatens groundwater resources.

*Resource requirements are lower and open space is protected where urban areas are healthy.*

In combination with other CDTC transportation - land use policies and arterial management actions, a regional development vision would have dramatic benefits to the highway and land use compatibility index. Residential land use conflict and arterial land access conflict in developing corridors would be minimized.

There is evidence from other areas, such as the Connecticut River Valley and Portland, Oregon, that regional solutions to regional problems provide regional benefits. Working together, regions *can* improve economic competitiveness by improving quality of life, using transportation improvements as a lever. It can be done here, too.

Efforts to define the form of the RDP began with CDRPC's 1999 interpretation of satellite imagery to identify suburban land use changes over the period 1986-1997. Current work to examine parallel changes in the established urban areas will provide a basis for regional discussions regarding the most effective product for CDRPC to provide to local communities.

## 2) Establish an Urban Service Area.

An Urban Service Area encourages new commercial and residential development to locate in areas with adequate water, sewer, and transportation infrastructure. Increased activity can be

*Urban reinvestment makes the entire region work better.*

absorbed there due to the extensive street network and public services, including transit. A starting point in drawing Urban Service Area boundaries in the Capital Region would be those adopted in the 1978 RDP, updated with information from the 1990 Census and the Saratoga

Sewer District in Saratoga County. The Urban Service Area can be extended to include areas that already have infrastructure in place; but further study and extensive collaboration with local government is necessary to specifically map the boundaries.

The Urban Service Area with urban reinvestment scenario provides significant protection for community quality of life. It keeps the central cities vital;

*Future economic competitiveness will derive from quality of life considerations.*

protects suburban character and prevents the suburbs from being overwhelmed by development. Rural character is protected by preventing suburbs from expanding. Reducing the cost and increasing the efficiency of development by using existing infrastructure encourages economic

development. However, restricting development locations may increase the cost of new houses incrementally by increasing land value and mitigation costs.

*We have a strong foundation of walkable mixed-use communities.*

The Capital Region is presented with an opportunity to build upon a strong base of walkable, mixed land use development in the cities and along transit corridors linking these cities. Private sector investment (supported by public policies) in development along traditionally strong transit

corridors and potentially strong corridors would help constrain the growth in travel associated with new economic activity. This effectively increases the size of the transit market (the number of trips that can safely and conveniently use the transit system) without requiring increases in overall development densities. There are opportunities for new large-scale mixed-use development along strong transit corridors.

Use of an Urban Service Area does not mean that safety, pavement, and bridge conditions *outside* the area are ignored or given low priority. It simply means that public funding for transportation projects that encourage or accommodate development is focussed on areas within the agreed boundary. Rural areas depend on small local industries (farming, mining, lumber mills and logging, cottage businesses) which in turn depend on goods pick-ups and deliveries (milk trucks, UPS, etc.). Poor roads can create problems for these small businesses and increase the likelihood of their failure. Farm failures increase suburbanization of rural areas by making land available for subdivisions. Lack of local employment means that residents must travel to the cities and inner suburbs to find jobs, further exacerbating traffic congestion.

It is important to provide for basic rural transportation needs while preserving rural features such as hamlets, villages, farmland and open space. Transportation improvements appropriate for rural areas will be identified as part of defining an Urban Service Area, including appropriate design standards for rural roads. Guidelines will be developed for the creation of roadway plans for rural towns, villages or hamlets. Driveway distances, speed limits, roadway maintenance and improvements, pavement widths, and customized design guidelines can be designated in such plans. These designations would be specific to the different classifications of roadways included in the rural town, including principal and minor arterials, major and minor collectors and local roads. Many localities have required developers to build new subdivision roadways to design standards that raise expectations for widening and paving of other town roads, threatening the rural character of the town.

*Rural needs are distinct  
and require their own  
guidelines.*

Rural areas have traditionally been well served by a network of "farm-to-market" roads in the Capital District. If growth is successfully concentrated in already dense areas through transportation investment policy, these roads will be able to continue to function at acceptable levels of service.

### **3) Provide funding for and staff participation in community-based planning.**

*For CDTC's plans and programs to be successfully implemented, a cooperative relationship with local government and operating agencies is required.*

A coordinated land use/transportation planning process at the community and corridor levels provides a framework for predictable development consistent with community goals. Cooperative studies with local governments are the backbone of CDTC's previous planning efforts and an essential part of future efforts to develop a regional vision. CDTC is not an implementing agency -- it has no land use powers, operates no transit service, and is not responsible for maintaining the roads or bridges. For CDTC's plans and programs to be successfully implemented, a cooperative relationship with local government and operating agencies is required. The *New Visions* Principles call for a land use management program or agreement to exist for any highway capacity expansion. Consideration of a transportation project's consistency with local, corridor and regional comprehensive plans has historically been and will continue to be an important part of the TIP project selection process.

Contractual arrangements for cooperative planning efforts are either underway or completed in

- Clifton Park (Master Plan)
- Rotterdam (Burdeck Street)
- Bethlehem (Master Plan)
- Niskayuna (Balltown Road)
- Glenville (Route 50)
- Colonie (Albany International Airport/Wolf Road area)
- Halfmoon (East-west corridor)
- West Avenue in Saratoga Springs (corridor management initiative)
- the Albany Pinebush (environmental studies)
- Washington Avenue (corridor management initiative), and
- Brunswick (Route 7)

CDTC is committed to these studies and plans, and participating in community-based, corridor-level land use and transportation plans in other corridors.

The following components of transportation and land use planning will be encouraged:

- Adoption by local municipalities of a transportation element in their local comprehensive plans that is consistent with the *New Visions* Regional Transportation Plan.
- Use of official maps by local municipalities to show present and proposed future roads within their boundaries that are consistent with their comprehensive plans. These maps could also identify
  - ◆ the functional class of existing roadways and proposed improvements;
  - ◆ conflicts between the functional classification of roads and adjacent land uses; and
  - ◆ transportation mitigations, including alternative land uses that minimize traffic conflicts.

These maps would be incorporated into a regional transportation map that would reflect local, corridor and regional considerations. Appropriate arterial corridor management plan map elements (such as the location of future service roads and road expansions) can also be incorporated into the local official map.

- Use of existing state enabling legislation encourages municipalities to join to adopt a comprehensive plan and land use regulation.

- Use of comprehensive plans to relate the effect of growth-inducing capital improvements for water and sewer in the public facilities component of the comprehensive plan to their impact on existing and future road capacities.
- Incorporation of arterial management strategies into corridor plans and in local site plans to mitigate land use/road function conflicts. Corridor management plans identify and implement corridor-specific conflict reducing measures such as installation of service or frontage roads, sidewalks, bike lanes or paths, driveway consolidation, and transit accommodation.
- Securing easements for conflict reducing measures, such as service roads and shared driveways, as part of development mitigation for traffic impacts.
- Incorporation of the findings of the transportation element of the comprehensive plan into local regulations which
  - ◆ allow a greater mix of complementary residential and commercial uses along arterials;
  - ◆ encourage street layout and site design that supports a pedestrian scale and transit access;
  - ◆ avoid arterial conflict; and
  - ◆ promote arterial access management.

Mixed-use development, in which shopping or office development is located adjacent to or interspersed with homes, creates many short trips that can be completed by foot or by bike.

- Use of such innovative planning tools as residential density bonuses, pre-platting, and land readjustment to create desirable development patterns. A density bonus could be provided for development that is close enough to arterials for transit and pedestrian access, and provides amenities such as sidewalks and transit accommodation.
- Encouraging mixed use development within the urban service area. Mixed-use development can be encouraged by zoning that allows commercial activity in or near residential areas. Greater use of planned unit development processes allows and encourages combinations of retail, office and residential development within a single development. Use of planned unit development procedures allows careful treatment of site design and protection of open space in the development of large tracts of land.
- Requiring pedestrian linkages between adjacent parcels and shared parking lots, particularly when the uses are complementary in terms of time-of-day use. Such linkages have been shown to encourage walking in place of driving. For example, the service road connection between Windsor Plaza and Computer Park West in the Wolf Road corridor provides access to nearly

100 walkers during the lunch hour that would otherwise have made the trip by car. The linked parking lots between the *Barnes and Noble* bookstore and *Bed Bath and Beyond* work well and encourage patrons to visit both stores in a single trip.

- In rural towns, development that is in harmony with the town's rural character is fostered by community-supported comprehensive plans. Comprehensive plans created with broad-based community input ensure that the entire community recognizes and uses the plan. Rural development must be focused in hamlets and villages in order to prevent suburban sprawl. Villages and hamlets with adequate community water and/or sewers will encourage denser development and allow cost-effective provision of services. Locating small essential businesses such as service stations, post offices, small groceries, and medical offices in hamlets and villages provides local employment and services while reducing driving distances. Some people may even be able to walk to these places, if sidewalks are provided.

CDTC's cooperative planning and Regional Corridor Management Initiative (an 80/20 challenge grant program) will be continued indefinitely. In 2000, CDTC established a new Community and Transportation Linkage Program, funding nearly \$500,000 of coordinated local-regional transportation-land use planning across the region.

#### **4) Develop access management plans for all priority network arterials.**

A common approach to address corridor traffic circulation and safety concerns is to resolve driveway access issues on a case-by case basis. The result allows proposed development and lot widths to essentially dictate the spacing of driveways along a roadway. Ideally, such issues should be addressed within the context of a corridor-wide access management that integrates land use and transportation planning objectives along the entire route.

*Corridor planning is not a new concept - many local examples exist.*

During 1990, CDTC carried out a pilot study on one arterial corridor - NY 7 through Colonie and Niskayuna - to define methods for maintaining through traffic functions on major highways challenged by local development. After completing traffic and land use inventories, traffic forecasts were prepared and alternative management actions, including signal coordination and/or consolidation, provision of transit and pedestrian accommodations, and mixed land use design were examined for applicability and effect. An access management strategy for Route 7 was developed in conjunction with the Albany County Airport Area FGEIS and has the support of both NYSDOT and town officials. Similar plans have been prepared for the Wolf Road corridor in the town of Colonie and the West Avenue corridor in the City of Saratoga Springs. The West Avenue plan is more comprehensive because it also recommended zoning changes, established parking standards, and set site design guidelines. Several communities in the region have completed fully integrated transportation-land use plans, which include objectives for access control. A few communities routinely consider the impacts of driveway access in site plan review.

Similar studies should be completed for other critical corridors. Central Avenue/Route 5 has been elevated to a high priority for study because of freight service issues, numerous driveways, accidents and travel delay, as well as the fact that this corridor is a candidate for major transit investment. Special attention should also be given to former "farm-to-market" roads that are low to moderate density and residential in nature (although they may be zoned for higher densities than existing infrastructure can support).

Implementing this action will strengthen the relationship between transportation and land use planning and create a set of strategies and guidelines that will influence both land development and highway design, and protect previous highway system investments. Compatibility of the transportation investment with the community is elevated to a priority equivalent to moving traffic. Because of the uniqueness of each of the region's communities, arterial strategies are best examined on a case-by-case basis. The arterial management plans will be developed in cooperation with municipalities, the New York State Department of Transportation and county highway and planning departments

#### **5) Support local planning boards' consideration of the regional transportation impacts of development decisions.**

*"Traditionally, most American development decisions have been made at the community level, and many of the places that most of us know best are a product of thousands of local choices made for hundreds of personal and local reasons-- such as Let's buy a house and Let's start a business and Let's put up a new office center and Let's bring in some more tax dollars into the area. What is new about conventional post-interstate development is that a national decision to switch transportation systems has spread these same makes-sense-to-me-personally and makes-sense-to-us-locally development decisions across huge regional expanses, on the optimistic assumption that, whatever happened next, they would inevitably continue to produce the things that all people need, such as stable communities, cherished surroundings, and opportunities for full and fulfilling lives."<sup>3</sup>*

This has not always been the case. Local planning boards, through education, increased proactive land use planning, and the adoption of a regional "vision", must increase the consideration the regional impacts of local development decisions. These local decisions impact not only the transportation system, but many other aspects of regional quality of life as well. The normal development review process, which follows the environmental review process, does not easily facilitate a meaningful examination of the potential regional impacts of projects being locally reviewed. Even when state agencies are involved in such review, or coordinated review occurs, it is not guaranteed that a broader look will be taken.

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<sup>3</sup> Tony Hiss. *The Experience of Place*. 1990. Vintage Books, A Division of Random House. Page 131.

*Local agencies need tools to enhance their ability to think regionally.*

CDTC, NYSDOT, CDTA, CDRPC, the Albany County Airport Authority and other state and regional agencies need to focus on providing local agencies with tools that will enable such consideration. An outreach program that promotes access management principles and concepts and the routine incorporation of transit, bicycle, and pedestrian accommodation will be developed. An educational program will demonstrate the public safety and capacity linkages of arterial corridor land use decisions and promote greater consideration of *New Visions* principles. The program would be aimed at neighborhood and community groups, planning boards, public works and safety officials, the development and business community, and other interested groups. The following components are suggested:

- Ideas on "what can be done" can be found in CDTC's *Make Your Community More Bicycle- and Pedestrian-Friendly* brochure, the Federal Highway Administration's *Selecting Roadway Design Treatments to Accommodate Bicycles* report, and the Florida Department of Transportation's *Walkable Communities* report. The Arterial Corridor Management task force assembled a similar library of materials. These easy-to-use materials can be distributed to local planning boards, highway agencies, community groups, developers, and others to promote use of access management techniques.
- Sponsor periodic workshops similar to the one sponsored by the Arterial Management task force in May 1996. Such workshops provide a forum to disseminate information about tools and techniques, while encouraging a continuing dialogue between the local planning and development community, and regional and state transportation officials regarding access, multimodal issues, and community compatibility.
- Foster continued communication and coordination between local and state transportation officials in addressing corridor and site-specific access issues to facilitate development of workable solutions. Such communication will serve to elevate community compatibility concerns in the project development process.
- Form a working group to build upon and advance the technical review of arterial management guidelines and sidewalk warrants initiated by the *New Visions* task forces. Many areas requiring further detailed consideration have been identified, including the need to develop a set of guidelines that can adequately accommodate the differences in land use character encountered in various parts of the region. This group should also track progress on access management research and suggested standards currently being developed by the Transportation Research Board (TRB) at the federal level.
- Create an awards program to recognize exemplary regional projects and plans, perhaps in conjunction with established professional groups in the region.

## 6) Improve site design practices.

Municipal land use and zoning policies strongly influence the efficiency of the region's arterials and highways. Each community should embrace site designs that creates a coordinated pattern of land use that limits access to major roadways, is transit friendly, and supports pedestrian circulation. A well-planned corridor will have concentrations of development at specific centers and areas of free-flowing traffic between these centers. A coordinated pattern of land use and transportation can minimize turning movement conflict, improve automobile, transit, and pedestrian access to activity centers, and help prolong the life of the roadway.

Building on good planning process, a review process that begins with an informal meeting and concept review allows planners to advise the developer regarding information needed to process the application. This may include state and local permit requirements and special aspects of the site. The concept review provides the developer with early feedback on a proposal, before the site plan has been drafted. The development review process is often segregated between the community (site plan process) and the highway agency (driveway permit). Issues are often identified too late in the process, frustrating technicians, public officials, and developers. A coordinated land use transportation planning process includes issues not traditionally considered, such as transit, pedestrian safety, and access management, and ensures that all pertinent issues are considered, thus avoiding unnecessary analyses, costs, and delays.

*Developers need early  
input.*

Prior to approval of residential subdivisions or commercial developments along arterial highways and major collector roads, NYSDOT, CDTC, and local governments should cooperatively analyze the traffic impact of each proposal. The objective of the analysis would be to:

- 1) limit the number of vehicle conflict points;
- 2) separate vehicle conflict areas;
- 3) reduce vehicle deceleration requirements; and
- 4) remove turning vehicles and queues from the travel lanes.

Access control that accomplishes these objectives at each new land development would minimize traffic conflict, crashes, and delay.

Furthermore, in transit corridors, the development proposal should afford or enhance access to the transit system. If there is no existing transit service, but the site is zoned for high intensity uses, then the site plan should not preclude the potential for future transit access. In general, transit service works best when it is considered as an integral part of the design and site plan. Post-development modifications are more costly, less effective, and in some cases, impossible to implement. Specifically, transit's effectiveness can be improved significantly by:

- Locating buildings closer to the street and the majority of the parking in the back;

- Providing turning radii that meet bus requirements;
- Locating bus stops and shelters in locations that are convenient to customers and integrating them into the architectural design of the development;
- Providing for bike racks or lockers at shelters on site, allowing for bike "park-and-ride" at these locations;
- Incorporating park-and-ride parking spaces that allow the site's use as a transit and carpool terminal;
- Providing safe and effective pedestrian movement from the street to the site and from building to building on site;
- Where needed, providing service roads or other connections to allow pedestrians, bikes, buses and other vehicles to visit adjacent sites without using the arterial; and
- Designing subdivisions and shopping centers to facilitate pedestrian access to transit stops.

*Retrofit of existing sites is as important as new design.*

While these actions are particularly suited to new retail locations, they are also applicable to commercial development and large residential development. It is also clear from recent activity in the Capital District that there will be frequent opportunities to redesign existing sites as they expand or change use.<sup>4</sup> Incremental costs for transit, bike, and pedestrian accommodations are minimal if addressed during site development or highway project development. Some costs to the business community will be offset by additional development opportunities created by increased land and transportation efficiency. Retrofitting existing developed corridors will be more difficult and costly, but can be accomplished either in conjunction with site redevelopment or as part of routine public highway reconstruction projects.

Cooperation among all parties, including attention to these issues by permitting agencies such as NYSDOT and the local municipality is critical to the success of this action. This can be facilitated if municipalities require formal site review of all major projects and provide for input from CDTA, CDTC, NYSDOT and others during the review process.

### **7) Elevate consideration of transportation alternatives in siting facilities that primarily serve elderly and handicapped populations.**

Facilities that primarily serve the elderly and handicapped, if located in places where fixed route accessible bus service is available and usable, provide essential mobility to these populations at the least public cost. Currently, special use facilities are frequently constructed in places where land is inexpensive, with no forethought regarding the availability of transit service or the ability of residents to independently access basic services. Even if bus service is available, logistics like providing ample space for bus turn-arounds, allowing for pedestrian access, and providing pedestrian amenities are often ignored.

<sup>4</sup> Many established urban and suburban sites in the Capital District have expanded or changed use in recent years. These include Colonie Center, Crossgates Mall, Latham Circle Mall, Westgate Plaza, downtown Albany (Knickerbocker Arena, KeyCorp Towers), downtown Schenectady (Broadway Center), downtown Saratoga Springs (new library). Each of these actions provides an opportunity to improve orientation to transit and to improve pedestrian accommodations.

*Facilities serving special populations need to locate in areas providing mobility at least public cost.*

Local governments can dissuade agencies that primarily serve the mobility impaired population from locating their facilities in places where bus and paratransit service does not operate by requiring those agencies to provide their own transportation for their clients. Local governments can also require developers to use site designs for special use facilities that are transit and pedestrian friendly. As a

means toward this end, municipal staff and planning boards can be educated with regard to special use site location guidelines, workshops on site design can be offered and outreach to the development community can take place.

CDTC has committed resources for completing a Site Design Handbook, but has repeatedly deferred development of this due to other pressing planning efforts. For significant changes in site design practices to occur in the Capital District, additional commitment, outreach and education must occur. Local governments will also need to invest staff time for education of their policy boards with regard to land use and transportation integration issues. New York State's site selection hearing criteria under the Padavan Law sets minimum spacing of group homes of one-half mile. One consequence of the application of this law is the siting of group facilities in areas that are very hard to serve with transit. This Law should be reviewed and possibly amended.

## **8) Improve delivery access for commercial vehicles.**

Delivery access is crucial to goods movement. At new developments, consideration starts with basic site design. CDTC's Site Design Handbook will provide guidance on preferred delivery access. All outreach to and education of Planning Boards and elected officials will include delivery access considerations.

Commercial parking programs in urban areas resolve persistent double parking violations and allow timely local deliveries. Painted "yellow zones", coupled with increased enforcement, provision of designated employee parking areas, and signs noting commercial delivery hours and limits have been successfully implemented in other areas -- benefiting shopkeepers, customers, and truck drivers. Implementation of commercial parking programs will require education through documentation of successful programs and the formulation of Capital District guidelines.

*Local business benefits when deliveries are accommodated properly.*

Targeted infrastructure improvements to improve delivery access include service roads in commercial areas, removal of clearance or other barriers on access routes, and implementation of arterial corridor management in areas with growing congestion. Targeted infrastructure improvements can be funded through the existing TIP process, through public/private partnerships, and through local infrastructure programs.

**9) Maintain a program for transportation projects directed explicitly at community enhancement or regional economic development.**

There has been considerable community support and creative thinking on transportation projects as catalysts for urban revitalization and economic development. In preparation for this outcome, the *New Visions* budget established a category for these types of projects.

Community enhancement and economic development can be fostered both by advancing new transportation projects and through sensitive execution of routine maintenance and reconstruction. A serious investment in pedestrian accommodation will have tremendous spillover benefits in urban revitalization and suburban livability. Coupled with sensible design policy that limits the width and speeds on urban thoroughfares, selective transportation infrastructure investments can make the Capital District a better place to live. Projects that promote economic development in places where supportive infrastructure exists help the region as a whole.

*Transportation projects are tools that advance other goals.*

Reconnecting with the waterfront along the Hudson and Mohawk Rivers is one big area where transportation projects can act as a catalyst for further enhancements. The Hudson River Valley Greenway Communities Council exists specifically to aid local communities in this effort. Continued partnership activities by municipalities with the Council will be integral to successful implementation of the *New Visions* Regional Transportation Plan. Specifically, transportation investments that provide access to and enhance urban waterfronts in the Capital District are needed. There are a number of existing plans that provide ideas for such projects including Capitalize Albany, the Eastern Gateway Canal Corridor Plan, Schenectady 2000 and the Schenectady Master Plan effort and the South Troy Waterfront effort.

New highways, particularly bypasses of existent activity centers, are not the thrust of this program. However, there may be instances where a bypass could enhance community cohesiveness by removing trucks from residential areas. A new road might support economic development in targeted areas. Two such examples are the Selkirk Bypass and the I-90 Phase 2 Connector to the RPI Technology Park. The criteria for future evaluation of such projects will be explicitly discussed as the program is further developed.

**[2] TREAT ALL MODES FAIRLY IN THE CAPITAL PROGRAM**

The original *New Visions* Plan called on CDTC to review and revise project evaluation criteria for capital projects as necessary to ensure that all transportation projects reflect *New Visions* principles, strategies and budgets.

**Expected Benefits**

A comprehensive re-examination of the project evaluation criteria used at CDTC, NYSDOT, and CDTA was identified as a necessary implementation step in making *New Visions* a reality. Benefits from so doing are seen across a variety of

*New Visions policies need to be applied to project evaluation criteria.*

performance areas. The main changes that were perceived to be needed are ones that better capture the external impacts of transportation decisions -- regional quality of life, compatibility of transportation with adjacent land use, and support for the economy.

### **Implications**

Budgetary priorities will need to be reassessed, although there will not necessarily be an increase in resource requirements. Because of this, a continuation of the consensus building approach of *New Visions* will be very important. The Budget chapter includes more detail on priorities -- this strategy makes the connection directly to the capital program.

### **Actions**

#### **10) Direct transportation improvements and services to support *New Visions* concepts.**

*The TIP is CDTC's primary implementation mechanism for New Visions.*

Flexible federal funding is expected to continue in coming years. The challenge of assigning priority to competing uses of scarce resources may become greater in the future. Future federal programs may offer greater flexibility (through block grants and expanded project eligibility) at the same time that overall federal funding levels are

lowered to meet deficit reduction targets. CDTC's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is the vehicle through which federal highway and transit funds are assigned to particular projects. Since adoption of the New Visions plan, CDTC has reviewed its TIP project selection procedures, including its project *screening*, "fact sheet" *evaluation*, and *program development* to ensure consistency with *New Visions* concepts.

New evaluation and program development approaches resulted from the review, tying the TIP strongly to the New Visions Plan and resulting in a far different set of projects than would have been the case prior to the plan's adoption. CDTC will continue this linkage in the future.

#### **11) Provide funding for implementation of small, cost-effective improvements.**

Regional "set-asides" are currently used to provide traffic signals, pavement markings, bridge inspections, and other programs where specific locations are not determined at the time of programming. There are several other areas where such an approach may facilitate the implementation of small, cost-effective improvements.

##### **Spot Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvements**

Quick-turnaround identification and mitigation of small-scale obstacles to cycling and walking is desirable. The City of Seattle has a program that accomplishes this. Its Bike Spot Improvement Program uses postcards, made available to the public at bike shops, libraries and other locations, which people can send in to request anything from pavement sweeping to pothole

*The 1997-2002 TIP programmed this project and CDTC earmarked funds to multiple small projects in 2000.*

repairs, bike racks and trail extensions. A comparable program was established cost-effectively by CDTC.

### Replace Street and Highway Signs to Accommodate Older Drivers

Older people, because of the aging process, experience visual problems related to depth perception, visual field, visual acuity and glare sensitivity. Many of these people could continue to drive safely as they age with improvements in sign letter heights, sign reflectivity and improvements in stopping site distances.

A sign letter height standard of 40 feet to 1 inch (i.e. for every 40 feet of visibility distance needed to detect, read and react to a freeway guide sign, provide one inch of letter height) is needed. The current AASHTO standard is 50 feet to one inch. In addition, signs should be made of high performance retroreflective sheeting. Adopting a 3.5-second perception-to-reaction time in favor of the current 2.5-second standard in determining stopping sight distances would better accommodate older drivers.

In 1999, CDTC programmed two projects -- one in Albany County and one in the city of Albany -- to replace all regulatory signs with those that meet these criteria.

### Safety Concerns at High Conflict Locations

The regional highway inventory identifies roads with poor "Level of Compatibility". While some of these locations will require corridor-wide planning and improvements, others could experience significant improvements with small projects. Examples include small-scale traffic calming devices (speed tables or the like) on a residential street, turning prohibitions, and signal modifications.

## **12) Develop Class I bicycle facilities in major travel corridors of the region.**

There is a need to complement on-street bicycle accommodations with bike paths in major travel corridors to support recreational bike/hike activities -- and remove those trips from the road completely. Development of such facilities should follow an examination of potential use and collection of public input. Depending on the areas selected and the lengths of the project, there might be needs for separate ("Class 1") bike paths, shared bike/pedestrian paths, sidewalks and/or other facilities. In addition, accommodations "along the way," such as crosswalk markings, pedestrian signal phases and bike racks would be included. Development of completely separate facilities improves the regional bicycle and pedestrian travel environments. The long-term goal is to have such facilities in every county in the region.