

Transportation Improvement Program and Incentives for Local Planning

CDTC has been successful in funding 36 Linkage Program planning studies since 2000. Although a review of the status of the implementation phases of these efforts has yet to be undertaken, it can be assumed that many of the large scale recommendations have yet to be implemented due to the lack of funds for reconstruction of roadway corridors and other large scale smart growth projects. One option to implement projects from local planning efforts is to utilize federal transportation funds. Either priority can be given to projects that have come out of local planning efforts or federal funds can be set aside for small scale smart growth projects. Set asides and funding priority can be difficult in times of fiscal constraint but they can help provide an incentive for communities to pursue local planning.

New Visions Budget versus the Current TIP

In New Visions, a budget was generated to estimate what it would cost to implement the various actions and specific major investments identified in the plan. The various actions and major investments are grouped into 17 regional program categories in order to simplify the summary. The budget is a rough estimate and does not include activities outside of CDTC's traditional realm of highway and transit projects. For example, private funds related to mitigation fees (Colonie) or other public-private financing schemes are not included. Private costs for other items such as goods movement, rail operations or operating expenses for the port, airport or Amtrak are also not included.

CDTC has a stated policy approach to advancing desired improvements for system preservation versus desired improvements that are part of the full implementation of the New Visions actions. The policy approach is:

- (1) Assure that basic system preservation needs are met first;
- (2) Seek progress across all fronts whenever funding levels exceed the basic system preservation level; and
- (3) Pursue funding levels sufficient to permit full implementation of the entire plan of reasonable actions.

CDTC's budget plan shows assumptions of funding availability and identifies the level of improvements possible under both scenarios (see Figure 1).

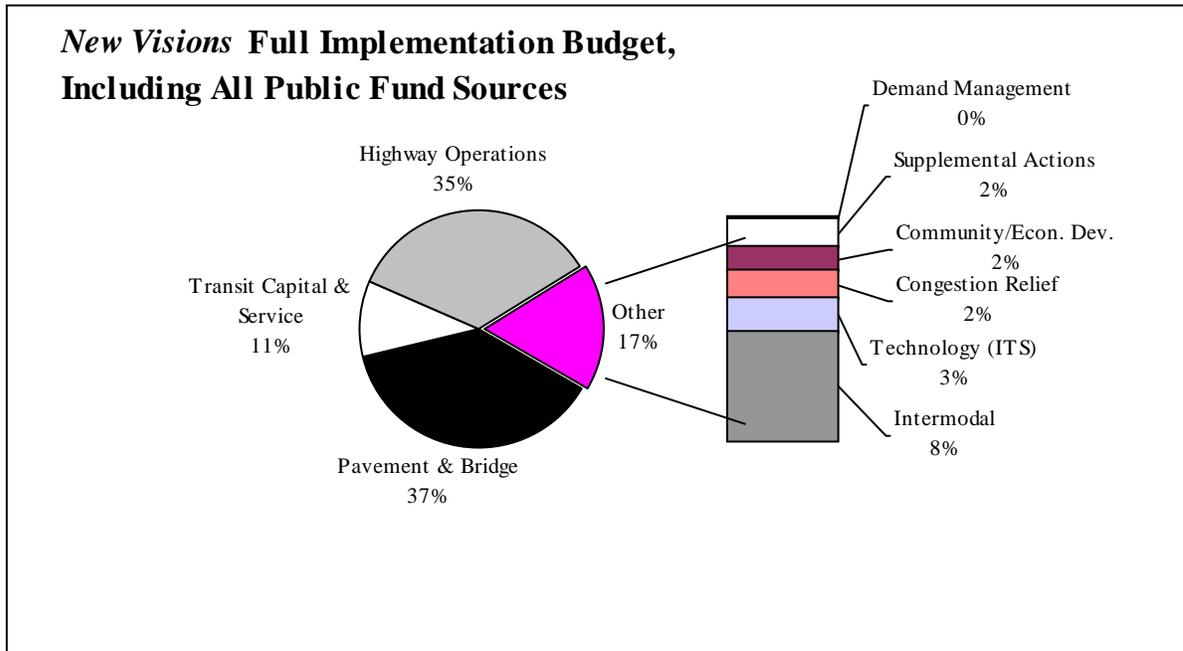
FIGURE 1: REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN BUDGET BY ELEMENT

		<i>basic</i>	<i>plus</i>	<i>total</i>		<i>Steady-state Funding</i>	
		System Preserve	Desired Improvements	Annual Average Need	Available Exclusive Funds	Comparable Progress Policy	Full Implementation Scenario
REGIONAL PROGRAMS¹							
1	Intermodal Facilities	10.638	30.457	41.095	39.600	40.392	41.095
2	Transit Infrastructure	5.956	5.535	11.491	10.285	10.924	11.491
3	Transit Service	38.000	3.860	41.860	41.860	41.860	41.860
4	ITS (Technology) and Traffic Infrastructure	2.578	7.672	10.250	2.050	6.642	10.250
5	ITS (Technology) and Traffic Operations	.715	1.825	2.540	0.375	1.682	2.540
6	Highway Rehab, Reconstruction and Redesign -- Priority Network	55.960	31.845	87.805	7.790	72.829	87.805
7	Highway Rehabilitation & Reconstruction – Other	15.000	0.250	15.250	15.250	15.250	15.250
8	Bridge Rehab & Reconstruction	62.000	20.100	82.100	31.092	73.494	82.100
9	Highway and Bridge Maintenance	171.800	2.500	174.300	174.300	174.300	174.300
10	Strategic Highway and Bridge Actions -- CMS-based (capacity)		10.277	10.277	1.341	6.074	10.277
11	Strategic Highway and Bridge Actions – Economic Development /Community Compatibility		8.712	8.712	4.315	6.644	8.712
12	Supplemental Goods Movement Accommodations		3.665	3.665	1.971	2.868	3.665
13	Supplemental Bike & Pedestrian Accommodations	0.275	2.343	2.618	1.2	1.951	2.618
14	Supplemental Access Management Actions		0.500	0.500	0.500	0.500	0.500
15	Supplemental Safety Actions	1.800	2.000	3.800	1.800	2.859	3.800
16	Demand Management	0.240	1.360	1.600	0.300	0.989	1.600
17	Integrated Planning & Outreach	3.400	0.210	3.610	2.640	3.511	3.610
SUBTOTAL		368.362	133.111	501.473	336.669	462.769	501.473

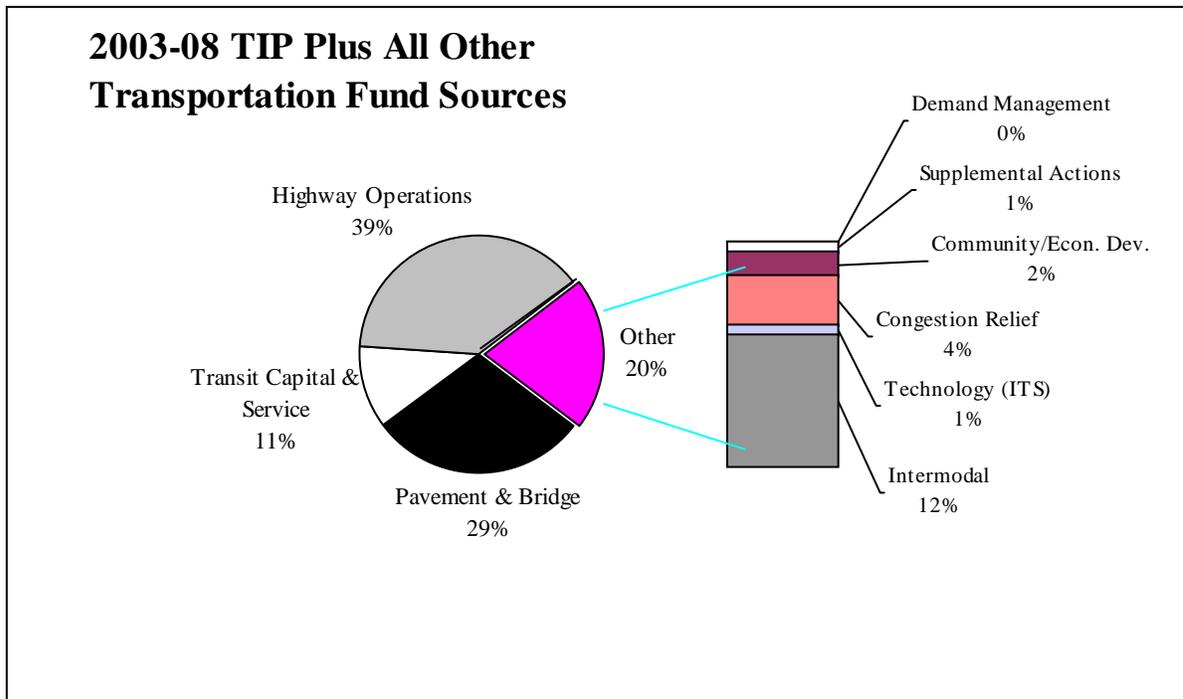
What has happened since this table was created for New Visions 2021 is that the transportation bond act in 2000 was not passed, reauthorization of TEA-21 has not occurred and New York State has not passed a state budget or added significant funds to state fund sources. All of this coupled with inflation in the highway construction industry has led to a situation where CDTC has been barely able to meet the steady-state funding scenario. Only a handful of new projects were added to the 2003-08 TIP and the expectation is that even less will be added to the 2005-10 TIP. That said, based on the broad New Visions budget categories, the TIP has largely mirrored what New Visions called for as shown in Figure 2.

¹ All values are in millions of 2000\$, annually over 21 years, 2000-01 to 2020-21, including all fund sources.

FIGURE 2: COMPARISON OF *NEW VISIONS* BUDGET TO THE 2003-08 TIP



Total funding is \$502M annually (20-year average from 2001 to 2021). The *New Visions* plan calls for total transportation spending to grow over time.



Total funding is \$437 M annually (5-year average from 2003 to 2008). The *New Visions* plan calls for total transportation spending to grow over time. Pavement work alone is 17% and bridge alone is 12%. Demand Management is 0.1%.

Implications for Providing Incentives

Funding Priority

As part of CDTC's evaluation process for TIP projects, the project screen is the most critical step with respect to local planning. The screening process for the TIP requires that a project meet certain criteria. The screening criteria are:

1. Consistency with TEA-21, and CDTC and local plans
2. Provision of local matching funds
3. Defined scope and timing
4. Meeting an identified need
5. Federal-aid eligibility

The Consistency with TEA-21, and CDTC and Local Plans criterion is the most vital criterion with respect to local land use planning. The definition for how a project is to be evaluated is described below. A project does not pass screen and will not be considered for funding unless it meets everything required under this criterion.

Regional Transportation Plan: Each proposed project was required to be consistent with the RTP. The relevant RTP was the *New Visions* Regional Transportation Plan, was adopted in March 1997. *New Visions* includes a set of 25 Planning and Investment Principles to guide capital programming, in addition to 10 strategies (with 43 implementing actions, long and short term). Consistency with these principles and strategies was required to insure *New Visions* implementation.

Major projects with system level impacts are not considered for TIP programming unless they are a recommended action from *New Visions* or a sub-area or corridor study. Some of these projects may be further subject to a Major Investment Study (MIS) in order to progress towards implementation.

All capacity increasing projects should be consistent with the Congestion Management System (CMS). CDTC has performed extensive analysis of existing congestion in the Capital Region, as documented in CDTC's *Metropolitan Congestion Management System: A Structured Approach to Addressing Congestion Issues in Regional Transportation Plan Development, Short-Range Programming and the Management System*, which was adopted by the CDTC in December of 1995. CDTC's priority is to address existing congestion problems, with projected future congestion being a lesser priority, subject to a "risk analysis" (See *New Visions* Congestion Management Principles for more information).

Boundary Compatibility: Each proposed project is required to be consistent/complimentary with the facility (or proposed facility) in the adjacent jurisdiction if the project is near or crosses a jurisdictional boundary.

Land Use Linkage: Linear capacity improvements are required to be linked to local land use management. To maximize the effectiveness of existing facilities, a plan or commitment to access management, construction of new local streets or provision of supplemental transit services must be in place prior to major capacity work.

Public and Sponsor Support: All projects are required to be consistent with community desires as documented in local land use plans or other policy documents, at public meetings, or through other applicable means.

Seven Planning Issues of TEA-21: ISTEA established sixteen planning factors to be considered in the development of the TIP. TEA-21 summarizes these into seven planning issues. All projects were required to address at least one of these factors, as listed below:

1. Support the economic vitality of the United States, the States and metropolitan areas, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency;
2. Increase the safety and security of the transportation system for motorized and nonmotorized users;
3. Increase the accessibility and mobility options available to people and freight;
4. Promote and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation and improve quality of life;
5. Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight;
6. Promote efficient system management and operation; and
7. Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system.

The screening process eliminates projects from consideration that do not have a connection to local land use planning if capacity issues are to be addressed in the project. The language regarding the connection to local land use planning could be strengthened to further connect local planning to project development.

Unfortunately, many projects currently on the TIP were already funded prior to ISTEA legislation and did not face the same level of scrutiny for local land use planning that projects competing for funding face today. With the current financial picture for the region limiting the number of new projects added to the TIP, it will be difficult for projects of merit to be added unless the funding situation changes or existing commitments are progressed.

Set-asides

Although the overall level of funding in the TIP has become increasingly constrained, it is clear that CDTC has made a commitment to make progress across all improvement initiatives. Many objectives are achieved in grand reconstruction projects such as Pearl Street in Albany or US 9 in Saratoga Springs. However, much is being achieved in smaller scale projects throughout the region.

In terms of regional set-asides, a number of smart growth supportive initiatives are already on the TIP. Some of these projects and their 2003-08 funding levels are:

RG 1 – Park and Ride Lots for Carpools (includes transit stops) \$1.5 M
RG 27 – Travel Demand Management \$2.6 M
RG 31 – Corridor Management Initiative (transit corridors) \$0.6 M
RG 38 – NY 5 ITS Transit Component (includes funds for BRT buses) \$4.4 M
RG 41 – Spot Improvement Program (bicycle and pedestrian projects) \$0.5 M
RG 96 – Recreational Trails Projects (administered by the NYS OPRHP) \$0.4 M

Based on this comprehensive group of available set-asides, in terms of subject, there does not appear to be the need for additional categories. However, additional funding for each could be of value, particularly for the SPOT Improvement Program. Projects were recently funded under the SPOT Improvement Program (Round 3) for a total of \$300,000 (\$240,000 federal, \$60,000 local). The 21 submissions had a total value of \$1.1 M with nearly \$830,000 requested in federal funds. Clearly the demands for the program outweighed the available resources by more than a 3 to 1 ratio and only 9 of the 21 submissions could be funded. If additional resources were available, programs such as this could be funded at a higher level.

A criterion that was not used in the selection process was whether or not a project came out of a planning study such as those in the Linkage Program. The evaluation criteria included eligibility, feasibility, magnitude of the transportation/safety benefit, credibility of cost estimates, cost effectiveness, if an “overmatch” was provided, if the project was in an EJ area and if the sponsor had received SPOT funds in the past.

Conclusion

CDTC currently has built in to its planning and programming processes a number of opportunities for projects to be funded that have developed from local planning efforts. Unfortunately, funding limitations and existing commitments reduce the opportunities for new initiatives to be funded. Although some minor tweaking of language could tighten some of the evaluation criteria for funding programs, the need for additional set-asides or prioritized funds may not be necessary.