

Concepts for Assisting Local Decision Making in a Regional Context

A Report from:

Working Group E of the
Capital District Transportation Committee's
Quality Region Task Force

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Introduction

The Capital District Transportation Committee's (CDTC) regional transportation plan New Visions has served as the point of reference for regional policy related to land use and transportation planning in the Capital Region. Originally adopted in 1997, the policies within New Visions have remained relevant and were re-affirmed with the adoption of New Visions 2025 in 2004.

The New Visions 2030 effort provides an opportunity to further explore issues of land use and transportation planning, particularly local decision making in a regional context. Working Group E was charged with the task of reviewing this issue, led by staff from CDTC and the Capital District Regional Planning Commission (CDRPC). Following several meetings, the Working Group developed this technical report to document current efforts, to articulate approaches to improve the capacity of municipal planning and approval processes and to improve the external support structure provided to local planners by CDTC and CDRPC.

What is the “Regional Context”?

There are numerous ways to define a region including the use of natural features, political boundaries, marketing territories and areas of economic influence. These “regions” have a variety of scales, often overlap and even result in different regulatory environments at the local level. Working Group E felt it was important to acknowledge the various definitions of a region as the Capital Region's area of influence can be far reaching. However, after a brief discussion the Working Group ultimately defined the region as the four counties served by CDTC and CDRPC. CDTC is the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and CDRPC is the regional advisory planning council serving the counties of Albany, Rensselaer, Saratoga and Schenectady.

Within the Capital Region, a wide variety of development patterns, densities, land uses and community character can be found in the 79 municipalities comprising it. Prior to the creation of Working Group E, the Quality Region Task Force (established in 2002 to articulate the issues related to the concept of a “quality region” for the Capital District) produced a discussion paper entitled “Pursuing Quality in the Capital Region” in 2003 (this paper can be found at www.cdtempo.org/rtp2030/2030.htm). The paper offers a thought provoking summary of regional issues, highlights challenges and opportunities to achieving a quality region and encourages their discussion. As part of this effort, the task force summarized some of the characteristics that define the Capital Region, both good and bad, as follows:

- Numerous small, older, traditionally-industrial urban centers.
- Suburban areas located primarily between these urban centers.
- An abundance of both underused land in older areas and undeveloped land in outlying areas.
- A strong home rule tradition.
- A high degree of auto-oriented mobility and yet a substantial number of households without vehicles.
- A stable but slow-growing economy.
- An increasingly diversified population.
- Growing concentrations of poverty in older urban areas.

The Quality Region Task Force also offered a draft definition of what a quality region might be for the Capital Region. The definition not only recognizes the characteristics that should be maintained and enhanced but considers those that should be changed and improved. At the same time, the definition emphasizes the need for quality throughout the Capital Region and the need for ensuring that benefits extend to all residents. In essence, to achieve a quality region, municipalities must work together and should recognize that their individual success is in many ways dependent upon the success of others. The draft definition of a quality region is:

A quality region develops and sustains healthy urban, suburban, and rural communities that function interdependently and readily adapt to change. A quality region creates economic, educational, social, cultural and recreational opportunities and provides safe neighborhood environments and housing choices for all; protects sensitive environmental resources; and fosters community identity and a “sense of place” in all parts of the region.

The work of the Quality Region Task Force is especially timely as there are growing concerns that uncoordinated, site-by-site “sprawl” development is threatening regional quality of life. Sprawl development reduces open space, increases traffic congestion and contributes to disinvestment in existing built-up areas, particularly in cities. These concerns are demonstrated by population loss in many of the region’s cities, increasing growth pressure on local towns and ever increasing interest in preserving open space. Whether perceived or real, this threat to regional quality of life coupled with the potential for a high tech economy bringing new jobs and people to the region supports the need for regional entities such as CDTC and CDRPC to promote regional thinking with respect to land use and transportation issues. The challenge is how to get there while respecting the local decision making authority of New York State communities.

Challenges to Planning in a Regional Context

There are many significant challenges to getting communities to think and act in the regional best interest. Several of these are beyond the control of CDTC and CDRPC, particularly institutional issues and the lack of a sense of urgency to pursue more regional thinking. A thorough review of these larger than regional issues was undertaken by New Visions Working Group D in the *Larger than Regional Policy Concepts Report* (this report can be found at www.cdcmpo.org/rtp2030/2030.htm). To provide some context for this discussion, a few of the more prominent challenges to planning in a regional context are articulated below.

Home Rule

The granting of home rule power to local governments by New York State gives local governments the authority to regulate the physical development of a municipality. That said, there are very few requirements or standards with respect to local planning (especially comprehensive planning) in New York, allowing municipalities that choose to plan to plan however they see fit. This can lead to inadequate planning processes, weak comprehensive plans, if they exist at all, a lack of coordination between municipalities and no real incentive to be pro-active in planning for the future. Although the state reserves the right to recall home rule

power in matters relating to overriding state or regional concern, this right has only been exercised occasionally with respect to land use.

Local Planning Board Members and Professional Staff

The view of planning as an exclusively local activity has resulted in a great burden being placed on local planners and Planning Board members. They not only have to understand and interpret state and local laws but must be creative in resolving difficult issues that development proposals can bring. This is challenging as Planning Board members are frequently appointed with no requirements as to their experience with planning and no required training for their very important role in the community. In addition, many communities lack a professional planning staff to assist with planning and development project review. Even communities that have a professional staff are at times limited to reacting to development proposals rather than thinking about comprehensive or other longer term planning initiatives, particularly in communities with frequent elected official turnover.

This reactive approach can lead to development that is uncoordinated, unattractive and inconsistent with the regional vision as not enough thought is given to the regional implications of projects. Lack of time and staff can also be a significant threat to the future of local communities. If rapid growth were to occur, many communities would be overwhelmed by the volume of proposals leading to choices that may not be in the regional best interest. Although several communities have improved their local planning efforts in recent years, there are others who have not yet bought into the idea that pro-active planning can make a difference.

Antiquated Zoning

The past lack of pro-active planning has also led to some communities having antiquated zoning and subdivision regulations and only a handful are now trying to update their codes. Zoning was initially created to separate land uses such as heavy industry from residential areas but has since evolved into a regulatory tool that can be overly complicated and can separate all uses from each other, regardless of the degree to which they negatively interact. This has resulted in many communities being forbidden by law to create walkable neighborhoods, mixes of shopping with residential areas and transit oriented development, all of which are viewed as examples of good smart growth planning techniques.

Limitations of Regional Planning

The home rule powers of New York State weaken the ability of regional entities such as CDTC, CDRPC and even counties to directly plan for the region as a whole. CDTC and CDRPC have *no direct* authority over land use and therefore *no direct* say in the local decision making process. Local governments are *not required* to follow New Visions principles and are *not required* to consult with CDTC or CDRPC on local land use or transportation planning. County planning is similarly limited in that it is generally considered advisory with a minimal coordinating role and no regulatory role in local land use planning. Counties have been given the authority to create a county wide comprehensive plan, a more limited form of regional planning, but even where a county comprehensive plan exists, municipalities are not required to

follow it. This results in missed opportunities for integrating regional principles into the local decision making process.

Regional Development Plan

The last regional development plan was completed by CDRPC in 1975 when funding was available through federal programs for such work. The plan was officially endorsed, not adopted, by the four counties in 1978. That subtle difference in language represents one of the underlying challenges in creating such a plan. Although a new regional development plan is still a recommended action in New Visions, the actual development of a plan is not likely. After reviewing this issue for CDRPC's recent Strategic Plan, it was determined that there is no longer a mandate by CDRPC's members to develop such a plan. However, CDRPC is actively engaged with CDTC in the development of New Visions 2030 through the Quality Region initiative. Although New Visions may not evolve into a true regional development plan, it will have regional land use policies and it will allow CDRPC to explore the implications of alternative growth and development scenarios for the region (as part of New Visions Working Group A at www.cdtempo.org/rtp2030/2030.htm).

Incremental Development

Incremental development can threaten regional quality of life through sprawl development, particularly since the region has not added much to its population in the last ten years. A number of publications have focused on this issue and their key conclusion is that land in the Capital Region is being consumed at a much greater rate than the population is growing. This implies that land is being developed for reasons other than population growth such as tax base enhancement (i.e. luring businesses from one community to another) and an overall shifting of the regional population from city to suburb, particularly families. In addition, land is being developed at much lower densities than in the past leading to organizations such as Smart Growth America ranking the Capital Region negatively with respect to sprawl amongst other metropolitan areas around the country. Finally, incremental development can lead to local land use decisions that conflict with the best interests of the region as the cumulative impacts of slow yet sprawling development may not be clearly seen in the development review process.

Despite the challenges to planning in a regional context, progress has been made in recent years due to new initiatives at CDTC and in New York State to support local planning. For CDTC, nothing has had as great an impact as the development of the regional transportation plan New Visions and its subsequent implementation efforts including the development of a local planning assistance program known as the Community and Transportation Linkage Planning Program. The following sections describe the role of New Visions, the purpose of the Linkage Program and other current and evolving methods of local planning assistance in the Capital Region.

The Role of New Visions

Although CDTC and CDRPC do not have any direct authority over local land use decision making, they can educate and empower local communities to plan for their futures in a way that is consistent with a regional vision. The regional vision has been articulated for the Capital

Region in the New Visions plan which contains a bold set of policies, principles, strategies and actions to help achieve it. Statements in the plan regarding the land use and transportation system connection are critically important to its successful implementation. The plan recognizes that the Capital Region's quality of life, mobility and economic vitality are dependent upon improved local land use planning and on better integration of land use development and the transportation system. Sound land use planning coupled with other demand management techniques can dampen the rate of regional travel growth and allow walking, bicycling and transit to be more viable options.

To further articulate the connection between land use and transportation, the adopted New Visions plan contains the following specific policies and principles:

Encourage Local Land Use Management

- *Land use planning and management is critical to the protection of transportation system investment.*
- *Design of street layout and location of complementary uses can create a pedestrian scale and provide increased accessibility without compromising the attractiveness of development.*

Link Transportation Investments to Land Use Planning

- *Transportation investments will encourage residential and commercial development to locate within an Urban Service Area defined for the Capital District.*
- *Transportation investments will not encourage development in environmentally sensitive areas and will help to preserve rural character.*
- *Arterial management guidelines will be flexible enough to deal with the Capital District's various roadway types and the specific land use patterns surrounding them.*

The most critical New Visions strategy related to the land use and transportation connection is pro-active planning of vibrant communities. This strategy recognizes that although land use decisions are made locally, a regional framework should be provided to achieve regional goals (See Appendix A). The elements of the regional framework are summarized as follows:

- *Maintain and increase pro-active 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.*

The adopted land use and transportation related elements of New Visions support a wide range of activities including reuse and revitalization of existing built up areas, mixed use and transit oriented development, open space and natural resource protection and a multi-modal transportation system that encourages walking, bicycling and transit use as alternatives to the automobile. The message is *against* unplanned sprawl development and *for* quality communities. The recent work of the Quality Region Task Force has confirmed this message.

New Visions has led to many positive changes in the Capital Region. At the CDTC table, the transportation investment decision making process was restructured to more closely follow the plan principles and budget while CDTC's planning efforts were shifted to more closely reflect plan priorities. Although both CDTC and CDRPC offer assistance to local planning as part of their normal work programs, New Visions gave CDTC the opportunity to offer assistance for planning through the innovative Community and Transportation Linkage Planning Program.

Community and Transportation Linkage Planning Program

CDTC utilizes the Community and Transportation Linkage Planning Program (referred to as the Linkage Program) as its primary method of local planning assistance. This groundbreaking program was initiated in 2000 and is designed to provide direct financial and technical assistance to communities undertaking local planning initiatives that integrate land use and transportation. The studies are conceptual in nature and recognize that good site and community design *can* help realize the region's potential and that transportation actions *will* play a role.

In the first four years of the Linkage Program, over \$800,000 in federal planning funds for consultant activities (excluding local cash matches) and nearly \$400,000 in CDTC staff assistance was provided to communities pursuing local planning initiatives. A wide variety of studies were eligible for funding including access management plans, architectural and site design standards, market studies, bicycle and pedestrian plans, highway safety plans and truck access studies among others. The level of interest in the program has grown each year as demonstrated by the increasing number and quality of funding requests. Through 2004, thirty-three local land use and transportation planning studies were funded from a wide variety of urban, suburban and rural municipal sponsors and not-for-profit organizations (see Table 1).

Table 1: Linkage Program Studies (2000-2004)

Albany County

Albany County Commercial Transportation Access Study
Albany Intermodal Center Planning Study
Broadway Commercial Corridor Development Strategy (Albany)
Cohoes Route 470 Corridor Study
Colonie Route 7 Corridor Study
Fort Hunter/Carman Road Neighborhood Transportation Plan (Guilderland)
Lawn Avenue Gateway Design Study (Albany)
Mansion Neighborhood Parking Study (Albany)
McKownville Corridor Study (Guilderland)
Patroon Greenway Trail (Albany)
Pinebush Transportation Study Update (Albany/Guilderland/Colonie)
Streetscape Guidelines and Architectural Design Standards (Colonie Village)

Rensselaer County

East Greenbush Route 4 Transportation/Land Use Master Plan
East Greenbush Routes 9 & 20 Design Enhancements
East Greenbush Route 151 Corridor Study
Hoosick Falls Parking and Pedestrian Plan
Hoosick Street Corridor Study (Troy)
Hudson River Valley Greenway Trail (Rensselaer County)
Lansingburgh 112th Street Corridor Study (Troy)
Rensselaer Route 20 Corridor Study

Saratoga County

Ballston Route 67 Corridor Study
Charlton Historic Main Street Improvement Plan
Halfmoon Center Master Plan
Malta District Program
Saratoga Springs Downtown Parking Study
Weibel Avenue/Gilbert Road Subarea Study (Saratoga Springs)

Schenectady County

Burdeck Street Corridor Traffic Study Update (Rotterdam)
Central State Street Neighborhood Land Use and Transportation Study (Schenectady)
Freemans Bridge Road/Dutch Meadows Master Plan (Glenville)
Glenville Town Center Master Plan
Nott Terrace Conceptual Plan (Schenectady)
Rotterdam Route 7, I-88, NYS Thruway Exit 25A Land Use & Transportation Study
Urban Bike Route Master Plan (Schenectady)

In 2004, Working Group E began meeting to discuss the issues related to planning in a regional context and reviewed the Linkage Program to see how it could be further strengthened. Based on a review of other smart growth incentive programs from around the nation (the details of which are provided in the next section), the Working Group felt that the Linkage Program needed additional structure and focus, particularly with respect to the program guidelines. Several recommendations were made to CDTC's Planning Committee with the most critical change being the introduction of six specific program strategies. These strategies identify the land use and transportation planning concepts that should be incorporated in all Linkage Program plans to help implement the regional vision. The strategies raise the bar for study proposals by challenging potential sponsors to incorporate smart growth concepts in their local planning. The six program strategies are to:

- Support urban revitalization and redevelopment of existing commercial/residential areas;
- Improve street connectivity and reduce driveway conflicts;
- Enhance and develop activity centers, town centers and transit corridors;
- Encourage a greater mix and intensity of land uses;
- Develop pedestrian-friendly design standards; and
- Create an integrated multi-modal transportation network.

The working group also developed six evaluation criteria for use in proposal review. The criteria include meeting the program requirements, demonstrating a need for the study, past sponsor performance on a Linkage study, demonstrating local commitment to the study, the degree of regional benefit/involvement of multiple jurisdictions and satisfying one or more of the program strategies. Of the six evaluation criteria the real emphasis is on to what degree the proposal meets the program strategies: the more strategies a proposal includes, the higher the priority for funding. As an impressive demonstration of the regional consensus surrounding the Linkage Program, CDTC's Planning Committee approved the Working Group's recommendations for the program in November 2004 for use in the 2005-06 solicitation.

The revamped Linkage Program and solicitation material resulted in fourteen applications requesting more than \$450,000 in federal funds for planning activities. The total dollar value of the proposed studies including consultant efforts (federal and local matching funds), CDTC staff assistance and additional local in-kind assistance was just over \$753,000. Proposals were evaluated by CDTC and CDRPC staff based on the evaluation criteria and CDTC's Planning Committee recommended eight studies for funding as shown in Table 2. The funded studies represent a cross section of community types integrating the program strategies in different ways.

Table 2: Linkage Program Studies Funded in 2005

Study Title	Study Description	Consultant Budget
Bethlehem Route 9W Corridor Study	Corridor vision and management plan for Route 9W from Exit 22 to the Routes 32/9W interchange. Standards for shared driveways and sidewalks will be developed; bicycle and pedestrian loops between existing and future points of interest will be identified; and the feasibility of a northern alignment alternative to the Selkirk Bypass project will be reviewed.	\$75,000
East Berne Hamlet Design and Land Use Standards	Revitalization plan for the East Berne Hamlet. Strategies for integrating small-scale economic development projects in the Hamlet while preserving the historic setting and current residential neighborhoods will be identified; zoning changes that allow for a greater mix of uses accompanied by rigorous design standards will also be recommended.	\$12,000
Guilderland Hamlet Neighborhood Master Plan	Master plan for the Guilderland Hamlet off Route 20 near the Guilderland YMCA. Access management, pedestrian facilities, streetscape improvements, scenic and environmental features, architectural and site design standards, and standards for mixed use development will be addressed.	\$42,000
Hadley Hamlet Streetscape and Design Standards	Streetscape and design standards for the main street in the Hadley Hamlet. Gateway and streetscape treatments, parking, sidewalks, trails and links to existing transportation routes and recreational areas will be addressed. Conceptual designs, design standards and a means of implementation will be developed.	\$37,500
Harriman Campus – University at Albany Corridor Transportation Study	Transportation plan related to growth and development at the Harriman Campus, University at Albany and Albany NanoTech. Growth and development plans for the North Washington Avenue parcels, the planned transformation of the Harriman Campus into a Research and Development Park and the planned expansion of the U/Albany – CESTM facility will be considered. The plan will address bicycle and pedestrian facilities; transit routing; roadway traffic patterns; parking and access; campus interconnectivity; lighting, way-finding and security improvements; and emergency and maintenance vehicle access.	\$100,000
Malta Route 9 Corridor Plan	Corridor plan for Route 9 north and south of the Downtown Overlay District. The type of development that would be best suited to each parcel in the corridor will be identified. Design standards, streetscapes, parking standards and visually attractive entranceways will be created. Connected streets and multi-use paths will be incorporated.	\$50,000
Saratoga Springs Downtown Improvement Plan	Multi-modal transportation improvement plan for the City’s downtown that can accommodate new development. A fair share plan to raise funds to implement the improvements will be created. Alternative development scenarios will be evaluated for their transportation impacts and a preferred development scenario will be selected. A shortlist of recommended transportation improvements will be developed.	\$80,000
Stillwater (Town and Village) Route 4 Main Street Plan	Corridor plan for the Route 4 corridor in the town and village of Stillwater. Plans to revitalize and redevelop the village center and commercial corridor will be developed; access between Route 4 and the Hudson River will be enhanced; and preservation of the community’s historic structures, rural character and visual quality will be encouraged. Design guidelines for building development, signage, bicycle/pedestrian improvements, access management and traffic calming measures will also be developed.	\$50,000

The response to the Linkage Program solicitation at the end of 2004 clearly indicated that local communities are willing and eager to incorporate smart growth concepts in their local plans. In addition, the program has led to a highly collaborative atmosphere in the region as CDRPC, the regional transit agency, NYSDOT and many others actively participate in the development of Linkage Program plans. The Linkage Program also helped fill a void in the region by providing financial support for local planning, opportunities for which are sometimes hard to come by in New York State. When compared to other regional smart growth incentive programs, the Linkage Program is one of the premier MPO programs in the nation.

Smart Growth Incentive Program Comparison

To get a sense of the quality of CDTC's Linkage Program, Working Group E undertook a review of regional smart growth incentive programs from outside the Capital Region. The programs were chosen from states with somewhat similar local, regional and state governmental structures as New York. Although the Working Group was primarily interested in planning programs, some of the reviewed initiatives focus on project implementation, typically through a capital program. Those initiatives generally had limited funding available for planning but were considered in this review since CDTC has implementation funding available to it as an MPO through its federal transportation funds. The programs reviewed are listed below and a brief summary of their components is provided in Table 3.

- Livable Centers Initiative – Atlanta
- Transportation for Livable Communities Capital and Planning Program – San Francisco
- Transit Oriented Development Housing Incentive Program – San Mateo County, CA
- Community Design Program – Sacramento
- Transportation Enhancement Activities Program – San Diego
- Smart Growth Incentive Program – Austin, TX
- Hudson River Valley Greenway Compact Program – New York

Table 3: Regional Smart Growth Incentive Program Case Studies

Program	Agency	Purpose	Funding
Livable Centers Initiative - created in 1999	ARC - Atlanta Regional Commission (MPO)	To finance studies that encourage increased residential development, mixed-uses and connectivity in activity and town centers. The studies also define detailed plans that support the adopted policies of the Regional Development Plan (RDP) to encourage activity and town center development.	\$5 M in planning funds have been allocated over 5 Years (51 studies were funded between 2000 and 2004) for planning studies. An additional \$350 million in capital funds have been allocated for priority funding of transportation projects resulting from these studies. For Fiscal Years 2003-05, \$70 million has been allocated in the Transportation Improvement Program for Livable Centers Initiative related projects.
Transportation for Livable Communities Capital and Planning Program - created in 1998	MTC - Metropolitan Transportation Commission in San Francisco (MPO)	Promote transportation/land use integration while expanding transportation options by providing direct financial incentives for cities and counties to support community development and redevelopment projects that encourage pedestrian, transit and/or bicycle trips, and spur the development of housing, downtowns and regional activity centers. There are three components: the capital program, the Community Design Planning Program and the Housing Incentive Program.	Funded eight planning studies for \$500,000 in 2004-05 and over \$18 M in capital projects. Over \$45 million has been allocated since the inception of the program in 1998.
Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Housing Incentive Program - created in 2000	CCAG - City/County Association of Governments of San Mateo County (non-MPO)	To provide financial incentives to encourage high-density housing development (greater than 40 units per acre) within one third of a mile of a Bart or Caltrain Station. If an application meets this requirement, up to \$2,000 per bedroom is designated for a transportation project and an additional incentive of up to \$250 per bedroom is provided if at least 10 percent of the units are for low or moderate-income housing. C/CAG then programs the incentive funds to a transportation project identified by the sponsor if the housing is built within two years. The transportation project is not identified until the housing units are under construction or built and may range from direct on or off-site improvements to landscaping, lighting, sidewalks, plazas, and recreational projects.	In the most recent cycle from February 2002 to February 2004, over \$2.9 million has been programmed for 10 projects to facilitate the creation of 2,407 bedrooms. C/CAG allocates up to 10 percent of its State Transportation Improvement Program funds for the program.
Community Design Program – created in 2002	SACOG - The Sacramento Area Council of Governments (MPO)	Financial incentives are awarded to cities and counties with specific projects that conform to SACOG’s seven smart growth principles: transportation choices, housing diversity, compact development, mixed land uses, enhance existing assets, natural resource conservation and quality design.	The Metropolitan Transportation Plan for 2050, adopted in 2002, set aside \$500 million in federal funds over a 23-year period for the program. The first round of funding (\$12 M) was authorized for the 2004-05 program cycle. Subsequent program cycles will be for two years. Funds are largely from the STP, CMAQ and TE (Transportation Enhancement) programs.

Table 3: Regional Smart Growth Incentive Program Case Studies - Continued

Program	Agency	Purpose	Funding
Transportation Enhancement Activities Program - created in 2000 (renamed the Smart Growth Incentive Program in 2005)	SANDAG - San Diego Area Council of Governments (MPO)	In California, each regional agency has the flexibility to establish its own guidelines for allocating its share of federal Transportation Enhancement funds. SANDAG's program focuses on projects that help implement the adopted Regional Transportation Plan, the Regional Growth Management Strategy and other regional plans and programs. SANDAG's TEA program has four emphasis areas: transit oriented development, regional corridor and feeder bikeways, scenic viewsheds or wildlife corridor acquisitions and corridor/gateway enhancements.	Funded through SANDAG's allocation of federal TEA-21 Transportation Enhancement Program funds. SANDAG awarded the entire \$22.6 million in one cycle through a Call for Projects process in March 2000. Out of 52 applications, nine projects were selected for funding. Project sponsors submit quarterly progress reports to the Transportation Committee. A new \$19 million funding cycle occurred in September 2005 under the new program title.
Smart Growth Incentive Program - created in 1998	City of Austin (non-MPO)	The Smart Growth Incentive Program is designed to promote three major goals: 1) Determine How and Where Residents Live, 2) Improve Quality of Life, 3) Enhance the Tax Base. The Desired Development Zone defines where growth is desired and new development is encouraged to follow models of Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) and Transit-Oriented Development (TOD). Incentives include reduced development fees and reduced fees related to a wide variety of public infrastructure improvements for projects that locate within the Desired Development Zone. The program utilizes a Smart Growth Matrix to assist the City Council in analyzing development proposals within the Desired Development Zone. It is designed to measure how well a development project meets the City's Smart Growth goals such as: 1) the location of development; 2) proximity to mass transit; 3) pedestrian-friendly urban design characteristics; 4) compliance with nearby neighborhood plans; 5) increases in tax base, and other policy priorities.	City Budget and other grant sources.
Hudson River Valley Greenway Compact Program – created in 1991	Hudson River Valley Greenway (NYS Agency)	Voluntary program that encourages regional cooperation at the local level. The counties are designated as the basic planning area for the development of a compact that addresses natural and cultural resource protection, regional planning, and economic development, public access to the Hudson River and heritage and environmental education. The approach is to think regionally while acting locally. Communities that sign on to the Compact receive technical and financial assistance for community planning efforts from the Greenway including up to 50% matching grants for community planning and an up to a 5% rating advantage over non-compact communities for state funding of Greenway projects. The program area encompasses the counties between Battery Park in Waterford and Battery Park in New York City	State funded through the Greenway Act of 1991. Matching grants for planning are generally awarded between \$5,000 and \$10,000 per request. Greenway projects are also funded by the Greenway but on a more intermittent basis. Available state resources vary from year to year.

The program comparison revealed that the Linkage Program is on par if not stronger than some of the leading smart growth incentive programs in the nation. Most of the programs do not seem to have the financial commitment per capita, the level of staff involvement or the level of engagement of local municipalities in the broader regional context than that of CDTC’s Linkage Program. Some specific findings include:

1. **CDTC is doing more with less.** Generally speaking, CDTC has less planning and project programming resources available to it than MPOs in larger regions. In addition, some MPOs have access to additional resources due to specific state policies (i.e. California MPOs have direct access to state transportation funds). Despite those disadvantages, CDTC commits roughly 25% of its total federal planning funds per year to Linkage Program studies. This appears to be an equal to or much higher level of commitment than that of the other MPO incentive programs reviewed, regardless of the fund source. In addition, CDTC appears to be spending equal to or more than larger MPOs on local planning per capita. A comparison of federal funds committed per capita for planning in the reviewed MPO incentive programs is provided in Table 4.

**Table 4:
Planning Funds Committed by MPOs to
Smart Growth Incentive Programs Per Capita**

Smart Growth Incentive Program	Annual Planning Fund Commitment*	2000 Regional Population**	Planning Funds Committed Per Capita
Community Design Program – Sacramento	\$750,000	1,939,000	\$0.39
Linkage Program – Capital Region	\$300,000	794,000	\$0.38
Livable Centers Initiative – Atlanta	\$1,000,000	3,429,000	\$0.29
Transportation for Livable Communities Capital and Planning Program – San Francisco	\$500,000	6,823,000	\$0.07
Transportation Enhancement Activities Program – San Diego	\$50,000	2,814,000	\$0.02

*Rounded to nearest \$50,000.

**Data from the 2000 U.S. Census rounded to nearest 1,000.

2. **The Capital Region is planning in the absence of growth.** All the programs reviewed, including the Linkage Program, indicate that there is great interest in shaping future growth by regional entities. However, many are doing so because they are reacting to

rapid population growth. Between 1990 and 2000, Austin, TX grew 47.7% and Atlanta, GA grew 38.4% while the Capital Region grew only 2.0%. These trends are only expected to continue. Despite the relative lack of population growth, Capital Region communities are attempting to be more pro-active with their planning efforts so as to be ready if a population increase were to occur. Local planning and its implementation will also help to address regional concerns of sprawl development and traffic congestion in specific parts of the region that are experiencing growth.

3. **CDTC maximizes the use of federal funds.** Several incentive programs are financed through the use of Transportation Enhancement (TE) Program, Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) Program and Surface Transportation Program (STP) funds. This allows the MPO to retain its federal planning funds which come from a different source for more traditional transportation planning work. Although CDTC has funded a few planning studies through its federal capital programs, using federal planning funds and local cash to finance the Linkage Program allows CDTC to have as many dollars available to it to implement projects as possible.
4. **CDTC's capital funds are tied directly to local planning.** Whereas many MPOs set aside blocks of capital funds for livable community type projects, CDTC's integration of local planning efforts with the capital program is more pervasive. As will be described in detail later on, CDTC has as a project screening criterion that the project must be consistent with local planning to be eligible for federal funds. In addition, there are land use management requirements in CDTC's congestion management system and Linkage studies are also coordinated with previously funded capital projects. This once again raises the bar for project sponsors to have considered and addressed their local planning before asking for a federally funded transportation project.
5. **Linkage awards are not grants.** CDTC is very careful in how it views Linkage Studies. Although many are community based, in most cases control of the study is not given to the community entirely. By retaining influence over the study through consultant administration, a fair access policy for consultants, the use of a memorandum of understanding, etc., CDTC staff remains directly involved with the study and can offer assistance to the community in guiding the study process. This also ensures that New Visions principles are being integrated into local plans. Many regional entities, particularly those in larger areas, are not likely to have the same level of staff involvement or influence over the study as CDTC.

CDTC's Linkage Program not only represents a vital method of planning assistance for local communities, it also indicates that planning in a regional context is possible, even in a medium sized, northeastern region not facing rapid growth. In addition, smart growth planning concepts are not only being considered in local communities, they are being implemented which helps to implement the New Visions plan. The program has been well received by Capital Region communities and was awarded the 2005 Outstanding Comprehensive Planning Award for a Program from the Upstate New York Chapter of the American Planning Association. In the future, the Linkage Program may be enhanced through the availability of additional planning funds as a result of the new federal transportation legislation increasing the percentage of federal

funds to be dedicated for metropolitan planning. If that were to occur, an already strong program would be made even stronger.

Additional Methods of Local Planning Assistance

Although the Linkage Program is the cornerstone of CDTC's local planning assistance program, there are other methods of assistance being offered to local communities. Websites, presentations at local, regional and statewide planning conferences and community workshops are representative of the kinds of outreach CDTC, CDRPC and New York State agencies undertake to improve local planning. The following highlights both CDTC's and CDRPC's planning assistance methods beyond the Linkage Program as well as opportunities for assistance through New York State programs such as the Quality Communities Program and through regional authorities and counties.

Non-Linkage CDTC Assistance

CDTC provides significant technical assistance and community services to local communities on request. The assistance may be in the form of site plan or traffic impact assessment review, traffic counts and transportation data support, participation in project design activities including traffic forecasts, transit support through commuter incentive programs, maintenance and reproduction of regional bike maps and many others. In the town of Colonie, an ongoing contractual arrangement with CDTC allows CDTC staff to participate directly in the assessment of mitigation fees through site plan reviews and traffic impact assessments within the Airport and Lisha Kill GEIS study areas. An ongoing contract is also in place with Albany County for data collection and other assistance.

The staff of CDTC is also available to provide assistance in all subject areas related to transportation including bicycle and pedestrian planning, safety planning, comprehensive planning, parking management, transit planning, etc. In addition, as required under federal law, CDTC's planning process goes far beyond basic transportation issues and considers land use, air quality, the environment, community and economic impacts, impacts on minority/low income populations, etc. Each year, CDTC commits its federal planning funds, including the Linkage Program funds, to needed planning work throughout the region. The tasks are summarized in the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) which typically includes an impressive mix of tasks related to all of the issues listed above. Much of CDTC's work is highly regarded at the national level and has been recognized as an MPO best practice.

CDTC also assists its members through education and outreach activities. The staff participates in conferences, partners with organizations like the American Planning Association for regular internet and conference-call professional development seminars and has developed training materials and reference guides on issues such as access management and bicycle and pedestrian issues.

In addition, CDTC expanded the membership of its Planning Committee for 2005. The Planning Committee is essentially the technical working group of CDTC's Policy Board and is comprised of 19 voting members as well as many designated alternates and advisory members. The 19

voting members include the seven Capital Region cities, the four counties, two towns/villages (Colonie is a permanent member and the other designated town or village is rotated annually), and six regional authorities or other governmental agencies. The communities added to the committee were added as alternates and include four towns with an active professional planning staff engaged in local planning activities. Although they do not have a vote, the new members are welcome to attend meetings, voice their opinion and stay involved with actions happening at the regional level.

CDRPC Planning Assistance Activities

CDRPC also offers a tremendous amount of assistance to local communities. A significant resource is the robust geographic information system CDRPC has developed and is utilized to perform local and regional spatial analysis and mapping. Data and maps are made available to local governments and special analysis/maps can be created on request. As a data affiliate for the U.S. Census Bureau, CDRPC also provides public access to all the available local and regional Census data. Data on population, demographics, employment, businesses and the economy are posted on the CDRPC web site (www.cdrpc.org), and are made available for review at the CDRPC office. Population projections are also calculated and made available to assist local planning efforts. Finally, CDRPC is active in the planning process for regional economic development and in water quality planning.

As part of its education and outreach activities, CDRPC, in partnership with the NYS Department of State, sponsors one day local government planning workshops on a bi-annual basis. The workshops are geared toward planning boards, zoning boards, and local elected officials, and cover such topics as the duties and responsibilities of planning boards, the duties and responsibilities of ZBAs, local government land use statutes and case law, SEQQR, open meetings law, water quality planning, smart growth, and numerous other contemporary planning topics. CDRPC staff also participates in a wide variety of conferences and symposiums.

New York State Quality Communities Program

New York State also offers assistance for planning for which Capital Region communities are eligible. The Quality Communities Program is designed to provide incentives and enhance opportunities for innovative planning and community development techniques that link environmental protection, economic prosperity and community well-being. This effort was initiated in early 2000 through the creation of the Quality Communities Interagency Task Force which was charged with three tasks: 1) inventory key local, state and federal programs; 2) gather public comment through workshops and other means; and 3) develop recommendations designed to enhance local community development efforts throughout the state. The resulting report *State and Local Governments Partnering for a Better New York* outlined Quality Communities principles and offered 41 recommendations for consideration by the state to further assist local communities in their efforts.

Since the report was completed in 2001, the state has developed a number of programs and resources to help implement the recommendations including the development of the Quality Communities Clearinghouse. This website (www.qualitycommunities.org) is intended to be a

one-stop shop for local communities looking for information on the various state agency services that support the Quality Communities effort. An entire section of the website is devoted to planning resources including state grant programs and technical assistance. The most significant new planning program is the Quality Communities Grant Program through the Department of State. This program offers grants for activities including open space protection, comprehensive planning, community visioning, development of community centers and many others. For the 2005 cycle, \$3 million is available for planning activities statewide. The Department of State also offers technical assistance to communities and has a number of land use management training programs for local governments.

There are a number of other resources available from state agencies as listed on the website but those worth noting here include the Hudson River Valley Greenway Compact Program and the Department of Transportation's (DOT) Environmental Initiative, Context Sensitive Solutions and Arterial Access Management initiatives and other general planning assistance through DOT's regional offices. Unfortunately, funding for the wide variety of state programs varies from year to year and generally is not sufficient to meet the statewide demand. That being said, the principles of the Quality Communities Program are consistent with the regional principles of New Visions as well as the Linkage Program and also support inter-municipal cooperation and coordination.

Regional Authorities and Counties

Planning assistance is also offered to Capital Region communities through regional authorities and county planning. The Capital District Transportation Authority (CDTA) is the transit operator in the Capital Region and offers transit planning assistance to local governments upon request. Currently, CDTA is embarking on a Transit Development Plan which seeks to reassess and reorganize transit service in the Capital Region with the ultimate goal of increasing transit ridership. CDTA coordinates regularly with CDTC, CDRPC and NYSDOT. Planning assistance is also offered through county planning offices and typically includes annual planning workshops, subdivision and site plan review and a wide variety of other activities. Although county planning is largely advisory, the counties frequently coordinate with both CDTC and CDRPC which helps to disseminate the message of New Visions to those at the local level.

Evolving Methods of Planning Assistance

Planning programs like the Linkage Program have helped jump start many local planning efforts in the Capital Region. Study sponsors have ranged from the largest City to some of the smallest towns and villages in the region. Although many communities are undertaking some form of planning on their own, not all of the regions' municipalities are actively engaged in the regional dialogue, despite the many existing opportunities. As planning efforts have matured, the need to devise additional incentives and implementation opportunities has arisen. The following describes some of the evolving concepts to assist local planning in the region as well as the growing collaborative relationships between regional agencies and other stakeholders with a regional interest such as the Center for Economic Growth and the Community Foundation of the Capital Region.

Linkage Regional Coordination Forum

CDTC created the Linkage Regional Coordination Forum as a spin-off of the Linkage Program. The concept is to bring local planners, local officials and other stakeholders together to discuss planning activities in the region, share ideas and note opportunities for collaboration and/or coordination. Information is not only shared on Linkage Program studies but on any active planning effort in the region including comprehensive plans, strategic plans, economic development plans, local waterfront plans, etc. The Forum is open to all municipalities regardless of whether or not they receive Linkage Program assistance although active Linkage study sponsors are required to attend two of the four meetings per year.

For what may be the first time, practicing planners have a place in which to share experiences in the real world of planning and to discuss the regional implications of local projects. It also offers participants an opportunity to learn what other communities are working on and how an individual municipality may have dealt with a particular issue. In addition, entities such as the Center for Economic Growth, the NY Planning Federation and other regional and statewide organizations and governmental agencies are invited to participate in the Forum. The role of the Linkage Forum is evolving which could lead to new opportunities for collaboration and new activities for the group to undertake, all of which serve to support local planning and local planners. Information on the Linkage Forum can be found on CDTC's website at www.cdtempo.org/linkage.htm.

CEG Regional Development Compact

The Center for Economic Growth (CEG) has been actively promoting the concept of creating business ready communities in the Capital Region. CEG is a not-for-profit regional economic and business development organization that is working to bring high tech businesses to the Capital Region. One of its core missions is to help preserve the regional quality of life by preparing Capital Region communities for the potential of new high tech business, new workers and new development. To assist with this, CEG has created a regional development strategy that facilitates growth through intergovernmental cooperation, public/private partnerships, technical assistance and support for significant regional projects. Their hope is to encourage each community to plan for its best future and to see how their choices fit into a broad regional vision.

CEG's efforts have broadened the reach of the regional dialogue and CDTC and CDRPC have been working to ensure that the dialogue is consistent with the regional vision set forth in New Visions. One outcome of these efforts is the pursuit of a regional development compact. Following models such as the Greenway Compact Program, CEG developed a regional compact stating that communities undertaking local planning initiatives are "pursuing responsible growth, economic vitality and social and environmental sustainability". Local governments that sign on to the compact, which is a voluntary step, receive additional technical and marketing assistance from CEG.

The significance of the regional compact is in part related to its collaborative development. CDTC and CDRPC were key players in drafting the compact (See Appendix B for the full text of the Compact) and were able to incorporate language that supports comprehensive planning,

sound zoning practices and training for local zoning and planning board members. It also contains language that says compact communities agree to conduct their community and economic planning efforts in a manner consistent with several key principles related to smart growth and development. The compact is consistent with New Visions which, if the level of local acceptance is high enough, may allow CDTC to use it as a condition for gaining access to Linkage Program or Transportation Improvement Program funds for projects. As of June 2005, nine Capital Region municipalities have either adopted the compact or have adoption pending.

Empowering Communities Initiative

The Community Foundation of the Capital Region, the regional center for philanthropy, launched a new initiative with the New York Planning Federation (NYPF) in 2005 entitled Empowering Communities: Partnership and Growth in the 21st Century. The goal is to help Capital Region communities manage issues of growth and sprawl.

As of August 2005, NYPF completed a survey of various local organizations, agencies, businesses and not-for-profits regarding what they are doing in the areas of growth management and sprawl and what the additional needs might be. NYPF also held a regional workshop to explore the potential for collaboration and the possibilities for providing additional assistance to local communities on growth and development issues. The telephone survey revealed that leadership training and regional initiatives had the greatest support. Strong support was also expressed for the following ideas at the workshop:

- Intermunicipal and county/regional roundtables, communication and coalitions
- Leadership training for local officials, boards and citizen groups
- Team approach to help communities tap into and choose among planning resources
- Grants to provide incentives for the use of effective new tools and to support regional initiatives
- “Best of” model ordinances/examples/resources with visuals on the web

Although it remains to be seen what the ultimate direction of this initiative will be, the involvement of CDTC and CDRPC in the process represents an accomplishment in and of itself. CDTC and CDRPC, particularly through the Linkage Program, will likely be valuable partners in the Empowering Communities effort. The effort also assists Working Group E by highlighting areas where further assistance for local planning may be warranted and what role CDTC and CDRPC might play in offering it.

Implementing Local Plans in the Capital Region

The Linkage Program, other local planning assistance activities and evolving planning initiatives in the region have created a critical mass of ideas and plans that need to be implemented. Doing that represents a challenge to local communities, particularly those with limited financial resources. The work of the Planning Federation and the Community Foundation may eventually lead to grants or other programs targeted to implementing zoning regulations, design guidelines or other land use oriented initiatives but other opportunities already exist. For example, New York State has a number of programs to implement local plans such as housing programs,

brownfield remediation programs, main street improvement programs and many others, all of which are noted on the Quality Communities Clearinghouse website and support the Quality Communities principles. For transportation projects that arise from local plans, CDTC and NYSDOT can assist through the Transportation Improvement Program.

Transportation Improvement Program

Aside from developing the long range plan, one of CDTC's primary responsibilities as an MPO is to maintain a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The TIP is a multi-year program required under federal law to list all transit, highway and other transportation improvement projects that use federal funds. The TIP also lists many non-federally funded transportation projects for information purposes. Federal law includes many funding programs through which projects may be programmed in the TIP such as the surface transportation program, national highway system program, etc. Once CDTC approves a TIP, the projects are then folded into the New York State Transportation Improvement Program (or STIP) which, when approved by FHWA, allows DOT and others to use the federal funds to implement projects.

TEA-21, the previous federal law, officially expired in 2003 which made it difficult to program new projects in the TIP due to uncertain funding levels. Supplemental bills were passed to extend TEA-21 but a new federal highway bill was not approved until August 2005. Called SAFETEA-LU, the legislation does not significantly increase funding to New York State. For example, on highway related activities each state will receive an increase in federal funding but New York will only receive the minimum increase as required in the law. Other states with faster growth or greater political influences will receive much greater shares of the national pool of funds. That situation along with dwindling state resources for transportation and increased inflation in the construction industry is leading to extremely limited funding for new projects, something that is not news to those in the Capital Region but will likely impact the TIP development process down the road.

CDTC undertakes periodic updates of its Transportation Improvement Program as required under federal law. SAFETEA-LU will require a TIP update every four years. The update process typically involves three primary steps. As a first step, CDTC works with NYSDOT Region 1 and the Adirondack-Glens Falls MPO to estimate the available funding. Once a starting point is set, CDTC then examines and endorses existing projects for which there were changes in cost or scope from previous commitments. From whatever funding remains, new projects are considered for addition to the program from a broadly solicited candidate pool. CDTC has authority to program projects utilizing federal funds while decisions on projects funded by the state are made by the state. CDTC's Planning Committee is the technical group that develops the TIP and the Policy Board has final authority on its contents.

Project programming in the TIP was significantly enhanced when New Visions was adopted in 1997. As mentioned before, the plan established new principles and a budget to help guide transportation decision making and implement the plan. The New Visions budget is divided into 17 regional program categories (see Table 5) to highlight the balanced goals and broad range of project types. CDTC's policy approach is to assure that basic system preservation needs are met first and then progress should be sought against all 17 categories whenever funding levels exceed

the basic preservation level. Since 1997 there has been a strong connection between the long range plan and the TIP.

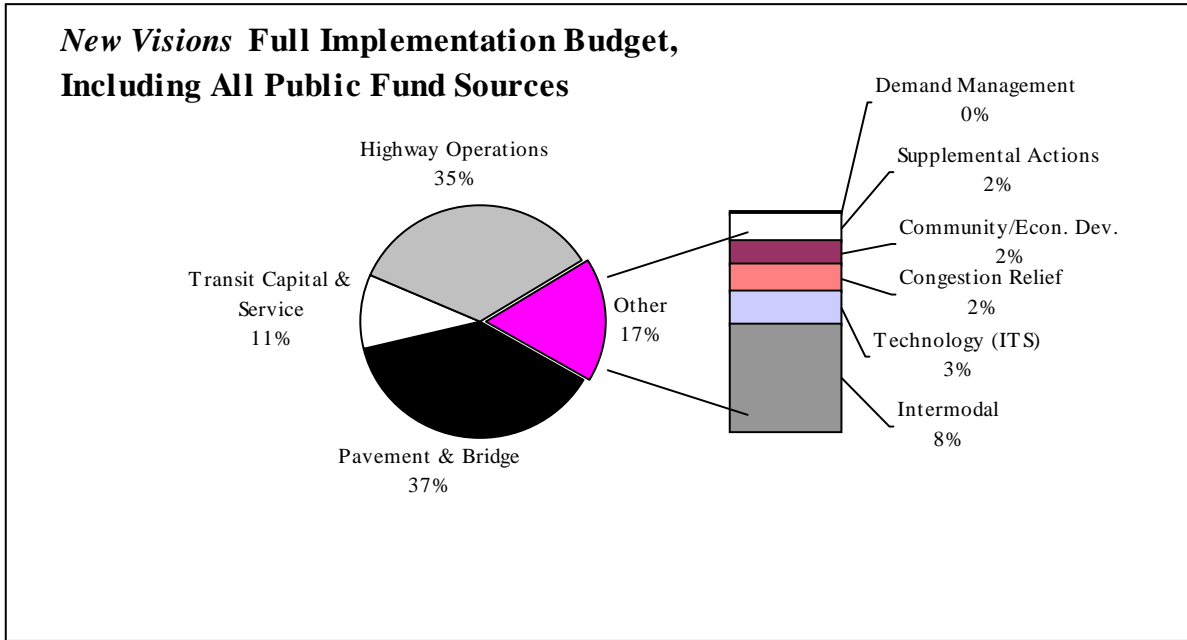
Table 5: New Visions Budget Categories

1	Intermodal Facilities
2	Transit Infrastructure
3	Transit Service
4	ITS (Technology) and Traffic Infrastructure
5	ITS (Technology) and Traffic Operations
6	Highway Rehab, Reconstruction and Redesign -- Priority Network
7	Highway Rehabilitation & Reconstruction – Other
8	Bridge Rehab & Reconstruction
9	Highway and Bridge Maintenance
10	Strategic Highway and Bridge Actions -- CMS-based (capacity)
11	Strategic Highway and Bridge Actions – Economic Development /Community Compatibility
12	Supplemental Goods Movement Accommodations
13	Supplemental Bike & Pedestrian Accommodations
14	Supplemental Access Management Actions
15	Supplemental Safety Actions
16	Demand Management
17	Integrated Planning & Outreach

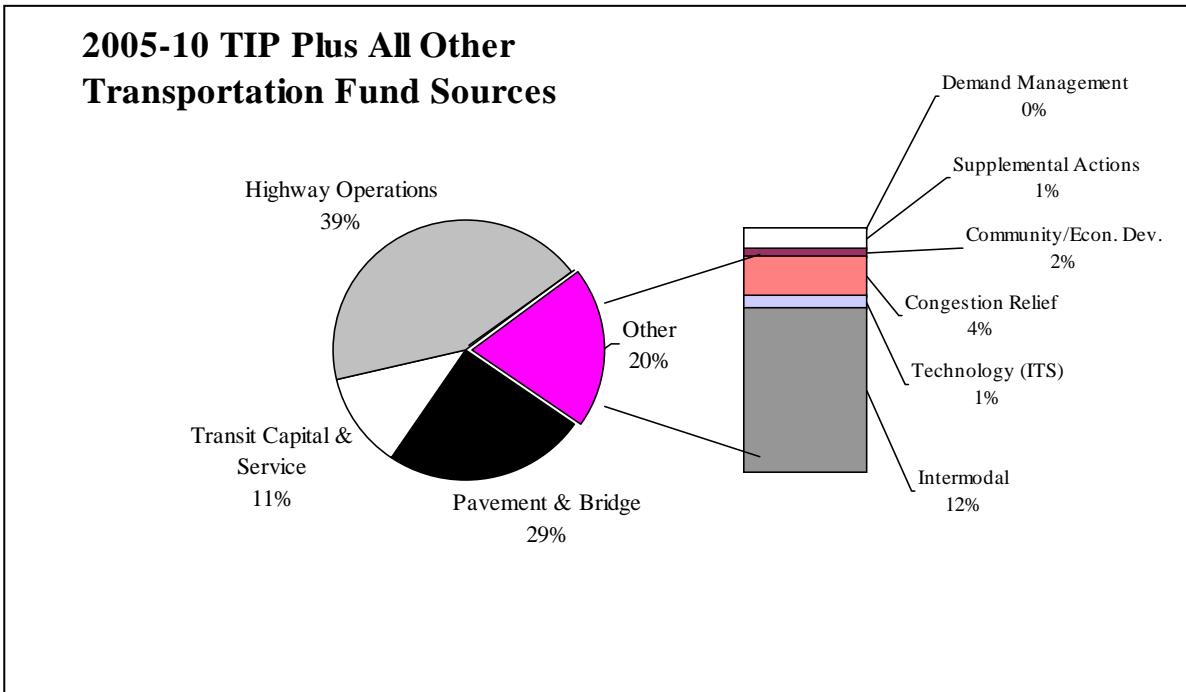
To illustrate the connection between New Visions and the adopted 2005-10 TIP, a comparison of the budget categories in New Visions with the programmed projects was made. The comparison was based on all fund sources, not just federal funding programs under TEA-21. For simplicity, the 17 budget categories were summarized into four primary categories with the “other” category encompassing six secondary categories including the supplemental actions as listed in Table 5.

Despite some differences in the percentage of funding allocated to projects in each category, CDTC has been consistent with its funding commitments and has respected the link between the plan and the TIP. This has been a positive aspect of CDTC’s process. Figure 1 illustrates the comparison between the New Visions budget under full implementation and the current TIP. The challenge for the future will be addressing the recent maintenance and operations first policy of the NYSDOT in TIP programming while maintaining balance in the TIP budget categories.

Figure 1: Comparison of *New Visions* Budget to the 2005-10 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 \$384 M annually (7-year average from 2003 to 2010). The *New Visions* plan calls for total transportation spending to grow over time. Pavement work alone is 19% and bridge alone is 8%. Demand Management is 0.1%.

Source: CDTC's 2005-2010 Transportation Improvement Program

Programming New Projects

In order to determine which projects should be prioritized for funding, CDTC developed an extensive, multi-step evaluation process. The process allows CDTC to ensure that the planning and investment principles in New Visions are utilized during project selection. The primary steps of the process are project screening, merit evaluation and project selection. The general screening criteria are:

1. Consistency with federal law, 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 federal law, and CDTC and local plans criterion is directly tied to local planning. Any project proposing a linear capacity improvement is 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. In addition, 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.

If a project does not pass the screening criteria, it can not move on to the next step in the process. By requiring a link between land use and transportation, CDTC has made an important connection between planning and project programming as well as between New Visions and the TIP. This offers one significant incentive to undertake planning efforts at the local level and has resulted in higher quality project applications in the TIP process. CDTC's policy was recently reinforced by SAFETEA-LU which now requires that land use issues be considered in project programming. Because of CDTC's strong consideration of local planning in project programming, it is has been unnecessary for CDTC to dedicate a portion of its federal TIP dollars to special smart growth projects. Inherently, any project under consideration for addition to the TIP will be consistent with local land use planning and will likely follow many of the smart growth/quality communities principles aspired to in the Linkage Program.

A New Model for Regional Planning

As can be seen throughout this report, a great deal of effort is being put forth by CDTC, CDRPC and others in the Capital Region to assist with local planning. New Visions regional planning principles, the Linkage Program, the Linkage Forum, CEG's Regional Development Compact and project funding through the Transportation Improvement Program and other State resources have become intertwined, leading to what may be considered a new model for regional planning. This new model is highly transferable, requires a high degree of cooperation and respects home rule through its voluntary nature. While it still does not allow CDTC or CDRPC to have a direct role in determining where future development will go in the region, the model does offer them a role in influencing the form that future development may take. The components of this new model for regional planning are:

- Regional land use and transportation system principles
- Integrated regional-local planning / integrated land use – transportation planning
- Regional coordination
- Voluntary regional compact participation
- Clear incentives and requirements for access to fully integrated implementation mechanisms

Thus far, this new model for regional planning is proving to be a successful one. It has allowed for the generation of a number of innovative and creative local plans and projects; it has led to a highly regarded partnership between CDTC and CDRPC, a partnership that continues to strengthen; it has strengthened the relationships with other regional partners such as NYSDOT, CDTA, the four counties and many others with an interest in regional issues; and it has opened the door for additional opportunities to partner with both public and private sector entities interested in maintaining and enhancing regional quality of life through pro-active local planning.

An opportunity to expand on this regional model may occur as the policy implications of New Visions Working Group A: *Effects of Alternative Growth and Development Scenarios* become known. This Working Group is looking at the regional development pattern impacts of alternative higher and lower growth scenarios through the year 2040. To date, the working group has completed the demographic analysis (which is available at www.cdtempo.org/rtp2030/a-development.htm). The policy implications/choices and impacts on the transportation system have yet to be discussed and described. That being said, this “what if” exercise could lead to changes in regional policy and an update to the regional principles that have guided New Visions and the Linkage Program to date. It is anticipated that the outcome of Working Group A’s analysis will only further strengthen New Visions and further support CDTC and CDRPC’s efforts for assisting local decision making in a regional context.

Recommendations for the Future

With this new model for regional planning in mind, Working Group E discussed some specific ideas that could help CDTC and CDRPC more fully realize the model’s potential. Many ideas build upon existing efforts and have the potential to deal with some of the remaining challenges in the regional dialogue. The recommendations are listed below in no particular order. However, a few of the ideas are noted as being recommended High Priorities. These recommendations will become action items in the New Visions 2030 plan and will be refined by the Quality Region Task Force.

- 1) **Update the Pro-active Planning Actions Currently Highlighted in New Visions (High Priority).** Specific to the land use and transportation connection, New Visions outlines nine actions that are intended to support the strategy of pro-actively planning vibrant communities (for additional detail, see Appendix A). These actions are to:

- Prepare and maintain a comprehensive Regional Development Plan
- Establish an urban service area
- Provide funding for and staff participation in community based planning

- Develop access management plans for all priority network arterials
- Support local planning boards' consideration of the regional transportation impacts of development decisions
- Improve site design practices
- Elevate consideration of transportation alternatives in siting facilities that primarily serve elderly and handicapped populations
- Improve delivery access for commercial vehicles
- Maintain a program for transportation projects directed explicitly at community enhancement or regional economic development

Although CDTC has made significant progress on many of these actions, some require revision. As mentioned earlier, a new Regional Development Plan for the region is not likely to occur. The 1978 Plan was never adopted by the four counties, only endorsed, and CDRPC's members recently determined that there is no longer a mandate to develop such a plan. In addition, the prospect of establishing an urban service area for the region is fairly low. The urban service area concept was to help encourage new commercial and residential development to locate in areas with adequate water, sewer, and transportation infrastructure. Public investment for transportation projects would then be prioritized within this area to encourage urban redevelopment and protect rural character. With the challenges of home rule and current New York State policies, establishing an urban service area for the region may be politically difficult.

As a result, Working Group E recommends that the pro-actively planning vibrant communities section be revised to describe what will be termed Regional Development Initiatives. Local communities will be encouraged to pursue these initiatives in their everyday planning work. They will focus on land use and transportation strategies that support smart growth and potentially influence urban form wherever growth is occurring. Much of the material is already in the plan, it simply needs to be repackaged and will incorporate any new concepts that arise from the efforts of the Quality Region Task Force and the New Visions 2030 update process.

- 2) **Develop a New Visions Planning Guidebook (High Priority).** New Visions is full of many policies, principles, strategies and actions which also make the plan very lengthy. The Executive Summary to the 1997 plan was helpful in summarizing the key points and in many ways remains relevant today as the bulk of the plan has not changed significantly. However, the New Visions 2030 effort is likely to lead to more significant changes than past plan updates necessitating new material to highlight key concepts. After a new executive summary is developed, it will be complemented by the development of a New Visions Planning Guidebook.

A New Visions Planning Guidebook will serve as a resource for local planners, Planning Board members and others involved with community development. The Guidebook will encourage local consideration of the regional impacts of development in the planning and development review process, particularly with respect to the transportation system. It will also include illustrated examples of the Regional Development Initiatives, perhaps in the form of companion summaries, factsheets or "how-to" guides. The Greenway Guides

produced as part of the Greenway Connections Report in Dutchess County will serve as a model (the greenway guides can be viewed at www.co.dutchess.ny.us/EnvironmentLandPres/ELPgreenwayguide.htm). The Greenway Connections report was produced as part of the Hudson River Valley Greenway Compact Program.

Some of the concepts that will be highlighted include site design techniques, connected street networks, the design of local, county and state road systems, access/arterial management strategies, mixed use and transit oriented development, etc. Other concepts that will be considered include the development of a smart growth/quality community matrix/checklist. Such a matrix/checklist could help planning boards assess the ability of a development proposal or a local comprehensive plan to meet local and regional goals as outlined in New Visions. Local governments could also create incentives to entice developers to develop in a more sustainable way through tax breaks, reduced development fees, etc. Finally the Guidebook will list existing tools/data sets available from CDTC and CDRPC.

- 3) **Develop a New Visions Training Program (High Priority).** CDTC in partnership with CDRPC will develop a New Visions training program for community development directors, local planners and Planning Board members, local government officials, neighborhood associations, not-for-profits and a wide variety of other stakeholders. The training program will be a two hour program that focuses on the Regional Development Initiatives contained in New Visions and how they can be applied at the local level. The training program will complement the New Visions Planning Guidebook. Such a training program will increase the visibility of CDTC in the region, it will increase the awareness of New Visions as more than just a transportation plan and it will assist in CDTC's continuous public involvement and outreach activities. CDTC staff will bring the training program to a wide variety of forums ranging from local planning board meetings to county or regional workshops.
- 4) **Engage County Planning.** Of all the entities that serve in a regional capacity, county planning is one with real influence in New York State. County planning will be further engaged in all regional initiatives and will be viewed as true partners in getting the message to local governments. Some of this is already happening and additional effort will be made to help county planners support local planning while promoting the regional vision. The key is to get regional, county and local planners speaking the same language with respect to planning and development issues. A special working group comprising of county planners, CDTC and CDRPC staff will be considered.
- 5) **Review Linkage Study Progress.** CDTC will undertake a review of completed linkage studies to see to what degree they have been successfully implemented. This effort may highlight areas that represent weaknesses in implementation opportunities, weaknesses in the plans themselves or other lessons learned that can lead to changes in the Linkage Program or additional assistance initiatives. Along with this review, the Linkage Program section of CDTC's website will be elevated as a go to resource for local land use and transportation planning issues. The site will include examples of "best practices",

funding announcements, links to other reference material, links to services offered by CDRPC and other entities such as state agencies, etc. The site will also be reorganized as part of the New Visions Planning Guidebook concept.

- 6) **Further Develop the Linkage Regional Coordination Forum.** CDTC recently broadened the membership of the Forum to include all municipalities in the region, not just those involved in the Linkage Program. Outreach will continue to be made to entities such as the Center for Economic Growth, the NY Planning Federation, state agencies and others with an interest in local planning. In addition, this group will be charged with additional tasks such as reviewing and developing material for the New Visions Planning Guidebook and training program.
- 7) **Document Project Financing Methods beyond the TIP.** The availability of state and federal funds for transportation projects varies from year to year, sometimes widely. With current shortfalls in state funding, projects that do more than repave a road or reconstruct a bridge have become more difficult to finance through state and federal funds alone. As the expectations for the overall transportation system continue to rise, it can not be expected that there will be enough state and federal dollars to cover the costs of all the projects arising from Linkage Studies. The state DOT and other entities can not do it alone and alternative funding arrangements must be developed. Public/private partnerships will be encouraged as well as the use of mitigation fees, transportation development districts and other innovative financing techniques. Examples of best practices from around the region and the state will be documented and used to educate local governments on the opportunities available to them.
- 8) **Strengthen the Link Between the TIP and Local Planning.** CDTC has a strong, respected process with respect to programming transportation projects. As stated previously, projects are required to be consistent with local land use plans. Working Group E believes the existing TIP evaluation process should be continued and suggests that all of CDTC's competitive programs such as the SPOT improvement program for small scale bicycle and pedestrian projects specifically require consistency with local land use planning in their evaluation criteria.

Conclusion

The Capital Region is an area with a high quality of life, perhaps one of New York's best kept secrets. Despite some ups and downs, the region today enjoys a healthy economy that is becoming increasingly diverse with each passing year. The future hope for a high tech economy will only further strengthen the region's position and enhance its image. However, it is vital that economic growth not destroy the vary quality of life that has thus far helped attract high tech and other businesses to the region. The best way to prevent this is to encourage local governments to plan and to ideally plan in the regional best interest.

The new model of regional planning outlined in this report is vital to the future of the region and a key to its success is the cooperative relationship between CDTC and CDRPC. By joining forces on many initiatives, these agencies are having a tremendous impact on local planning and

have helped to strengthen the regional dialogue. Partnerships with NYSDOT, CDTA, CEG and many others in the region have also greatly contributed to this effort. The Linkage Program in particular has jumped started a number of local planning initiatives and has led to a number of local plans waiting for implementation opportunities. As time moves on, opportunities for implementation will arise and it is hoped that the pro-active planning efforts will lead to a regional land use and transportation system that offers a wide variety of options for its residents.

The recommendations generated in this report to further assist local planning as well as the many evolving initiatives in the region can go a long way to supporting local communities in their local decision making efforts. With growing momentum and interest on the impacts of growth, it can be expected that the demand for planning assistance will continue to rise, particularly if rapid growth were to occur. The public sector entities can not do it all alone. Partnerships with those in the private sector must be nurtured, local governments must remain engaged and opportunities for collaboration can not be missed in order for the regional vision to come to fruition. For their part, CDTC and CDRPC will do what they can to continue to assist local planning and to support the development of a quality region now and in the future.

APPENDIX A

EXCERPT FROM NEW VISIONS 2021 STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

STRATEGY: 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."*¹

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.

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

¹ 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.

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."*²

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 the

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

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

² 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.

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; 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.

Future economic competitiveness will derive from quality of life considerations.

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

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.

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

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 focused 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

Rural needs are distinct and require their own guidelines.

standards that raise expectations for widening and paving of other town roads, threatening the rural character of the town.

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."*³

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.

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.

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

- 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 *Developers need early input.* 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.

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.⁴ 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.

⁴ 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.

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.

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

Local business benefits when deliveries are accommodated properly.

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.

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.

APPENDIX B

DRAFT REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMPACT

Communities that reflect the following characteristics are collectively pursuing responsible growth, economic vitality and social and environmental sustainability.

1. The community completes comprehensive plans; corridor, sub-area or neighborhood plans; and/or economic development plans that define preferred development patterns through public processes.
2. The community translates the preferred patterns into coherent zoning ordinances, regulations, standards and guidelines that are predictable and consistently applied.
3. The community conducts its community and economic planning efforts in a manner consistent with several key principles:
 - Pursuit of plans that are consistent with and supportive of the cultural and historic fabric of the region, including historic preservation, community character, neighborhood cohesiveness and scenic and other natural resources.
 - A focus on infill development and use of existing infrastructure and services.
 - Use of economic impact analysis, visualization and other planning tools to consider alternate development patterns.
 - Incorporation of open space, habitat protection and recreational facilities and trails into plans.
 - Cooperation among all parties in local planning and decision making and the development of transportation and other infrastructure.
 - Recognition of the need for vibrant downtown centers as cultural hubs and regional magnets for young talent and “Creative Class” workers.
4. The community welcomes and seeks both basic and advanced training and education for local elected and appointed officials on issues regarding comprehensive planning, use of innovative tools and the needs and challenges of the 21st century economy, including technology-based companies.

Communities that successfully reflect these characteristics will help secure a sustainable social, economic and environmental health for residents. They also are “business ready” and can be portrayed as such in joint planning and economic initiatives and external regional marketing efforts.

_____ (city, town, village X) _____ voluntarily commits to the attainment of these characteristics through its own and collaborative efforts at the county, regional and state levels.

name, title

date