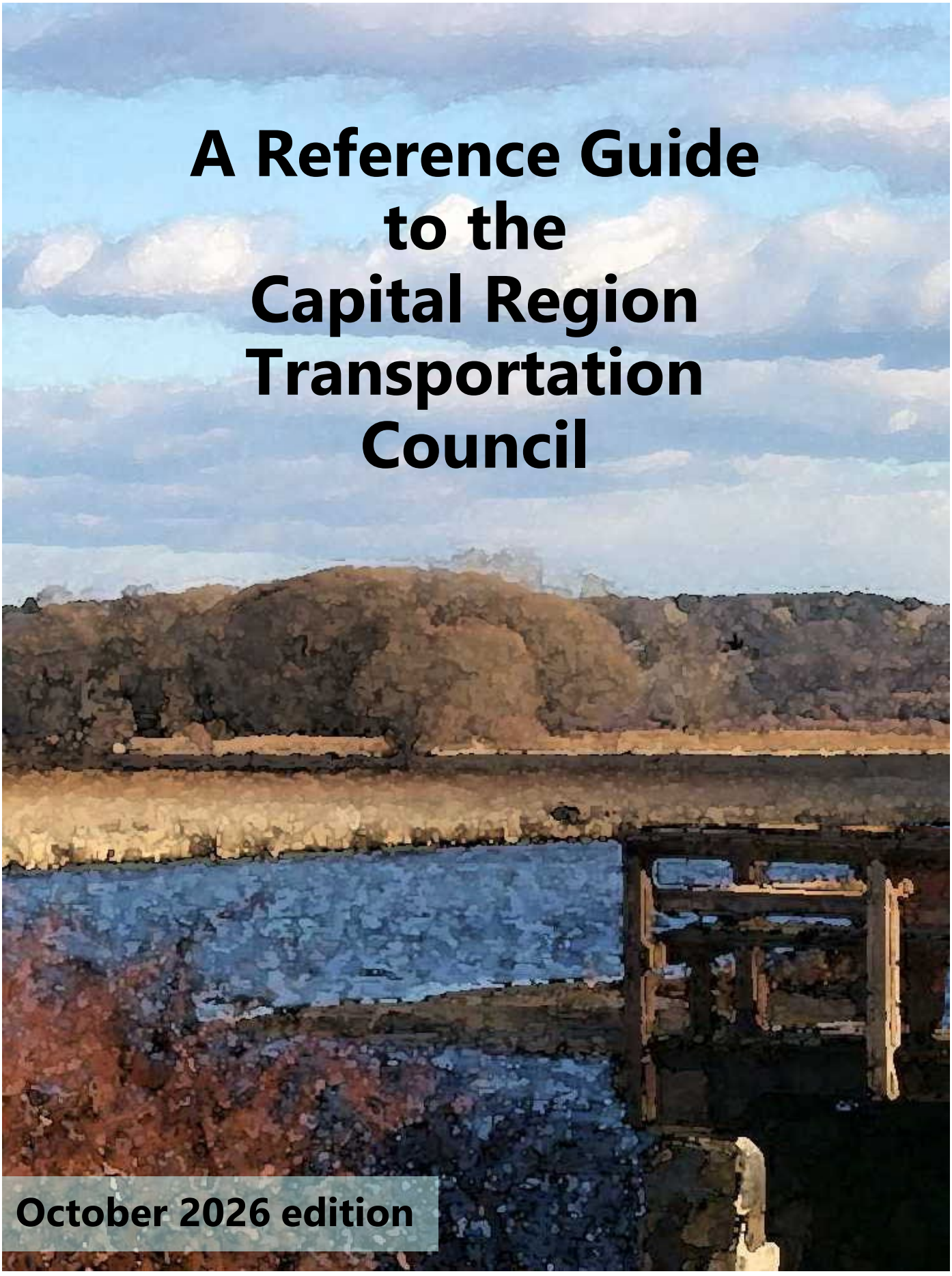
A Reference Guide to the Capital Region Transportation Council



October 2026 edition

Disclaimer

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1. The Basics

A basic understanding of the Capital Region Transportation Council (Transportation Council) can be distilled as follows:

- The Transportation Council is a forum for local elected officials and transportation representatives in Albany, Rensselaer, Saratoga and Schenectady counties (except the Town of Moreau and the Village of South Glens Falls).
- The Transportation Council is a Metropolitan Planning Organization, required by federal law and supported with federal funding.
- Federal transportation funding controlled by the consensus decisions of the Transportation Council is substantial -- about $110 million per year in federal highway and transit funding.
- The federal government does not direct or intervene in the Transportation Council's decisions.
- The Transportation Council's priorities are guided by its long-range, metropolitan transportation plan known as *In Motion: The Plan to 2050*.
- The Transportation Council has enjoyed a high degree of local success and national recognition due to a highly collaborative environment of mutual trust and respect.
- The Transportation Council requires unanimous consent from its Policy Board members, a process that hinges on strong staff work and deliberations by the Planning Committee prior to recommendations for Policy Board action.



City of Albany skyline. Photo credit: Transportation Council

2. What is the Capital Region Transportation Council?

The Capital Region Transportation Council (Transportation Council) is a designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) fulfilling key provisions of federal transportation law. The Transportation Council has its origins in the Federal Highway Act of 1962 that first established a requirement for a cooperative planning process in all urbanized areas over 50,000. Congress was concerned that local elected officials should have a say in the major Interstate highway construction program underway at the time. The Transportation Council was formed as the Capital District Transportation Study in 1964 by written agreement between New York State and each county, city, town and village in Albany, Rensselaer, Saratoga, and Schenectady counties, except the Town of Moreau and the Village of South Glens Falls which are part of the neighboring MPO, the Adirondack/Glens Falls Transportation Council.

The Capital District Transportation Study was later renamed the Capital District Transportation Committee (CDTC) in 1973 at which time it was officially designated as the MPO for the Capital Region by the Governor. CDTC was renamed the Capital Region Transportation Council in 2023 to differentiate it from CDTA and to reflect its role more strongly as a primary, permanent decision making body for federally funded transportation related plans, policies, and programs in the Capital Region.

Over the years, Congress added additional responsibilities and resources to strengthen the MPO concept, allowing each region of the nation to tailor the transportation planning structure, process, and products to meet local needs. By law the Transportation Council must maintain a long-range regional (or metropolitan) transportation plan (MTP), a short-range Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) listing federally aided transportation projects, and an annual Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) for planning coordination and the assignment of federal transportation planning funds.

To put "teeth" in the MPO process, the **federal government will not approve funding for transportation planning, construction, or operation anywhere in the Capital Region unless the project comes from the Transportation Council's adopted MTP or TIP**. The legal authority for such a significant role lies in federal law, currently the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) enacted in November 2021.

The Transportation Council has matured over the years while remaining flexible to meet changing needs. Today, the Transportation Council's Policy Board of local elected officials and transportation agency representatives guides an annual planning budget of about $4 million and maintains a five year TIP currently valued at over $700 million. Projects on the TIP are selected from those submitted by New York State Department of

Transportation (NYSDOT), Capital District Transportation Authority (CDTA), municipalities, and other sponsors and are prioritized based on an evaluation process guided by MTP priorities.

When NYSDOT repaves the Northway, when CDTA purchases buses, when the City of Schenectady reconstructs the Kings Road Bridge -- odds are that federal transportation funds are involved. If federal funds are involved, then the Transportation Council's action has likely preceded the project by many years.

3. What Kinds of Subjects Does the Transportation Council Address?

Federal law and the Transportation Council's practices encourage discussion of a broad range of transportation, land use, and economic development issues. There are very few issues related to transportation in which the Transportation Council is not involved. Safety and complete streets planning, freight issues, bicycle and pedestrian planning, human service agency transportation, community strategic land use and transportation plans, transit planning, transportation demand management, traffic signal technologies, resilience planning, congestion management, airport access, and downtown redevelopment are representative of the range of planning study and technical assistance subjects that the Transportation Council is involved in. That planning work leads to the identification of transportation project concepts that may one day become federal-aid construction projects.

In Motion: The Plan to 2050 is the Transportation Council's current regional (or metropolitan) transportation plan. The In Motion Plan elevates consideration of all these issues to the same level as more traditional concerns about traffic and pavement conditions and has as its five key goals safety, access, mobility, livability, and resilience.

It is important to recognize that there is a distinction among these subjects in terms of *how* the Transportation Council is involved. Transportation Council staff are available to provide technical assistance in all subject areas, but the Transportation Council's decision-making *authority* is generally limited to decisions related to federal transportation planning and implementation funds. For instance, the Transportation Council staff can assist a community in updating its comprehensive plan or in reviewing a traffic impact study for a new development, but the Transportation Council does not have the authority to approve or reject the products of such efforts.

The Transportation Council's Policy Board, however, does establish policies, principles, and priorities for the use of federal transportation funds. **Because federal funding is**

often critical to implementation of plans, the Transportation Council can be quite influential in encouraging careful and creative planning at the state, regional, and local level.

4. How is the Transportation Council Structured?

The key elements of the Transportation Council's structure are the Policy Board, the Planning Committee, and the staff.

The Policy Board is the ultimate decision making body of the Transportation Council. Since its origins in 1964, Policy Board membership has included the chief elected and appointed officials of the four counties, eight cities, and the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) in the Transportation Council's planning area. These governments own most of the roadway system eligible for federal aid. Later, the Capital District Transportation Authority (CDTA), Capital District Regional Planning Commission (CDRPC), New York State Thruway Authority (NYSTA), Albany County Airport Authority, and Albany Port District Commission were added as voting members.

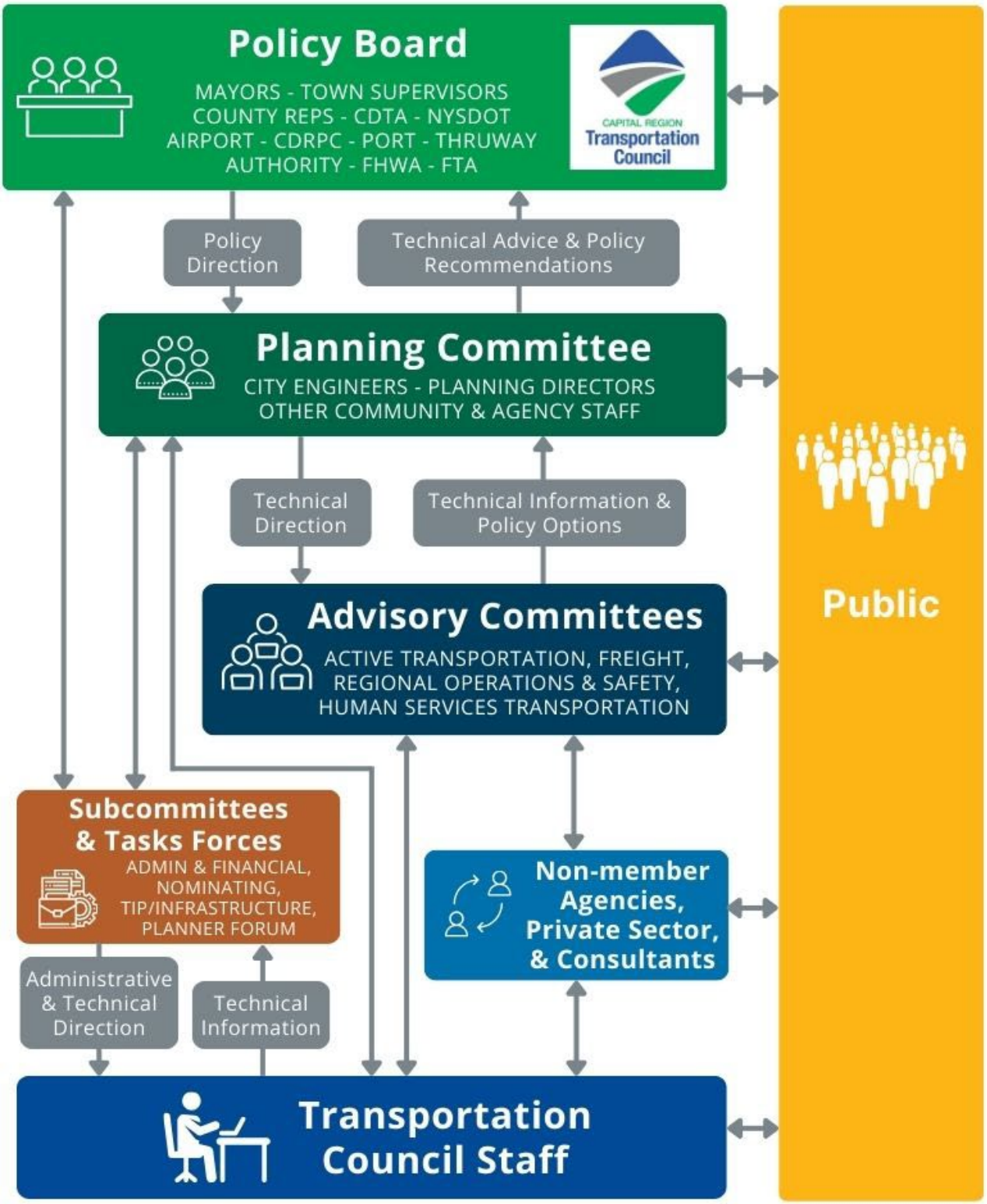
Towns and villages are represented through the counties, as well as through two additional Policy Board positions that rotate from community to community on an annual basis. In 2003, permanent membership was established for all municipalities with 50,000 or more residents. This action added the Town of Colonie to the Policy Board as the second largest municipality in the region. Federal agencies and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation participate in an advisory capacity.

The Policy Board typically meets four times a year at 3:00 PM on the first Thursday of March, June, September and December. Members can be represented by alternates; an alternate has voting privileges and counts toward a quorum if designated in writing by the member. **Representation by the member or an alternate is very important; lack of representation may leave the Transportation Council without a quorum.**

The Transportation Council's culture has been cultivated by its members and staff over many decades, earning a reputation for collaboration, innovation, technical capability, and transparency. Policy Board members have developed mutual trust in the planning process and have shared ownership of major decisions through consensus voting on all actions. The requirement of consensus, defined as unanimity of all affected parties, has provided a safe environment within which to create, innovate, and compromise.

Policy Board members are encouraged to bring forth issues and concerns at any time -- they are expected to be active participants in the process. Raising concerns during meetings or discussing them with other Policy Board members, Planning Committee members, or the Transportation Council staff between meetings makes the Transportation Council more effective, responsive, and relevant.

The Transportation Council's Structure



The second major component of the Transportation Council's structure is the Planning Committee. For the Policy Board to be successful, much of the work necessary to develop recommendations about transportation plans, programs, and projects has been delegated to the Planning Committee. The Planning Committee is largely composed of technical counterparts to the policy members of the Transportation Council. For example, mayors serve at the policy level while city engineers or planning directors serve on the Planning Committee. (The at-large Planning Committee member may or may not come from the town or village currently serving on the Policy Board.)

The Planning Committee usually meets at 9:30 AM on the first Wednesday of January, February, April, May, July, August, October, and November to provide input and direction to planning efforts. The Planning Committee also develops recommendations for action by the Policy Board. Beyond this, it has the delegated authority to approve small-scale changes to the Transportation Council's UPWP or to the TIP.

The third element of the Transportation Council's structure is the staff. CDTA serves as the Transportation Council's "host agency" and fiscal agent as the Transportation Council is not established as a legal entity separate from its member governments and agencies. It also saves considerable cost since CDTA provides administrative support including human resources, payroll, procurement, and other administrative services. By agreement, however, CDTA defers virtually all authority over the staff and federal requirements to the Policy Board. The Policy Board maintains an Administrative & Financial (A & F) Standing Subcommittee composed of the Transportation Council's Chair and other appointees. This subcommittee handles the Transportation Council's personnel and housekeeping issues on behalf of the Policy Board.

The planning work of the Transportation Council is set annually through the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), developed by the Planning Committee and adopted by the Policy Board. The UPWP describes federally funded transportation planning work undertaken by staff, consultants, and by CDTA, NYSDOT, CDRPC, local governments, and others that supports the implementation of the In Motion Plan.

The Transportation Council's staff serve as resources to the Policy Board and Planning Committee, both carrying out the assignments given to the staff by the Policy Board and Planning Committee through the UPWP and also identifying opportunities for additional efforts or improved techniques. The staff seeks to apply a diverse set of skills to ensure that the discussions held and the decisions made by the Policy Board and Planning Committee are founded on solid technical work and broad public access. The staff also represent the Transportation Council at public meetings.

5. What is Expected of Members?

Because of the reliance upon standing advisory committees, working groups, task forces and the continuing work of the Planning Committee, it is imperative that Policy Board members and Planning Committee members maintain good, continuing communication with each other. **Each policy maker needs to keep in touch with their Planning Committee representative to be sure that their community's or agency's perspective is being fairly represented in the discussions and consensus-building that takes place at Planning Committee meetings**. At-large town and village members on the Policy Board should freely contact the Transportation Council's staff, county Planning Committee members, or the at large town and village Planning Committee members to be briefed on key issues. Policy Board members receive notices and agendas for Planning Committee meetings so that items of importance can be flagged and the jurisdiction's views properly represented.

It is also important that Policy Board and Planning Committee members recognize their responsibilities to the whole region. **Members are ultimately responsible to the residents of the Capital Region for the quality of the transportation system (and for the impact of transportation on the overall quality of life) that will be enjoyed in five, ten, and twenty years' time.** This means that the Transportation Council's members jointly share the responsibility for making sure that the major transportation issues of today and tomorrow are considered by the Transportation Council.

Members also need to remember that the federal government does not hold any approval authority over the decisions made locally by the Transportation Council nor does it dictate the Transportation Council's planning priorities. **The choices facing the Capital Region** over issues ranging from the future of the Northway to the role of public infrastructure investment in urban revitalization, from treatment of suburban congestion to the use of funds to make the highway system compatible with neighborhoods, from prospects for Light Rail to the need for better sidewalks **-- all are judgments that must be made locally.**

6. How Does the Transportation Council's Funding Work?

Regarding *planning* items, the Transportation Council commits its available federal transportation planning funds to needed work through its Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) which covers the fiscal year of April 1st through March 31st. Federal planning funds are allocated by formula from both the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration. These funds are provided to ensure that the Transportation Council's decisions are technically sound and comprehensive.

Under the federal law, the Transportation Council must assure that its planning process considers ten subjects, roughly summarized as: economic competitiveness, safety, security, accessibility, environmental protection, intermodal connectivity, system management, system preservation, resiliency and reliability, and travel and tourism. The Transportation Council must also base its planning and programming on performance measures identified in federal law for safety, bridge and pavement condition, system reliability, and asset management.

To carry this out, the staff and Planning Committee develop a comprehensive planning program that leaves room for local planning initiatives. The Community and Transportation Linkage Planning Program (Linkage Program) and Technical Assistance Programs are the primary means of assisting local efforts. Since 2000, over 100 Linkage studies have been approved for funding in 43 local communities.

Federal planning funds are used for Transportation Council staff work and member agencies such as NYSDOT and CDTA, consultants under contract to the Transportation Council, and for consultants under contract to local governments or member agencies. In addition, the Transportation Council is available to perform supplemental work under contract to members and others. For example, the Transportation Council has a small annual agreement with the Town of Colonie to review development proposals in the Albany International Airport area and suggest traffic mitigation actions.

On the *capital* side, the Transportation Council maintains a rolling five-year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), normally adopting a new program every three years. The 2025-2030 TIP was adopted in June 2025. The development of the TIP includes an assessment of expected resources and updates from project implementers regarding the costs and schedules of existing commitments. Using this information and funding targets for federal programs provided by NYSDOT, the Transportation Council solicits proposals from members and all other municipalities in the four counties.

Transportation project proposals are screened to eliminate unrealistic or non-compatible projects and scored to find the best projects in each budget category. The Transportation Council uses its regional transportation plan budgetary guidelines to assign available funds to various project categories. This framework supports the selection of projects within categories largely based on a benefit/cost ratio and a qualitative merit score. This information is used to develop a TIP that reflects the goals and priorities of the regional transportation plan.

The federal funds that are programmed through this process include National Highway Performance Program, Surface Transportation Program, Highway Safety Improvement Program, and Transit Capital funds. In total, these amount to over $600 million when matched over five years. In addition, federal discretionary projects, projects selected through federally funded state transportation programs, and Congressional earmarks must be included in the TIP before funds can be released to project implementers.

7. How Can I Learn More?

The Transportation Council's website www.capitalmpo.org serves as the repository for all publicly available information on transportation plans, programs, and projects.

Questions? Contact us at 518-458-2161 or info@capitalmpo.org.

8. Policy Board Members (as of October 15, 2026)

Albany County:
- Daniel P. McCoy, County Executive
- Joanne Cunningham, Chair, County Legislature

Albany County Airport Authority:
- Stephen Clark, Chief Executive Officer

Albany Port District Commission:
- Christine Stuto, Chief Financial Officer

Capital District Regional Planning Commission:
- Lawrence Schillinger, Esq.

Capital District Transportation Authority:
- Frank Annicaro, Chief Executive Officer (Policy Board Vice Chair)

City of Albany:
- Dorcey Applyrs, Mayor

City of Cohoes:
- William T, Keeler, Mayor

City of Mechanicville:
- Michael Butler, Mayor

City of Rensselaer:
- John DeFrancesco, Mayor

City of Saratoga Springs:
- John Safford, Mayor

City of Schenectady:
- Gary R. McCarthy, Mayor (Policy Board Chair)

City of Troy:
- Carmella Mantello, Mayor

City of Watervliet:
- Charles V. Patricelli, Mayor

NYS Department of Transportation Region 1:
- James Boni, Regional Director (Policy Board Secretary)

NYS Thruway Authority:
- Vacant, Albany Division Administrator

Rensselaer County:
- Steven McLaughlin, County Executive
- Kelly Hoffman, Chair, County Legislature

Saratoga County:
- Philip C. Barrett, Chair, Board of Supervisors
- Thomas C. Werner, Saratoga County at-large

Schenectady County:
- Gary Hughes, Chair, County Legislature
- Robert Lawton, County Manager

Town of Colonie:
- Peter Crummey, Supervisor

Village of Castleton-on-Hudson:
- Michael Slik, Mayor

Village of Voorheesville:
- Richard Straut, Mayor

*Federal Highway Administration:
- Richard J. Marquis, Albany Division Administrator

*Federal Transit Administration:
- Michael Culotta, Regional Administrator

* Advisory or non-voting member

9. Commonly Used Acronyms

ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
BFP	Bridge Formula Program – FHWA funding program
BIN	Bridge Identification Number
BUILD	Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development Program – FHWA funding program
BRT	Bus Rapid Transit
AV	Autonomous Vehicle
CDRPC	Capital District Regional Planning Commission
CDTA	Capital District Transportation Authority
CHIPS	Consolidated Local Street and Highway Improvement Program
CMAQ	Congestion Mitigation Air Quality Program – FHWA funding program
CMP	Congestion Management Process
CRP	Carbon Reduction Program – FHWA funding program
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration – USDOT agency
FRA	Federal Rail Administration – USDOT agency
FTA	Federal Transit Administration – USDOT agency
GEIS	Generic Environmental Impact Statement
HSIP	Highway Safety Improvement Program – FHWA funding program
IIJA	Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act – federal transportation law; expires Sept. 30, 2026
ITS	Intelligent Transportation Systems – Advanced technologies integrated into vehicles and transportation infrastructure
MPO	Metropolitan Planning Organization – Capital Region Transportation Council is an MPO
MTP	Metropolitan Transportation Plan – also referred to as a regional transportation plan
NHFP	National Highway Freight Program – FHWA funding program
NHPP	National Highway Performance Program – FHWA funding program
NHS	National Highway System – network of Interstates and major arterial roadways
NYSDOT	New York State Department of Transportation
PEL	Planning and Environment Linkages – FHWA approach that integrates environmental, community, and economic goals early in the transportation planning process.
POP	Pave Our Potholes – NYS Funding Program
PROWAG	Public Right-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines – sets standards for making transportation infrastructure (i.e. sidewalks, street crossings, etc.) accessible to people with disabilities.
RCP	Reconnecting Communities Pilot Program – FHWA funding program
RTP	Recreational Trails Program – FHWA funding program
SMART	Strengthening Mobility and Revolutionizing Transportation
SS4A	Safe Streets and Roads for All Program – FHWA funding program
STR	State Touring Routes – NYS Funding Program
STBG	Surface Transportation Block Grant Program – FHWA funding program
TAP	Transportation Alternatives Program – FHWA funding program
TDM	Transportation/Travel Demand Management
TDP	Transit Development Plan
TIP	Transportation Improvement Program – capital program of transportation projects
TMC	Transportation Management Center
TSMO	Transportation Systems Management and Operations
UPWP	Unified Planning Work Program
USC	United States Code
USDOT	United States Department of Transportation
VMT	Vehicle Miles Traveled