



Mary O. Donohue, Lt. Governor
Chair, Quality Communities
Interagency Working Group

Quality Communities Workshop: “Advancing the Transportation - Land Use Connection”

June 13, 2006
Binghamton, NY

Conference Summary



Thomas J. Madison, Jr.
Commissioner,
Department of Transportation

Introduction

The New York State Quality Communities Workshop, “Advancing the Transportation-Land Use Connection,” was held in Binghamton on June 13, 2006. The New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT), Department of State, and Department of Environmental Conservation sponsored the event with the assistance of the University Transportation Research Center. The event attracted over 150 participants from state and local governments, regional organizations, universities, businesses, and citizens’ organizations from throughout New York State.

The workshop discussed New York State’s approach to integrating transportation investment decisions with community land use planning. It provided input to NYSDOT as it develops a strategy for encouraging and supporting greater transportation and land use coordination in the future. The conference held breakout sessions featuring innovative practices from across the state to stimulate discussion and identify ideas for action.

This summary is an overview of the conference, including the key themes and lessons that emerged during the day.

Welcoming Remarks

Tim Gilchrist, Chief of Transportation Strategy for NYSDOT, opened the workshop by emphasizing that the day was intended to be interactive. He called attention to the Department’s new 25-year transportation master plan, which called for improved integration of transportation and land use planning as a key strategy to support economic development and quality communities. The ideas identified in this workshop will help shape NYSDOT’s approach to implementing this strategy.

NYSDOT Commissioner **Thomas J. Madison, Jr.** welcomed participants to the conference and established its context. He noted that in the past, land-use and transportation policies have not always been on the same page. The victims of these segregated policies have often been downtowns and older small

cities and towns. Policymakers are now able to see the unfortunate side effects of sprawl and poor land management.

Commissioner Madison serves on the Quality Communities Interagency Task Force, established by Governor George Pataki and chaired by Lieutenant Governor Mary Donohue. He is committed to working with local governments to strengthen the economy and improve the environment through a holistic approach. With major upcoming investments funded by the recent federal surface transportation act, called SAFETEA-LU; and New York’s own Transportation Bond Act, which voters approved in November 2005, DOT is in a position to play an important role in these efforts. The DOT’s customers are local governments, and this conference is about re-establishing a dialogue between the two. If we all work together we can make our communities a better place to live.



NYSDOT Commissioner Thomas J. Madison, Jr. welcomed participants and spoke about the importance of linking transportation planning with land use planning.

Under its draft 25-year master plan, NYSDOT will be more responsive on issues relating to safety, accessibility, and the environment. Land use planning is a local government priority, and the DOT should play a proactive role in supporting it. To accomplish these goals, there is a need for greater funding for a robust program of investment. NYSDOT plans to spend \$38 billion on transport in the next 5 years, but some \$70 billion in additional investment is needed to meet all identified needs.

With more funds, the DOT can better serve the communities and MPOs with which it intends to work more closely.

The Honorable Matthew Ryan, Mayor of Binghamton, reinforced the need to rejoin the city and periphery, strengthen linkages, foster entrepreneurship, engage residents, promote connections to natural resources and encourage stewardship. He said that Binghamton’s resurgence depends on the development of economic, social, and physical networks, and transportation investments that support smart, sustainable growth are critical for its continued success. This requires planning that is comprehensive, proactive, fair, and engages the public. We must bring people back to the urban core to generate the vibrancy that makes New York State great.

Morning Plenary: The Current Transportation - Land Use Planning Landscape in New York State

John Poorman, Staff Director of the Capital District Transportation Committee, provided an MPO perspective on the current situation. He argued that integrated transportation and land use are necessary to cultivate the economic growth the state wants, yet integrating them presents a difficult challenge. Most of New York State is not short on space, so it is difficult for local governments to encourage greater density or to steer development into small downtowns. He said we need perspectives and skills from all sides and should be careful not to let illogical rules and regulations narrow perceptions of available options.

There are countless examples of planning challenges that have intertwined land use and transportation components, ranging from replacement of the Tappan Zee Bridge to traffic calming on a highway through Troy. The challenge is thinking through how to follow the rules and do transportation projects in a defensible manner, while at the same time sorting through the bigger issues of quality of life and still accomplishing the goals we set out to achieve.

David Legeikis, Resource Manager for NYSDOT's Eastern Zone, provided a state government perspective. He said Binghamton was a quality community long before the advent of the Quality Communities program, but in the past 10-15 years various policies and planning decisions facilitated the exodus of businesses from downtown. New residential development in the outlying areas has meant more congested arterials, making it increasingly difficult to make forward-looking decisions.

Legeikis suggested new ways to address these continuing problems including: context sensitive design, local waterfront revitalization plans, and cooperation with small towns. He said there is room for NYSDOT to improve by scoping its projects to better match long-term expectations of land use. But if DOT is expected to play a role in helping to save downtowns, there also needs to be a balanced partnership and two-way cooperation. In Region 9, NYSDOT is sitting down with all 46 villages and developing baselines with them. This is an incredible effort to open up the process and improve mutual understanding.

Special Presentation: **New York Lieutenant Governor Mary O. Donohue**

Lieutenant Governor Mary O. Donohue, Chair of the Quality Communities Interagency Working Group, said that Binghamton was an ideal venue for the conference. Four years ago, when the Working Group was first launched, Binghamton was designated as the first pilot Quality Community. The Working Group seeks to promote a dialogue to help communities preserve and pursue their chosen way of life.



Lieutenant Governor Mary O. Donohue encouraged active participation in the workshop.

Transportation and land use are very tough issues: decisions have long-lasting impacts on an area's economy, its natural beauty, and its way of life. Managing growth and making correct transportation decisions requires a delicate balance. The decision-making process needs to respect the reasons why people have moved to Southern Tier and Upstate New York. It needs partnerships with many stakeholders to maintain and improve on that vision.

This workshop is intended to share lessons learned attempting to find the right balance between advancing growth and making correct transportation choices. It will address land use management tools and how to match those tools with different situations and objectives. There will be discussion of community visioning and of using transportation as a community asset, not a community struggle. These presentations will lead to engaging discussions on the difficulties and the successes of

applying these methods to our communities. Audience participation is critical to the success of this session, so everybody is encouraged to share their views and experiences.

Morning Breakout Sessions

1A. Integrating Land Use and Transportation Planning Collaboration Achieves Many Objectives

Robert Traver, Assistant to the Director, NYSDOT Delivery Division, presented a Case Study of the Route 332 Corridor. This project will help to lay the groundwork for future land use decisions all along the Route 332 Corridor connecting Canandaigua and Rochester. When NYSDOT first took a look at the corridor, it was a two-lane rural highway. NYSDOT simply planned to add some lanes, but the town then came forward and said it had an alternative vision for this corridor. Their vision and willingness to develop a partnership affected the outcome of the project. Residents, businesses, developers, and town, county and state officials helped develop this vision.

The community wanted to reduce strip mall development, and the design limited access to achieve these ends. It optimized traffic signal spacing to absorb new development effectively, included restrictive medians to reduce conflict points and reduce congestion at turning points, and improved access control for traveling in and out of businesses. Coupled with the design, the Town adopted new zoning ordinances, laws, and regulations. Within three years, \$30 million dollars of development and \$120 million in investments and appreciation in land values were realized. Simple, planned solutions achieved multiple benefits. The keys to success included establishing strong and spirited partnerships, using professional help for technical issues, reaching agreement on common goals and objectives, and finding the will to take proactive steps to address future problems.

Dan Sitrer, President of Saratoga Associates, said he has witnessed an increasing level of collaboration. It is no longer simply about development; it is about creating quality places—connecting a community’s physical assets to its vision for the future. He presented a series of case studies of how communities have grappled with these issues:

Ballston, NY aspired to save its working landscape from encroaching sprawl and maintain its small town character, but also wanted to allow appropriate development and maintain a fiscal balance. The town conducted community meetings, a very contentious process, but ultimately reached agreement on a mixed-use rezoning strategy that steers growth to the areas that can best be served by the infrastructure.

Bethlehem, NY developed a comprehensive plan to help save its history, farmland, and community character. The town had seen a lot of growth, but was concerned about a loss of community character, the high cost of infrastructure, and an imbalance in its tax base. They adopted “smart growth” principles to promote mixed economic development zones, and developed strategies for dealing with the rapid growth in truck traffic.

Utica, NY is attempting to address a highway that serves as both a through route and a local street, dividing the community. High traffic volumes have led to a high number of accidents, a dangerous environment for pedestrians, and a high commercial vacancy rate. A community-based process is currently underway to develop a vision for how to improve the roadway.

Albany, NY is redeveloping the Harriman State Office Campus into a mixed-use technology park. The site was initially designed to be isolated from the community. As part of its redevelopment efforts, the city is attempting to reintroduce a street grid to connect the campus better with the community. Transportation is central to land use planning for the site.

John Poorman noted in conclusion that governments cannot afford to provide enough transportation capacity to support every community’s full zoning build-out. Transportation agencies need to prioritize. Federal law requires that MPOs take a comprehensive approach to planning – this is the justification MPOs need to provide leadership in this area. The Capital District Transportation Committee has a four step approach:

1. Embrace a principled, holistic view of transportation in its broader context.
2. Ensure integration of transportation, land use, economic development and environmental plans.
3. Make a strong connection between plans and implementation programs.
4. Implement and refine in an organic manner.

CDTC uses budget discipline as a tool to promote these goals, and to promote the development of local land use development plans, mitigation fees, and transportation and land use “linkage” studies. But MPOs cannot achieve success simply by working within their walls – they must partner with local agencies.

Discussion. Participants noted:

- Comprehensive plans can empower communities to take a proactive, rather than reactive approach to addressing growth.

- Transportation agencies need to lower communities’ expectations of their ability to expand capacity in response to changes in local demand.
- Communities need more information on where they can find money to do comprehensive planning and fund local improvements.

1B. Visioning: Transportation as a Community Asset Translating Community Visions to Action

Peter Plumeau, Northeast Director, Planning Services, Wilber Smith Associates, launched the session by describing how visioning processes can be used as a foundation for quality communities. He argued that the critical steps in this process are crafting a vision through leadership and partnerships, vision-based planning based on strategy and innovation, and gauging progress toward the vision through performance monitoring and feedback. A key question for this session is how DOT can support efforts of this kind.

John Behan, Principal at Behan and Associates, used the town of Halfmoon, New York, as a case study in how visioning processes can work. Halfmoon developed a comprehensive plan to establish a town center to provide the community with a greater sense of place. The town was facing serious development pressures, rapidly growing volumes of through traffic, and a great deal of potentially developable property on the market. In the absence of proactive measures, the town would see continued sprawl.

A visioning process helped the town figure out which direction it wanted to go. Key themes that emerged from this process were a desire for land preservation; integration of a hamlet style development area, which would require a change in zoning; linking of cul-de-sacs; and a desire for traditional neighborhood areas. Behan illustrated the solutions that the community developed to implement this vision. The need to develop a Generic Environmental Impact Statement (GEIS) helped spur the visioning process because it was self funding, facilitated landowner outreach, and kept the public involved.

Tara Boggio of FRA Planning Associates spoke about transportation visioning processes in rural settings. She noted that comprehensive plans provide an important opportunity to address critical transportation issues, yet they rarely do in practice. Strong transportation elements in comprehensive plans can help ensure that capacity and safety issues help drive land use decisions, establish a road network hierarchy to improve the functioning of the system, provide an opportunity to identify and protect viewsheds, and help ensure that existing and future development areas are adequately served.

Corridor studies can also play important roles. They can help establish how much development a corridor can handle, identify developable lands, flag potential access management issues, promote integration of policies among municipalities, and provide an opportunity to unify a corridor aesthetically.

She described a visioning process that was conducted for the Routes 5 and 20 Corridor outside Rochester. The process examined where safety, volume, and speed problems exist, and created a viewshed map to determine which areas needed to be

protected. It included community surveys on development, land use, zoning, signage, access, and other issues. There was a DOT representative at all the meetings, which kept the process “visionary but in the realm of possibility.”

The visioning process identified the community’s goals. These will be converted into policies in an upcoming corridor plan.

Discussion. Ideas and comments raised by participants during the discussion period included:

- Avoid visioning efforts that aim too high and raise expectations in favor of options that are really not feasible. Technical, budgetary, and implementation realities need to be part of the visioning process. DOT can assist with this.
- Many of the factors driving a need for transportation and land use coordination come from the outside, such as the need to coordinate interstates, warehousing, and big box retail. Coordinated assistance from DOT and the Dept. of Agriculture and Markets would be helpful, especially in non-MPO areas.
- Congress created regulations to ensure that state DOTs are working with local comprehensive plans, but left the states with significant flexibility. FHWA is trying to provide tools for this to happen, if states want it to.
- The Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) process is not well-understood by local volunteer planning boards. It would be helpful for DOT to replicate Region 9’s pilot outreach program across the state.
- More information about creative funding opportunities would be helpful.
- The pool of trained community planners is shrinking in this state, as they are attracted to parts of the country where there are more job opportunities. DOT might want to consider hiring more professional planners.
- We need to understand the groups we are reacting to – the builders, developers, and businesses.

Keynote Address

Georges Jacquemart, Principal of Buckhurst, Fish & Jacquemart, and Adjunct Professor at the Robert F. Wagner School of Public Service at New York University, delivered the keynote address. He noted that this conference is dealing with interesting and complex issues, and that nobody has all of the answers. He discussed common professional practices in transportation planning, traffic engineering, and land use planning, and how they relate to community quality of life.

Reflecting on a career that included oversight or review of thousands of traffic impact studies, he admitted committing a number of “sins” that are all too common in the profession:

- The first sin has been an obsession with “levels of service,” to the point that it has almost become a proxy for quality of life. Yet in fact, some of the most successful communities have terrible levels of service. These indicators only reflect drivers’ experiences, and have no relationship to safety or economic vitality.
- The second sin has been an unreasonable focus on levels of service during the peak 15 minutes of the day.

- The third sin has been recommending traffic improvement measures that degrade the pedestrian environment, such as removing on-street parking. This also reduces customer access to local businesses.
- The fourth sin has been implying that traffic demand on arterials is fixed, when in practice it is elastic. The arrangement and walkability of land uses does have a significant impact on trip generation. Planners should manage travel demand, not simply satisfy it.
- A fifth sin common in the profession is the use of design standards based on the 85th percentile of vehicle speeds on a roadway. While this practice makes sense on a remote highway, it has questionable value within communities. Roundabouts prove this – they are safer, more efficient, and a great tool for marking the transition between rural areas and villages.

Jacquemart also noted a number of sins prevalent in the land use planning profession:

- Municipalities guarding their land use powers while abdicating any responsibility for conducting planning.
- Zoning strategies that create a strict separation of land uses, significantly increasing the need for travel.
- Over-reliance on ITE trip generation rates, which are based on suburban environments and are not relevant to denser or mixed-use environments.

He concluded by identifying better practices that land use and transportation professionals can begin to put into place:

- Design guidelines that are tailored for populated areas. Context sensitive designs can make drivers aware that they are in different environment, and meet community needs by promoting safety and local character.
- “Form-based zoning,” as Saratoga Springs has adopted in its downtown, provides flexibility to mix land uses (but no residential uses on the first floor). This has been successful in promoting economic growth and downtown development, while limiting traffic growth.
- Transferable development rights can help communities grow strategically while protecting their character.
- Replacing inefficient off-street parking requirements with shared parking and off-site “park-and-walk” facilities. In-lieu fees can help fund public lots.
- Promoting local street circulation and connectivity to mitigate traffic, instead of allowing developments to dump traffic directly onto major highways.
- Preserving opportunities for future bypass roads. Bypasses are controversial, but it is important to provide future generations with options for meeting their community development visions.
- Planning for access management can also be a critical strategy, as discussed several times in this conference.

He noted that it is important to broaden the authorship of ideas. Ensuring broad ownership of policies can help them outlast the involvement of any particular individual. Political power changes over time, and broad support for ideas can help ensure their continuity.

Afternoon Breakout Sessions

2A. Transportation – Land Use Management Tools Matching the Tools to the Objectives

Stephen Ferranti, President of SRF Associates, launched the session by describing the public’s increasing awareness of the relationship between transportation and quality of life, and its increasing demands that public policy directly address these linkages. Increasingly a good project is seen as one that combines land use, transportation and community design seamlessly and effectively. Each of these components is needed for communities to be reliably proud of the results.

Route 434, the Vestal Parkway, is an example of what can go wrong with poor integration. This was once a high-quality limited access road. But a supporting access management and land use strategy was absent, and connections increased over time and deterioration ensued. A positive example of seamless integration of transportation planning in communities is University Avenue in Rochester.

Many tools are available. Tools must be selected to fit the context (rural, suburban, urban); situation (new development, expanding development, redevelopment); and community objectives (travel efficiency, safety, community character, economic opportunities, etc.). On the transportation side, potential tools include proactive use of the highway work permit, innovative approaches to directional turns, roundabouts, context sensitive design, and other approaches. Education is essential when new designs are used: the public cannot be expected to know how to use a new type of facility properly.

Comprehensive access management strategies differ from traditional approaches by looking beyond the right of way itself. Planning boards can create and modify land use laws and codes to work in synergy with the DOT’s approaches and encourage/discourage development within a corridor. Typical local management tools include rezoning and improvements and/or advocacy for local street network development in ways that support land use and transportation goals. Local connectivity can help alleviate strains on primary networks. This can be controversial – people like cul-de-sacs – but a single arterial is generally not enough.

He presented several examples of these types of efforts:

- The Town & Village of Victor adapted a regional travel demand model to look more closely at local issues. This allows them to identify conditions at their scale of analysis and helped them develop a transportation element in the comprehensive plan.
- The towns of Farmington and Canandaigua addressed the Route 332 corridor through ordinance revisions including a local zoning law, a major thoroughfare overlay district, subdivision and development of land use regulations, median and directional turn modifications, and signal management.
- The Town of Penfield developed a comprehensive access management plan ten years ago for the areas around Route 441 and Route 250. It included zoning overlays, access roads, medians, and reduced curb cuts.

Thomas Harvey, Associate Planner, Ontario County Planning Department, discussed the Route 364 Access Management Plan in the towns of Gorham and Canandaigua. This effort was spurred by public concern over a proposed highway widening project near Canandaigua Lake. The community was facing significant growth pressures (especially summer homes), and wanted to protect its quality of life.

The town decided to develop a management plan with broad public involvement. The initial situation was one that encouraged uncontrolled growth: no official street map, limited available rights of way, a high quality of life (recognized as the #1 county for rural living in the U.S. by *Progressive Farmer* magazine), high property values, wealthy residents, and a great deal of vacant land “prime for development.” Conditions on Route 364 included structures close to the road, high weekend summer traffic, and inadequate driveway spacing.

The study examined access points, usage of roads, ways to get traffic off of Route 364, and driveway spacing. A consultant organized an open public education and participation process, and tailored its recommendations in response to feedback and public support. One result of the process was a Comprehensive Plan amendment that emphasizes access management, establishes an alternative road system in the corridor, and categorizes intersections. Other results included a new local Access Management Law, Zoning and Subdivision Law amendments, and a Memorandum of Understanding between NYSDOT and Ontario County, which outlines objectives, goals and methods for future improvements.

Mike Welti, Senior Planner and Project Manager at The Chazen Companies, explained the “Land Use – Transportation Cycle,” in which road capacity improvements in congested areas tend to attract development, which inevitably deteriorates levels of service, generating a need for further capacity increases.

He described several efforts to avoid this cycle. The first was the Town of Colonie which conducted an innovative study of the Route 7 and Route 2 corridors, supported and assisted by the Capital District Transportation Committee’s “Community and Transportation Linkage Planning Program.” The goals of this effort were to preserve the effectiveness of its transportation system, maintain and improve the quality of its natural and built environments, realize the corridor’s economic development potential, and plan for all transportation modes.

The study examined two scenarios: (1) a “trend-based” projection that assumed no policy changes; and (2) a “plan-based” picture of the future, developed through an extensive outreach and visioning process. The plan-based scenario used land use as a strategy for managing demand in the face of rapid growth, including protections for open space, more robust mixing of land uses, and a more integrated street network.

The study modeled how each of these scenarios would perform from a transportation perspective. It found significant benefits from the “plan-based” scenario, which would not generate as much traffic as a trend-based buildout. Zoning amendments, traffic calming, and other transportation innovations are being put into place to implement the vision as policy.

The town of Stillwater has a much more rural setting than Colonie. Route 4, which functions both as a highway and a Main Street for the community, was the focus of another “Linkage” study that looked at improving connections between the periphery and village center, and at finding a way for Route 4 to contribute to economic revitalization. Design guidelines, traffic calming, and other transportation innovations were the key focuses of the town study.

A final example is Saratoga Springs, New York, which adopted a concept called “Transect Zoning” in 2004. This approach looks at a continuum of settings, from urban to rural, and provides distinct design and zoning guidelines appropriate to each setting. Saratoga Springs’ approach encourages mixed uses downtown, while still allowing developers flexibility.

Discussion highlights:

- The concept of “Transect Zoning” is attracting interest as a model for local zoning reform. Information can be found at placemakers.com.
- Developers need to know what types of projects can win approval. Establishing ground rules early reduces uncertainty for developers and makes a town a more attractive place to invest.
- Advice is needed on how to develop strategies in multi-jurisdictional contexts, and how to “lock-in” agreements so that they can endure.
- Public consensus-building strategies are essential. The Charrette Institute (charretteinstitute.org) has many techniques and resources on this topic.
- In the Capital District, the private-sector Center for Economic Growth is advancing a “regional compact” under which municipalities agree to work together to address growth issues. It is offering to help communities that agree to participate by marketing them internationally as sites for business investment.



Joe Grasso, Clough Harbour Associates, discussed the value of the GEIS process as a tool to help promote land use planning.

**2B. The Economy, Planning for Growth
Planning, Attracting and Coping with Growth**

Joe Grasso, Registered Landscape Architect, Senior Associate, Clough Harbour & Associates explained that many communities are realizing that traditional zoning is no longer a useful tool for achieving their desired form of growth. Communities must be better prepared to accommodate and control growth, in order to be ready for any economic opportunities. A planning process can help open lines of communication so that communities can educate themselves and be ready for economic opportunities.

The Generic Environmental Impact Statement (GEIS) process is one tool that has been used recently to help drive land use policies and change regulations. The GEIS examines a large area around major projects, and includes a thorough analysis of existing resources and impacts. It can include different scenarios, yet is not project specific. By simulating what future build-out conditions will look like under alternative policies,

this process provides an opportunity for communities to consider what directions they consider to be desirable.

Besides zoning and land use policies, mitigation fees are another useful tool for addressing the impacts of a development. These can include development fees based on the additional traffic generated on local streets, loss of open space, and other factors, and can help fund infrastructure over time in an equitable way. Mitigation fees also reduce cost uncertainties for developers.

Clifton Park has pursued multiple strategies. It realized that a full build-out of its existing plan had unacceptable costs. In response, it developed a new land conservation plan, with density restrictions, amenity fees on new development, access management, parcels targeted for permanent protection, a

system of tradable development rights, and new design guidelines. Clifton Park now has 40-60 businesses along the state highway, none of which has its own driveway. Most businesses are fully accessible by local roads. There is also a growing town-wide bicycle and pedestrian system that is intended to serve the entire community.

Effective growth management requires communication and partnerships. Under the old planning paradigm, only the developer and a consultant were involved in the design of projects. Today, we

need a land use paradigm that involves town boards and residents, as well as developers and consultants. It is important to recognize that this is a long-term process. Elected officials come and go, so it is important to have plans that can stand the test of time and be ready when development opportunities present themselves. Communities should not be afraid to steal good ideas from elsewhere. There is also a need to have more knowledgeable boards and communities. It is important for professionals to understand who these people are, and educate them. Grasso concluded by urging professionals to engage elected officials on this issue, but to be compassionate, stick to their guns, and look for opportunities to build partnerships.

Vincent Azzarelli, Village Manager, Village of Horseheads described a situation very different from that in Clifton Park. The community has rebuilt its historic town square, but is just beginning a discussion about the larger pressures for change that it is facing. Those pressures are significant: with the conversion of Route 17 to I-86, there has been substantial growth in housing and big box retail. There has been enough traffic growth that two major arterials may need to be widened to four lanes each. Essentially, the community needs to grow because of the growth all around it. Public officials are trying to help the public to understand that neighborhoods are going to change, but the public discussion about how to address these pressures is only beginning, and there is a lot of resistance. In an established community, education and inclusiveness are very important.

Successful projects result from:

- Involvement of politicians and the public
- Education and exposure to information
- Communication, coordination, and collaboration

- Planning patient partnerships prevents poor performance

Steve Munson, Senior Transportation Analyst at NYSDOT’s Office of Statewide Planning and Strategy presented a case study from the Town of Virgil in Cortland County. Growth in this area has been slow but fairly constant and the area’s economy is externally-oriented. There are very few businesses in the town. Yet several new projects, including a major development project at the Greek Peak Ski Area, will add a lot of pressure on the road network. Much of the area remains relatively undeveloped, but there is growing development on the arterials. There are also plenty of sight distance problems and curves that will be a problem with higher traffic volumes.

NYSDOT was about to launch a corridor study, but discovered that the town was embarking on a rezoning effort at the same time. NYSDOT realized that it could accomplish more by working with the community on its new zoning policy than it could through a conventional corridor study, so it decided to put its efforts there. NYSDOT, the community, and the regional planning board met for over a year to review the draft zoning ordinance, and develop suggestions for improvement.

They started by defining what the community hoped and expected to see in 10-15 years, and reflecting on what they hoped to achieve through zoning that was worth the pain of regulating. They wanted to establish conditions to attract economic development while protecting landowners’ ability to sell property. Yet there was a consensus that preserving amenities would produce a greater value for the community, in terms of both property values and quality of life. Specifically, there was agreement on four basic objectives: protect the groundwater, reduce accidents, limit frontage road development, and minimize the visual impacts of development.

Specific requirements related to transportation were kept minimal. Instead, there was a decision to allow the zoning regulations to do the work of protecting the transportation system. The new code provided incentives for small lots and commercial and residential clustering in certain areas, and incentives for open space and farmland protections in others. It also included “clearance zones” to keep development away from the roadways. The ordinance allowed 5-acre lots with 450-foot frontages over most of the area. The general idea was that large lots here make sense because they are a simple way to protect resources, and provide an opportunity to distribute the benefits of property sales more widely. The ordinance does not mandate compact growth, but it does provide an opportunity to create a village over time if done right.

Discussion. Munson concluded by listing NYSDOT activities that touch local communities, and the municipal planning and regulatory activities that impact the transportation system. He asked where the disconnect is, since interaction is frequent; where, among all of these activities, the best place to work together would be; and whether comprehensive planning is the best approach. Key points in the discussion that followed were:

- Communities often do not know what is happening in neighboring communities that might affect them.
- Highway work permits are probably the most frequent point of interaction with local governments. DOT

could be more proactive, e.g. by asking developers to show consistency with local plans. But the permits occur at a late stage, so few options are available.

- Planning boards often hear, “DOT won’t let us” as an explanation for why some strategy cannot be pursued. When this happens, local officials should feel free to contact NYSDOT directly. There may be more room for problem solving if NYSDOT is involved early.
- It would be helpful for NYSDOT to comment during rezoning or planning processes, rather than during site plan review. NYSDOT often gets involved too late.
- NYSDOT could reach out more actively to help local highway superintendents adopt more progressive policies. Perhaps DOT could assign a liaison to each county to track planning and zoning processes.
- Education and outreach are important but difficult, especially since officials change every 2-4 years.
- NYSDOT also needs to stand by its own policies.
- There is a continuing challenge breaking out of a tendency for each discipline to speak its own language. The most successful organizations and communities are the ones who engage in multiple dialogues with a wide range of partners in their own languages.

Closing Session

Tim Gilchrist, Chief of Transportation Strategy for NYSDOT, kicked off the final panel by noting that this is not the start of DOT’s efforts to address the transportation-land use connection. These efforts have been ongoing for a long time. However, this has been a great forum to bring these efforts to together and start a continuous dialogue on the topic. Based on the lessons heard today, NYSDOT will continue to flesh out its strategy on land use, and find ways to institutionalize these efforts.

Allison L.C. de Cerreño identified some crosscutting themes that came up over the course of the day. These included:

1. There is a need for coordination, cooperation, communication and information.
2. Growth can happen exponentially, quickly, and unexpectedly. The key is to help position communities to be proactive instead of having to react after the fact.
3. There is a need for consistency and complementary between local plans and state policy actions for economic development, transportation, etc.
4. We need to look at each village and town and then beyond. Many do not necessarily know what is happening in the next community over, and decisions made by neighboring towns will affect one another.
5. Change is possible, as demonstrated by many of the conference’s presentations.

John Poorman – A key lesson from Session 1A was how the Route 332 Project showed that access management can help create a suburban kind of managed growth. These strategies need to be in place well in advance of economic pressure. Communities are best served if planning includes early participation from state agencies, to ensure realistic visioning.

From a regional perspective, suburban growth management is the flip side of the coin for urban revitalization. The MPO

planning processes can be successful because of innovation and the will of the players involved. He suggested looking at places that work well and are fostering those types of initiatives.

Peter Plumeau – Session 1B discussed visioning: how to focus on the big picture, how to turn vision to action, and what the role of transportation planning and investment might be in making that happen. The discussion noted that, while many communities across the state do have comprehensive plans, many have minimal transportation elements and lack official maps. Because of this, many are missing a very valuable opportunity to enact their visions of their community's future into law. One important reason to have a plan in place is to help the community protect itself from development proposals that do not align with the community's vision or interests.

The discussion also noted that many local communities lack the resources to conduct comprehensive planning and visioning processes, due to a lack of personnel. There is a growing shortage of trained planning professionals in the state, due to the scarcity of employment opportunities for planners here. Because of this shortage, communities have a great need for technical assistance. Finally, any information-sharing by the state to inform communities about plans, programs, funding sources, and other matters of interest would be very valuable.

Stephen Ferranti – Breakout Session 2A looked at tools that can be applied and how to gauge success. It is important to take a system-wide view. Near-term priorities often determine what tools are applied. But it is important to consider whether we are simply choosing these tools for convenience, and whether we are keeping enough of an eye on our long-term objectives.

Consistency of plans is also important. The players and policy environments are constantly changing, so a flexible but robust system to maintain progress over time is needed. Finally, education is important. Public officials need to be educated so that they understand coordinated transportation-land use planning. The unknown is stressful to the driving public and the private sector. A coherent planning process can help reduce this uncertainty about the future.

Steve Munson – One lesson that can be drawn from Breakout Session 2B is that there is a tendency to focus on the immediate task at hand. NYSDOT has an ongoing struggle communicating with the cities, towns, and villages that it deals with directly. Somehow DOT's structure and the way it fragments its duties has broken that ongoing relationship into a series of instantaneous and unrelated activities. The ongoing highway work permit relationship has been converted into discrete highway work permit issues. Two-month or one-year planning studies are conducted every five or ten years rather than on a

continuing basis. NYSDOT is looking for ways to build relationships and build a more seamless process.

John Poorman – One goal of this workshop has been to suggest potential roles for the DOT in this planning process. All the sessions agreed that there is a significant role for the DOT alongside MPOs and local governments in encouraging good land use and transportation planning.



John Poorman, Staff Director of the Capital District Transportation Committee, emphasized that planners already have the tools and mandates they need to provide leadership on linking transportation and land use.

There is a risk that DOT employees will leave this room feeling overwhelmed by yet another layer of expectations. The challenge for the Department and its employees is to reconcile all of these greater expectations with the limited resources and time and other responsibilities everybody has. That is imminently doable, but it does mean beginning to establish priorities. We do need to find ways to provide some degree of participation across the board to

improve the quality of integrated land use and transportation planning. CDTC's linkage program is not perfect, but may provide a model.

Final discussion. In responding to questions, NYSDOT made the following points:

- NYSDOT is not seeking to arbitrate conflicts among adjacent towns. It is looking for opportunities to assist communities that are looking to cooperate.
- NYSDOT is open to considering strategies that make more active use of its access management authority.
- NYSDOT decided about 8 years ago not to pursue authority for development mitigation fees, but it may be coming to a point where this can be reconsidered.

Charlie Murphy, New York State Department of State said that the Quality Communities program at the Department of State would like to offer its assistance to any communities seeking to embark on a comprehensive planning process, or seeking assistance coordinating with various state agencies.

Tim Gilchrist concluded the workshop by reemphasizing NYSDOT's commitment to this issue. As an agency, it is developing a strategy for moving forward. It is developing an advisory group to monitor progress, and will provide updates to anybody who is interested in receiving them. He noted that this is an evolving process, and expressed the Department's appreciation for everybody's participation.

This document was prepared for NYSDOT by Todd Goldman of the University Transportation Research Center, with the assistance of Allison L. C. de Cerreño, Paul Cummings, Martin Daley, Arturo Espinoza, David Greenberger, and Ellen Thorson.

