an opportunity to influence New York’s approach to integrating transportation investment decisions with community land use planning
Dear Colleague:

On June 13, 2006, the New York State Department of Transportation and the Department of State, in conjunction with the University Transportation Research Center, held a Quality Communities Workshop: Advancing the Transportation-Land Use Connection, in Binghamton, New York. The event attracted more than 150 participants from state and local governments, regional organizations, universities, consulting agencies and other stakeholders interested in having a constructive dialogue on this subject.

This interactive workshop identified ideas and strategies that could be utilized by the department in developing an approach to better integrate transportation investment decisions with community land use planning. In studying the “Conference Summary,” you will note the many good points that were raised by the speakers and participants on this subject. Lieutenant Governor Mary Donohue spoke on the Quality Communities Initiative, a program built on creating strong partnerships between state and local governments to invest in those communities. Georges Jacquemart of Buckhurst, Fish & Jacquemart provided the keynote talk, suggesting that communities use tools and strategies that consider all transportation users and the communities’ unique needs. Power Point Presentations of all Sessions can be found at www.nysdot.gov, under the heading of “Initiatives”.

As a next step, the department will convene a working group of transportation stakeholders to collaboratively advise the department and to develop an overall strategy to enhance coordination of transportation and land use planning. Some of the strategy actions may include holding workshops and training sessions for municipalities to educate local officials on planning tools and to showcase best practices. The department also is considering a new community transportation planning grant program as a future state budget initiative.

If you are interested in participating in the working group, please contact Cliff Thomas of the department’s Policy and Strategy Division at (518) 457-7475.

Sincerely,

Thomas J. Madison Jr.
Commissioner
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BEST WESTERN REGENCY,
BINGHAMTON, NEW YORK AGENDA

8:30 - 9:00  On-Site Registration and Continental Breakfast

9:00 - 9:30  Welcome - Grand Ballroom

- Thomas Madison, Commissioner,
  New York State Department of Transportation
- Senator Tom Libous, Chairman, NYS Senate Transportation Committee
  (Invited)
- Honorable Matthew Ryan, Mayor City of Binghamton

9:30 - 10:15  Plenary Session: The Current Transportation - Land Use Planning
  Landscape in New York State - Grand Ballroom
  Setting the Stage - MPO and NYSDOT Overviews

  Moderator: Allison L. C. de Cerreño, Ph.D., Co-Director,
  Rudin Center for Transportation Policy & Management
  John Poorman, Staff Director,
  Capital District Transportation Committee
  David Ligeikis, P.E., NYSDOT Eastern Zone – Resource Manager

10:15 - 10:30  Lt. Governor Mary O. Donohue,
  Chair of the Quality Communities
  Interagency Working Group, Quality Communities - Partnering for a Better Today - Grand Ballroom

10:30 - 10:45  Break

10:45 - 12:15  Concurrent Breakout Sessions:

  Session 1A: Integrating Land Use and Transportation System Planning - Johnson Room
  Collaboration Achieves Many Objectives

  Moderator: John Poorman, Staff Director,
  Capital District Transportation Committee
  Daniel Sitler, President, Saratoga Associates
  Robert Traver, Assistant to the Director,
  NYSDOT Delivery Division
Session 1B: Visioning:
Transportation as a Community Asset - Endicott Room
Translating Community Visions to Action

Moderator: Peter Plumeau, Northeast Director – Planning Services, Wilbur Smith Associates
John Behan, AICP, Principal, Behan Planning Associates, LLC
Tara Boggio, AICP, Senior Planner, FRA Planning Services

12:15 - 1:45  Luncheon - Grand Ballroom
Georges Jacquemart, Principal, Buckhurst, Fish & Jacquemart and Adjunct Professor, Robert Wagner School of Public Service at NYU, “Advancing the Land Use and Transportation Connection”

1:45 - 3:15  Concurrent Breakout Sessions

Session 2A: Transportation - Land Use Management Tools -
Endicott Room
Matching the Tools to the Situation and Objectives
Moderator: Stephen R. Ferranti, President, SRF & Associates
Mike Welti, AICP, Senior Planner / Project Manager, The Chazen Companies
Thomas P. Harvey, AICP, Associate Planner, Ontario County Planning Department

Session 2B: The Economy, Planning for Growth - Johnson Room
Planning, Attracting and Coping with Growth
Moderator: Steve Munson, Senior Transportation Analyst, NYSDOT – Statewide Planning
Vincent Azzarelli, Village Manager, Village of Horseheads
Joseph Grasso, R.L.A., Senior Associate, Clough Harbour & Associates

3:15 - 3:30  Break
Sessions Summary and Dialog – Where do we go from here?
Facilitator: Allison L. C. de Cerreño, Ph.D., Co-Director Rudin Center for Transportation Policy & Management
Tim Gilchrist, Chief of Transportation Strategy, NYSDOT
Session Moderators: John Poorman, Peter Plumeau, Stephen R. Ferranti, Steve Munson
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) and Department of State sponsored the event with the assistance of the University Transportation Research Center. The event attracted more than 150 participants from state and local governments, regional planning organizations, academic experts and other transportation professionals interested in having a constructive dialogue on this subject.

The workshop fostered discussion of 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 to 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 well aligned. 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 to 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, NYSDOT is in a position to play an important role in these efforts. The department’s customers are local governments, and this conference is about re-establishing an effective dialogue between the two. If we all work together, we can make our communities a better place to live.

Under its draft 25-year master plan, NYSDOT will be more responsive on issues relating to safety, accessibility, economic sustainability and the environment. Land-use planning is a local government responsibility, and the department should play a proactive role in supporting it. To accomplish these goals, greater funding is needed for a robust program of investment. NYSDOT plans to spend $38 billion on transportation in the next five years, but some $70 billion in additional investment is needed to meet all identified needs. This shortfall,
However, will not prevent the department from addressing critical needs and supporting community efforts in New York State.

The Honorable Matthew Ryan, Mayor of Binghamton, reinforced the need to rejoin the city and periphery, to strengthen linkages, to foster entrepreneurship, to engage residents, to promote connections to natural resources and to encourage stewardship. He noted that Binghamton’s resurgence depends on the development of economic, social and physical networks; transportation investments that support smart, sustainable growth are critical for its continued success. This requires planning to be comprehensive, proactive, fair and open to public participation. 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 a Metropolitan Planning Organization perspective on the current situation. He argued that integrated transportation and land use planning are necessary to cultivate the economic growth the state wants, yet they present 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 we 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 to do transportation projects in a defensible manner, while at the same time sorting through larger quality-of-life issues and still accomplishing our goals.
David Ligeikis, 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, with its excellent schools, parks and lack of congestion on city roads. However, in the past 10-15 years, various policies and planning decisions facilitated the exodus of businesses from downtown to the outlying areas. Also, new residential development in the suburbs has yielded more congested arterials, making it increasingly difficult to make forward-looking decisions.

Ligeikis 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 NYSDOT 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 meeting with all 46 villages and developing baselines with them. This is an incredible effort which will open up the process and will improve mutual understanding.

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.

Transportation and land use are 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 require a delicate balance. The de-
cision-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 to improve on that vision.

This workshop features speakers sharing lessons learned as they have attempted to find the right balance between advancing growth and making correct transportation choices. It addresses land use management tools and how to match those tools with different situations and objectives. There must be discussion of community visioning and of using transportation as a community asset, not as 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 looked at the corridor, it was a two-lane rural highway. NYSDOT simply planned to add some lanes, but the town then said it had an alternate 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; therefore, the design included provisions to achieve these ends. It optimized traffic signal spacing to absorb new development effectively; included restrictive medians to reduce conflict points and to reduce congestion at turning points; and improved access control for traveling in and out of businesses. Along 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 Sitler, 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 case studies of how communities have grappled with these issues:

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

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

**Utica, N.Y.** is attempting to address a highway that serves as both a through route and a local street, dividing the community. Heavy traffic volumes have led to many accidents, a dangerous environment for pedestrians and a high commercial vacancy rate. A community-based process is under way to develop a vision for how to improve the roadway.

**Albany, N.Y.** 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 better connect the campus with the community. Transportation is central to land use planning for the site.

John Poorman provided some concluding commentary for the panel. He noted 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 raised these points:

- Comprehensive plans can empower communities to take a proactive, rather than reactive approach to addressing growth.
- Transportation agencies need to lower the expectations of communities in their abilities 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 to 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, N.Y., 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 much 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 feasible, 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 shape land use decisions; can establish a road network hierarchy to improve the functioning of the system; can provide an opportunity to identify and to protect viewsheds; and can help ensure that existing and future development areas are adequately served.

Corridor studies also can 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 it 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 NYSDOT representative at all the meetings, keeping 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 - Some ideas and comments from participants during the discussion period:

- It is important to 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. NYSDOT 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 NYSDOT and the Department 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 it left the states with significant flexibility. The Federal Highway Administration is trying to provide tools for this to happen, if states want to use these tools.
- The Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) process is not well-understood by local volunteer planning boards. It would be helpful for NYSDOT 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, because they
are attracted to parts of the country where there are more job opportunities. NYSDOT 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 started by noting 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; 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; these 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. For example, context-sensitive designs can make drivers aware that they are in a different environment; they also meet community needs by promoting safety and local character.
- Saratoga Springs has adopted “form-based zoning” in its downtown, providing 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.
- Inefficient off-street parking requirements can be replaced by shared parking and off-site “park-and-walk” facilities. In-lieu fees can help fund public lots.
- Instead of allowing developments to dump traffic directly onto major highways, promoting local street circulation and connectivity can mitigate traffic.
- Opportunities can be preserved for future bypass roads. Bypasses are controversial, but it is important to provide future generations with options for meeting their community development visions.
- As discussed several times in the conference, planning for access management can also be a critical strategy.
- Ensuring broad ownership of policies can help ideas outlast the involvement of any particular individual. Political power changes over time, and broad support for ideas can help ensure policy continuity.
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. Unfortunately, a supporting access management and land use strategy was absent, so 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 NYSDOT’s approaches and to 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 because people like cul-de-sacs. However, a single arterial is generally not enough.

Ferranti presented several examples of these types of efforts:

- The Town and 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 to 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 10 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, with 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 much 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; it tailored its recommendations in response to feedback and public support. One result 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, outlining 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 would inevitably deteriorate 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. It conducted an innovative study of the Route 7 and Route 2 corridors, with the support and assistance of the Capital District Transportation Committee’s “Community and Transportation Linkage Planning Program.” The goals of this effort were to preserve the effectiveness of Colonie’s transportation system; to maintain and to improve the quality of its natural and built environments; to realize the corridor’s economic development potential; and to 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 that would not generate as much traffic as a trend-based build-out. 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, N.Y., 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 www.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 (www.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.

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

Joe Grasso, Registered Landscape Architect, Senior Associate, Clough Harbour & Associates, said 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 it is not project specific. By simulating what future build-out conditions will look like under alternate policies, this process provides an opportunity for communities to consider what directions they consider to be desirable.

In addition to 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; they 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 also is a growing townwide bicycle and pedestrian system 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 plans are needed that can stand the test of time and be ready when development opportunities emerge. Communities should not be afraid to steal good ideas from elsewhere. There also is a need to have more knowledgeable boards and communities. It is important for professionals to understand who these people are, and to educate them. Grasso concluded by urging professionals to engage elected officials on this issue, but to be compassionate, to stick to their guns, and to look for opportunities to build partnerships.

Vincent Azzarelli, Village Manager, Village of Horseheads, described a situation different from that in Clifton Park. His community has rebuilt its historic town square, but it 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 residents 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 important.
Successful projects result from:
• Involvement of politicians and the public
• Education and exposure to information
• Communication, coordination and collaboration
• Planning patient partnerships to prevent 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 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 also are 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 it 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 more than a year to review the draft zoning ordinance, and to 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 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, as well as incentives for open space and farmland protections in others. It included “clearance zones” to keep development away from the roadways. The ordinance allowed five-acre lots with 450-foot frontages over most of the area. The idea was that large lots here are a simple way to protect resources, and they 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, as well as the municipal planning and regulatory activities that affect 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:

- 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. NYSDOT could be more proactive, e.g. by asking developers to show consistency with local plans. However, 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 to help local highway superintendents adopt more progressive policies. Perhaps NYSDOT 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 two to four 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 department’s efforts to address the transportation-land use connection. They have been ongoing for a long time. However, this has been a great forum to bring these efforts together and to start a continuous dialogue on the topic. Based on the lessons learned today, NYSDOT will continue to flesh out its strategy on land use and transportation and to find ways to institutionalize these efforts.

Allison L.C. de Cerreño identified some crosscutting themes that came up:

1. There is a need for coordination, cooperation, communication and information.
2. Growth can happen quickly, unexpectedly and exponentially. The key is to help position communities to be proactive instead of reacting 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 those involved. He suggested looking at places that reward and are fostering those types of initiatives.

Peter Plumeau – Session 1B discussed visioning: how to focus on the big picture, how you turn vision to action and what the role of transportation planning and investment might be in making that happen. It was noted that while many communities across the state have comprehensive plans, many are minimal in their focus on transportation elements and lack official maps. Thus, communities are missing a valuable opportunity to enact their visions 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.

It also was acknowledged that many local communities cannot conduct comprehensive planning and visioning processes, due to a lack of personnel. There
are fewer trained planning professionals in the state, due to fewer employment opportunities. Because of this shortage, communities need technical assistance. Finally, any information sharing by the state to inform communities about plans, programs, funding sources and other matters of interest would be valuable.

Stephen Ferranti – Breakout Session 2A looked at tools that can be applied and how to gauge success. It is crucial to take a systemwide view. Near-term priorities often determine which tools are applied, but it is important to consider whether we are simply choosing these tools for convenience and whether we are keeping enough scrutiny on our long-term objectives. Consistency of plans is vital. 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 must be educated so that they understand coordinated transportation-land use planning. The unknown is stressful to the driving public and to the private sector. A coherent planning process can help reduce this uncertainty.

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 struggled communicating with the cities, towns, and villages that it deals with directly. Somehow, NYSDOT’s structure and the fragmenting of its duties broke that 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 10 years rather than on a continuing basis. NYSDOT is looking for ways to build relationships and to build a more seamless process.

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

There is a risk that NYSDOT employees will feel overwhelmed by yet another layer of expectations. The challenge for the department and its employees is to reconcile all of these greater expectations with limited resources, time and other responsibilities. That can be done, but it requires establishing priorities. We 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 it 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 eight years ago not to pursue authority for development mitigation fees, but it may be reaching 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 it 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.
QUALITY COMMUNITIES WORKSHOP:
advancing the
transportation-land use connection

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June 13, 2006
Binghamton, NY

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BINGHAMTON WORKSHOP EMPHASIZES COOPERATIVE TRANSPORTATION DECISIONS

By AIMEE MILKS
Press & Sun-Bulletin

BINGHAMTON - Representatives from New York state’s transportation and planning agencies filled the Regency Hotel and Conference Center in Binghamton on Tuesday for a workshop on integrating transportation needs with land use.

Called “Advancing the Transportation – Land Use Connection,” the event focused on how to supply and enhance transportation while preserving the environment and fostering relationships between community, city and state transportation groups.

“This is the beginning. It’s been happening for some time but this is setting the stage to move forward,” said Allison L. C. de Cerreño, co-director of the Rudin Center for Transportation Policy and Management. “The workshop will lay down a foundation for a true cooperative and coordinated effort between municipalities, Metropolitan Planning Organizations and New York state Department of Transportation.”

The workshop was sponsored by Lt. Gov. Mary O. Donohue, chairwoman of the quality community’s interagency working group, which was developed by Gov. George E. Pataki in 2001 to assist communities with development, preservation and rehabilitation for both job growth and environmental protection, according to Donohue’s Web site.

“Lt. Gov. Donohue has been involved in quality community initiatives for several years now,” said Thomas Madison, commissioner of the state Department of Transportation and a Binghamton native. “We want to discuss transportation while preserving historical beauty.”

The workshop began with Madison, state Sen. Thomas W. Libous, R-Binghamton, and Binghamton Mayor Matthew T. Ryan welcoming about 150 participants and talking about relations with the DOT. A brief speech from Donohue on “partnering for a better today” followed the welcome.

“This conference brought together a cross section of business and civil organizations to exchange dialogue,” Madison said. “We discuss transportation decisions with land use and exchange information about the best practices.”

The workshop also served to help improve working relations with leaders on proposals and projects, according to Jennifer Post, spokeswoman for the DOT.

Breakout sessions started at 10:45 a.m. with focus topics such as integrating land use and transportation, visioning and planning, and attracting and coping with growth.

John Poorman, staff director for the Capital District Transportation Committee, made a presentation on translating community visions to action. He spoke about the Route 332 highway project in 1994, which runs through Ontario County and how the communities in the area benefited with continuous growth.

Keys to success include establishing a strong connection with local municipal and planning agencies, working toward a common goal and having the will and desire to take the necessary steps to implement a project that may not be immediately beneficial, Poorman said.
Power Point Presentations of all Sessions can be found at www.nysdot.gov, under the heading of “Initiatives”.