1. **Statement of purpose:** This multi-disciplinary team was brought together to analyze data, brainstorm ideas, conduct research, develop, implement and evaluate a comprehensive plan to increase traffic safety, especially as it pertains to pedestrian traffic on Route 13, (Tompkins Street), in the Town of Cortlandville. The team consists of members of the Cortland County Traffic Safety Board, Town of Cortlandville Town Board, Cortland County Legislature, State Senator Seward’s Office, Cortland County Health Department, New York State DOT, Cortland County DOT, Cortland County Sheriff’s Department and the New York State Police.

2. **Introduction:** New York State Route 13, between Route 281 and the Cortland City line, locally known as Tompkins Street, is a four-lane highway, traveling generally north to south. There are two lanes in each direction. The only through intersection is the Starr Road and McLean Road intersection. This intersection is controlled with traffic lights, pedestrian crossing signs and pavement markings. There are no sidewalks, however there is a wide, improved shoulder. There are a series of apartment complexes on the west side of Tompkins Street. On the east side of the street is a large mobile home court. Along the roadway are businesses, restaurants, grocery stores and a 24-hour fuel station. Tompkins Street is the main thoroughfare into and out of the City of Cortland from the south, and traffic is moderate to heavy at times. The latest NYS DOT traffic count data shows approximately 19,500 vehicles use the highway during an average weekday. The highway has a posted speed limit of 45 miles per hour along its one-mile length. It has been the scene of 2 fatal car-pedestrian accidents between 5/23/03 and 11/20/05. In addition, another car-pedestrian fatal accident occurred on 7/14/05 approximately 300 feet west of Tompkins Street on McLean Road. Together, these accidents resulted in the death of four persons. These fatal accidents, grouped so closely together generated concern from government officials as well as from the general public. Numerous disjointed calls for action were made. In order to address this issue, using a problem solving approach, a team of stakeholders was formed to begin to analyze the problem and develop and implement a comprehensive solution.

3. **Problem Identification:**

   a. Review of fatal accidents.

      i. On 5/23/03 at about 9:00 PM, a vehicle struck and killed two pedestrians on Tompkins Street about 300 feet east of Fairview Drive. Investigation revealed the driver of the vehicle was exceeding the posted speed limit, traveling approximately 68 miles per hour in a 45 mile per hour zone at the time of impact. He was cited for that offense. In addition, pedestrian error (crossing the highway) was cited as a causative factor. Dark clothing, worn by the pedestrians, was also noted as a contributing factor in this accident.
ii. On 7/4/05, at about 3:30 PM, a vehicle traveling west on Mclean Rd., coming from the Red Apple Convenience Market, struck a child who darted into the roadway between 2 parked cars, approximately 300 feet west of Tompkins Street. At the time traffic was backed up on McLean Road and the child did not use the crosswalk. There was no contributory negligence on the part of the driver who was not cited.

iii. On 11/20/05, at about 1:15 A.M. and intoxicated driver was operating northbound on Tompkins Street between the bowling alley and mobile home park. She swerved onto the east shoulder and struck and killed a pedestrian who was walking northbound, with traffic. The intoxicated driver fled the scene, was apprehended a short time later and was charged with Vehicular Manslaughter. The pedestrian was walking on the wrong side of the road at the time of the accident.

b. Causative factors in these accidents:
   i. Speeding in excess of posted limit – 1 accident.
   ii. Driving While Intoxicated/Improper Lane Usage – 1 accident.
   iii. Pedestrian Error – all 3 accidents.

c. Other supporting data indicates this is otherwise not a high accident location for property damage or personal injury accidents.

d. The core of the problem appears to be that this is a high pedestrian traffic area across/along a busy 4-lane highway. There is a significant pedestrian population due to adjacent apartment/trailer housing and the need for citizens to walk along and cross the highway to get to businesses, shopping, residences or into the City of Cortland.
   i. Members brainstormed if there were any similar problems in other jurisdictions and if so, what solutions were implemented. No one was aware of any similar problems elsewhere.
   ii. Review of National Highway Traffic Safety Administration data on car-pedestrian fatal accidents was consistent with ours. No obvious aberrations in times, locations, manner, etc.

4. Proposed Solutions/Status:

a. Reduction of Posted Speed Limit (REJECTED):
   i. Speed was the causative factor in only one accident, and this person was well exceeding the posted limit of 45 miles per hour at the time of the accident.
   ii. DOT conducted a speed study in October, 2005. That study revealed an 85th percentile speed of 46 miles per hour. This is indicative the speed limit is properly posted in the area.
   iii. NYSP conducted a speed survey in February, 2006. The data was consistent with DOT results.
   iv. Review of prior incidents where speed limits were reduced, without supporting reason, showed the average speed did not change. Highway design tends to establish the speed of travel.
   v. Directed enforcement efforts by the New York State Police and Cortland County Sheriff’s Department confirmed speeding is not an issue on this roadway with only 12 speeding citations written among a total of 264 tickets issued.
   vi. Inasmuch as vehicles traveling at the posted speed limit was not a contributing factor in any accident, that speeding was a contributing factor in only one accident, that DOT and NYSP data as well as directed enforcement data indicate speeding is not a problem on this road, no proposal for a reduced speed limit was proffered.
b. Sidewalks: (PENDING FUNDING)
   i. The NYS DOT reported that in the late 1990’s, they initiated the design process for an improvement project for Tompkins Street that was completed thereafter. As a part of this process, they held public meetings to discuss proposed improvements. Among the proposals were the installation of an 8-foot shoulder, curbs and sidewalks. The sidewalks were soundly rejected by the public due to eminent domain issues (acquiring land) and property owner’s responsibility to maintain the sidewalks. Once the proposal was rejected, the project continued and the newly installed drainage system is tied into the existing curb lines. Any change to install new sidewalks would be costly and involve both eminent domain and property owner maintenance issues.
   ii. Team members agreed to pursue any available grants, which might defray some of the costs of the project before continuing the discussion. Those grant searches and proposals continue through the Cortland County Traffic Safety Board and the Town of Cortlandville Town Board.

c. Pedestrian Cross-Walks mid-block: (REJECTED)
   i. NYS DOT indicates they cannot install additional traffic lights to facilitate pedestrian cross walks mid-block. A painted and signed cross walk was soundly rejected by the team as being much too dangerous. Pedestrian overpasses were discussed and cannot be installed by DOT. Pedestrian tunnels were also not possible due to construction costs and DOT regulations.

d. Guide rails (REJECTED)
   i. NYS DOT reports they can only be installed to protect motorists from fixed objects, not pedestrians.

e. Limiting access and egress from the Penguin Trailer Court: (REJECTED)
   i. A suggestion was made to limit pedestrian access/egress from the Trailer Court by closing one or more driveways. The matter was researched and the property owners indicated the curb cuts were granted to them by DOT years ago. They deemed them necessary for access and egress into the park and refused to surrender them. After discussion of the difficulties inherent in trying to control pedestrian actions leaving the park all along its borders, the idea was shelved.

f. Installation of additional lighting along Tompkins Street: (IMPLEMENTED).
   i. Team members identified sparse nighttime lighting along the highway. Town Board members contacted Niagara Mohawk and 9 additional high intensity street lights were installed.

g. Installation of additional signage warning of pedestrian traffic: (IMPLEMENTED)
   i. NYS DOT researched and reported that additional signage could be installed pursuant to the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices. After discussion locations were identified for placing fluorescent strong yellow-green pedestrian caution signs along Tompkins Street. In addition, signs will also be installed on the approaches to Tompkins Street via McLean Road and Starr Road, by County DOT.

h. Installation of a traffic light at either Glenwood Road or Fairfield Drive: (UNDER STUDY)
   i. Consideration was given to the installation of a traffic light at either the intersection of Glenwood Road and Tompkins Street or at the intersection of Fairfield Road and Tompkins Street. It was proffered the proposed traffic light would serve to assist motorists entering Route 13 from these side streets as well as “break up” or “pulse” the north and southbound traffic flow. This would be
beneficial for pedestrians attempting to cross the highway and also allow for
easier vehicular access to Tompkins Street from side streets and business
driveways. However, it was acknowledged that the installation of an additional
traffic light may cause a reduced traffic carrying capacity on Tompkins Street,
possibly causing further congestion within and outside the City of Cortland.
The matter is currently under study by the NYS DOT who will report back with
their findings and recommendations.

i. Public Education: (IMPLEMENTED)
   i. Team members identified public education regarding the responsibilities as
      pedestrians to be of significant importance in attempting to address pedestrian
      error, cited as a causative factor in all of the fatal accidents. The Cortland
      County Traffic Safety Board has partnered with the Cortland County Health
      Department to bring an existing pedestrian safety program to the schools,
      businesses and apartments in the area. Grant applications will be made to fund
      this initiative, which will be implemented, by the Health Department and
      Cortland County Sheriff’s Department.

j. Enforcement: (IMPLEMENTED)
   i. Both the New York State Police and the Cortland County Sheriff’s Department
      have conducted highly visible dedicated enforcement details as well as
      enforcement efforts by existing post patrols. Both agencies have dedicated to
      maintaining these efforts commensurate with existing manpower and other
      duties. Each NYSP station has a finite amount of overtime from the Governor’s
      Traffic Safety Board for Aggressive Driving Details. The NYSP Zone
      Commander will continue to direct the majority of that overtime to the
      Tompkins Street project. The Cortland County Sheriff’s Department will
      continue their efforts and partnering with the Cortland County Traffic Safety
      Board, continue to seek additional grants for this effort. In addition, the NYS
      DOT has recently named Tompkins Street as a part of a Corridor Enforcement
      Project to be held from May 11, 2006, through May 17, 2006. This designation
      will facilitate additional enforcement efforts and variable message board
      placement during this period.

5. Project implementation:
   a. Changes identified as viable have already begun to be implemented. Improved lighting
      has been installed. Additional signage has been ordered and will be installed shortly.
      Public education programs have been identified and are being implemented. The
      Cortlandville Town Board and the Cortland County Traffic Safety Committee are
      actively seeking additional grants for identified projects, enforcement and perhaps the
      installation of sidewalks. Joint dedicated traffic law enforcement efforts will continue.

6. Project reporting:
   a. Results of the project team will be reported to the media during a press conference to be
      scheduled in early May, coinciding with the DOT Corridor Enforcement announcement.

7. Project evaluation:
   a. Team members will evaluate the effectiveness of the project by monitoring accident and
      enforcement data as well as feedback from the public. Members were careful to indicate
      that there may not be enough data to form statistically significant conclusions as to
      program effectiveness and caution will be used when making those evaluations in the
      future.