2.4. IMPROVED TRUCK ACCESS TO “BUILD NOW-NY” SITE

2.4.1. INTRODUCTION

The concept discussed in this section – Improved Truck Access to a “Build Now-NY” Site – is focused on the Goods Movement market, and the safety and convenience of drivers traveling to and from that site. However, it will also improve access into and out of the Glens Falls business district along the area’s busiest east-west commercial corridor. This type of improved freight and commercial access between I-87 and important existing and proposed economic development sites is fully consistent with the Smart Freight goals, and with the I-87 Corridor Study’s underlying goal of supporting the long-term economic development goals of communities along the corridor.

2.4.2. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Warren County Route 28 (Corinth Road) corridor is the primary east-west arterial providing access between I-87 at Exit 18 in the Town of Queensbury and the City of Glens Falls (see Figure 2.4-1). This corridor is considered one of the most congested corridors in the Glens Falls area. In 1999, Governor Pataki announced the designation of the Northway Business Park in the Town of Queensbury as a “Build Now-NY” site within the Warren County Empire Zone. The 40-acre Northway Business Park site, designated for light industrial uses, is located just slightly to the northeast of Exit 18 on Luzerne Road (see adjacent aerial and the “Build Now-NY Site” shown in Figure 2.4-1).

The project being proposed under this initiative is the construction of a new north-south connector road parallel to I-87 between Corinth Road and Luzerne Road. This project will result in more direct access to the Northway Business Park “Build Now-NY” site from I-87 at Exit 18, while relieving congestion in the Warren County Route 28 (Corinth Road) corridor. The location of the proposed north-south connector road is shown in Figure 2.4-1.

2.4.2.1. Existing Conditions and Deficiencies

Since the mid-to-late 1990’s the Town of Queensbury and the City of Glens Falls have promoted and seen the development of industrial land uses near Exit 18 of I-87. The promotion of light industrial development in conjunction with the Town’s re-zoning efforts along the Corinth Road corridor has resulted in more intense commercial land use along County Route 28 between Exit 18 and the City of Glens Falls.

The high traffic volumes in the Corinth Road corridor between I-87 and Glens Falls are dominated by through traffic. The predominance of heavy traffic volumes in the morning peak hour heading into Glens Falls confirm the importance of this corridor as a primary commuter route and an important economic corridor for the region. Currently, daily traffic volumes on Corinth Road increase from approximately 17,300 vehicles per day at the Northway interchange to 24,000 vehicles per day as the corridor enters downtown Glens Falls. Commercial vehicles on the segment between the I-87 interchange and downtown Glens Falls make up nearly 4% of the daily traffic.

The designation of the “Build Now-NY” site north of the I-87 Exit 18 added a new dimension to the already congested corridor. The 40-acre site is located within a half mile of I-87 just to the northeast of Exit 18 within the Town of Queensbury. Direct access between I-87 and the site is not currently available, and in its current state, vehicular access to the site is not conducive to
commercial access. The site requires that vehicles exit or enter I-87 at Exit 18 by using Corinth Road as an east-west connector to/from Pine Street, a north-south local road to the site (see Figure 2.4-1). The use of Pine Street as an industrial access connector route is not consistent with its intended function, nor is it compatible with the surrounding residential land uses, environments and the type of traffic volumes (including trucks) that would be added by the development of the 40-acre light industrial “Build Now-NY” site.

Exit 18 is a diamond-type interchange with traffic signal control at the intersections of its ramps with County Route 28. In their current configuration and signalization the northbound exit ramp (from I-87 to Corinth Road) and the southbound entrance ramp (from Corinth Road to I-87) are at high levels of congestion in the afternoon peak hour. With the expected growth in the region, fueled with the opportunities to lure new medical and high-tech venues into the Northway Business Park and another proposed 15-acre light industrial site adjacent to the east side of I-87, the traffic conditions will worsen significantly. Forecasted volumes and operations indicate that unless significant improvements are undertaken, the interchange and the adjoining road network will degrade to near gridlock conditions during periods of peak traffic flow.

The Importance of Medical Technology and Biotech Development. Upstate New York already has a considerable and nationally recognized employment concentration in the manufacture of medical devices and pharmaceuticals. Although this activity is widely distributed among the larger upstate metropolitan areas of Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse and Albany, two smaller upstate areas -- Glens Falls and Utica -- have received national attention for their employment position in this key industrial market. The standard measure of employment concentration in a specific industry is the location quotient. A location quotient of 1.0 means that the specific region’s concentration of employment in an industry is identical to that of the nation. Location quotients (lq) above 1.2 suggest that the area has a specialization in a particular industry or field. Some of the location quotients shown in a recent 2000 Census report show Glens Falls with areas of recognized specialization in electro-medical equipment (lq=20.5), medical equipment and supplies (lq=23.0), and medical manufacturing (lq=12.1) – all some of the highest such figures in the country.1

The “Build Now-NY” site is expected to be a catalyst for the continued expansion of medical manufacturing and technology-based industries. The medical and technology-based industries are finding upstate New York, the I-87 corridor and particularly Warren County to be very attractive when identifying emerging or expanding business headquarters or satellite facilities. In addition to the designated “Build Now-NY” site, the Town of Queensbury is actively pursuing the identification of two additional sites totaling 15 acres in the same proximity of the Northway Business Park for similar types of light industrial development. When approved and developed, the composite 15-acre site (see “Other Site” in Figure 2.4-1) will also benefit significantly from improved access to I-87.

Both of these sites are target locations for new or expanding medical manufacturing opportunities, which can include the research, development and production of medical devices and pharmaceuticals. Currently, the medical device sector includes

1 Reference provided by Warren County Economic Development Corp.
FIGURE 2.4-1: LOCATION OF PROJECT SITE AND PROPOSED CONNECTOR ROADWAY
businesses that produce a vast array of instruments, supplies, machines and other diagnostic and therapeutic purposes. Their products range from commodities such as disposable hospital supplies to high-tech medical implants and imaging machines. Medical manufacturing is one of the few U.S. manufacturing industries seeing increased employment in recent years, with more growth projected.

Using the medical device and medical manufacturing industries as a foundation for the area, the next step in the continued promotion of the Glens Falls region as a leader in the industry will be the development of the biotechnology sector. Biotechnology, although in its infancy, is viewed by many as the future of the pharmaceutical industry. The proximity of the proposed Luther Forest Technology Campus and the prominence of SUNY Albany and its affiliated high-tech industries will act as a catalyst to facilitate the growth and success of the biotechnology fields in the Glens Falls area.

Warren County, the Town of Queensbury and the City of Glens Falls recognize the importance of maintaining, improving and promoting the quality of life within the region and the value that the corridor provides to the region. They, along with Adirondack/Glens Falls Transportation Council (A/GFTC), have elevated the importance of the Exit 18/County Route 28 transportation corridor as a top priority to the region.

### 2.4.2.2. Existing Actions and Programs

In the late 1990’s the A/GFTC commissioned the preparation of a Corridor Management Plan for the Exit 18 – Warren County Route 28 (Corinth Road) corridor between I-87 at Exit 18 in the Town of Queensbury and the City of Glens Falls. The resultant plan (the “1999 Corridor Plan”) recommended capacity improvements within the corridor to address congestion and mobility concerns. These improvements ranged from the reconstruction and multi-lane widening of existing County Route 28 to the construction of a new north-south connector road parallel to I-87 to divert and re-distribute traffic between Corinth Road and Luzerne Road. The 1999 Plan noted that an improved north-south access “… is particularly relevant given the pending industrial development on the north side of Luzerne Road.”

At about the same time that the congestion problems were being identified and quantified within the 1999 Corridor Plan, the designation of the “Build Now-NY” site was announced. Given the identified need for improvements to the Corinth Road corridor, A/GFTC included a project to address the capacity deficiencies along Corinth Road east of the I-87 interchange in its Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) in early 2000. The project that A/GFTC has programmed will improve overall traffic conditions along the 1.8-mile section of Corinth Road between I-87 and the Glens Falls downtown business district. Warren County and the Town of Queensbury have since initiated this project as a locally administered Federal Aid project, and the project is currently in its design phase.

During the project development phases of the project, interim modest capital-cost solutions were also evaluated and recommended to provide relief to the operational deficiencies at the interchange. These improvements included minor ramp widening and intersection improvements. Although both Warren County and NYSDOT realize that larger-scale improvements at the Interchange would be necessary to address the long-term capacity and operational deficiencies at this location, such improvements have been deferred by A/GFTC, NYSDOT and Warren County to the future due to financial constraints.

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4 Corridor Management Plan: County Route 28 (Corinth Road). A/GFTC (1999)
The project development phase also looked at improved industrial access to the “Build Now-NY” site through the extension and construction of “East Street” as a connector road which would divert traffic and improve access to Luzerne Road. This improvement (i.e., the same proposed connector road included in the proposed project) was also excluded from the Warren County sponsored project due to project limitations and financial constraints.

The project currently being advanced through A/GFTC by Warren County and the Town of Queensbury primarily addresses the geometric and capacity-related issues along Corinth Road. The goals of that project will be achieved through the construction of a three-lane cross-section (one lane in each direction with a center turning lane) from the Interchange towards Glens Falls. The project is expected to be completed in late 2006.

2.4.3. PROPOSED SOLUTION

The proposed solution involves the construction of a near direct connection to provide access between Exit 18 and the “Build Now-NY” site. The access road would be a conventional two-lane facility which would intersect Corinth Road from the north, approximately 500 feet to the east of the I-87 Northbound exit and entrance ramps, at the present location of South Street. South Street is currently a dead end local road that extends slightly to the north of Corinth Road and provides access to a limited number of parcels. The proposed project would extend South Street approximately 1/3 mile along a corridor just east of and parallel to I-87 to a new intersection with Luzerne Road in close proximity to the 40-acre “Build Now-NY” site. (Another possibility would be to begin the new Connector Road at the present site of an emergency vehicle garage directly west of South Street, and align this new roadway with a relocated Big Boom Road that would provide better access to a number of industrial uses south of Corinth Road.) As noted earlier, this roadway improvement would also provide direct access to two proposed additional parcels totaling 15 acres, located between Corinth and Luzerne Roads. These sites are currently being evaluated by the Town of Queensbury for additional high tech or bio-medical light industrial uses.

2.4.4. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

The proposed project does have independent utility and function and would provide an immediate benefit to the flow and operations of traffic adjacent to and on I-87, as well as on the local road system at Exit 18. The construction of a connector road parallel to I-87 between Corinth Road and Luzerne Road is consistent with and supplements the Town’s on-going reconstruction of County Route 28 project. The ability to divert and re-distribute a portion of the traffic from County Route 28 to Luzerne Road along a connector route will improve the overall effectiveness of this proposal, as well as the effectiveness of the County Route 28 reconstruction. A second phase of this initiative to support and promote improved access between I-87 and the light industrial zones adjacent to I-87 would involve the relocation of Big Boom Road (south of Corinth Road) to line up across Route 28 from the South Avenue connector. In relocating Big Boom Road away from the northbound exit ramp and aligning it with the South Avenue connector at a conventional four-way signal controlled intersection, the overall operations and safety of the corridor would be improved. The relocation of Big Boom Road will also support zoning initiatives to promote future development opportunities on the south side of Corinth Road in close proximity of, and with easy access to, I-87.

2.4.4.1. Regulatory, Environmental, and Agency Coordination Issues

This project has been developed previously through a conceptual design stage to identify a preferred alignment. In order for the project to advance to construction it must be processed
through an environmental review procedure which satisfies State (SEQRA) and Federal (NEPA) requirements. For this candidate project to be eligible for state and/or Federal funding through A/GFTC, the project must first be included in A/GFTC’s multi-year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The public awareness and acceptance of the access road in conjunction with the lack of complexity associated with this initiative lends itself well to rapid progression through the necessary environmental and public review processes.

2.4.4.2. Project Costs

The following are the projected costs for the proposed improvement initiative:

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<th>Improved Truck Access to “Build Now-NY” Site: Project Implementation Cost</th>
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<td><strong>Element</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering/Design &amp; Approvals</td>
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<tr>
<td>Equipment/Materials</td>
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<tr>
<td>Construction/Installation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Operating &amp; Maintenance</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
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</tbody>
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As indicated, the projected capital costs for the proposed project would be approximately $1,000,000.