1. **INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW**

1.1. **Overview of Corridor Strategic Plan**

This Corridor Strategic Plan is the culmination of extensive planning and engineering studies completed by the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) to assess conditions in the I-87/Autoroute 15 Corridor between the Tappan Zee Bridge area and Montreal. These studies, collectively called the I-87 Multimodal Corridor Study (hereafter “the Study”), were completed in two phases. Phase I identified the transportation needs and deficiencies in the corridor and their relation to the economic development goals of the corridor, and defined possible actions to address those needs. This first phase of the Study also included a pre-feasibility analysis of the potential for European-type, 150+ mph high-speed rail service along the corridor, with a focus on the segment between Albany and the US-Canada border. The second phase of the Study selected and further developed and assessed those actions that could most effectively meet the corridor's needs and long-term goals.

Rather than undertaking a traditional corridor study focused mainly on physical improvements to a particular segment of roadway, the Study Team examined passenger and goods movement across all modes of transport available in the corridor, making this the first study completed using New York State's new approach to meeting transportation needs. NYSDOT, in cooperation with other transportation agencies and authorities within the State, is presently in the midst of a broad ranging “Transformation” of its structure, goals and ways of viewing its mission. A key element of the Transformation process is the change from a region-based model of transportation decision-making to multimodal, corridor-based transportation planning, programming and operations. Under this approach, each corridor is defined according to the predominant nature of travel within that corridor, with corridors stratified by the dominant customer demand - i.e., trade, commuter, intercity, and tourism. The I-87 Corridor is a multi-purpose corridor that serves all of these markets; consequently, the broad purpose of the I-87 Multimodal Corridor Study was to examine how improvements across all modes in the corridor could meet the increasing demands of each of these customer groups.

A Strategic Corridor Plan based on the study’s findings is presented in this report. It lays out how NYSDOT and other agencies, with support from the private sector, can move forward toward the evolution of I-87 as a “Smart Corridor,” effectively and efficiently meeting the long-term transportation needs of the corridor’s major travel markets.

- **Section 1** provides the history of the project and describes the structure of the Study. The relation of these activities and findings to NYSDOT’s on-going “Transformation” reorganization process is then presented.
- **Section 2** describes the study’s extensive public outreach process and summarizes the activities under each of the project’s phases, resulting in the selection of the “Smart Concepts” that form a critical component of the overall Corridor Strategic Plan.
- **Section 3** then presents the Corridor Strategic Plan, including the evolution of the “Smart Corridor” vision, and the elements of the plan organized according to the key travel markets that collectively define this critical, multi-purpose transportation corridor. A “Long-Term” vision for the corridor is then provided - i.e., the technologies likely to be

---

1 See Appendix A of this report for a listing of the I-87 Multimodal Corridor Study Team (hereafter referred to as the “Study Team.”)
most important, how they might evolve, and what NYSDOT and others can do to move
the corridor in the right direction.

- Section 4 summarizes the plan’s recommendations and lays out the next steps that
NYSDOT and others need to implement to pursue the Strategic Plan.

1.2. Purpose of Corridor Study

The I-87/Autoroute 15 corridor provides a direct international connection between the largest
metropolitan area in the United States (New York City) and the second largest metropolitan
area in Canada (Montreal) through the Lacolle/Champlain border crossing. The corridor,
through its connections to crossing highways and to other modes, serves a broad area that
includes the Mid-Atlantic States, New England and Eastern Canada and a total population of
approximately 80 million people. Continued growth in trade and tourism has placed even
greater demands on this vital corridor and created the potential for more economic
development opportunities. The new security concerns since the events of September 11th have
also had implications on personal and commercial travel along this multi-purpose, international
corridor.

To respond to these pressures, a comprehensive study was initiated by NYSDOT to identify
improvements to the transportation network in the I-87/Autoroute 15 corridor in New York
State and Quebec. These actions would address past growth in the corridor while allowing the
full potential growth in the economy of the corridor and region to be achieved. The Study was
integrated with the findings and results of the New York in the New World Economy study
previously completed for NYSDOT, which focused on major changes in the regional, national
and international economies and trade patterns, and the consequences of those changes on
future transportation patterns and requirements.

1.3. Structure of I-87 Multimodal Corridor Study

The I-87 Multimodal Corridor Study was completed in two phases. During Phase I, the Study
Team assessed overall conditions in the corridor, defined its most critical transportation
limitations and most promising opportunities, and identified potential methods of addressing
them. This effort resulted in a “long list” of possible improvement concepts to address critical
corridor transportation needs.

Phase II of the Study focused on refining this list, prioritizing the various improvement concepts
and developing some into “Smart Corridor Projects” that would begin to address the needs
identified during Phase I. The ultimate product of Phase II is this Corridor Strategic Plan, which
incorporates all of the projects and concepts identified during the study, including those not
selected for detailed Phase II scrutiny, into a strategic vision for the corridor.

The Study Team’s activities during each phase are described further in Section 2.

1.4. Relation of the Study to the Reorganization of State Transportation Agencies

NYSDOT’s ongoing Transformation process emphasizes the Department’s “customers” - i.e.,
those that move themselves or their products through and within New York State. Putting the
customer first is at the center of the revised approach to the way NYSDOT and other agencies
provide and maintain the State’s transportation infrastructure and services. The Transformation

---

2 University Transportation Research Center, Region II, and Michael Gallis and Associates. New York in
the New World Economy. (January 2003).
emphasizes that transportation customers expect their transportation network to provide certain “priority results,” including:

- **Mobility and Reliability** - increase mobility by providing reliable and predictable trips for people and goods;
- **Safety** - provide safe trips which contribute to their physical safety and the safety of their goods while in transit;
- **Economic Sustainability** - understand the important relationship between a multi-modal transportation system and the State’s economic vitality and quality of life, with viable transportation options essential to sustainable, livable communities;
- **Security** - be secure from external threats or potential abuse; and
- **Environmental Enhancement** - understand the environmental consequences of transportation decisions, both at the local and macro-level, to mitigate its impact and enhance the natural environment.

The Transformation process also understands the critical role that transportation agencies, in cooperation with other state and local agencies, elected officials, and businesses, must play in managing transportation rather than just responding to demand as it arises. This includes (1) demand management (actions to increase transit use, support off-peak travel, and support better trip planning by travelers); (2) managed growth (transit-oriented development planning, adequate space for warehousing, intermodal facilities and truck stops, etc.); (3) expanded use of Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) to enhance the safe and efficient flow of people and goods; and (4) network expansion (after all options have been exhausted).

Historically, NYSDOT operations have been divided into 11 regional offices, with those regions responsible for developing programs to meet the Department’s overall goals within that region. Unfortunately, critical travel corridors generally cut across many regions and involve many different travel modes and market conditions. As part of this effort, NYSDOT is being reorganized into four divisions - Operating, Integrating, Program Support and Administrative Policy and Services - to better enable the Department to shift its focus from the maintenance and preservation of highways and bridges to achieving all five “priority results” described above, across all modes that transportation customers expect to be met.

In addition, the New York State Transportation Federation was created in November 2003 to more closely coordinate the activities of the state’s transportation agencies and authorities, a first step in the creation of a seamless statewide transportation system. The goal of seamless
travel is to remove institutional barriers, such as different technologies and fare structures used for highway and bridge tolls or public transit, that result from NYSDOT and other transportation agencies operating independently of each other. Comprised initially of NYSDOT, the NYS Thruway Authority and the NYS Bridge Authority, the Federation will efficiently coordinate transportation planning and policy-making and more effectively move people and goods across the state. It will eventually expand to include other state agencies, transportation operators, and service providers to continue the coordination of system operations and improvements. Many actions that are discussed in the context of this corridor study – highways under multiple jurisdictions functioning as part of a single network, coordinated collection and sharing of data, unified safety systems, etc. – will be considerably easier to plan and implement under this new arrangement.

As the first study completed using these new principles, the I-87 Multimodal Corridor Study can serve as a model for future corridor planning efforts in the state. It provides a fitting example of the kind of multimodal, multi-market needs assessment the Transformation process was intended to address. I-87 is a lengthy corridor that passes through many very different areas, and in the process serves all of the travel markets defined in the Transformation approach (shown in bold), i.e.:

- Near the New York City area and around the Albany Capital District, commuter and intercity passenger demand are important.
- Trade movements are very important in the New York and Albany metropolitan areas and at key corridor connector points (i.e., intersection of I-87 with I-90 in Albany, with I-84 in Orange County, with I-287 in Rockland and Westchester Counties, etc.). Although the efficiency of trade movements is important to the entire corridor, improving trade movements at the US-Canada border is particularly important.
- The Northway portion of I-87 opens up the Adirondack’s many natural and recreational areas to tourist and other visitors year-round, while also connecting the Adirondacks to urban centers to the north and south.

The “Smart Corridor” vision at the center of the Strategic Plan for the I-87 corridor appropriately fits into the near- and long-term goals being established by the Transformation process. In many ways, the efforts that NYSDOT, its Study Advisory Group and the Study Team have gone through on this Study can provide useful insights as NYSDOT and other agencies go through the Transformation process, looking toward a corridor-based planning and operational approach and to a new way of looking at the provision of transportation services.