



CAPITAL DISTRICT TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

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WHAT IS THE CAPITAL DISTRICT TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE?

Every metropolitan area in the nation with a population of over 50,000 must have a designated "Metropolitan Planning Organization" (MPO) for transportation in order to qualify for any Federal highway or transit funding assistance. The simple purpose of each MPO is to provide a forum for State and local officials to discuss transportation issues and reach a consensus on transportation plans and specific programs of highway and transit projects. The U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) relies on each MPO to make sure that the highway and transit projects that are intended to use Federal funds are the products of a credible planning process and meet the priorities of the metropolitan area. To put "teeth" into the MPO process, the USDOT will not approve urban highway and transit projects for use of Federal funds unless they are on the MPO's program. [Federal regulations for MPO's are jointly administered by the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Urban Mass Transportation Administration (UMTA).]

The Capital District Transportation Committee is the designated MPO for the Albany-Schenectady-Troy Urbanized Area. It has its origins in the old Capital District Transportation Study (CDTS), set up in 1965 through agreements between New York State and the four Capital District counties (Albany, Rensselaer, Saratoga, and Schenectady) and the 78 municipalities in those counties. Currently, the CDTC is composed of elected and appointed officials from each of the four counties; from each of the eight cities in the four counties; from the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT), the Capital District Transportation Authority (CDTA), and the Capital District Regional Planning Commission (CDRPC); and at-large members representing the area's towns and villages. The Federal Highway Administration and the Urban Mass Transportation Administration serve as advisory members.

While its initial mission was to develop a long-range transportation plan for the area, CDTC's current efforts are much broader. The CDTC sets its own agenda for planning activities, and with a small professional staff funded primarily with FHWA, UMTA and county funds devoted to this purpose, and with the assistance of other member agencies, it investigates issues critical to the future of the Capital District. CDTC's planning efforts are intended to be action-oriented, answering questions such as: *"What should we, at the local, county, regional, State, or Federal levels of government, be doing to address current problems?... What do we need to do now so that transportation and land use is not a problem in the future?... How do the priorities of one need compare to those of another?... How can we best use the limited USDOT funds available to us, and who is going to pick up the tab in cases in which USDOT funds just aren't available?"*

The most visible action oriented product of the Capital District Transportation Committee process is its five-year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), with its millions of dollars of Federally-funded highway and transit investments. However, it is becoming more and more common for actions recommended to depend on funds other than Federal funds. In the future, CDTC may become more of a forum for discussing how best to share transportation costs among various levels of government and between government and users than it will a forum for "divvying up" an increasingly-small pot of Federal funds. In fact, the conflict between what we all expect of the transportation system and the less-than-adequate amount of funding devoted to it is the major transportation issue facing us today.