

# DIRECTIONS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SYRACUSE METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION COUNCIL (SMTC) • SPRING 2010

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## THE SMTC'S CONTINUING PLANNING EFFORTS

Spring is a busy time at the Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council (SMTC). On April 1, 2010, staff began working on projects under the 2010-2012 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). Due to the large number of carryover projects from the 2009-2010 program year, the SMTC did not solicit any new projects for the current work program. Staff has been working with retained consultants on the Onondaga County Department of Transportation Signal Optimization Study, the James Street Road Diet, the Traffic Count Program, the Clay Three Rivers Access Study and the Transportation Demand Management Project for Downtown Syracuse.

In February, the SMTC -- in conjunction with the Syracuse/Onondaga County Planning Agency -- launched the Community Planning and Transportation Resident Survey. Randomly selected county residents received the survey in the mail. If you would like to participate, please visit the SMTC web site, [www.smtcmpo.org](http://www.smtcmpo.org), and click on the LRTP 2011 Update Survey.

On March 5, the SMTC Policy Committee acknowledged the completion of the University Hill Phase II: Feasibility Study Park and Ride Initiative (see page 3) and the Clay/Cicero Route 31 Transportation study (see page 4). The final documents have been distributed to the Study Advisory Committees. Additionally, the documents are available on the SMTC web site.

On March 25, staff participated in the Building Bridges for Traffic Safety symposium at the Rosamond Gifford Zoo. This event brought together not only local speakers but representatives from New York State agencies as well as the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). The day focused on ways to bridge the multicultural gap.

As stated in the Fall 2009 edition, a new federal transportation bill has not been enacted by the United States Congress. However, Congress did pass an extension of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). This extension will remain in effect until December 2010.

As always, if you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 315.422.5716 or [jdagostino@smtcmpo.org](mailto:jdagostino@smtcmpo.org).

Yours truly,  
*James D'Agostino*  
Director

# SMTC COMMITTEES ELECT OFFICERS

The Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council (SMTC) is pleased to announce the following individuals were selected as committee officers through March 31, 2012:

## Policy Committee:

Chair: **Kathleen Rapp**, Chair, Central New York Regional Planning and Development Board; and  
Vice Chair: **Van Robinson**, City of Syracuse Common Council President.

## Planning Committee:

Chair: **Mary Robison**, City Engineer, City of Syracuse; and  
Vice Chair: **Brian Donnelly**, Commissioner, Onondaga County Department of Transportation.

## Executive Committee:

Chair: **Frank Kobliski**, Executive Director, Central New York Regional Transportation Authority; and  
Vice Chair: **Ms. Robison**, City Engineer, City of Syracuse.

The Policy Committee provides the overall policy direction and decision-making of the Central Staff; establishment of goals; adoption of transportation plans, programs, and projects undertaken by the Council; and adoption/acknowledgment of transportation reports and recommendations. The Planning Committee functions as a forum to discuss and resolve relevant transportation issues; oversee the technical activities of the SMTC; and analyze and determine transportation funding priorities for the Metropolitan Planning Area. The Executive Committee provides oversight for the day-to-day operations of the SMTC, primarily for financial management, personnel and other administrative requirements.

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## IN THE NEWS ...

The SMTC announced the following staff news: In February 2010, **Michael Alexander** joined the SMTC staff as a Senior Transportation Planner. Alexander is a graduate of Cornell University with a Master's degree in Regional Planning and a Bachelor's degree in Urban and Regional Studies. He also holds an Associate's degree from Onondaga Community College and is a 2005 graduate of Leadership Greater Syracuse. Alexander was previously employed by CHA Inc.

**Kevin Kosakowski** also joined the SMTC staff in February 2010 as a Junior Transportation Planner. Kosakowski is a graduate of Buffalo State College where he received a Bachelor's degree in Urban Regional Analysis and Planning. He was previously employed by the City of Syracuse where

he worked in the Community Development Department, Neighborhood Planning Division. Kosakowski staffed the Westside TNT planning area, and one of his main tasks as a neighborhood planner was to work with the residents of the City, mainly in the Westside, to help plan and improve the future state of their neighborhoods.

In other news, **Patricia Wortley**, the SMTC Administrative/Communications Assistant, was elected secretary of the Onondaga County Traffic Safety Advisory Board on January 12, 2010. She recently completed her term as chair of the Board. Wortley has been a member of the SMTC staff since 2001.

## DIRECTIONS

**DIRECTIONS** is a publication of the Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council (SMTC). Formed in 1966 as a result of the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1962, and the Urban Mass Transportation Act of 1964, the SMTC serves as the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) for the Syracuse metropolitan area, and provides a forum for cooperative decision making in developing transportation plans and programs. Its committees are comprised of elected and appointed officials, representing local, state and federal governments or agencies (member agencies) having an interest in or responsibility for transportation planning and programming.

Editor: *Patricia A. Wortley*

# UNIVERSITY HILL PARK AND RIDE FEASIBILITY STUDY COMPLETED

The SMTC recently completed the **University Hill Park and Ride Feasibility Study**. The study, sponsored by the Metropolitan Development Association, was designed to advance several concepts originally recommended as part of the University Hill Transportation Study, principally an integrated parking strategy for Hill institutions. The study tested the potential for a remote facility combining shared institutional parking, supportive land uses, and transit shuttle service.

The study examined over 30 potential sites, including sites in suburban locations and within walking distance of Hill institutions, using a set of criteria formed from best practices research, input from an advisory committee, and the results of a questionnaire completed by 3,600 Hill employees. Among the criteria critical in determining the feasibility of sites were location, accessibility from major commuter corridors, acquisition costs, safety, and transit compatibility. The study investigated the potential for both garages and surface lots with wrapped elements to make them more compatible with surroundings.

Short-term recommendations from the study include modifications to Centro's existing park and ride service from suburban locations. This service, particularly from DeWitt, Liverpool, and Camillus, has the potential to capture a significant number of employees commuting from suburban locations to the Hill. The study also recommends creating a park and ride from Alliance Bank Stadium with direct transit service to the Hill. This site has been used successfully as a temporary park and ride facility in the past. These sites could be used for park and ride service almost immediately with comparatively little capital investment from the institutions. The study recommends that, simultaneously, the Hill institutions should implement transportation demand management programs to support mode shifts and reduce overall parking demand. A guaranteed ride home will be a critical element of these programs.

In the long-term, the study recommends the development of a park and ride facility at Kennedy Square. This site is within walking distance of the Hill and could therefore allow commuters a shuttle or walk option once reaching the facility. Shuttles would run frequently on a circulator route, stopping at each major University Hill institution. A structure incorporating supportive land uses would enliven the pedestrian environment and provide services for not only commuters using the facility, but employees working at the Center of Excellence and Biotechnology



*KENNEDY SQUARE SITE A2 -- SOURCE: BING MAPS 2009 AND C&S ENGINEERS*

Research Center. The study recommends that a parking authority be established to construct, maintain, and operate the facility, potentially through a transportation management association (TMA).

A remote parking facility for University Hill institutions, once complete, could replace existing parking on the Hill to make land available for new development, accommodate parking demand generated by new development, or shift employee parking to preserve nearby spaces for patients and visitors. The facility, lined with active, pedestrian-oriented uses, could enliven the streetscape and provide needed services for both commuters and nearby residents and employees. Because the facility is remote, it will prevent commuting cars from reaching already-congested streets on the Hill. Lastly, the remote parking facility provides an opportunity for the Hill institutions to advance green initiatives by encouraging alternative modes of transportation, including carpooling, walking, and transit.

# A LOOK AT THE CLAY/CICERO ROUTE 31 TRANSPORTATION STUDY

The SMTC Planning and Policy Committees recently acknowledged the completion of the **Clay-Cicero Route 31 Transportation Study**. This study was requested by the Town of Clay and the Town of Cicero to address concerns about recent development trends and the related increase in travel demand along and adjacent to the Route 31 corridor. The aim of this study was to explore relationships between land use patterns and transportation alternatives as a framework for decision-making, consistent with available resources and environmental considerations.

This study officially began in the summer of 2005. The study purposefully got off to a slow start to allow time for the two towns to complete their land use planning processes. The pace of work picked up significantly in 2007, once both the Town of Cicero Comprehensive Plan and the Town of Clay Northern Land Use Study were complete. These two studies formed the basis of the future land use and transportation analysis for the Route 31 Transportation Study and provided a point of comparison for all of the future alternatives developed throughout the course of this study.

This study was guided by a Study Advisory Committee (SAC) that included representatives from the New York State Department of Transportation, the Onondaga County Department of Transportation, the Onondaga County Office of Economic Development, the Syracuse-Onondaga County Planning Agency, the Central New York Regional Transportation Authority (Centro), the North Syracuse Central School District, the Town of Cicero (Zoning Board, Planning Board, Town Board), and the Town of Clay (Department of Planning, Planning Board, Town Board). Numerous Study Advisory Committee meetings and three public meetings were held throughout the course of this study.

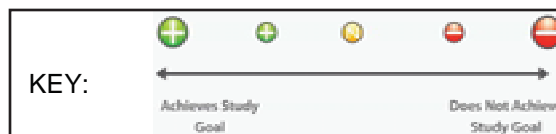
Based on discussions with the SAC and feedback from the public, four primary issues were identified for the study area:

- regional accessibility;
- arterial congestion;
- development pressure; and
- coordinated planning.

Study goals were defined, with input from the SAC and the public, to address the study area issues. As shown in the matrix below, each future alternative was evaluated by how well it achieved, or did not achieve, each study goal.

EVALUATION MATRIX FOR SECOND ROUND OF ALTERNATIVES

STUDY GOALS	Future Base	Alternative 5 Alternative Land Use	Alternative 6 Limited Growth	Alternative 7 S. Bay Upgrade & Overpass + Alternative Land Use	Alternative 8 New Transit Routes + Alternative Land Use	Alternative 9 I-19 Interchange north to new local roads in Business Park area	Alternative 10 New local roads in Clay commercial and Business Park area + Alternative Land Use
Plans for sustainable development	⊖	⊕	⊕	⊖	⊕	⊖	⊕
Protects existing capacity on Rte. 31	⊖	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕
Minimizes future vehicle miles traveled (VMT)	⊖	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕
Minimizes capital cost	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊖	⊕	⊖	⊕
Reduces congestion around interchanges	⊖	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕
Creates east-west connections	⊖	⊖	⊖	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕
Connects residential and commercial	⊖	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕
Supports access management	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕
Supports transit	⊖	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊖	⊕
Supports walkability and bikeability	⊖	⊕	⊕	⊖	⊕	⊖	⊕
Reduces arterial congestion	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕
Promotes infill development	⊖	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊖	⊕
Preserves open space	⊖	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊖	⊕
Promotes environmental sustainability	⊖	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊖	⊕
Supports a mix of uses	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕
Promotes mixed use hamlets	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕
Promotes economic development	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕
Preserves community character	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕
Integrates transportation and land use	⊖	⊕	⊕	⊖	⊕	⊖	⊕



A total of eleven future scenarios were evaluated as part of this study: the Future Base scenario plus ten alternatives. The future transportation alternatives included:

- two possible locations for a new I-81 interchange;
- new local road connections in the Clay commercial area;
- new local road connections around the Clay Business Park;
- upgrading Verplank and Mud Mill Roads (without adding lanes);
- upgrading South Bay Road and adding a new I-81 overpass; and
- expanding or modifying express bus service in the study area.

The land use alternatives analyzed included:

- Alternative Land Use scenario (same amount of development as the Future Base but with a different spatial distribution, concentrating development south of Route 31 with increased density and more mixed-use development); and
- Limited Growth scenario (less future growth than the Future Base with higher densities and more mixed-use development).



*INFILL DEVELOPMENT AT AN EXISTING COMMERCIAL PLAZA (COR CENTER ENTRANCE FROM ROUTE 31)*

Results from the SMTC’s travel demand model indicated that all future scenarios will result in additional traffic on Route 31 and throughout the study area compared to the existing conditions. The analysis showed that land use changes (both in spatial distribution and in magnitude of total growth) have a much more significant impact on total traffic in the Town of Clay and Town of Cicero than any of the transportation network modifications that were modeled. The Limited Growth scenario achieved the most study goals while the alternatives that included a new I-81 interchange achieved the fewest study goals.



*CICERO CENTER HAMLET (ROUTE 31 AT WHITING ROAD)*

After reviewing all of the modeling results, alternatives evaluation, and public input, the SAC and the SMTC staff developed the following list of recommendations for the Town of Clay and the Town of Cicero.

- Revise the existing Town of Clay and Town of Cicero planning documents to include lower levels of future growth;
- New development should focus on increasing density and mixing uses;
- Enhance transit service, with supportive land use practices;
- Upgrade Verplank Road;
- Build new local road connections in the Clay commercial area through developer mitigation [see graphic]; *Cont. on next page*

## CLAY/CICERO CONTINUED

- Build new local roads in the Clay Business Park area as development occurs [see graphic];
- Reconfigure the Route 481 interchange (split the southbound on-ramp from Soule Road);
- Reconfigure the I-81 interchange to increase capacity and enhance safety;
- Do not build additional interchanges unless regionally significant development occurs that would necessitate additional Interstate access;
- Require new development to include pedestrian, bicycle, and transit accommodations;
- Practice good access management in commercial areas; and
- Require roadway connections between residential areas (discourage cul-de-sacs). Recommend new road connections and upgrades in Clay and Cicero.



*RECOMMENDED NEW ROAD CONNECTIONS AND UPGRADES IN CLAY AND CICERO*

The SMTC staff also worked with the SAC members to develop an implementation plan that includes specific actions to achieve the study recommendations. The implementation plan is included in final report.



*INFILL AT A MAJOR INTERSECTION (ROUTE 31 AT ROUTE 298 IN BRIDGEPORT)*

The final report is available on the SMTC web site. Hard-copies are available at the Clay and Cicero town halls, as well as the NOPL Cicero and the Liverpool Library.

The SMTC thanks all of the Study Advisory Committee members for their time and input throughout the course of this study! Also, thank you to all of the residents that attended the public meetings and provided your thoughts and concerns as well.

## NEW FEATURES ON THE INTERACTIVE TRAFFIC COUNT WEB SITE

The SMTC has recently updated its **Interactive Traffic Count** web site. After selecting a municipality, users may now download Traffic Volume Reports (TVR), which are available in Portable Document Format (PDF). Both turning movement counts and tube counts are updated through 2009.

This update will allow users to immediately see traditional information such as road, segment, year, Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT), and data source. Further, with data provided by the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT), users will be able to download individual TVRs, which display more detailed information such as hourly volume, recorder placement, dates counted, and directional Average Daily Traffic and AADT. The NYSDOT data currently without an associated document will be continually updated, and the SMTC staff hopes to have all documents up and ready for viewing by the summer.

Counts from the Onondaga County Department of Transportation (OC DOT) do not have any documents associated with them. For more information on the Traffic Count web site, contact Ahmed Ismail at [aismail@smtcmpo.org](mailto:aismail@smtcmpo.org).

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## RIDDEN YOUR BIKE LATELY?



With the arrival of spring, the SMTC is teaming up with the League of American Bicyclists and other agencies in support of **National Bike Month** this May.

The SMTC encourages everyone to ride their bike or walk to work and/or school during **National Bike to Work Week (May 17-21)** and on **National Bike to Work Day (May 21)**, and beyond. Join millions of Americans who are engaged in bicycle and pedestrian activities every day, and take advantage of this viable, environmentally sound form of transportation. Help cut down on traffic congestion and improve personal health and fitness by commuting to work by bike or on foot! Please be safe and adhere to bicycle and pedestrian safety rules and regulations.

Anyone interested in obtaining more information about National Bike Month or Bike-to-Work Week should contact Danielle Krol [dkrol@smtcmpo.org](mailto:dkrol@smtcmpo.org) or via phone at 315.422.5716.

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## FEDERAL AGENCIES COMMEND/CERTIFY THE SMTC

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) undertook a federal certification review of the transportation planning process conducted by the SMTC in June 2009. Following their extensive three-day audit and evaluation, the FHWA and FTA reported that the SMTC meets the federal requirements for a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and is in compliance with federal transportation planning regulations.

In accordance with federal transportation planning regulations, the FHWA and FTA must review and evaluate the metropolitan planning process in each Transportation Management Area (an MPO containing more than 200,000 persons) at least once every three years. The primary purpose of the federal audit is to ensure that certain planning requirements are being satisfactorily implemented.

Once again, according to FHWA and FTA, "the SMTC transportation planning process is a very credible endeavor." The Federal transportation agencies highlighted several examples of good planning practices conducted by the SMTC, including the quality of produced reports and presentations, effort being expended on the I-81 focus groups, consideration of Big Ticket Initiatives concept in the Long Range Plan, employment practices on the Central Staff, public outreach, environmental justice considerations, and the quality of the MPO web site.

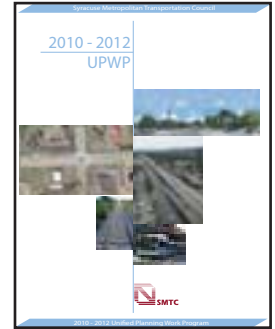
The FHWA/FTA Certification Review Final Report is available to the public and can be accessed via the SMTC web site at [www.smtcmpo.org](http://www.smtcmpo.org). The report contains numerous commendations for existing practice, as well as recommendations for consideration in furthering program excellence.

# WORK BEGINS ON 2010-2012 UPWP

The SMTC Policy Committee adopted the **2010-2012 Unified Planning Work Program** (UPWP) at its March 5, 2010 meeting. The UPWP incorporates into one document all transportation planning activities in the Syracuse Metropolitan Area that are to be conducted from April 1, 2010 – March 31, 2012. The document is intended to provide a mechanism for the coordination of transportation planning efforts by local, state, and regional agencies through the SMTC.

As the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) designated by the Governor of New York State, the SMTC has the responsibility to carry out the continuous, comprehensive and cooperative transportation planning process for the Syracuse Metropolitan Area.

Although the UPWP was adopted for the period ending March 31, 2012, the staff will focus on activities during the next year. A sampling of tasks to be undertaken or continued by the SMTC during the 2010-2011 program year includes:



- \* OCDOT Signal Optimization
- \* Clay Three Rivers Access Study
- \* East Genesee Street Sidewalk Study
- \* Long Range Transportation Plan 2011 Update
- \* Almond Street Pedestrian Accommodation Evaluation
- \* Cicero Route 11 Corridor Study
- \* James Street Road Diet
- \* SOCPA Development Guide Assistance
- \* Near Northside Parking and Wayfinding Study
- \* Transportation Improvement Program.
- \* I-81 Public Participation Phases 2 & 3 & Travel Demand Modeling

The 2010-2012 UPWP is available for viewing at main branch of the Onondaga County Public Library, the Galleries, 447 South Salina Street, Syracuse, at the SMTC offices at 126 N. Salina Street, Syracuse; or by logging on to the SMTC web site - [www.smtcmpo.org](http://www.smtcmpo.org).

THE METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION



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