

DIRECTIONS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SYRACUSE METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION COUNCIL (SMTC) • WINTER 2012



Creekwalk at Franklin Square, Syracuse

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Happy New Year from the Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council (SMTC). Over the last several months staff worked on finalizing several studies for presentation to the SMTC committee structure, as well as starting work on new projects.

In late November, staff presented the Clay Three Rivers Access Study, the East Genesee Sidewalk Study, the James Street Road Diet Study and the Downtown Syracuse Transportation Demand Management Study to the Policy Committee for their acknowledgment rendering the projects complete. The recommendations from the respective studies have been presented to the project sponsors. Further information on each of the studies can be found inside this newsletter.

Through late fall, staff conducted numerous vehicle and pedestrian counts. Project managers have been working on the Erie Canalway Trail project, the Bicycle Corridor study and the City of Syracuse Wayfinding study. The consultant selection process is being finalized for the

Downtown Syracuse Two-Way Feasibility Technical Analysis project. Additionally, staff continues to work on *The I-81 Challenge* project.

In mid-September, the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) legislation was extended, at current funding levels, until March. The Senate is working to draft a new transportation reauthorization titled Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21). The House is working on their version of new legislation.

Work is underway on the development of the new Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) for the start of the next program year on April 1.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at **315.422.5716** or jdagostino@smtcmpo.org.

Yours truly,
James D'Agostino
Director

JAMES STREET ROAD DIET STUDY OVERVIEW

Can a “road diet” improve traffic flow, enhance transit service, and safely accommodate walkers and cyclists along James Street?

This is the question that the City of Syracuse asked the Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council (SMTC) to investigate for the James Street corridor between Oswego Boulevard in downtown and Shotwell Park, Eastwood.

The term “road diet” refers to the reduction or modification of travel lanes to better accommodate all transportation modes. Benefits include a reduction in the number of speeding vehicles, improved safety, enhanced streetscapes, and a more balanced approach to transportation that supports walking, biking, and transit use.

With input from the Study Advisory Committee, the public, and the SMTC staff, the project consultants - Wendel Duchscherer Architects & Engineers and GTS Consulting – developed five alternatives for the James Street corridor. These included a No Build alternative, three “road diet” alternatives, and a signal coordination alternative:

Alternative 1 – No Build: No changes to the roadway.

Alternative 2 – Pavement Reallocation: Restripe the existing pavement to include one travel lane in each direction with a center two-way left-turn lane, and on-street bicycle lanes.

Alternative 3 – Enhanced Transit: Designate the existing outer travel lanes for use solely by transit vehicles and bicycles, while the inner travel lanes are used by motorists.

Alternative 4 – Roadway Reconstruction: Complete redesign of the corridor to include one travel lane in each direction with center two-way left-turn lane. Reconstructing the corridor enables roadway widths to be narrowed or widened as necessary to incorporate new features such as additional greenspace, on-street bicycle lanes or off-street multi-use paths, and “green” infrastructure elements.

Alternative 5 – Traffic Signal Coordination without Road Diet Element: Coordinate traffic signals, without altering the number of travel lanes. This alternative would provide an off-street multi-use path.



A Centro bus travels the James Street Corridor

Common features among Alternatives 2-5 include traffic signal coordination and dedicated left turn lanes at signalized intersections. Aesthetic improvements such as replacing/infilling street trees and installing ornamental lamp posts could also be incorporated.

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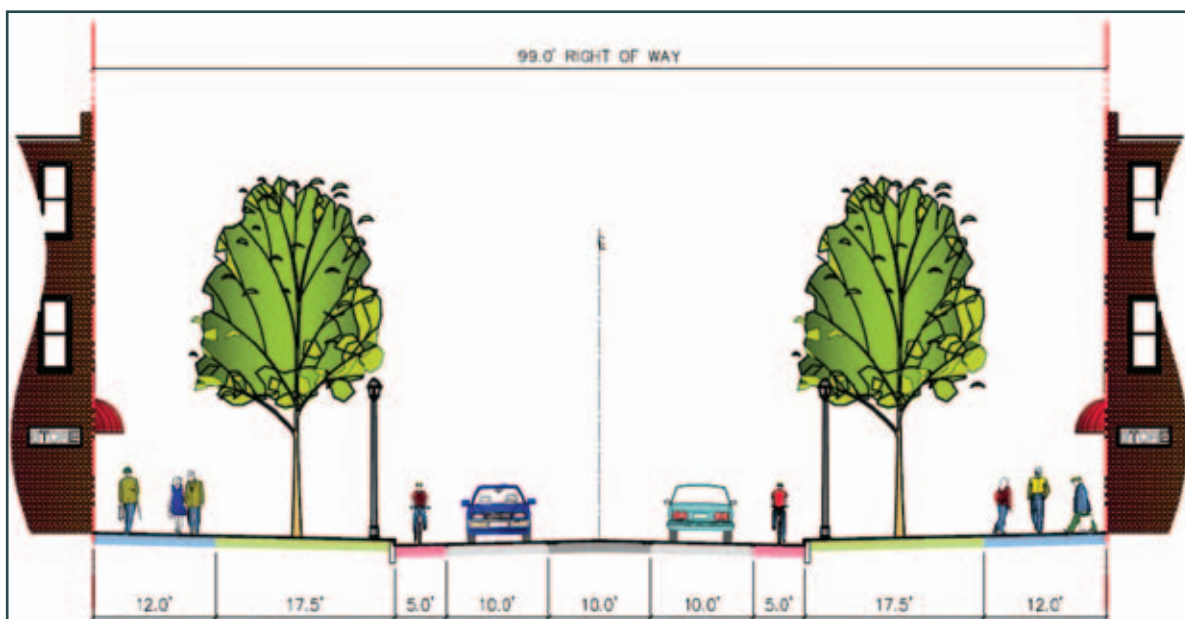
DIRECTIONS is a publication of the Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council (SMTC). Formed in 1966 as a result of the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1962, and the Urban Mass Transportation Act of 1964, the SMTC serves as the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) for the Syracuse metropolitan area, 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

The study analyzed traffic flow along the corridor for each of the alternatives using forecasted year 2030 traffic volumes. The analysis showed that traffic flow could be maintained or improved under each of the road diet alternatives (Alternatives 2, 3, and 4) and under the signal coordination alternative. Therefore, the SMTC and its consultants were able to show that the Road Diet alternatives were feasible and could achieve the goals and objectives of the study.

The study process yielded two viable options for consideration and potential implementation by the

City of Syracuse. Many public meeting participants expressed concerns about the potential impacts on motorists from reducing the number of travel lanes. Participants expressed an interest in improving traffic flow through the corridor for motorists and felt that Alternative 5 best met this aim while also providing an opportunity for an off-street multi-use path for cyclists. However, the alternative that best met the study's goals and objectives to enhance the corridor for motorists, walkers, cyclists and transit riders is Alternative 2. This study serves as a reference for the City of Syracuse when deciding to implement any corridor improvements.



Alternative 2 – Pavement Reallocation – This graphic represents the alternative that best met the project goals and objectives to strike a balance for improving the corridor for all users (i.e., cyclists, motorists, walkers, and transit riders).

The report can be found on the SMTC web site, www.smtcmpo.org. For further information on the study, please contact Mike Alexander at 315.422.5716 or malexander@smtcmpo.org.

IN THE NEWS ...

In September, the SMTC welcomed **Michael Godfrey** to the staff as a Junior Transportation Planner. Godfrey, who served as an SMTC summer intern in 2010, recently received his Masters Degree in Urban Planning, with a concentration in urban design and physical planning, from the University at Buffalo. While attending Buffalo, he was a part of a group of planners and architects studying and designing a complete streets concept for Niagara Street within the city. He is also a graduate from the Rochester Institute of Technology in 2009 and from Morrisville State College in 2006.

SMTC COMPLETES CLAY THREE RIVERS ACCESS STUDY



Go to Three Rivers Point, as pictured above, on the northern edge of the Town of Clay today, and you are likely to see two or three cars parked in the vacant lot near the Seneca River; a few people come here to fish or to take in the view of the tree-lined river banks dotted with homes, but it's an otherwise quiet spot. There is little here to suggest this site's historic role as a Canal Terminal on the New York State Barge Canal or that there was once a well-known nightclub on the point. There is also little to suggest the site's future potential, other than the fact that it provides a panoramic view of the confluence of the Seneca and Oneida Rivers as they flow north into the Oswego River.

The Town of Clay has identified Three Rivers Point, and the former industrial sites along Marder Road to the east, in its *Draft Northern Land Use Study* as “an ideal location to develop a mixed-use neighborhood to create a compact village area safe for walking and biking.” The Town's plans for this area, including the former industrial sites along Marder Road east of Three Rivers Point, would encourage a mix of single-family homes, town homes, apartments, office space, stores, restaurants and a new marina.

While no development proposals have been put forward, the Town of Clay requested that the SMTC study how development of this kind would affect the transportation network in this area – particularly the already heavily-used intersection of State Route 31 and County Route 57. To answer this question, the SMTC,

working with a Study Advisory Committee (SAC) and with the consulting firms of edr and Clark Patterson Lee, established a Study Area that included Three Rivers Point in Clay and the adjacent area on the north shore of the Oneida River in the Town of Schroepfel.

With public input garnered at two public meetings, the Study Advisory Committee developed and refined two alternative “concepts” for the Study Area. These development scenarios are not going to be built, but they do take into consideration the environmental conditions in the area and the vision for this area laid out in the two Towns' planning documents.

Alternative Concept One proposes a combination of 86 townhomes, 48 apartments, 60 single-family homes, a marina with boat storage, and 25,525 square feet of retail commercial space. Alternative Concept Two proposes a combination of 34 townhomes, 8 apartments, 33 single-family homes, a marina with boat storage, and 28,150 square feet of retail commercial space including a 15,000 square foot entertainment center. Both alternatives are assumed to be developed in tandem with a low-intensity land use plan for the Town of Schroepfel portion of the Study Area. This plan includes 48 townhomes and a 25-acre park with a 15-site campground.

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To measure the potential traffic impacts of this development, the study included data on four intersections:

- County Route 57 and State Route 31
- County Route 57 and Verplank Road
- County Route 57 and Maider Road
- County Route 57 and Route 57A.

The study projected traffic conditions would be at these four intersections in the year 2020 with and without development in the Study Area.

The study found that none of the intersections, other than the County Route 57 intersection with Maider Road, are expected to see measurable changes in delay time or overall congestion if the Study Area is developed. Delay would increase at the Route 57 intersection with Maider Road if Alternative Concept Two were developed, chiefly because this scenario includes an entertainment center that could generate a lot of traffic on some nights and weekends. This could be mitigated, somewhat, through the addition of a left-hand turn lane on Maider Road.

Based on this analysis, neither of the concept plans would have substantial impacts on the local transportation network.

The Study included the following recommendations:

- The Town of Clay in collaboration with Onondaga County should study the potential realignment of Maider Road with County Route 57.
- The New York State Department of Transportation should implement signal timing improvements at the intersection of Route 31/Route 57.
- After redeveloping the Study Area as a node of mixed-use development, the Town of Clay should consider encouraging development techniques, such as conservation subdivision, for the area north of Route 31 to encourage open space conservation and to minimize future impacts to the transportation network.
- The Town of Schroepel should consider encouraging low impact land uses other than single family homes along its southern and southeastern waterfront, such as the proposed recreational uses. These uses generate minimal traffic and are compatible with conserving the natural resources in the area.
- The Town of Clay should promote development of an active trail along the Oneida and Seneca Rivers, including a walkway under the Route 57 and CSX Railroad bridges. This is an amenity that local residents and visitors would enjoy, and that would act as a catalyst for future redevelopment.



Maider Road, Clay

The report can be found on the SMTC web site, www.smtcmpo.org. For further information on the study, please contact **Aaron McKeon**, project manager, at 315.422.5716 or amckeon@smtcmpo.org.

SIDEWALK FEASIBILITY STUDIED FOR EASTERN PORTION OF GENESEE STREET IN SYRACUSE

The Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council (SMTC) Policy Committee acknowledged the **East Genesee Street Sidewalk Study** (requested by the City of Syracuse) as complete on November 22, 2011.

The purpose of this project was to determine the feasibility of completing the sidewalk network along East Genesee Street between East Avenue/Brookford Road and the eastern city line, and assessing the existing sidewalk network along Meadowbrook Drive between Hurlburt and Kimber Roads. The project also established gross order of magnitude cost estimates of recommended sidewalk facilities.

The project included an analysis of traffic operations and an assessment of existing roadway conditions to determine the technical feasibility of completing the sidewalk network. The study also considered issues such as vehicle speeds, pedestrian and bicycle safety, and adjacent land uses to assess the appropriateness of a complete sidewalk network along this corridor. The City of Syracuse surveyed the study area along East Genesee Street between East Avenue/Brookford Road and the eastern city line to determine the Right of Way extent, distance from the edge of pavement to the street's centerline and potential obstacles to the installation of sidewalks, such as fire hydrants, utility poles, etc. These data were then used to evaluate the existing conditions in the study area and the anticipated area/space on a planning analysis level required for completing the sidewalk network.

A Study Advisory Committee (SAC) was formed to guide the study. Representatives from the City of Syracuse, New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT), the Syracuse City School District, and the Central New York Regional Transportation Authority (CNYRTA) were included on the Study Advisory Committee. The SAC met with the SMTC staff at key points during the study to track study progress and provide input towards the final recommendations. Two public meetings were

also held during the course of the study to present the existing conditions analysis, the findings of the technical and qualitative analysis, and to share alternatives.

Based on the analysis of pedestrian movement and other study area conditions, input from the Study Advisory Committee members, and input from the community, the study concluded that adding sidewalk is both feasible and recommended on both sides of East Genesee Street between East Avenue/Brookford Road and the eastern city line.

Final recommendations include broad level corridor-wide recommendations for the study area include re-striping of existing pavement markings throughout the corridor using a more durable material; examination



Participants at Public Meeting #1 - March 2011

of intersection configurations at three locations within the study area, and that the City of Syracuse should continue to consider maintenance/improvements to Edgehill Park.

Recommendations for the installation of sidewalk along both sides of East Genesee Street were separated into four phases and include rough planning level cost estimates developed by the City of Syracuse Department of Engineering. As this study is a planning level study, it is important to note that prior to construction, additional engineering studies and/or information would be necessary prior to moving forward with the recommendations noted within the document. Cost

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estimates are based on 2011 construction costs, and additional costs could emerge during construction depending on the results of additional engineering studies, etc. The rough planning level cost estimate for pedestrian accommodations and improvements to the entire corridor ranges from \$950,000 to \$1,325,000.

Implementation of recommendations noted within the East Genesee Street Sidewalk Study is the responsibility of the City of Syracuse, as the City owns and maintains East Genesee Street within the study area. The City of Syracuse can choose to implement all of the recommendations and/or portions of the recommendations outlined within the final report. Each phase has a rough planning level cost estimate associated with it, which can be reviewed within the overall report, located on the SMTC's web site (www.smtcmpo.org – click on “Final Reports”).

For further information on the study, please contact **Danielle Krol**, project manager, at 315.422.5716 or dkrol@smtcmpo.org.



Brick path at Edgell Park

A LOOK AT PEDESTRIAN SIGNAL TIMING

Are your traffic signals timed properly for pedestrians to safely cross an intersection? The most vulnerable traveler through an intersection is the pedestrian; and pedestrians vary in their ability to quickly and effectively cross a roadway. Those that vary most in their ability to cross an intersection include people with limited mobility, children, and senior citizens.

To ensure that all pedestrians have enough time to safely travel through an intersection, the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) has reduced average walking speed standards for signal timing from 4.0 feet per second to 3.5 feet per second. Walking speed can be further reduced to 3.0 feet per second if, based on engineering judgment, it is determined that slower moving pedestrians “routinely use the crosswalk”.

For more information, please visit our web site: http://www.smtcmpo.org/docs/downloads/Ped_Signal_Timing_Fact_Sheet_Final.pdf to review a fact sheet prepared by the New York State Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations entitled *Timing Traffic Signals to Accommodate Pedestrians*.



Pedestrian crossing at East Adams Street and South Crouse Ave.

SMTC STUDIES DOWNTOWN SYRACUSE TDM

The **Downtown Syracuse Transportation Demand Management Study** was completed by the SMTC on behalf of CenterState Corporation for Economic Opportunity/ Downtown Committee of Syracuse, Inc. Transportation Demand Management (TDM) can be defined as a wide range of policies, programs, services and products that affect whether, why, where and how people travel. TDM programs and strategies are meant to encourage greater use of sustainable modes of transportation and trip decision making that reduces, combines or shortens vehicle trips. Developers, property owners, employers, government agencies and non-profits can implement TDM programs. The study process included a review of existing conditions, meetings and interviews with area stakeholders, surveys of downtown employees and employers. Study recommendations are based on findings from the employee survey, employer survey, interviews with key stakeholders, a review of existing TDM and transportation activities in downtown Syracuse, review of TDM best practices in settings similar to downtown Syracuse and feedback obtained in community meetings.

Suggested TDM strategies include: coordinating with the State Department of Transportation to implement a carpool

matching web site for the Syracuse metropolitan area; developing an online clearinghouse for transportation information; creating a guaranteed ride home program; identifying and promoting carshare opportunities; advocating for transportation system improvements; developing a bicycle parking system and; coordinating with the colleges/universities and major employers to implement TDM activities and programs.



Warren Street in downtown Syracuse

The Final Report was acknowledged as complete by the SMTC Policy Committee in November 2011. To learn more about the project, visit the SMTC web site, www.smtcmpo.org or contact **Mario Colone**, project manager, at 315.422.5716 or mcolone@smtcmpo.org.

THE METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION



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