

Funding Opportunities

Local Resources

Use of local funds has the advantage of generally being the fastest way to progress projects. At the same time, this requires the local implementer to fund projects entirely with its own resources. This may not be a desirable approach for larger-scale projects.

Typically, highway, public works or parks department budgets are used to support transportation projects such as pavement repairs or reconstruction, sidewalk construction and trail or bike path development. Human service agency funds may be used to secure transportation service for agency program clients. Under more aggressive arrangements around the State, highway funds have been used to support transit service, with the logic being that the investment in transit service in essence benefits the highway system by relieving some of the burden on the road system.

From the set of strategies developed in this *Study*, among the primary candidates for pursuit solely with local funding are some of the shorter-length sidewalk replacement or construction projects, signage improvements, and support of specialized transit services (e.g., dial-a-ride services for seniors). In addition, a number of the ordinance-related strategies set forth in this report would likely be progressed through local resources as the necessary development work would be undertaken by Town staff in the courses of their normal duties.

In light of the point raised in the Executive Summary regarding the way in which improvements such as sidewalk construction can yield benefits to both quality of life and economic development, they can be seen as investments in the future of the community which benefit both residents and business owners. As such, one concept raised by the Steering Committee in its discussions was the establishment of a Town fund for sidewalk development accumulated from modest taxes and fees imposed on new developments. Recognizing the Town's past history with impact fees, it is noted that the key to making such a fee basis work would be to establish a clear connection between the fee levies and the in-the-field improvement projects funded through these fees. As it may be difficult for a developer to (for example) reconcile a levy on a development in Fort Hunter with a sidewalk project in McKownville, it may be most appropriate to structure the fund groups such that funds are collected and used within the same neighborhood, based on the Town's most common neighborhood definitions.

Another dimension to the discussion of local resources concerns taxpayer-financed improvements through *special assessment districts*, such as a sidewalk district. While the establishment of such districts could partially defray the Town's expenses related to the replacement or new construction of sidewalks, there are a number of political and policy-related issues which would need to be considered should the establishment of a special assessment district be considered by the Town. Some of the main such issues include the need to identify a

logic for prioritizing these improvements and the time frame to achieve benefit (if improvements in the district are funded solely by the assessments).

Note on Local Resources and Maintenance

It should be recognized that a number of the improvements recommended in this report will introduce new responsibilities for maintenance of public spaces and facilities. As the Town considers whether and when to pursue those improvements falling within its areas of responsibility, potential maintenance-related demands need to be understood, and a commitment to performing this maintenance needs to be made. Failure to do so will lessen both the magnitude of and the length of time during which these benefits will realized.

State Resources

State support for transportation investments comes in four main forms: direct State pursuit of these investments, State assistance to local governments in covering their shares of the costs of transportation-related investments, State non-NYSDOT grant programs in other areas which can provide communities with support for their efforts, and legislative “member items.”

In regard to *direct state pursuit* of transportation projects, it is frequently the case that many or most of the most critical road-based transportation linkages in a community (in McKownville’s, case, including Western Avenue and Fuller Road Alternate) are on State routes. As such, NYSDOT would ordinarily be financially responsible for improvements to these facilities, save for some cases in which the host community looked to do something (such as streetscaping) which was neither within the scope of an existing NYSDOT project nor within the NYSDOT right-of-way for the road in question. That said, the general comment is that opportunities may lie in existing NYSDOT projects and plans to achieve community transportation objectives.

On the matter of *State assistance to local governments*, the two main programs serving this purpose in the transportation arena are the Consolidated Highway Improvement Program System (CHIPS), which provides support for capital improvements to road and bridges with expected life spans of seven to ten years or more, and Marchiselli funding, which covers 75 percent of the local share on federally-funded projects (that is, 75 percent of the required 20 percent local share, meaning that the locality ultimately needs to cover only five (5) percent of the cost of such shared-fund projects). CHIPS tends to be used to support improvements such as pavement rehabilitations (“repaving”) and bridge repairs, while Marchiselli funding tends to be applied to larger pavement and bridge reconstruction projects (that is, projects that are large enough to be federally funded and for which this type of support would be beneficial).

There are also *non-NYSDOT programs* which support transportation improvements or related activities. For example, in the area of safety education, the Governor’s Traffic Safety Committee (GTSC) and the New York State Department of Health’s Bureau of Injury Prevention both operate funding programs supporting safety education. Several communities in Albany County have taken advantage of past GTSC programmatic opportunities. These agencies are also sources of accident data for planning and project development efforts. (GTSC: 518-474-3135;

Bureau of Injury Prevention: 518-474-8985) In addition, the New York State Environmental Protection Act, administered by the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP), covers projects for such facilities as walking and bicycling trails.

Recognizing the significance of stormwater management issues in the neighborhood, it is worth noting that the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, the New York State Emergency Management Office and other related agencies may be sources of information regarding state (and federal) funding opportunities for stormwater management enhancements which may be able to include pursuit of some of the trail concepts presented in this report.

Finally *legislative member items* can be secured through the area's State Senate or Assembly representatives. The pursuit of member items has positive and negative aspects. On the positive side, they can be secured for relatively short term project implementation (i.e., within the next State Fiscal Year), tend not to require the sorts of detailed applications or project justifications that are typical of transportation funding processes (particularly competitive program opportunities), tend not to require local matches, and can be "pitched" through very localized efforts such as meetings or field visits with a Senator's or Assemblyperson's district office staff. On the negative side, the competition for this sort of support can be quite fierce, the dollar amounts that can be provided tend to be toward the low end of the range for transportation improvements (perhaps \$10,000 or less), the degree to which the opportunity really exists is a function of the political process (e.g., the area representative's majority/minority status in his/her legislative body), and the availability of funds is ultimately a function of the passage of the State budget.

Federal Transportation Funds and Programs

Several transportation funding programs operate under the provisions of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century, or TEA-21. TEA-21 is the Federal transportation law which authorizes Federal highway, highway safety, transit and other surface transportation programs. These programs cover general transportation, transit, pedestrian and bicycle transportation, pavement and bridges. TEA-21 took effect in October of 1997, and will be in force through September 30, 2003, by which time a new highway law will need to have been passed.

Through the Capital District Transportation Committee (CDTC), the Town can submit projects for consideration for federal transportation funding under CDTC's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The TIP process is both quite competitive from the perspective of quality of project proposals and constrained by available funds and the need to first complete existing projects before funding new ones.

For the 2003-2008 TIP update, the Town submitted a proposal to CDTC for a package of projects developed under this study. At the time of this writing, the proposal was on the draft TIP out for comment (to be voted on by the CDTC Policy Committee in May), with construction projected for the 2007-2008 fiscal year. The package consisted of the following projects.

- SW-2: Western Avenue Eastbound Side Sidewalk Improvements (segments between UAlbany and Fuller Road only)
- SW-3: Western Avenue Westbound Side Sidewalk Improvements (segments between UAlbany and Fuller Road only)
- IS-1: Western Avenue/UAlbany Intersection Improvements
- IS-2: Western Avenue/McKown Road/Norwood Street Intersection Improvements
- IS-4: Western Avenue/Fuller Road Intersection Improvements
- NCD-2: Median on East Leg of Western Avenue/Fuller Road Intersection

Other Federal Funds and Programs

Other Federal agencies administer programs with potential application to study area projects, particularly in the area of trail development. As examples, the Federal Land and Water Conservation Funds and the National Trails Act are managed by OPRHP and New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) staff, while stormwater, wastewater and floodplain management efforts supported through the Army Corps of Engineers and the United States Department of Agriculture's Soil Conservation Service may include trail and walkway development. The NYSDEC Region 4 offices in Rotterdam would be the first point of contact for information on these opportunities.

Private Support

Private support for transportation-related improvements tends to be limited to trail, open space or tourism-oriented opportunities. In many cases, this support takes the form of in-kind or permissive support, such as the way in which a number of utility companies around the State have allowed trail development along their rights of way; however, with policy changes implemented by many utilities in the wake of the World Trade Center attack, there may not be the degrees of access to these rights of way in the future.

Another form of private support is financial support for trail development or land acquisition. Charitable foundations such as the J. M. Kaplan Fund (www.jmkfund.org) have provided grants to efforts of these sorts in past years, although the recipients of these grants have tended to be private organizations rather than governments, and the Kaplan Fund has particularly (although not exclusively) targeted more rural areas. That said, a number of the trail development concepts discussed earlier could conceivably be pursued by the Guilderland Pathways Committee (if its official or legal status qualifies it to do so) with foundation funding support.

For both private and public grant support, it would be prudent to periodically contact the New York State Library, as the State Library is a clearinghouse for those libraries in each county which serve as *designated repositories for foundation grant information*, and maintains updated listings of grant opportunities.