

ULSTER COUNTY TRANSPORTATION COUNCIL

Technical Committee Meeting

Meeting Summary

December 7, 2004

Ulster County Community College
Stone Ridge, NY

Members

Present:	Michael Campbell**	Village of Saugerties
	Mircea Catona	UC Public Works Department
	Sandy Cozza**	City of Kingston Citibus
	Dennis Doyle	UC Planning Board
	Steve Finkle**	City of Kingston
	Toni Hokanson**	Town of New Paltz
	Jack Hohman**	NYS Thruway Authority-NYC Division
	Albert Meyer**	Ulster County Legislature
	Jill Ross-Schmelz**	NYS Thruway Authority-Albany Division
	Richard Peters**	NYSDOT Region 8
	Cynthia Ruiz	Ulster County Area Transit
	Charles Schaller	UC Traffic Safety Board
	Nancy Hammond**	Town of Lloyd
	Fred Wadnola ⁺	Town of Ulster
	Barbara Wise**	Town of Ulster

Others

Present:	Joel B. Brink	Town of Ulster
	Raymond J. Costantino	Hudson Valley Rail Trail Preservation
	Glenn Gidaly	Shingebiss Associates
	Gilbert Hales	Town of Saugerties
	Meghan Hammerle	Creighton Manning Engineering
	Larry Hammond	Town of Lloyd
	Tom Jackson	Ulster County Area Transit
	Nadine Lemmon	Town of Gardiner
	Mark Morano	NYSDOT Region 8
	Russ Robbins	NYSDOT Region 8
	Mark Sargent	Creighton Manning Engineering

Staff

Present:	Michele Bager	NYSDOT-Albany
	Marianne Davis	UC Planning Board
	Bill Tobin	UCTC

⁺Permanent Voting Member

^{*}Current Voting Member (Until June 4, 2005)

^{**}Current Voting Proxy

[^]Current Advisory Member

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting began at 10:01 a.m. with Mr. Tobin welcoming those in attendance. Those in attendance introduced themselves.

CALL FOR CITIZEN COMMENTS

Mr. Tobin asked if there were any Citizen comments at this time. None were received.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

Mr. Tobin presented the October 5, 2004 Technical Committee meeting minutes and asked for any comments or corrections. None were received. Mr. Finkle made a motion to approve the October 5, 2004 minutes as presented. Ms. Hammond seconded the motion. Motion was approved.

COMMUNICATIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr. Tobin noted that the UCTC's Long-Range Transportation Plan Public Information meeting was held in the Village of New Paltz on November 30, 2004. Mr. Tobin handed out a summary report highlighting the issues and problems received by meeting participants.

Mr. Tobin reported that staff is making preparations for the development of the SFY 2005-06 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) set to begin April 1, 2005. Mr. Tobin invited municipalities to submit comments or recommendations for planning projects in the coming year. A draft SFY 2005-06 UPWP will be presented at the February 1, 2005 Technical Committee meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

TIP application scores presentation: Mr. Tobin presented background information on the FFY 2006-2010 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) project evaluation and scoring process. After a brief update on the TIP project evaluation process, staff presented the following recommendation for the Technical Committee to consider and recommend the Policy Committee for adoption:

“Consider the projects and scores presented and recommend the Policy Committee fund highest ranking paving and bridge projects first, and then fund all other general projects beginning with highest score.”

Upon completion of the TIP presentation, the Technical Committee members discussed the outcome of the project evaluation process.

Mr. Doyle thanked the people for serving on the scoring sub-committee. He stated that he believed the process was fair and equitably focused.

Mr. Gidaly asked about funds available for projects on the 5-year TIP and clarification on the purpose of today's Technical Committee meeting.

Mr. Tobin stated that staff and NYSDOT are waiting to hear the exact amount of Federal funds available for Ulster County, when funds would become available, and reminded

the Committee that the purpose of today's meeting was to make a recommendation to the Policy Committee on what projects to select.

Ms. Ross-Schmelz asked about enhancement funds and whether trail projects should compete for highway funds in the TIP process.

Mr. Peters stated that enhancement funds that were used for trail projects in the past were part of the TEA 21 transportation bill that has recently expired. Mr. Peters stated there was no guarantee an enhancements program will continue in the next transportation bill leaving trail projects with even fewer funding source alternatives.

Ms. Hammond stated that some municipalities have matching funds available now and are ready to initiate their projects.

Ms. Lemmon stated that the Town of Gardiner was disappointed their project didn't score higher because they had pledged matching funds in excess of the minimum requirement.

Mr. Tobin stated that the Policy Committee could consider projects with matching funds in excess of the 20% minimum requirement but criteria number 15 (local commitment) was eliminated from the scoring process because all projects earned ten points in this category as it was written.

Ms. Ruiz stated the sidewalk project in Rosendale is very important due to the number of kids walking to the Rosendale Recreation Center on Route 32.

Mr. Wadnola expressed his concerns that the Town of Ulster's traffic light application scored the lowest. Mr. Wadnola was surprised that rail trails and sidewalks scored higher than traffic lights.

Ms. Ruiz asked if traffic counts were considered when scoring projects.

Mr. Tobin stated that only paving and bridge projects considered traffic volume data when developing and assigning scores.

Mr. Gidaly stated that the multi-modal center in Ellenville was clearly stated in the Ulster County Long Range Transportation Plan but may not get funded (the plan states Ellenville should have a multimodal center). Mr. Gidaly stated that this project should receive funding given its demonstrated link to the plan.

Mr. Finkle asked if the projects that could not get funded in 2006 with \$5 million could be considered in 2007.

Mr. Peters clarified that the amount of Federal funds available for the Ulster County FFY 2006-2010 TIP is projected to be approximately \$5 Million for the entire five-year period or \$1 Million for each year.

Ms. Ruiz asked about the possibility of phasing projects to help fund additional projects.

Mr. Doyle added that it would be difficult to “phase fund” projects. He asked if anyone from the scoring committee would be willing to speak on how scoring was conducted.

Mr. Finkle, who served on the sub-committee to evaluate and score TIP projects, stated that all projects were different and it was difficult to score them against each other but felt the overall process was fair given the criteria. Mr. Finkle also stated that partial projects should not be funded unless a study was needed.

Mr. Morano asked how the sub-committee scored the projects and wanted to know if project locations were inspected by staff or members of the project evaluation sub-committee.

Mr. Tobin stated he had visited each project location.

Mr. Tobin stated that the entire TIP update process is repeated in every two years and projects could then be re-submitted. Mr. Tobin also mentioned the possibility of holding on to project applications that were not accepted until funds become available (illustrative project scenario).

Mr. Peters stated that New York State MPOs do not utilize an illustrative projects approach and require a resubmission of project applications at the next call for projects.

Ms. Ross-Schmelz stated that in some cases large projects can go to Legislature for special consideration when the project amount greatly exceeds the Federal funds allocation.

Mr. Schaller wanted to know where safety fits into the overall project evaluation process.

Mr. Tobin stated that safety was evaluated in every project except bridge and paving projects. But existing bridge and paving projects are considered higher in overall priority than general projects because they are Ulster County’s existing infrastructure and not considered new transportation investments.

Mr. Schaller asked why rail trail and sidewalk projects scored higher than a shoulder project for Sawkill Road. Mr. Schaller stated the project evaluation process needs refinement to reflect higher consideration for traffic safety-related projects.

Mr. Peters stated that the Technical and Policy Committees adopted a scoring system that was used and these were merely the results of the criteria adopted. Mr. Peters also stated that the system may need modifications in the future but for the present time these are the results we’ll have to accept. Mr. Peters further added that everyone was committed to the system but if the Technical Committee would like to give more priority to safety than other criteria and most everyone agrees that’s needed, then that change could be made.

Mr. Finkle asked Mr. Schaller which roads were the most dangerous.

Mr. Schaller responded with Sawkill Road, S. Putt Corners Road, Boices Lane, and Enterprise Drive.

Mr. Finkle asked if the County sets funds aside to help pay for safety improvements on these roads.

Mr. Schaller stated the roads are kept up but they need shoulders. Mr. Schaller stated he did not think that rail trails and sidewalks were as important.

Mr. Gidaly added that rail trails help keep pedestrians and bicycles off of the road so it could be a safety issue. He also said he appreciated Mr. Finkle's comments on the scoring process. Mr. Gidaly asked if recipients could give more money toward their projects to help fund additional projects on the list. He stated that he did not think a non-Kingston multimodal project could be constructed without TIP funds and felt the Village of Ellenville might be able to negotiate a higher matching fund contribution to enable their project to be funded.

Mr. Finkle responded to Mr. Gidaly's last comment by stating that applicants can appeal to the Policy Committee for merit consideration but it is up to the Policy Committee to take a second look at projects and how they were scored and decide if a project warrants a higher degree of consideration.

Ms. Ruiz made a comment regarding safety priorities versus rail trail and sidewalk projects. Ms. Ruiz stated that the Ulster County Transportation Council's transportation planning program should be well-rounded and multimodal and all projects should be considered. Ms. Ruiz asked if the first phase of the Ellenville multimodal center could be funded.

Mr. Peters stated that the purpose of the Technical Committee is to hash out and respond to questions and comments. Mr. Peters stated that the reason for not partially funding projects is because you may start a trend toward funding project phases but never see projects be completed. Also, the Federal Highway Administration may come back to a municipality and ask for funds to be returned for unfinished projects.

Mr. Finkle made a motion to accept staff's recommendation to the Policy Committee to fund bridge and paving projects first, then begin funding all other general projects beginning with the highest scoring general projects.

Mr. Gidaly asked if awarding the Town of Wawarsing's two trail projects was too generous when other municipalities received nothing.

Mr. Peters responded to Mr. Gidaly's comment by stating that's up to the Town of Wawarsing if they want to withdraw their second application to help out their neighbors. But without anyone present from the Town of Wawarsing, it's difficult to guess what they want to do in this situation.

Ms. Hammond seconded Mr. Finkle's motion to accept staff's recommendation. Ms. Ross-Schmelz suggested staff and the Technical Committee convey the concerns and issues raised regarding the project scoring process before they make a final decision on which projects to fund.

Mr. Finkle agreed but expressed his concerns about changing the criteria or starting over with the process.

Mr. Peters stated that a recommendation should be given to the Policy Committee to refine the criteria before the next TIP update process in two years to address the concerns and issues identified at today's meeting.

Mr. Doyle asked if there was a consensus on the motion made by Mr. Finkle and seconded by Ms. Hammond. A consensus was achieved by those in attendance.

Draft Long Range Transportation Plan Vision and Goals: Mr. Tobin briefly presented the current vision and goals of the Ulster County Long-Range Transportation plan. Mr. Doyle stated that due to time constraints, staff will present this item at a later date to receive input and direction on the UCTC's overall long-range transportation vision and goals for Ulster County.

UCTC Logo Presentation: Mr. Tobin presented eight (8) draft examples of the UCTC logo. Mr. Tobin noted that a logo will help the UCTC establish a visible identity. After reviewing the logos, it appeared UCTC draft logo number "X-3" received the most favorable response. Staff will make revisions to the logo and unveil a revised version of "X-3" at a later date.

UPWP Mid-Year Financial Report: Mr. Tobin briefly presented the mid-year financial report for the current year's UPWP. Mr. Tobin explained that revisions will follow in the third quarter report to reflect additional transactions but overall the UCTC's work program is in excellent fiscal health.

Washington Avenue Corridor Study presentation: Ms. Hammerle of Creighton Manning Engineering presented an overview of the Town of Ulster's Washington Avenue Corridor alternatives analysis project. Ms. Hammerle stated that after a careful review of all the traffic and land use data collected, the preferred recommendation appears to be a roundabout at the Sawkill Road intersection with a raised median from the existing traffic circle to the Esopus Creek Bridge.

At the conclusion of Ms. Hammerle's presentation, Technical Committee members discussed the Town of Ulster study and the potential for adding a second roundabout at Sawkill Road.

Mr. Brink stated the roundabout is not feasible at the Sawkill Road intersection.

Mr. Brink added that tractor trailers and buses might have trouble negotiating a smaller sized roundabout.

Mr. Brink also stated the high volume of traffic could backup into existing roundabout. Ms. Cozza stated she agreed with Mr. Brink's comments about traffic volumes and was concerned with traffic backing up into the existing traffic circle.

Ms. Hammerle presented an animated simulation of traffic in the Washington Avenue Corridor in Year 2030.

Ms. Ruiz stated that UCAT bus drivers currently have no problems negotiating the existing roundabout.

Ms. Ruiz also stated that bus stops and bus pull outs would be beneficial when the corridor is improved especially when considering future ridership and corridor traffic projections.

Mr. Brink stated the roundabout simulation looks good but doesn't represent reality.

Mr. Schaller stated the design of the proposed roundabout will not be striped as a full 2-lane roundabout like existing one.

Mr. Wadnola expressed his concerns about the location and grade of the access road proposed to connect Powell Lane to Sawkill Road.

Mr. Wadnola expressed his concerns about traffic leading into the City of Kingston and the Dutch Village area. Mr. Wadnola stated that Dutch Village may need a traffic light as a result of the Sawkill Road intersection improvements.

Ms. Cozza added that an extra lane for right hand turns to Sawkill Road may be needed.

Mr. Doyle stated that applications have been received by the Town and property owners in the Town of Ulster's Washington Avenue Corridor area but development hasn't proceeded due to lack of access. Mr. Doyle stated that because of the sewer district the Town of Ulster and the region need to seriously look at access management strategies throughout the corridor.

Ms. Bager asked if sidewalks had been considered in the overall planning process and particularly how a roundabout impacts pedestrian movements.

Mr. Doyle responded to Ms. Bager's question with a yes and will be incorporated into design along the corridor and near the intersection.

Mr. Doyle stated NYSDOT wants to see sidewalks on both sides of Washington Avenue to the bridge. The plan shows sidewalks on both sides of road until the bridge. Pedestrian access Esopus Creek is being considered and will be addressed in design.

Mr. Doyle stated that the purpose of presenting the corridor concept to the Technical

Committee was to demonstrate a cooperative working relationship among municipalities, NYSDOT, and Citizens to help facilitate changes in land use while at the same time preserve the efficiency and safety of roadway system.

OTHER ANNOUNCEMENTS

No further announcements were provided.

A consensus was reached to adjourn the meeting at 11:50 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by
Bill Tobin