

U. CAPITAL DISTRICT TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

The following comments are taken from a letter from the Capital District Transportation Committee dated May 2, 1996. A copy of the letter is provided in Appendix 1.

1. Comment:

The draft report provides a brief mention of truck traffic in the study area, with little discussion or quantification of truck traffic impacts of various alternative improvements. CDTC's STEP Model analysis provided for the Study Area did not address truck traffic impacts. A description of existing truck routes throughout the study area would be beneficial. A more complete description of the proposed locations of large truck traffic posted restrictions would also be beneficial.

Response:

The major truck routes in the Study Area include the principal arterials, Central Avenue and New Karner Road, and the minor arterial, Albany Street. The location of industrial businesses in the southwestern part of the Study Area has forced collector and local streets to become significant truck routes. These streets include Morris Road, Cordell Road, Kings Road, and Curry Road. With over one million square feet of industrial use forecasted for this part of the Study Area, the volume of trucks on the collector and local streets will increase.

The Cordell Road - Lisha Kill Road Connector Road will reduce the truck traffic along the more residential sections of Cordell Road, Morris Road, and Albany Street. Weight restrictions, which would reduce the truck traffic on these streets even more, would be placed on Cordell Road and Morris Road north of the connector roadway and on Albany Street between Cordell Road and Lisha Kill Road.

2. Comment:

Location of light industrial development close to existing rail lines is consistent with the work of the CDTC Goods Movement Task Force. That task force has recommended that regional goals for compact development and optimal use of existing industrial land would be fostered by public policies encouraging the location of freight-intensive industries along existing rail lines. Adequate provision for separation of industrial uses and truck traffic from residential streets is an important goal.

Response:

The comment is noted.

3. Comment:

The traffic impacts forecast for in the study area will be affected by; the type of access provided for new development in the projected growth scenario, as well as efforts to manage existing arterial access and provide access improvements where possible. For example, careful design of access for new development along Central Avenue would lead to a reduced future traffic volume on Albany Street, as well as improved traffic flow on Central Avenue.

The Transportation section of the Draft Generic Environmental Impact Statement does a good job of identifying arterial - land access conflict in the study area. The draft FGEIS also mentions the importance of limiting and/or consolidate driveways as development occurs (Page II-77). It would be valuable to further highlight this recommendation as a mitigation measure.

Response:

The comment is noted.

4. Comment:

Forecasts of traffic volumes on Albany Street, Central Avenue, and a new Cordell Road-Lisha Kill Road Connector are sensitive to assumptions about how and where access to the street system is provided for new development. more detailed modeling of the access indicated that the traffic forecast for Albany Street between Cordell Road and Morris Road could be lowered by 250 to 350 in the year 2015 PM Peak Hour if access for new retail development in this area is focused on Central Avenue.

Response:

The comment is noted.

5. Comment:

In addition to careful access management, CDTC believes that several strategic connections could help to mitigate traffic on New Karner Road and Central Avenue. Because the arterial system is insufficient to meet current traffic needs

in the New Karner Road portion of the Study Area, construction of new service or local roads can draw traffic away from major intersections. These service roads can be planned for before parcels are developed, and implemented as part of new development, with a portion of the cost covered by mitigation fee, and a portion covered by non-mitigation fee. These service road connections would provide benefits in the near term, prior to any widening of New Karner Road in the Study Area, as well as in the long term. Two examples of connecting roads which could benefit traffic flow in the Study Area are:

- ***Service Road Connecting Central Avenue to Albany Street, west of New Karner Road*** - *The purpose of this service road would be to provide alternatives for trips related to existing and future commercial development in this area. These trips would have an alternative to traveling through the intersection of New Karner and Central, and would relieve some congestion at the intersection. CDTC analysis indicated that this facility would divert 375 approaching vehicles from the intersection of New Karner Road and Central Avenue in year 2015.*
- ***Upgrading of Old Karner Road, with a Grade Separated Rail Crossing, Connecting to Rifle Road*** - *Improving Old Karner Road would provide better traffic service in the Old Karner Road area and would supplement the capacity at the intersection of New Karner and Central in the interim period until mainline improvements to New Karner Road can be implemented. CDTC analysis indicated that this facility would divert 625 approaching vehicles from the intersection of New Karner Road and Central Avenue in year 2015. The negative impacts of such a connection would include the cost of providing a rail crossing and possible impacts to the Pinebush. These impacts would need further evaluation and discussion.*

It is important that these actions be planned for now so that they; are not foreclosed because of future development.

Response:

The comment is noted.

6. Comment:

Route 5 has been identified by CDTC as an important regional corridor for ATMS improvements, which includes signal coordination systems and signal upgrades where appropriate, and applications of other emerging transportation technologies. Route 5 will be an important component of the region's

"Intelligent Transportation System" (ITS). Improvements to Route 5 based on its regional importance will benefit the Lisha Kill - Kings Road Area.

Response:

The comment is noted.

7. Comment:

The Importance of the Route 5 Transit Corridor - The Route 5 corridor represents the strongest transit market in the Capital District. Route 5 has been identified by the CDTC New Visions process as an important corridor for transit service improvements to maintain and develop this transit market. Transit service improvements could range from improving and enhancing conventional bus service on Route 5, to more innovative solutions. CDTC has explored the option of providing a high scale transit improvement in the Route 5 corridor as a supporting element of a large scale urban reinvestment policy for the Capital District. Under this scenario, shopping malls and office complexes would develop toward the street and parking would be relocated to allow easier pedestrian access between sites. In this context, the transit investment would be intended to integrate the suburban middle into the urban fabric of Albany and Schenectady at each end and reinforce the cities.

CDTC is planning a major initiative as part of its 1996-97 Unified Planning Work Program to examine the land use portion of Albany-Schenectady; urban reinvestment strategy identified in the Fixed Guideway Transit Investigation. In the Transit Futures Report, the task force concluded that fixed guideway investment (light rail or dedicated bus land or bus way) would be warranted only as a complement to a major public and private commitment to redesign and reinvestment in the corridor. The scope of this corridor management study will touch on fixed guideway issues only tangentially; the focus will be upon exploring options for designing development configurations in the Route 5 corridor that are conducive to a high degree of transit orientation. Such transit orientation would not necessarily have to depend on fixed guideway transit options, but could also be consistent with providing an increased service level for bus service.

Response:

The comment is noted.

8. Comment:

Implications of Transit Planning for the Lisha Kill Kings Road GEIS Study - Specific design guidelines and recommendations for the Route 5 corridor will be prepared in the upcoming CDTC study. However, general planning concept can be built into the Lisha Kill Kings Road Area GEIS which will make it consistent with the Albany-Schenectady urban reinvestment strategy. Large scale transit investment of more modest transit improvements in the corridor would be well served by development strategies which encourage new retail and office commercial development to be concentrated along Central Avenue with location and design accessible to transit. New residential development should be concentrated as much as possible within walking distance of Central Avenue.

By concentrating new development on or near Central Avenue, traffic impacts to minor arterials, collectors and local streets in the study area would be reduced. In addition, such orientation of development near a principal arterial with significant transit service would serve to reduce the number of auto trips produced in the area, further reducing traffic impacts. Potential future improvements to Route 5 including pedestrian, bicycle and transit access improvements would be a regional responsibility and would best serve development in the corridor which was well designed and which was in proximity to Route 5.

Response:

The comment is noted.

9. Comment:

CDTC is supportive of the approach that allocates cost of transportation improvements based on usage. This approach is being used in the Airport Area and appears to have the support of the residents and development community.

Response:

The comment is noted.