

Complete Streets Strategy Recommendations & Sustainability Plan

Version: 8/6/2011

This three-year Complete Streets strategic plan recommends activities for the City of Kingston Complete Streets Advisory Council (CSAC) to undertake, working with other interested persons and groups, in order to improve the Complete Streets environment.

A core vision informing recommendations for advancing Complete Streets in Kingston is a notion for safe and interconnected streets (and paths) that are vibrant, with people of all ages walking, bicycling, taking the bus and less frequently driving cars to destinations, whether it be school, work, parks, church, shopping and restaurants. Pedestrians are joined by people on wheelchairs and kids on scooters and skateboards. By enhancing the street environment, and enabling active transport, it is envisioned that kids and residents will be active, healthy and feel connected to their neighborhoods, the city and its businesses. More attractive, better laid out, versatile streets that are well-maintained complement community activities and businesses. Through improvements to our streets there will be better community access and mobility, enhanced air quality and energy conservation, and most of all a greater sense of place and a stronger local economy.

The strategies that follow are organized under three elements:

- Laws & Policy;
- Demonstration Projects & Capital Improvements; and
- Capacity, Collaboration & Public Outreach

Each part has fundraising recommendations. These point to possible resources to target to help underwrite action. This will leverage the assistance of volunteers and aid in synchronizing with regional initiatives. While there are a lot of actions, many could be advanced by volunteers and/or City staff with limited resources.

The CSAC was formed by the Mayor and City Council in 2010 under Resolution 196. The CSAC actively engaged in the development of this strategy. The focus is on actions that can help build commitment to Complete Streets and on setting up demonstration projects. It is intended as a living document and is meant to be flexible, although implementation of policies and projects are measures of success.

Over the next three years, the support requested of the Mayor and Common Council should help advance policy reform, facility enhancements, and the collection of baseline data. It will be beneficial to achieve actions that help gel the group and solidify its image as a resource for the community. It is important to select items the group supports and can handle, which are desired by the community or advance regional development. Typically, actions will need to be cost-effective in terms of the impact to the City. Often they will need to be low cost, or have a reasonable chance of outside funding support.

LAWS & POLICY – Integrating Complete Streets practices into the day to day municipal administration, including long-range planning, provides balance, aids sustainability, and enhances community wellness and overall development. Promoting Complete Streets policies should be a prime role of the CSAC in the near-term. It will counter an inefficient and inequitable bias toward autos. Embedding Complete Streets approaches within City affairs will help achieve Complete physical projects.

An early CSAC activity should be the collection and review of pedestrian and bike plans and policies from around the Hudson Valley and Long Island. This will help identify projects and approaches that may be used to complete streets in Kingston. An objective should be to identify how other places have formed transportation measures and metrics which consider a range of benefits, including health, land use and economics.

Comprehensive Planning – The City is getting ready to forge a master plan. The process will take at least two years. It will likely result in new goals for the City's development and changes in the way business is conducted. The plan will set a vision for how neighborhoods should evolve, acting as a guide for decision-making in the future. The CSAC should request a formal role. It should provide input on infusing Complete Streets approaches into the plan. In order to promote street design and land use that allows people to get around safely on foot, by bicycle, and transit, it is recommended to form a CSAC 'planning' sub-committee. This will aid the CSAC in delivering leadership and sustained participation in the master planning.

Pedestrian & Bicycle Master Plan – Providing Complete Streets and promoting active mobility can involve diverse projects, touching on many aspects of community. While this strategy suggests immediate measures to provide safe crossings, enable walking, and enhance bike access and facilities, resources should be aligned to develop a stand alone non-motorized transport plan. The plan could have a 10 to 15 year horizon. While it would address a range of actions, it should contain detailed analysis and policy recommendations to form an overall sidewalk management and improvement program. It should also advance the design, sequencing and costing for major projects.

The CSAC should request permission to apply for funding/external support with intent to complete the plan in the next year and a quarter. This timeframe should fit with comprehensive planning. To economize, it is suggested that Ulster County Transportation Council be requested to support geographic (GIS) analysis. It should also be ascertained if UCTC would pledge staff resources for plan development. It may also be possible to line-up an urban graduate planning team studio to economically, yet capably form aspects of the plan. Other external support of \$10,000 to \$30,000 could be requested from the Greenway, and/or working with UCTC, from State or Federal sources such as the Congestion Mitigation/Air Quality Program.

Select Policy Proposals – A Complete Streets Codes Audit & Diagnosis (2011) points to possible Complete Streets environmental change through code modifications. The analysis surveys City policies surrounding non-motorized transport and connectivity. It examines how policies are structured – including the extent that these may aid or hinder achieving mobility and access and healthy and active living. The diagnosis identifies approaches and upgrades that could achieve more Complete Streets and support non-motorized transport.

Regulations can impede or support change. Independent of the broader master planning, the CSAC should select and recommend to the City Council a subset of policies, perhaps one or two items per year, for which it would like to propose modifications. A ripe example may be bicycle parking. New Paltz recently adopted supportive zoning and in the Nonmotorized Transportation Plan (2008) the County indicates intent to work on and fund the development of these types of facilities (see also Capital Planning below).

Data Collection & Presentation – Analysis should occur to support policy planning. This includes gathering baseline data on the extent of walking and biking. Research should also explore understanding and interests around active transport, streetscape preferences and community perspectives on Complete Streets policy. Moreover, there is an ongoing need for crash data, with examination of geographic context and translation into population-based rates. UCTC could be asked to aid this.

Design Guidelines – Many people interested in Complete Streets have articulate interest in forming graphic road (and path) and sidewalk design and maintenance standards and guidelines. These could help bring life to local land use plans and laws to life.

Developing Complete Streets design guidelines is key because this tool will identify ways to improve site and area access and mobility. Pedestrian and bicycle facilities planning is technical. Improving streets to better enable intermodalism requires constant dedication. Given the age and complexity of Kingston's grid, design guidelines will support understanding of non-motorized facilities performance objectives, minimum requirements, and allowable treatments. Establishing stronger guidance and a framework for decision-making will also enable interested parties to more quickly negotiate project specifications. Moreover, setting guidelines will aid efforts to efficiently prepare engineering reports and establish project readiness so that capital improvements can go ahead should funding become available.

There needs to be coordination with City leaders to build consensus for a specific funding application. More suitable sources appear to be the New York State Brownfield Opportunity Areas Program (BOAP) or the Transportation, Community, and System Preservation Program (TCSP) administered by the State DOT for the federal government. Advantages often present under the BOAP are a low match requirement

(10%) and an ability to use service by City staff to satisfy the match.

DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS & CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS – The purpose of policy change is to foster upgrades in the Complete Streets environment. Yet, to actually improve conditions it is crucial for the CSAC to assist the organization and implementation of needed, high quality Complete Streets physical projects. Many projects are being planned at different scales. The CSAC should request involvement in projects implementation with an objective to increase the prevalence of non-motorized and transit-oriented enhancements.

Capital facilities development is complex and interdisciplinary. While this section suggests priorities for physical projects in concert with local and regional plans, the emphases and sequencing is meant to be fluid. The next section provides complimentary short-term strategies to establish cooperation to ensure maximum effect. Generally, the CSAC should request authorization to prepare funding applications. Staff should be directed to assist in forming project approaches, including in prioritizing capital improvements.

Safe Routes Planning & Implementation – The national Safe Routes to School program funds infrastructure such as sidewalks and signalization as well as educational programs. The Safe Routes to Parks and Schools Committee in the Healthy Kingston for Kids initiative has been meeting and providing analysis to inform the recommended placement of priority routes with the assistance of a GIS Community Mapping Team. While the scope of SRTP&S is the KCSD, the City is a focus since many facilities, including the high school, are here.

Within six to nine months the CSAC should meet with these groups and review findings. An objective should be to identify four priority capital projects on recommended routes. The CSAC should then work with these groups to present the rationale to the community and elected officials. Then, these groups should collaborate to: assist detailed engineering design; support funding applications; aid the formation of Safe Routes Plans for local schools; and support Safe Routes promotions and engagement.

Road Painting – Strong interest has been expressed in using quickly deployable, low cost actions to control traffic and improve safety. This includes more frequently painting crosswalks and using DOT-acceptable patterns. The CSAC should meet with the DPW to explore the painting budget and protocols and DPW interests around maintenance practices. A focus should be to increase the frequency of painting crosswalks where there is more risk, including on high volume and high speed streets.

In later years of this strategy the CSAC should use this test case to inform additional efforts to collaborate on DPW policy. Within three years, the CSAC should establish a system of routine interaction with the DPW that is designed to give input on how street

maintenance and repair policies impact non-motorized transport. This cooperation can help promote operations and resource allocations that reflect the needs of pedestrians and bicyclists.

Uptown Stockade Transportation Plan – The group should review this 2009 plan and confirm bicycle/pedestrian enhancement priorities. The plan presents detailed strategies, so the CSAC should always consult it in forming recommendations. To help give this plan life, when the CSAC considers possible action that intersects with the geographic scope of the Uptown Plan, it should define the context of its recommendations and how it compares with notions in the Uptown plan.

Westbrook Lane has a lot of walker and biker traffic, as it is a connection between retail offerings and the food store in Kingston Plaza and Uptown and Mid-town. This is not a public street, but there is friction between pedestrians and cars at Clinton Avenue. The CSAC should recommend frequent crosswalks repainting there. It should also request and partake in action to upgrade the intersection and find funding to install the signals recommended in the Uptown Plan.

On an on-going basis, it is suggested that the group track the Plaza locale for any land use applications. The CSAC should advocate for physical master planning to enhance pedestrian circulation within this development and on adjacent parcels. There is a need for dedicated sidewalks, traffic mitigation and pedestrian friendly landscaping. While it is important to consider each incremental development, other key locations to track and comment on site plans are along Albany Avenue, and Flatbush Ave/Rd, and Washinton Street.

The Wall Street/ Main Street intersection has a challenging geometry, is unsignalized, and without a stop control on Main Street, while it services many walkers. This should be another location for high frequency cross-walk painting. The CSAC should take interest in how this intersection is managed, as the Uptown Plan suggests action impacting this spot. The group could also consult stakeholders to explore the potential to provide a curb alteration/ road diet treatment to improve safety in conjunction with the Uptown Plan.

Route 32 Between Golden Hill Drive & Washington Street – This part of the Boulevard gateway is heavily used by pedestrians and cyclists although there is poor pavement, narrow shoulders, sporadic sidewalks, limited lighting and heavy traffic. A reason for the foot traffic on this segment of State-designated bike route is that people migrate to services and employment at Golden Hill. Providing a Bike Lane/Shoulder on State Route 32 is cited in the NMTP (page 24), but the situation is dangerous. There should be efforts to prioritize funding for the upgrade. While planned improvements should not be delayed, it is essential for the CSAC to advocate for additional right of way and design work to install sidewalks on at least one side of the road along with appropriate crossings

and signals. This project is TEP eligible. It may be beneficial for the CSAC to request the City to take on a lead role. Since there appears to be potential for future development in the area, a win-win approach might be to appeal to adjacent land owners for matching resources to help leverage and advance that project.

Bike Routes Planning & Safety – The NMTP recommends signing (route designation/wayfinding and destination markers) and striping bike lanes, as appropriate, on NYSDOT designated bike routes (Project 71 and Tech Memo #2). There is a convergence of routes in Kingston, including Routes 28; 32; and 9W. The project does not have funding, plus other route planning is underway. Efforts to advance signage are recommended to wait until year three. Yet, signs are low cost and instrumental to recreation and heritage tourism and improving non-motorized system safety and reliability. The CSAC should work with UCTC, County Tourism, local preservation interests and County Health to identify early steps to advance regional signage system implementation. There could be exploration of the feasibility of the City serving as lead in a funding application to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), DOT, or OPRHP in exchange for the City being the spot where prototypes are tested and deployed.

Another notion stressed is taking action to improve bicycle safety and awareness by establishing definitive bike pavement makings on corridors, including where it does not appear feasible to establish separate bike lanes. Within three years, in conjunction with enhanced route designations and 'Share The Road' signage, the CSAC should work to advance “sharrow” markings on Washington Street¹. This is a State designated bike route and assuming that planning for a network of non-motorized trails will advance, this corridor would still be a key non-motorized connector. Alternatively, there could be an effort to secure funds to plan a designated bike lane, or sharrow markings, on Wall Street. There is probably also a need for some on-street planning in the northeast quadrant, picking-up on concepts in the regional NMTP. These are prime examples of retrofitting the city for active transport. Working on projects like this will build local and regional stakeholders' capacity. These are ideal projects to appeal to the federal government for funding for engineering design, or to make a request of a foundation for \$15,000 to achieve project readiness.

Other Possible Actions:

- *Transit Enhancements* -- Annually CitiBus staff should be requested to provide an update on route planning and service. This should be used as an occasion to explore how to advance the siting of bus shelters in priority locations. A presumption is that FTA funding support could be accessed through the UCTC.
- *Trails Planning* – There is great opportunity for rail-trails development in Kingston. A CSAC role and resource requirements must be defined. One

¹ Traffic calming measures at intersections and by the school may also be of interest here.

responsibility it should take on is defining how to facilitate high quality linkage at the nodes where streets and trails intersect.

- *Universal Design Upgrades* – Along with Building Department staff and representatives of RCAL, the CSAC should identify projects that would remove potential barriers to people with mobility challenges. This list should identify readily achievable actions, like signal timing or unlocking gates. It should also include capital projects that could benefit from local, state and federal funding assistance.
- *587 Project & Regional Transit Facility* – it is assumed that comprehensive planning will pick-up on recent work for these two major regional projects. In the interim, the CSAC should review any documents that come forward and advocate its interests to the Mayor and Common Council.
- *West Chester Traffic Calming Project* – there appears to be neighborhood support for designing a road diet. There should be an inquiry made of Community Development staff to help determine whether any part of the road is an environmental justice area or serves a substantial low-moderate income population. With this information, the CSAC could determine whether it would like to make a budget request for a local capital project, search for external support, or take other steps.
- *Stormwater Management Demonstration Projects* – a regional initiative is in place which is spearheading retrofits using Low Impact Design principles. If it can increase the potential for construction funding, the CSAC should write a letter of support.
- *Park & Ride Facilities Development* – it is no surprise that utilization of commuter parking is high. The CSAC should advocate for site selection to ensure that there is a ready project that complements community land use and sense of place should funding become available.

CAPACITY, COLLABORATION & PUBLIC OUTREACH – A key part of Complete Streets efforts involves expressing the rationale for non-motorized transport improvements, educating people about activities and approaches and advocating for change, plus providing awareness of meetings, events and initiatives. It is also important that people experience the pleasure of walking and biking.

Publicity and Promotions – The CSAC should develop and follow a two-year Complete Streets communications strategy. This framework would articulate ways to engage the community and provide a portal for municipal Complete Streets planning. This strategy should outline public involvement activities and promotions at the municipal level, or in collaboration with partners, for different audiences and using various forms of media, such as newspapers, the web, radio and cable television. One decision should be whether

to assign a communications point person or sub-committee.

One early request of elected officials should be to explore their interest in continuing to use a part of the City web site to highlight local efforts surrounding Complete Streets and the Safe Routes to Parks and Schools initiatives. While there must be care not to over-commit resources or duplicate efforts, having unique information on the City web site highlights municipal efforts. A problem to date has been the limited resources available to form fuller public communications. It is time consuming to actively maintain up to date information. Yet, the City administration is upgrading and expanding the use of internet communications and other aspects of city planning would benefit from enhanced outreach, including the anticipated master planning.

If there is interest in requesting municipal funds, or going after external grants or foundation donations to assist outreach, objectives could be to purchase software that would enable public commenting and management. Also beneficial would be software to aid analysis and viewing of web maps. In each case there would be a need for technical support to prepare their use, including resources for training and integrating these applications with existing systems.

Walk & Bike Programming – The CSAC should participate in or develop efforts to encourage walking or biking in the city. There are many ideas for possible initiatives – a few have come up repeatedly in Complete Streets dialogue. The YMCA has a bike skills program -- an extension of this notion is a community bike program with an expanded effort to bolster youth ownership of used bicycles coupled with a program of training and assistance on upkeep and repair. Some form of bike sharing system, such as around the core of Broadway or in the Rondout, could be a novel way to aid mobility and support outdoor tourism. Providing community walking and riding events is a way to bolster active living and ‘Main Street’ vitality. For this notion, an ‘Open Streets’ approach could be pursued whereby on preset dates a route, such as stretching from Forsyth Park/Dietz Stadium along the ‘corridor’ to a Broadway turn-around, is closed to motorized traffic. Having the occasion to get out and walk and bike on a main street is liberating. People-friendly activities like this have been shown to be wildly popular and can aid local business and community cohesion. A foundation appeal for support for any of these options probably could succeed because the impact could be gauged.

Economic Development Affinities – Achieving a shift to an even greater share of walking and biking and transit use will bolster markets, especially retail service offerings, including restaurants, the arts, and the tourism trades. The CSAC should brainstorm and advocate for formal investigations of market opportunities related to walking and bicycling. For instance, there could be exploration of potential for a bike repair and retailing operation on Broadway, the establishment of pedicab service, or ways to attract and site walking and biking tours. As noted, community events can assist trade, so

merchant associations must be involved in event organizing. Community Development Block Grant, Community Reinvestment Act or Economic Development Administrations funds might serve to support this.

Develop CSAC Capacity – To strengthen awareness of the CSAC and its reach, there should be regular recruitment of associate members. Also, as a way to synergize with the Planning Board, Conservation Advisory Council, Public Works Department, and Ulster County Trails Advisory Committee, there should be formal liaisons established with routine reports on affinity activities and communications. This will help interdisciplinary efforts, establish relationships with stakeholders, and set-up invitations to work on tasks. Routine evaluations of the CSAC effectiveness can provide insight into whether it should request changes in its mandate or ask for formal assignments of dedicated City staff support.

Design Forum – Provided there is follow-through, involving a neighborhood or the whole City in project design can build understanding of non-motorized techniques and bolster support for development. It is proposed to structure a stakeholder meeting, perhaps within a half-year to a year, as a design workshop or charrette, on a Complete Streets implementation project of interest. As evidenced from prior efforts, substantial effort is required to promote a meeting and motivate attendance. Plus, if decent community participation and media coverage is likely, with sufficient lead time, it should be possible to obtain the crucial donation of volunteer time from area planners, architects and allied professions to facilitate and aid the design dialogue. The CSAC should determine if this objective is feasible and develop an agenda for the event. Two possible projects may be ripe for this type of analysis.

- Forsyth Park & Dietz Stadium – This is a community and recreational hub. A Safe Routes to School Master Plan (2011) for Bailey and Edson Schools identified some concepts for area non-motorized access improvements. Concurrently, there are mobility improvements being advanced for this area as part of signalization upgrades at Washington Ave./Huley Ave/Swenk Drive and as part of the Uptown Plan. Traffic causes friction and isolation and the whole area has lost spaces and lacks cohesion. A meeting could explore a vision for upgrading and integrating features of the Washington Avenue gateway to better accommodate all modes, including through enhanced trails and improved landscape design at and around the park and public facilities.
- Greenkill Avenue / Broadway – the heart of the city, this area should be transformed to accommodate a rise in walking and biking as more people take up these modes. This could be a hub for urban trails. There is also a need to facilitate stronger transit connections here. A meeting could test notions for street grid upgrades, trail concepts, and other non-motorized investment and enhancements.

Objectives would be to form more explicit designs, standards and specifications so that capital planning moves ahead.

Enforcement – Parking and traffic enforcement can help make a safer bike and pedestrian environment. It can promote appropriate speeds and dissuade illegal parking that blocks active transport or inhibits it by forcing the walker or biker out into auto traffic. The CSAC should form a short list describing locations with problems. It should then meet with police to request an enforcement campaign. If more background is needed, the CSAC could convene a meeting of community groups and walkers and bikers to more thoroughly identify problems. Some suggestions include: idling on Broadway; double-parking Uptown, including on Wall and John Streets and in the core on North Front; Greenkill Ave.; West Chester. Places where traffic volumes or speeds are high that are candidates include along: Albany Avenue; Hurley Avenue; Lucas Avenue; Schwenk Drive; and Washington Avenue. There would also be a need to provide for similar scoping in residential neighborhoods. Many of the spots above also represent places to focus on crosswalks management.

Other recommendations:

- *Coordination with the Mayor* -- Once or twice per year the CSAC should meet with the Chief Executive and review priorities.
- *Neighborhood Outreach* – While many strategic recommendations encompass community focal points and major priorities, the potential for success achieving Complete Streets depends on an ability to aid access and mobility throughout the street grid. The CSAC should offer support to elected officials holding ward meetings that can inform citizens about Complete approaches and gather input.
- In a meeting with CitiBus staff, the CSAC should explore the feasibility to improve people’s ability to move bikes
- A foundation grant request should be formed to underwrite a field trip and training for staff and the CSAC. This will aid understanding of how to apply Complete Street techniques and aid team building.

CONCLUSION – A relatively small part of the City budget goes towards non-motorized transport compared with the fairly high percentage of people who actively walk and bike. This strategy is intended to help provide balance in the road system by assisting transportation choice, leveraging investment, aiding efficient operations, and by demonstrating the possible. The strategies herein support goals to promote healthy, safe and walkable neighborhoods and districts. The mix is ambitious. There should be regular reviews to evaluate whether there is a need for additional resources to achieve implementation, or a benefit from altering the sequence of actions, or by adding actions. If there are challenges, the CSAC could consider what might be assigned lower priority or whether more time should be allocated to finish certain tasks.