



2014 Annual Report

I. Introduction

The Complete Streets Advisory Council (CSAC) was established in November 2010 by Common Council Resolution #196. Our mission is to advise the Common Council and the Mayor on the many aspects of the street environment, and work together to advance Complete Streets practices and projects in the City. We consider ways to make travel in Kingston more functional and attractive to all segments of the community. This includes the young and the old, those with disabilities, those in cars and buses, and those on foot and on bikes.

Our definition of “Complete Streets” starts with the premise that streets are for everyone. They are designed and operated to enable safe access for all users. Pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and public transportation users of all ages and abilities are able to safely move along and across a complete street. Complete Streets make it easy to cross the street, walk to shops, and bicycle to work. They allow buses to run on time and make it safe for people to walk to and from public transit stops.

In September, 2011, Gilmour Planning, a consultant to CSAC through the Cornell Cooperative Extension's grant with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, prepared a draft **Complete Streets Strategy Recommendations and Sustainability Plan**. This Plan envisaged a three-pronged approach to implementing Complete Streets in Kingston: changes in laws and policy; demonstration projects and capital improvements; and, capacity, collaboration and public outreach. The plan identified the need for three subcommittees of the Council to focus on each of these areas, and presented a matrix of 44 specific action items. A copy is included with this report as Attachment A.

In the three years since the draft was prepared, the Council has worked on roughly ten of these action items. This low “batting average” is due to three major factors. First, CSAC has not been able to mobilize enough members and non-members to set up

working subcommittees as foreseen by the 2011 plan. CSAC has essentially acted as a committee of the whole as it addresses policy, capital and public outreach issues.

In addition, one of the action items in the 2011 plan was to obtain funding for staffing assistance, as the Robert Wood Johnson grant concluded in 2013. While the Council has made use of college interns and graduate students for a range of projects, all other administrative, research and planning activities have been undertaken by Council members on their own time and with their limited knowledge of the complexities of the transportation and planning disciplines.

Last, and perhaps most important, the Council has become engaged as policies and projects emerge as issues for the City. These include specific pedestrian issues brought to the Council's attention, the Kingston Connectivity funding awards, the Broadway Design Study ("Building a Better Broadway"), the 2012 Safe Routes to School award, and a Transportation Alternatives grant application - none of these were on the 2011 plan's action items but CSAC has had a role in all of them.

The remainder of this report references the three broad areas of laws and policy, demonstration and capital projects and programing and outreach, makes recommendations for action on several issues that were brought to our attention by concerned community members, recommends changes in the structure of the Council to make it more effective and indicates our focus to update the 2011 strategic plan.

II. CSAC Activities in 2014

The Council met five times in 2014, and continued work on projects initiated in 2013. These include the Sidewalk Task Force, Sharrows, Street Lighting, Communications, the Kingston Connectivity Project and the City's new Comprehensive Plan. New projects in 2014 included the Broadway Design Study and the Transportation Alternatives Funding Request.

Laws and Policy

The Sidewalk Task Force was set up as an ad-hoc subgroup of the Council to develop new approaches to dealing with the deteriorating condition of many sidewalks in the City. Currently, property owners are responsible for maintaining the sidewalk in front of their property, with financial penalties if they fail to do so. Enforcement, however, has been non-existent and for some residents paying for the upkeep of their sidewalk is prohibitive. Research has been done to see what other communities do, and a review of the City Charter produced a large number of references to sidewalk maintenance. The next steps for the task force will be to analyze the policies of other communities and make recommendations for pilot programs and/or revisions to the code in the City Charter.

Comprehensive Plan: CSAC has been involved in the development of the “Kingston 2025” Comprehensive Plan with two Council members sitting on the steering committee and the Council itself providing comments on issues of concern.

Demonstration and Capital Projects

Work on implementing Shared Lane Markings, or Sharrows also continued in 2014. The Council, working with the advocacy group Bike Friendly Kingston (BFK), assisted the City Department of Public Works in painting the City’s first sharrows in May. CSAC and BFK members acted as volunteer “flaggers” while City employees spray painted the markings using stencils donated by BFK. These were placed on Delaware Avenue between North Street and the Rotary Park at Kingston Point.

Support and advice on the Kingston Connectivity project: In late 2013, the City was notified that it had been awarded \$2,273,650 in funds to support range of capital projects aimed at creating a more livable community. Projects range from Complete Streets infrastructure to the development of rail trails in the City with connections to trails outside the City. CSAC has supported the City in these efforts and has added its voice to help educate the public.

Broadway Design Study: The Ulster County Transportation Council (UCTC) initiated a project to renew, restore and revive Broadway in the heart of the City, titled “Building a Better Broadway.” CSAC members have participated in the Technical Assistance Committee which is overseeing the consulting firm VHB who are reviewing existing conditions, conducting public outreach and will present their findings later this year. This work will become part of the Kingston Connectivity projects mentioned above.

Transportation Alternatives Funding Proposal: CSAC provided input and assisted in the City’s application for federal funds via the Transportation Alternatives program. While funding was declined, the development of the proposal will provide guidance to future funding opportunities.

Programs and Public Outreach

Street Lights: John Grossbohlín, a CSAC member, became interested in how the Council could encourage more walking in the City without major construction or policy changes. To promote more pedestrian activity, he focused on the lack of lighting which makes walkers more vulnerable to traffic and crime. He initiated an investigation of the number of non-working street lights in the Stockade area of the Uptown neighborhood. He found 71 non-working lights, and upon further research learned the procedure for reporting these outages to Central Hudson. Following the instructions on the Central Hudson website, he was able inform the utility and repairs were made on many of the lights. As a result the Stockade area is much brighter and more conducive to walking, especially in the winter months when there is less daylight. The Council plans to actively promote this process to the public so that citizens can report broken streetlights in their own neighborhoods.

Communications: CSAC maintains a Facebook page and in 2014 it was merged with the “Safe Routes to Schools and Parks” Facebook page. The Safe Routes page was initially developed through a committee of the Healthy Kingston for Kids project funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation from 2010 to 2013. As that initiative progressed to the Live Well Kingston collaborative, the Safe Routes committee was disbanded. By merging the two Facebook pages, CSAC was able to retain a presence among those people who are interested in pedestrian and bicycle safety for youth. The Council also has links on the City’s website and the Live Well Kingston site.

Partnership with Live Well Kingston: Live Well Kingston is a City-endorsed public health coalition which aims to prevent obesity and chronic disease and promote active living and healthy eating through environmental policy, and systems change. They have created four active Focus Teams, of which one is Travel Well. The Travel Well Focus Team streamlines communications and efforts between the three active walking and bicycling advocacy groups in Kingston – CSAC, BFK, and the Kingston Land Trust Rail Trail Committee. The CSAC 2015 Action Plan is included in the 2015 Travel Well Action Plan, which shows the major strategies of the three groups in one place. The Travel Well Action Plan is included with this report as Attachment B.

Public Comments: At its meetings, CSAC invites public comment on any and all issues affecting transportation in the City, and in 2014 we addressed several major safety and infrastructure concerns. These included pedestrian safety on the Boulevard/Rte. 32 at Golden Hill, concerns from Congregation Agudas Achim on Lucas Avenue regarding the dangers in walking to and from the synagogue and pedestrian safety in the Uptown neighborhood.

1. The Boulevard (Route 32) at Golden Hill:

Francoise Dunefsky, President and CEO of Gateway Community Industries, wrote to Mayor Shayne Gallo and Alderman Brad Will in December, 2013 and highlighted the lack of sidewalks for pedestrians to access the Gateway Community Industries facility at One Amy Kay Parkway and other buildings in the Golden Hill area. At the CSAC meeting in April, Benjamin O’Shea, Safety Officer at Gateway Industries spoke on the issues. Pedestrians – including mothers with strollers and people with disabilities – walk on the narrow shoulder (there are no sidewalks on either side) of Route 32 to the Gateway building, and others in the Golden Hill complex. At the intersection of Route 32 and Amy Kay Parkway (across from the Hillside Manor), pedestrians are at risk as vehicles have limited sight distance and routinely exceed the 30 MPH speed limit. Snow and ice in the winter increase the danger for pedestrians.

Recommended Action: The City review existing conditions and prepare cost estimates for constructing sidewalks and other pedestrian infrastructure along this part of Route 32.

2. Congregation Agudas Achim, 254 Lucas Avenue:

On July 16, 2014, Rabbi Yitzchok Hecht wrote to Alderman Matt Dunn concerning the dangerous conditions for members of his synagogue as they make their way on foot to and from religious services. As an Orthodox Jewish congregation, driving is prohibited on the Sabbath (sundown Friday to sundown Saturday) and major Jewish Holidays.

In September, Rabbi Hecht spoke at the CSAC meeting. The issue for his congregation, and others, is that the sidewalks on Lucas Avenue end at the corner of Lucas and Burhans Blvd. (the Forsyth Park tennis courts). This forces pedestrians to walk in the road.

Recommended Action: As first step, the City should paint stripes on the existing shoulder of Lucas Avenue to give pedestrians safer walking conditions, calm traffic and signal to motorists that the side of the road is used by pedestrians. As a more permanent solution, The City should review the existing conditions and prepare cost estimates for constructing sidewalks along this part of Lucas Avenue.

3. Uptown Kingston:

Following an article in the Daily Freeman, CSAC received two communications from members of the public. Ms. Suzanne Goddard-Cranston emailed her concerns regarding the lack of safe pedestrian crossings on North Front Street. She suggested education for motorists, a longer red light at the corner of North Front and Wall Streets, and pedestrian walk/don't walk lights. The owner of Signature Fitness on North Front contacted CSAC member Kristen Wilson on May 14th regarding the North Front/Wall Street intersection. His concerns were traffic and pedestrian safety. At some point later in the year, the traffic light was replaced with stop signs, but the need for improved pedestrian safety in Uptown still remains. Another concern for pedestrian safety is the Albany Avenue/Clinton Avenue and Pearl Street intersection. CSAC is continuing to review pedestrian issues in Uptown and additional measures to improve access and safety.

Recommended Action: The Kingston Police Department engage in a driver education and enforcement program at the North Front/Wall Street and Albany Ave./Clinton Ave./Pearl Street intersections.

III. Recommendations for Changes in the Council's Structure

1. Voting Members

The resolution that set up the Council stipulated the following:

"...the Council is to be composed of eleven (11) voting members appointed by the Mayor with approval by the Common Council who are interested in achieving Complete Streets and who want to explore opportunities and find collaborative

access and streetscape solutions for pedestrians, cyclists and people with disabilities. A representative shall be designated by each of the following: Conservation Advisory Council; Planning Board; Tree Commission; Historic Landmarks Preservation Commission; Board of Public Works; Human Rights Commission; and there shall also be representatives assigned from the business community; an established local non profit; plus three (3) members at large of whom at least one is under the age of 21."

The intention of this membership structure was to ensure the representation of various interests in the community. While the Council supports the value of inclusion, in practice the current structure has not resulted in an adequate number of members for the Council to function. Of the organizations listed, none have ever nominated a representative to the CSAC. In addition, over the four years the Council has been operating, the At-Large youth position has been filled by one individual for a two-year term. A list of CSAC members and their present status is included with this report as Attachment C.

Written requests to fill vacancies from the groups specified in the resolution have not been successful. In hindsight, this is not surprising; each of them is composed of citizens who have volunteered to participate in a specific area, and as volunteers they are already giving their time for a worthwhile purpose. Asking them to become involved in another (Complete Streets) seems to be beyond anyone's capacity.

The end result has been that many CSAC meetings do not have a quorum of members and so decisions cannot be taken. In 2014, three of the five CSAC meetings lacked a quorum.

Recommended Action: An amendment to the existing resolution should be approved by the Mayor and Common Council along the following lines, with changes in italics and deletions lined through:

"...the Council is to be composed of ~~eleven (11)~~ *nine (9)* voting members appointed by the Mayor with approval by the Common Council who are interested in achieving Complete Streets and who want to explore opportunities and find collaborative access and streetscape solutions for pedestrians, cyclists, *the elderly, young people, public transit users* and people with disabilities. Members shall be recruited from a variety of recreation, health, leisure, business, public service and wellness activities as well as diversity with respect to age, race and gender. *Representatives from each of the following will be encouraged:* ~~A representative shall be designated by each of the following:~~ Conservation Advisory Council; Planning Board; Tree Commission; Historic Landmarks Preservation Commission; Board of Public Works; *and the* Human Rights Commission; ~~and there shall also be representatives assigned from the business community; an established local non profit; plus three (3) members at large of whom at least one is under the age of 21. "~~

2. Non-voting Members

The resolution establishing the Council also provided that:

“There shall be seven (7) non voting members, or their designees, consisting of the: City Planner, City Engineer, Office of Economic Development, DPW Director, Recreation Director, two (2) Aldermen.”

Of the non-voting members, the only consistent representative has been Greg Swanzey, Director of Economic Development and Community Partnerships. He is also a voting member who performs the critical role of facilitating communications between the City administration and CSAC. He does not speak for the individual departments but he offers the Council guidance on who to talk to about specific issues. More problematic is the lack of an Alderman, let alone two, to attend any meetings in 2014. This deprives CSAC, and the City, an open flow of information to and from the Common Council.

A third issue has arisen with the opposite problem: CSAC meetings in 2014 were regularly attended by Brian Slack, representing UCTC. Mr. Slack is not a member, voting or otherwise, but provides valuable insight into how implementing the Complete Streets policy in the City affects and is affected by policies and projects that the County is pursuing. A perfect example is the “Building a Better Broadway” design study for the Broadway Corridor. This project focuses on the City’s main street, but is overseen and funded by Ulster County.

Recommended Action: Changes in the non-voting membership should be made as follows, with changes in italics and deletions lined through:

“There shall be seven (7) non voting members, or their designees, consisting of the: City Planner, City Engineer, Office of Economic Development, DPW Director, Recreation Director, *a representative of the state or county transportation planning organizations* and ~~two (2)~~ *one (1)* Alderman.”

CSAC would also strongly encourage the Mayor and the Common Council to support City staff and Aldermen respectively to attend and actively participate in Council meetings.

3. Term Limits

Given that the recruitment of members from other boards and commissions has not been effective, and that bringing in new Council members from the general public has also been difficult, the current term limits pose a serious threat to the continued operation of the Council. CSAC members are limited to serve as follows:

“The voting Council members will serve for two (2) year terms...Any person serving two (2) consecutive terms, may after a lapse of two (2) years, be eligible for reappointment to the Council.”

Of the Council's eight (8) current voting members, only six have been attending regularly in 2014. Five of the eight will complete their second two-year term on May 31, 2015, and **all** five will be unable to continue to serve, leaving the Council with only three members.

Recommended Action: Changes in the Council member terms should be made as follows, with changes in italics and deletions lined through:

"The voting Council members will serve for two (2) year terms...Any person serving ~~two (2)~~ *four (4)* consecutive terms, may after a lapse of one (1) year, be eligible for reappointment to the Council."

IV. CSAC's 2015 Work Plan

The Council has reviewed, discussed and revised the 2011 strategic plan (Attachment A). Our work plan for 2015 (included as Attachment D) continues the three priority areas of policy change and planning, capital projects and public engagement. It also integrates with the Travel Well Focus Team Action Plan (Attachment B). As we take action in 2015, we will inform and involve the Mayor and Common Council, as well as our collaboration partners and other interested parties.