

***Evaluation
of
Pilot Sustainable Development Programs
conducted by the
New York Metropolitan Transportation Council:
1999-2007***

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Prepared for:

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Executive Summary

Background

In 1999, NYMTC began implementing a new federal policy designed to encourage the integration of land use planning into the design, improvement and modification of regional transportation networks. The policy shift had its roots in 1987, when the concept of sustainability was defined at an international conference on environment and development. Subsequent federal legislation, e.g. the 1991 *Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act* (ISTEA) and the 1998 *Transportation Equity Act of the 21st Century* (TEA-21), was designed to influence the direction of subsequent state transportation policy and programming.

The pilot Sustainable Development Programs (SDPs) undertaken by the New York Metropolitan Transportation Council during the years 1999 through 2007 were grounded in a consensus-building process which offered citizens and local and regional levels of government an extraordinary opportunity to reshape the business of government within the land use and transportation planning fields.

The four SDPs listed below were evaluated in this report:

- 1999 - Route 303 Sustainable Development Study, Orange County**
- 2000 - Route 35/202/6 and Bear Mountain Parkway, Westchester County**
- 2001 - Sustainable East End Development Strategies, Suffolk County**
- 2005 - Coney Island/Gravesend Sustainable Development Transportation Study, Kings County**

Although each SDP was designed to resolve specific land use and transportation situations, they varied widely in terms of their geographic extent, the dominant settlement and land use patterns within the region, and the number of local governments and regional agencies involved.

Evaluation Focus

The evaluation assessed whether SDPs were successful in changing the process whereby land use and transportation planning decisions were being made. Questionnaires and interviews supplemented the author's administrative experience with the Suffolk program. The author also compiled practical insights and suggestions to help improve the design and implementation of future SDPs.

Each SDP was found to consist of three basic phases: **Design, Process** and **Implementation**. The **Design** phase consisted of identifying the project area, obtaining local commitments and putting the program funding and administrative framework in place. The **Process** phase included such activities as forming a Steering Committee, preparing the Request for Proposals (for consulting assistance), and the designation of a Project Manager. The **Process** phase also included public outreach and education efforts, consensus-building and conflict resolution sessions, the design and assessment of the

transportation model and its outputs, and the final report. The **Implementation** phase consisted of the ongoing coordination and implementation activities which took place subsequent to the termination of funding for the SDP.

Findings

The Design phase was found to be critically important to the success of the subsequent phases. Sustaining political commitment throughout an SDP can be a challenge, particularly if the process extended longer than two years. The process of building consensus during the SDP was quite different from that of maintaining it during the Implementation phase. The degree to which the consensus approach to decision-making permeated working relationships among the key players (e.g. municipal governments and regional agencies) varied, and this affected the degree to which the Implementation phase went smoothly.

Effective consensus-building among the key players and the public required the engaged commitment of people who possessed the ability to cross disciplines and translate concepts from one professional language to another, the capacity to work flexibly with different organizational management objectives and styles, and the wherewithal to leverage the respective strengths of each organization. Achieving consensus required an objective assessment of the prevailing mind-sets (of the public, the elected officials and the regional agencies) towards government, problem-solving and conflict-resolution.

The perceptions of almost all program administrators, project managers and many public and electoral participants (towards the value of consensus-building) changed as a result of their participation: mostly favorably. But, implicit in the critiques and suggestions for the future was a clear recognition of the ineffectiveness of the current paradigm within which most land use and transportation decisions currently are made. The consensus seems to be that continued transformation of the governmental decision-making process is needed. In spite of the difficulties that were encountered, most participants felt the consensus-building approach was better than the current paradigm for resolving mutual issues of concern, whereby irate citizens press elected officials to solve transportation problems and those officials lean on agencies to build their way to a solution.

Recommendations

Program administrators and other key players made specific suggestions to improve the SDP process, many of which illustrated the importance of understanding the human faces behind the governmental dynamics within a region. The bedrock of the SDP process is consensus-building, (as opposed to the strictly objective methodology of standard technical planning processes); and this requires paying much closer attention to the human aspects of organizational management styles, the jurisdictional responsibilities of different levels of government, the regulatory standards which dictate how and where public monies are spent, and the perceptions of elected officials and the public about the transportation issues of concern.

The suggestions included many practical tips such as designing SDPs with the middle and end phases (Process and Implementation) in mind. The quality of the consensus-

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building process is enhanced when all agencies, governments and public groups feel they will benefit. Memoranda of Understanding and Inter-municipal and Agency Agreements are useful tools for solidifying political and agency ownership of the process, as well as commitment to implementing SDP agreements.

There is widespread public cynicism about the effectiveness of governments to solve problems. For this reason, public outreach and education, even when the subject matter, e.g. transportation models, is technical and complex, should be continued, even after the close of an SDP. Preparations to implement short-term projects should be started before the SDP process is finished, and executed as soon as possible.

In sum, the evaluation suggests the SDP process should be viewed as a vehicle of change; a catalytic agent for enhancing working relationships between local governments and regional agencies so as to make them more efficient and effective.

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I Purpose of Evaluation

Introduction

The four pilot Sustainable Development Programs evaluated in this report came about as a result of sweeping changes in federal policy regarding land use and transportation initiated within the past two decades.

A 1997 report issued by the National Research Council's Transportation Research Board, *Toward a Sustainable Future*, noted that transportation can contribute to long-term irreversible environmental problems, including loss of biological diversity and changes in ecosystem functions due to chemicals emitted by motor vehicles and habitats disrupted by road systems and other transportation infrastructure. One of the two approaches explored for reducing motor vehicle emissions was changing travel behavior. (Source: Volpe Center: US Department of Transportation. <http://www.volpe.dot.gov/infosrc/strtplns/nstc/sustcomm/notice.html>)

The Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century was enacted on June 9, 1998 as Public Law 105-178. TEA-21 established, among other things, a *Transportation and Community and Systems Preservation Pilot Program* to fund planning, implementation and analysis of innovative transportation and community development initiatives by state and local agencies.

Sustainable Development Programs were intended to facilitate the integration of regional transportation planning with local land use planning efforts. The concept is simple on the surface: change the prevailing approach to transportation planning (including design and construction) by integrating it with local land use plans throughout a defined region.

In reality, achieving true integration of regional with local planning, and sustaining that integration from the public and inter-agency consensus-building phases through capital budgeting, construction and land use implementation is a far more complex endeavor. As will become starkly evident in this evaluation, the process of reaching consensus is quite different from the process of sustaining it.

Context for Sustainable Development Programs in New York Metro Region

In response to changing federal policies and incentives, the New York Metropolitan Transportation Council initiated four federally-funded pilot Sustainable Development Programs. The four pilot programs are listed below in the order in which they were funded:

- ❑ 1999 Route 303 Sustainable Development Study, Orange County
- ❑ 2000 Route 35/202/6 and Bear Mountain Parkway, Westchester County
- ❑ 2001 Sustainable East End Development Strategies, Suffolk County
- ❑ 2005 Coney Island/Gravesend Sustainable Development Study, Kings County

Each of these programs differed in terms of location, scope of territory studied, project management structure and results. Funding for the first three programs has ended, and funding for the fourth will end in 2007. An estimated sum of two million federal and local dollars has been spent on these programs to date.

Readers Guide

The intent of this evaluation is to look back and assess how these programs progressed, with a critical eye towards ascertaining how future sustainable development programs might be more effectively designed, conducted and implemented.

Chapter II contains brief synopses of each of the four programs which are the subject of this evaluation. The synopses illustrate the range of applications to which the sustainable development program approach was applied as well as highlighting the distinguishing features of each program. This information was useful when analyzing the questionnaire responses and the interviews.

Chapter III contains information about the questionnaire, its design and respondents, as well as the information it revealed. The copy of the questionnaire, along with the cover letter, can be found in Chapter VII, Appendix.

Chapter IV contains the substance of the confidential, one-on-one interviews the author conducted with selected program administrators and/or major players within each of the four programs.

Chapter V contains the program evaluation which consists of the author's analysis of the import of the information gathered and presented in Chapters III and IV.

Chapter VI contains the Bibliography and Chapter VII the Appendix.

Throughout this report with the exception of Chapters IV and V, the programs are discussed in the order they were conducted from 1999 through 2007.

One final note: the author chaired the Sustainable East End Strategies (SEEDS) process in Suffolk County from 2001-2005. This first-hand, up-close experience provided valuable insights into the strengths and weaknesses of the sustainable development approach. The author's perspective was immeasurably enriched by the help of NYMTC staff, and the frank insights offered by questionnaire respondents and interviewees.

Special acknowledgements are due to the following staff of the Planning Group at the New York Metropolitan Transportation Council: Gerry Bogacz, Assistant Director; Nancy O'Connell, Associate Transportation Analyst; and Leslie Fordjour, Transportation Analyst.

II Program Synopses:

Background

Each of the four pilot Sustainable Development Programs, SDPs, was designed to respond to geographically specific sets of transportation and land use issues. Since each program was structured and administered differently, direct comparison of programs might seem, at first glance, to be irrelevant. However, as will be seen in later chapters, there are some things that can be learned from an overview.

This chapter describes each program as they were presented in their respective final or draft reports. It concludes with a set of observations that were used by the author to interpret the questionnaire and interview responses.

Synopses

Each synopsis contains the following six categories of facts:

- Focus Area
- Purpose / Planning Context / Problem in need of resolution
- Key Governmental and Agency Players
- Vision / Goals / Principles
- Findings
- Implementation Recommendations.

Route 303 Sustainable Development Study, Rockland County

Focus Area

Route 303 is a major north-south arterial connecting New York and New Jersey. Located in the Town of Orangetown, Rockland County, New York, approximately 25 miles from mid-town Manhattan, the project study area was defined as all land uses located within a half-mile on either side of the Route 303 right-of-way, within a five-mile corridor southward from the Clarkstown Town line to the New Jersey State border.

The Route 303 corridor was divided into three neighborhood areas....there are no formal boundaries to these areas...

- Tappan – extending from King’s Highway South to the New Jersey State Line,
- Orangeburg/Blauvelt – extending from Glenshaw Street to King’s Highway South in Tappan, and
- Bradley Parkway – extending from Route 59 to Glenshaw Street (between Erie Street and Mountainview Road).

(Executive Summary: Route 303 Sustainable Development Study. December 2002. pp 1, 2 and Final Report, Route 303 Sustainable Development Study. December 2002. p 1.)



(Executive Summary: Route 303 Sustainable Development Study. December, 2002. Figure ES-1.)

Purpose / Planning Context / Problem in need of resolution

“Because of major population and employment increases in recent years, Route 303 has become not only a major route for commuter travel and commercial traffic, but also a focus of commercial and residential development in the town. The character of the hamlets surrounding the Route 303 – the communities of

Tappan, Orangeburg and Blauvelt – have not yet been overwhelmed by the adjacent commercial development at the Palisades Center and in New Jersey. Nonetheless, development pressures have galvanized public attention on the corridor’s traffic safety and operational problems, diversion of traffic into residential areas, and the potential for diminished quality of life in the surrounding residential neighborhoods.

In 1992, in response to the traffic safety and congestions problems...the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) began to develop preliminary project plans for a street widening project that would address these deficiencies. These plans were perceived by the Town and its residents as being out of scale with the needs of the community and the project was not implemented...The Route 303 Sustainable Development Study was undertaken to link transportation and safety improvements with recommendations for land use changes...The five- mile Route 303 corridor was chosen because its high rate of accidents make it an unsafe road and its mix of land use and zoning districts make it aesthetically unappealing, despite its impressive natural environment.”(*Executive Summary. p 1.*)

Key Governmental and Agency Players

Local: Town of Orangetown
County: Rockland County Planning Department
State: New York State Department of Transportation,
Region 8
Regional: New York Metropolitan Transportation Council
Federal: Federal Highway Administration

Vision / Goals / Principles

“The ultimate objective of the study was to chart a path for future improvements that balanced the need for safety, accessibility, mobility, and sustainable development and land use goals.”
(*Executive Summary. p .1*)

Findings

“Efforts were made to involve all stakeholders in the process, including residents, business people, and educational institutions. By getting the public actively involved and engaged in project-level alternatives analysis and decision-making, the project team was able to develop a consensus among the stakeholders.”
(*Executive Summary. p 1.*)

Implementation Recommendations

“The study recommendation included early action improvements, short-term strategies and long-term actions for implementing land use and transportation improvements.” These included:

Corridor Wide Improvements

Land Use

1. Overlay Zone
2. Bike Trail, Rail Trail, Pedestrian Path
3. Hamlet Center Guidelines
4. Townwide Open Space Plan
5. Parcels in More Than One Zoning District
6. Business Improvement District (BID)
7. Rockland Psychiatric Center
8. Sparkill Creek Management Plan
9. Ridgeline Protection Regulation

Transportation

10. Access Management Projects – Shared Driveways; Driveway Signage; Medians; Etc.,
11. Transit and Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Strategies
12. Traffic Calming Techniques for Residential Areas
13. Passenger Service on the West Shore/Northern Branch Train Line including Passenger Stations
14. Truck Parking Restrictions

Neighborhood Area Improvements

Tappan – Kings Highway to NJ State Line

- Ten specific projects

Blauvelt/Orangetown - Glenshaw St. to Kings Highway S.

- Eleven specific projects

Comment [g1]: Note spelling correction

Bradley Parkway – Route 59 to Glenshaw Street

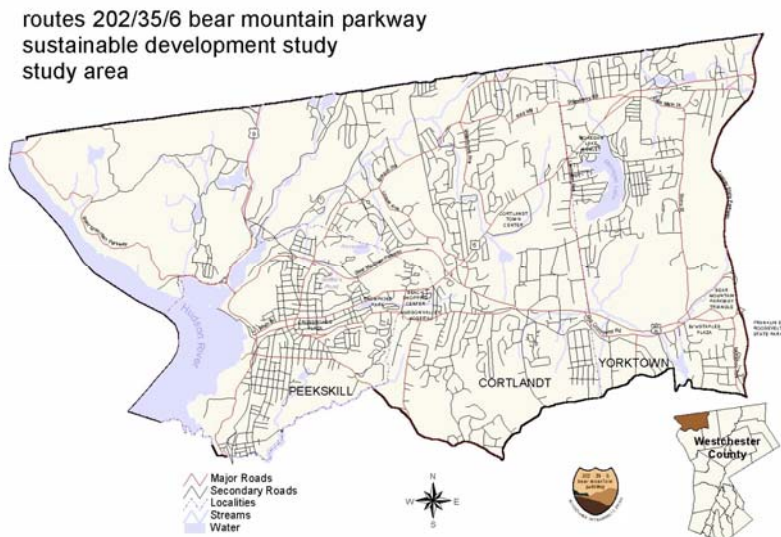
- Three Specific projects

(Executive Summary. p 19 and Table ES-1.)

Routes 35/202/6 & Bear Mountain Parkway, Westchester County

Focus Area

“The study area encompasses approximately 40 square miles and is home to approximately 91,000 residents. It is located in the northwest corner of Westchester County bordered by the Hudson River on the west, Putnam County to the north and the Taconic State Parkway on the east. Mid-town Manhattan in the City of New York is located approximately 40 miles south of the center of the study area.” (*Routes 202/35/6 & Bear Mountain Parkway Sustainable Development Plan: Linking Land Use and Transportation Decisions. March 2004. p 2.*)



(Linking Land Use and Transportation Decisions, Figure 1. Study Area, p 3. (Jpeg file courtesy of Brian J. McMahon, Associate Vice President, Jacobs, Edwards & Kelcey, Saratoga Springs, NY)

Purpose / Planning Context / Problem in need of resolution

“The study area was identified by local municipal planners and by NYMTC’s Regional Transportation Plan as an appropriate target for this new approach to transportation planning due to increasing traffic congestion, development pressures, environmental concerns and the complexity of identifying transportation improvements acceptable to the communities.” (Linking Land Use and Transportation Decisions. p 1.)

“Prior to this study, corridor studies in the Hudson Valley typically focused on identifying solutions for single highways using traffic forecasts based on existing land use policies. Consideration was generally not given to changing land use policies in order to alter future traffic patterns and demand.” (Linking Land Use and Transportation Decisions. p 2.)

Key Governmental and Agency Players

- Local: The entire City of Peekskill.
 The northern half of the Town of Cortlandt.
 The northwest quadrant of the Town of Yorktown.
 Three hamlets within the Town of Yorktown: (Mohegan Lake, Shrub Oak and Crompond).
- County: Westchester County Departments of Planning and Transportation
- Region: New York Metropolitan Transportation Council
- Federal: Federal Highway Administration

Vision / Goals / Principles

“The Routes 202/35/6/ Bear Mountain Parkway Sustainable Development Plan represents a consensus among the public as well as local, county, state and federal government participants on ways to:

- create more livable neighborhoods and communities
- improve traffic flows in the study area
- integrate transportation and land use decisions and
- improve interagency and intermunicipal coordination”

(Linking Land Use and Transportation Decisions. p 1.)

Findings

“As a result of this process, a consensus was reached on the following sustainable development objectives:

1. Maximize the efficiency of the existing transportation network by completing short-term actions, implementing smaller scale construction projects, improving transportation services and improving land use management.
2. Initiate planning for major construction projects.
3. Develop hamlet-type centers along Route 6 in Cortlandt and at the Bear Mountain Parkway Triangle in Yorktown.
4. Revitalize historic downtown Peekskill.
5. Improve community character along Routes 202/35 and Route 6.
6. Protect unique natural resources and scenic areas.
7. Continue collaboration among the study partners.
8. For Peekskill, reduce adverse truck traffic impacts in downtown Peekskill and improve regional highway connections to the downtown.
9. For Cortlandt, improve access and congestion management, protect community character and ensure watershed protection.
10. For Yorktown, emphasize natural resource protection congestion management and enhancement of the neighborhood and traffic considerations in Mohegan Lake.”

(Linking Land Use and Transportation Decisions. pp 11-12.)

Implementation Recommendations

“This Sustainable Development Plan recommends that actions be taken in five interrelated but distinct categories – major road construction, intersection reconstruction, transportation services, land use management and regional coordination. As the study process demonstrated, the solutions for resolving traffic congestion issues cannot be sought only in making highway changes. Land use, access to land use and broader aspects of mobility can both hinder and improve traffic flow. ...The city of Peekskill, the Town of Cortlandt, the Town of Yorktown, Westchester County, the New York State Department of Transportation, the New York Metropolitan Transportation Council and the Federal Highway Administration will have responsibility for implementation of

the Plan's recommendations. They will continue to meet and work cooperatively." (*Linking Land Use and Transportation Decisions.. p 79.*)

Sustainable East End Development Strategies, Eastern Suffolk County

Focus Area

“The SEEDS process took place within a region that covers approximately 360 square miles, and consists of the five towns of East Hampton, Riverhead, Shelter Island, Southampton, and Southold, and the 10 villages of Dering Harbor, East Hampton, Greenport, North Haven, Quogue, Sag Harbor, Sagaponack, Southampton, Westhampton Beach, and Westhampton Dunes. The region lies 70 miles from New York City at its closest point (the western border of the Town of Riverhead) and 125 miles at its farthest point (Montauk Point, East Hampton). The geography of the East End is unique, extending over two peninsulas that are referred to as the North and South forks, which are separated by the Peconic Bay and Gardiner's Bay and the island town of Shelter Island.” (*Sustainable Development Strategies, Summary Report, June 2006, 1. Introduction and Overview, pp 1-2.*)

The population of the East End was 124,938 at the time of the study.



(Power Point slide, SEEDS, Allee King Rosen Fleming, Inc., 2005, with permission from Peter Liebowitz, Sr. Vice President. November 2007)

Purpose / Planning Context / Problem in need of resolution

“The SEEDS process undertaken for Long Island’s East End communities is a direct result of previous efforts by the East End Supervisors’ and Mayors’ Association (EESMA) to grapple with regional transportation and land use issues as a unified group. Before 1996, individual towns and villages had attempted, with limited success, to resolve transportation issues of concern within their own borders. At that time, the EESMA formed an internal research committee, which came to be known as the East End Transportation Council (EETC).”

“Initial dialogue among the EETC members consisted mostly of complaints about transportation problems as perceived by the local officials. However, in responding to these complaints, the transportation providers and the local officials broadened the dialogue to include potential solutions. To resolve some transportation problems, it was clear that the towns and villages would have to work together on related land use issues. In 2000, the EESMA acted to take part in a pilot program of the New York Metropolitan Transportation Council (NYMTC) to undertake federally funded sustainable development studies as a means to lay the groundwork for regional consensus on the land use and transportation issues and their potential solutions. The resulting initiative was expanded to include the general public as stakeholders, and this became the SEEDS process.”

“The purpose of the SEEDS process was to evaluate the East End’s transportation system in relation to its land use policies and practices through a 2025 horizon year, in order to plan future development patterns and transportation solutions that could sustain one another in the long term.” (*Summary Report. p ES 1.*)

Key Governmental and Agency Players

- Local: The towns of East Hampton, Riverhead, Shelter Island, Southampton, and Southold and the incorporated villages within those towns:
1. Dering Harbor, Shelter Island
 2. East Hampton, East Hampton
 3. Greenport, Southold
 4. North Haven, Southampton
 5. Quogue, Southampton
 6. Sag Harbor, East Hampton
 7. Sagaponack, Southampton,
 8. Southampton, Southampton
 9. Westhampton Beach, Southampton
 10. Westhampton Dunes. Southampton
- County: Suffolk County Departments of Planning, Public Works and its Transportation Planning Division
- State: New York State Department of Transportation, Region 1.
- Region: New York Metropolitan Transportation Council

Metropolitan Transportation Agency: Long Island Rail
Road

Federal: Federal Highway Administration

Vision / Goals / Principles

“These principles articulate the goals which elected officials, local and agency planners, and public agency decision-makers are being asked to consider as they develop and implement planning policy and transportation initiatives on the East End.”

“The two overarching goals established by the SEEDS process emphasized the interconnection of land use and transportation:

1. Create a balanced and sustainable approach to improving transportation in coordination with land development; and
2. Establish a consensus to pursue land use policies consistent with regional goals and to guide regional transportation investment.”

“The broad-based guiding principles of SEEDS include:

Community Principles

- Preserve and enhance the historic villages and hamlets that make the East End unique.
- Provide for a mix and variety of housing types (rental, affordable ownership, etc), enabling current residents to have more choices and workers to live in the community, and providing economic diversity.
- Redevelop and reclaim land before converting undeveloped land.
- Protect agricultural and open space resources that help define the character of the East End and are primary drivers of the local economy. Reinforce traditional industries, such as farming, fishing, and tourism.

Transportation Principles

- Decrease local community and visitor dependency on cars and improve pedestrian and public transit accessibility.
- Establish short- and long-term solutions to chronic congestion and unsafe road conditions.
- Minimize congestion due to diverted traffic to or from key destinations or from main travelways to local roads and side streets.
- Improve visual character of roadway corridors.

Environmental Principles

- Protect important natural resources, including groundwater, wetlands and surface waters, shorelines, forests, significant habitats, open space, and existing parks and recreational facilities.
- Pursue long-term and sustainable commitment to regional environmental quality (i.e., regional air quality).

(Summary Report. pp 1-4 and 1-5.)

Findings

“Since its start in 2001, SEEDS has been a far-reaching and collaborative process of educating the public and exploring preferred development and transportation options, thereby laying the groundwork for reaching regional consensus on the long-term future of the East End. If its recommendations are implemented, the SEEDS process will have established an ongoing and effective forum for regional land use and transportation planning on the East End.” (*Summary Report. p 1-2.*)

Implementation Recommendations

“A critical element for transitioning from a regional planning forum to real policy change is a commitment of the East End municipalities to work together to achieve the ambitious land use strategies established by SEEDS. For starters, the towns and villages of the East End must agree to conform to the SEEDS principles and to incorporate them into local decision-making. Second, formal inter-municipal agreements should be sought on a wide range of planning initiatives, including:

- setting resource protection and identifying areas appropriate for development on a regional basis and not by municipal boundary;
- using the established EETC forum to collaborate on planning along municipal boundaries; and
- collective advocacy for regional issues.”

“It is recommended that the EESMA empower the EETC to continue its work in inter-municipal planning and coordination with county, regional, and state agencies. Since the EETC served as the primary SEEDS steering committee, it would also be able to manage the implementation process.”

“The EETC, working as an Implementation Strategy Committee, should establish a work plan to:

- facilitate analysis by the appropriate entities to determine appropriate densities for hamlet centers, location and densities of mixed-use and commercial districts, infrastructure needs to implement plan elements (i.e., schools and sewers), and roadway and intersection operational improvements;
 - since land use decisions are the function of local municipal governments, the coordination of infrastructure necessary to support changes in allowable densities would require the interagency cooperation of local government with Suffolk County (i.e., Department of Health Services), and state agencies;
- pursue development of design guidelines and parameters such as parking management, access management strategies, and traffic calming techniques;
- support and help manage local and regional TDR initiatives;
- assess feasibility of plan elements;
- explore and advocate for financing options for the SEEDS Concept Plan;
- develop a timeline for action items (i.e., short, medium, and long term);
- facilitate municipal relationships and collaboration;

- manage and facilitate the creation of special transportation districts or other pan-municipal initiatives; and pursue improvements to transportation services and facilities.”
(*Summary Report, pp 2-8 and 2-9.*)

Coney Island/Gravesend Sustainable Development Transportation Study, Kings County, Brooklyn

Focus Area

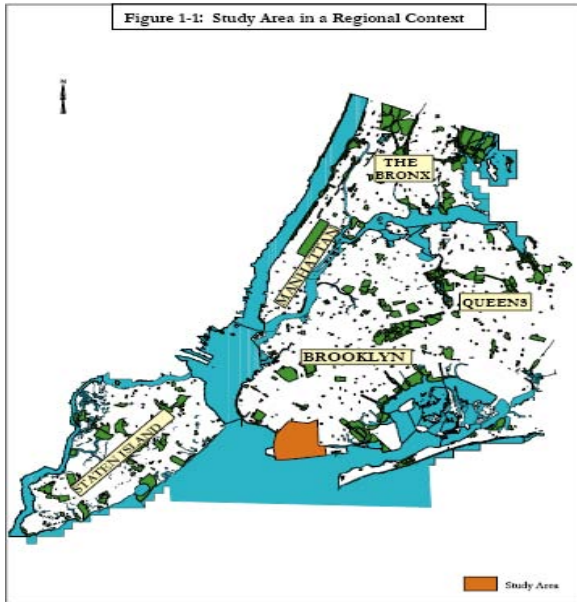
“The Coney Island/Gravesend Sustainable Development Transportation Study seeks to address the development and transportation needs of three communities (Coney Island, Gravesend, and Brighton Beach) in southern Brooklyn. The study area is bounded by Kings Highway on the north, Coney Island Avenue (northeast) and West End Avenue (southeast), the Riegelmann Boardwalk, and West 37th Street (southwest) and Bay Parkway (northwest).” (*Technical Memorandum No.1, Executive Summary. Coney Island/Gravesend Sustainable Development Transportation Study, May 2004. p ES 2.*)

“The traffic and transportation analysis focused on the 14 major corridors in the study area –

- Coney Island Avenue,
- Ocean Parkway,
- Stillwell Avenue,
- McDonald Avenue/Shell Road,
- Kings Highway,
- Bay Parkway,
- Cropsey Avenue,
- 86th Street,
- Neptune Avenue,
- Mermaid Avenue,
- Surf Avenue,
- Brighton Beach Avenue,
- Avenue X, and
- Avenue U.”

(*Technical Memorandum No. 1. p ES 3.*)

The area’s population of 176,516 is served by five subway and ten bus lines. ((*Coney Island/Gravesend Sustainable Development Transportation Study, May 2004. Introduction (Draft), pp 1-6.*) Public transit is used by 54% of the residents to get to and from work. The majority of the area is zoned and used for residential purposes, with commercial/retail development clustered around thirteen of the fourteen major arterials. The study area contains the major attractions of Coney Island Amusement Park, New York Aquarium, Keyspan Park and the Boardwalk. (*Technical Memorandum No.1. p ES 3.*)



1-3

(Coney Island/Gravesend Sustainable Development Transportation Study, Introduction (Draft), pp 1-2 and 1-3.)

Purpose / Planning Context / Problem in need of resolution

“The purpose of the study is to assess the land use development potential and trends of the area and to evaluate their effects on the traffic network and transportation system. Of the three communities in the study area, Coney Island has the greatest growth potential because it has a concentration of prime vacant parcels and buildings that exceed those found in either Gravesend or Brighton Beach. Additionally, there have been some discussions about revitalizing Coney Island as a destination location for recreation and entertainment.” (*Technical Memorandum No. 1, p ES 2.*)

Key Governmental and Agency Players

Local: City of New York, Department of Transportation
City of New York Department of Planning
City of New York Department of Transit
Community Boards (three)
City Council Representative

Region: New York Metropolitan Transportation Council
Metropolitan Transit Authority
New York State Department of Transportation

Federal: Federal Highway Administration

Vision / Goals / Principles

Vision:

- “Improved maintenance of subway facilities so that it is clean and safe;
- Provision of friendly and timely transit service; ferry service to Manhattan;
- Mermaid Avenue as a destination area (pedestrian mall with specialty stores);
- Gambling casinos, funeral home, movie theatre and entertainment, high school and junior high schools; and
- Development of commercial/retail activities on the pier.”

(*Introduction (Draft). pp 1-10 and 1-11.*)

“As a sustainable development study, the study’s goal is to provide a framework to facilitate the development of improvement measures that safely accommodate future transportation needs (including those generated by new developments and economic growth), thereby satisfying future travel demand without negative environmental consequences. The study’s main objectives therefore are:

- To examine the spatial distribution and intensity of land uses and its relationship to the derived demand for travel.
- To assess the area’s economic base, employment opportunities and their implication for travel.
- To identify the travel and traffic characteristics, assess the existing and future transportation demand and needs of the study area, and evaluate their effects on the community.

- To develop and test land use/transportation scenarios.
- To improve travel conditions by reducing vehicular congestion, improving safety for all users (vehicular and pedestrian) and increasing the use of public transit or alternative modes.

(Introduction (Draft). pp 1-4 and 1-5.)

“A set of overarching principles, or guiding principles, were developed using the study’s goals/objectives, community visions, and other stakeholders input to frame future outcomes in the study area. The guiding principles complement the transportation and land use alternative futures; they are as follows:

Transportation

- Improve the aesthetics of major gateways and corridors;
- Provide increased options for bicyclists and pedestrians;
- Enhance transportation connections and use of public transit; and,
- Develop solutions to reduce congestion and improve safety along major corridors and at intersections, where necessary.

Environment

- Protect natural resources – shorelines, open spaces, and parks and recreational areas.

Community and Land Use

- Provide a mix of housing types to support economic development and diversity;
- Develop vacant lots and renovate or demolish abandoned buildings; and,
- Create an attractive and revitalized amusement/recreation center in Coney Island.”

(Introduction (Draft). pp 1-4 and 1-5.)

Draft Findings

A list of strategic outcomes, results-based outcomes, corresponding to each strategic area and consistent with the guiding principles was identified by the community. The following strategic outcomes for each strategic area were developed to assess the results of the modeling process:

Principle 1: Transportation

- Improved lighting;
- Better curbside management;
- Greater parking turnover;
- Better truck route;
- Improved interface with Belt Parkway;
- Better walk/transit access to activity centers;
- Expediting buses through traffic;
- Focus on transit to Keyspan Park – incentives; and,
- Enhanced Coney Island bus service.

Principle 2: Environment

- Maximize the use of the beach and open/park space;
- Continuity and access in recreational areas.

Principle 3: Community and Land Use

- Reduced density in Gravesend;
- Open space preservation/greenery;
- Maintaining nature of current streets;
- More of a land use mix; same level of density;
- Affordable housing for seniors;
- Amusement/recreation center in Coney Island; and,
- Improved community facilities/community space.

Implementation Recommendations

Not available as of October 2007.

Observations

The Rockland SDP concentrated on a heavily traveled, five-mile stretch of Route 303 which traversed through several neighborhoods located within one town. The study area contained limited bus transit options, significant levels of truck traffic and serious safety issues. Some (but not all) of the causal factors of the growth in traffic and development were due to commercial development patterns that had been set in motion by nearby municipalities located in another state, New Jersey. This growth, coupled with increased development within the program area, had led to serious traffic safety problems, which were a central focus of the program. In addition, there were concerns about the declining aesthetic appearance of the Route 303 road corridor due to pre-existing zoning and land uses, as well as the tendency for traffic to overflow into residential neighborhoods, and the resultant decline in their quality of life. The Rockland SDP was targeted towards solving an existing and worsening problem-set about which the local citizenry had long complained. As a consequence, this program benefited from strong political support by top elected officials.

The Westchester SDP covered a larger geographic area of 40 miles governed by six local municipalities, which were connected by three, major, intersecting roads, several public bus routes and a passenger rail service to New York City. Growth within the respective municipalities was impacting the traffic flows within the region. The study area had been the focus of past corridor studies aimed at improving traffic flow and highway designs but without specific consideration of the impact of local land use policies on the situation. Lack of coordination among the six local jurisdictions through which the Route 202/35, Parkway and Route 6 corridors ran had exacerbated previous attempts by transportation officials to resolve the problems. The decision to address these corridors using a sustainable development approach essentially was made at the County level, in the hopes that a broader, regional understanding of local land use and planning trends might lead to better coordination and cooperation in resolving the region's existing and potential

transportation problems. The Westchester program also benefited from strong political supporters, although this support did not seem to be consistent across all the municipalities.

Both of these study areas were predominately rural areas containing discrete hamlet or urban centers experiencing more intense development. In both programs, new development within and outside the region had caused significant congestion and safety impacts on the capacity of the respective road networks.

The eastern Suffolk SDP involved a predominately rural area with a major commercial center within the Town of Riverhead. The entire region was experiencing significant increases in commercial and residential traffic as a result of population growth, largely in its resort and second-home sectors, and to a lesser extent, its year-round and retirement housing sectors. The Suffolk SDP covered 360 square miles and contained the lowest population density, and the greatest number of local municipalities of the four programs. The study area included five major road networks along with interconnecting rail and bus service (within the region and to New York City) and four ferry routes. The program area itself had been defined four years earlier, in 1996, by a loose federation of the five towns and ten villages that comprise eastern Suffolk. Known as the East End Supervisors and Mayors Association (EESMA), these governmental entities had amassed some experience in coordinating on regional transportation issues under the aegis of its research arm, the East End Transportation Council, EETC. The EETC consisted of planning, other professionals including a town councilperson, who met monthly with regional transportation providers from the county, state and metropolitan levels to hammer out transportation solutions to problems of mutual concern. The SEEDS program gave the EETC (and the EESMA) the wherewithal to elevate coordination to a higher level, to include public input and to expand the dialogue beyond discussing discrete site-specific issues. Although the Suffolk SDP was geared towards resolving existing problems, it had an intense focus on preventing future traffic congestion and safety problems through better land use planning at the local level. Due to its broad geographic extent (and other factors which will be examined later in this report), political support for this program was marred by internal conflicts amongst some elected officials.

The fourth SDP, in the southern part of Kings County, addressed traffic congestion issues within a densely developed part of Brooklyn where the remaining vacant land and unused buildings offered significant economic redevelopment opportunities, particularly around the Coney Island entertainment district adjacent to the waterfront. The Kings SDP dealt with 14 major road corridors, several bus and subway routes, and parking issues. This program area had the greatest population density, the most public transit options and probably the highest degree of capital intensive transportation infrastructure per square mile of the four programs evaluated here. The underlying impetus for this SDP was the significant development and re-development potential posed by prime vacant land and unused buildings within three adjacent communities: Gravesend, Brighton Beach and, particularly, Coney Island. The program administrator, the City of New York's Department of Transportation, was aware of the potential downsides of economic revitalization within congested neighborhoods, e.g. increased congestion, speeding, and

changes to historic neighborhoods. The SDP process offered the City of New York a means of examining sustainable development options while giving residents of these neighborhoods the opportunity to educate themselves and offer input on potential solutions (as well as to voice their concerns about existing conditions). This effort complimented another regional project, the *Southern Brooklyn Transportation Investment Study*; and had the support of the City of New York's planning and economic development agencies.

Concluding Notes

First, each of the four SDP programs was designed to address a specific set of problems that was recognized and acknowledged by a broad spectrum of players including the general public. Second, the SDP process was applied to a wide variety of situations ranging from intensely developed urban neighborhoods to a rural resort area where agriculture is still a significant part of the regional economy; from tightly circumscribed portions of larger urban environments to more than three hundred square miles of territory; from mitigating existing conditions to preventing future traffic congestion problems. Third, the consensus-building aspect of the SDP process was recognized by most program administrators as a potentially viable alternative to more traditional land planning and transportation corridor approaches to problem resolution. In some cases, and at certain key levels of decision-making, there was clear recognition that other planning methods were (or would be) either irrelevant or ineffective in these instances. Finally, the fact that substantial federal funds were available to underwrite the SDP program was a strong incentive to undertake these pilot initiatives. It is doubtful any of these programs would have taken place without federal backing and funds. The possibility of obtaining additional funding to implement the consensus-driven recommendations arising out of these programs was acknowledged as a factor in seeking to participate in the SDP process.

III Questionnaire Responses

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Purpose

Each of the four SDPs evaluated in this report was designed to facilitate dialogue between (and among) agencies and citizens. The intent of the dialogue was to achieve regional consensus about land use and transportation problems, identify potential solutions and agree on implementation strategies. Within this construct, the participants differed in the nature of their involvement and the dynamics of their interactions.

Regardless of the role played, each participant brought to the table certain expectations, unique perspectives and an information base, each of which was informed and re-shaped by the consensus-building process. Whether consciously recognized or not, each participant brought a particular mindset about the effectiveness of governance, the role of planning and the need for certain types of transportation infrastructure. Each participant had a vocabulary for articulating and interpreting opinions and observations; some more technical than others. Evaluating the effectiveness of the four SDPs meant finding a way to tap into this information.

Design & Methodology

The questionnaire was designed to solicit general insights into the experiences and perceptions of participants about the Sustainable Development Program in which they were involved. The same questionnaire was used for each SDP.

Mailing lists of stakeholders and participants were obtained from the administrators of each of the pilot programs. The lists included members of Steering and Citizen Advisory committees as well as Stakeholders, including agency, government and elected officials. The consultants were invited to answer as well.

The respondents came from diverse walks of life, had specific professional or organizational allegiances, and, in some cases, represented different levels of government. Each was offered the option of remaining anonymous. Regardless of whether they revealed their identity, they were asked to specify which of five roles they played in the SDP. These are described below:

- **Project Manager** – Any person whose primary responsibility was to oversee the day-to-day administration of the SDP. Project managers may have held another agency or governmental position concurrently.
- **Elected or Appointed Government Official** – Any person who took part in the SDP as an elected or appointed governmental official. The term “appointed” was defined as including representatives of elected officials and members of legislatively appointed entities, e.g. Planning Commissions, Planning Boards, etc.
- **Agency Representative** – Any person who participated as a civil service representative of a government office, such as a Planning Department, Transportation Department, regional transportation authority and regional land use or economic development agency.

- **Advocate or the General Public** – Any person who participated out of personal interest, as a representative of a civic organization or other public interest group.
- **Consultant** – Any person who was paid to work on the SDP process under the direction of the Project Manager, the Steering Committee and/or NYMTC.

The questionnaire contained five categories of questions, each designed to elicit certain types of information.

Motivation for taking part in the SDP

These questions sought to identify the participant's motivation for becoming involved in the process, and underlying reasons or goals for that involvement.

- Was your participation voluntary or mandatory?
- What was (were) your (or your office or agency's) motivation(s) for pursuing or participating in the SDP?
- What type/degree of commitment did you (or your office or agency) make to the SDP process?
- What were your (or your office or agency) goals for participating in the SDP?

Expectations of the SDP

These questions were aimed at identifying expectation levels at the beginning of the SDP process, as well as determining the extent to which participants were familiar with consensus-building methods.

- Prior to your participation in this SDP, did you have any experience or familiarity with consensus-building approaches to planning?
- At the start of this SDP, what were your expectations of the consensus-building process?

Experience during the SDP

These questions sought to identify the degree to which respondents understood the goals of the process, as well as to determine whether the SDP administrators and the consulting team were successful in communicating factual information and using consensus-building methods.

- Were the physical boundary and primary purposes of the SDP clearly defined?
- Was the consensus-building process explained clearly?
- Was the flow of information (and the way in which it was presented) helpful?
- Was the modeling process explained sufficiently?
- Was the modeling exercise helpful for analyzing potential solutions?
- Were all the relevant issues identified?
- Were the public education measures effective?
- Was there adequate coordination between the Project Manager, the Steering Committee and the Stakeholders?
- Were the conflict resolution techniques effective?
- Did the design of the public participation workshops facilitate public understanding and input?
- Did you understand the consultant's supporting role in the process?
- Was the supporting role of the consultant constructive to the conduct of the study?

- Was there sustained and sufficient political support throughout the SDS process?
- In your opinion, the timeframe during which the SDP took place, from start to finish, was: Too long/Just about right/Too short

Outcomes of the SDP

These questions asked whether the respondent felt the primary problems (and potential solutions) had been identified and prioritized; and whether consensus had been achieved. The questions also explored whether the respondents' understanding of the issues and the decision-making process benefited from participation in the SDP.

- Do you think the SDP achieved consensus on the primary issues?
- Do you think the SDP identified practical and realistic solutions to the regional issues of concern?
- Did participation in the SDP improve your understanding of the primary issues?
- Do you think participation in the SDP deepened your understanding of how transportation and land use decisions are made?
- Do you think the SDP improved inter-agency understanding of their respective policies and decision-making processes?
- Do you think the SDP improved public understanding of how transportation and land use decisions are made?
- Do you think the SDP resulted (or will result) in improved decision-making at the regional level?
- Did the SDP lay a foundation for continued collaboration, consensus-building and coordinated decision-making in your region?
- Do you think the SDP achieved consensus on an implementation timeframe?
- How has your participation in the SDS affect your (or your agency's or office's) on-going decisions, planning and/or advocacy activities?
- What measures have been taken to ensure continuing collaboration between relevant agencies, officials and the public about transportation and land use issues?
- In your estimation, are the recommendations and implementation strategies that arose from this SDS likely to be implemented?
- In your opinion, what were three weakness of the SDS process?
- In your opinion, what were three strengths of the SDS process?

Suggestions and Comments

This part of the questionnaire invited more extensive written responses without setting any parameters. It was intended to invite frank assessments and suggestions.

- If you were to be involved in another SDP, what three things would you do differently?
- Do you have additional comments or issues about the SDP process that you would like to share with us?

A complete copy of the questionnaire can be found in Chapter VII Appendix.

Findings

A total of 359 questionnaires were mailed and delivered, of which 50 were answered: a response rate, overall, of 13.6%. The response rates by SDP ranged from a low of 7.8% (Suffolk County) to a high of 24% (Westchester County). The Rockland and Kings county studies both averaged over 14%.

The answers from one respondent, who failed to identify the program he or she participated in, are included in the overall count, but not the individual program analyses. Based on the nature of the write-in answers, this respondent most likely was part of the Rockland SDP.

The findings from the questionnaire responses are discussed by program. The programs are reviewed in the order in which they took place, with the un-identified respondent discussed separately. The reader should keep in mind that many respondents declined to answer all the questions within the questionnaire. The percentage of *yes* and *no* responses takes into account the non-responses.

The last section of this Chapter, contains observations about the responses and conclusions that might be inferred. These observations were made with a keen awareness that the sample sizes are small, and that respondents to the questionnaire might not be truly representative of the whole.

Chapter VII: Appendix contains a spreadsheet which showing all responses except those of the “write-in” questions. The actual questionnaires are in the possession of the New York Metropolitan Council for future reference and analysis.

Route 303 Sustainable Development Study, Rockland County

A total of 154 questionnaires were delivered, of which 23 were returned; resulting in a response rate of 14.9 %.

Motivation for taking part in the Rockland Sustainable Development Program (SDP)

Eighteen (78.2%) of the respondents were Advocates or the General Public (P). Four (13%) of the respondents were Elected/Appointed Government Officials (G). One (4.3%) was from the Consulting team (C) and one was an Agency Representative (A). All but one respondent, the consultant, described their involvement as voluntary.

The respondents offered the following reasons for pursuing or participating in the SDP:

- Opportunity to develop an integrated land use and transportation plan C
- Opportunity to introduce progressive planning and design to a suburban community. C
- To make improvements. A
- Provide knowledgeable response to constituents G
- Provide input on safety issues, economic development and open space G
- Proper traffic flow on 303 with minimum work and low cost G
- Re-stripe lanes without widening G
- Obtain information on traffic flow P
- Improve safety conditions in Orangetown/Rte 303 corridor P
- Maintain local need for changes, not those of the trucking industry P
- Better planning/improved land use options/less sprawl P
- Not widen Rte 303, slow traffic coming off 303 to Campbell Avenue P
- Improve neighborhood P.
- Concern about overdevelopment P

Respondents identified and ranked the nature of their commitment as follows:

- 87 % Time
- 21.7 % Other
- 17.4% Political credibility
- 13 % Institutional credibility
- 4.3% Financial

The reasons for participating in the Rockland SDP were, in descending order,

- 43.5% Improve decision-making process
- 43.5% Change land use/transportation or other public policy
- 43.5% Improve inter-governmental dialogue about land use and transportation issues
- 34.8% Educate public about land use and transportation options
- 30.4% Respond to complaints from the public about transportation problems
- 21.7% Other
- 13 % Change capital budgeting priorities of transportation agencies
- 4.3% Respond to complaints from government officials

Three (21.7%) of the respondents added additional goals, which were:

- Provide public input on transportation issues
- Improve safety and traffic flow
- Ideas

Expectations of the Rockland SDP

Sixteen (69.6%) of the respondents had no prior experience with consensus-building techniques. Five (21.7%) of the respondents had experience and two (13 %) did not answer.

When asked about their expectations of the SDP process, nearly half (47.8%) answered Skeptical/Neutral. Of the remainder, less than half (43.5%) answered Hopeful and 8.7% did not answer.

Experience during the Rockland SDP

The fourteen questions in this part of the questionnaire tried to determine how effectively the SDP conveyed information considered crucial to a consensus-driven planning effort.

The first five questions dealt with basic technical data and the more challenging modeling process.

A majority (78.3%) of the respondents felt the physical boundaries and the primary purposes of the process had been clearly defined, but one person (8.7%) disagreed and 13% did not answer. (Compared to other program respondents, the Rockland group seemed the least certain about this basic set of facts.)

More than two thirds (69.6%) of the respondents felt the consensus-building process had been clearly explained. Seventeen percent (17.4%) disagreed and thirteen percent (13%) did not answer.

The majority (82.6%) felt the flow of information (and the way it was presented) had been helpful. Only 8.7% disagreed and 8.7% declined to answer.

Nearly two-thirds of the respondents (65.2%), felt the modeling process was explained sufficiently, but 21.7% disagreed, and thirteen percent (13%) did not answer.

More than two-thirds, 69.6 %, felt the modeling exercise was helpful for analyzing potential solutions. Thirteen percent (13%) disagreed and the rest, 17.4%, did not answer.

More than half, 56.5 %, the respondents said all relevant issues were identified. Of the remainder, 26.1% disagreed and 17.4% declined to answer.

More than half the respondents, 60.9%, said the public education measures were effective, and 17.4% disagreed. The rest, 21.7%, did not answer.

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Slightly more than half, 52.2%, of the respondents said there was adequate coordination between the project manager, steering committee and stakeholders. Thirteen percent (13%) disagreed, and more than a third (34.7%) declined to answer.

When asked if conflict resolution techniques were effective, less than half (47.8%) of the respondents said Yes. A few, 13%, disagreed and the rest, 39.1%, did not answer.

Nearly two-thirds (65.2%) of the respondents felt the design of the public participation workshops had facilitated public understanding and input. Thirteen percent (13%) disagreed and the rest (26.1%) did not answer.

Nearly three fourths (73.9%) of the respondents said they understood the consultant's role in the process. One person (13%) did not and the consultant did not answer.

Asked if the consultant's supporting role was constructive, a majority (65.2 %) said Yes. One person (13%) disagreed and two (21.7%) did not answer.

Slightly more than half the respondents (56.5%) felt there had been sustained and sufficient political support throughout the SDP. A minority (17.4%) disagreed and the rest (26.1%) did not answer.

The respondents split over the question of time frame: 43.5% felt the study time frame was too long, 43.5% felt it was just about right and 13% declined to answer.

Outcomes of the Rockland SDP

Ten of the fourteen questions in this section attempted to determine respondents' perceptions about program outcomes.

With regard to achieving consensus on primary issues, more than half (60.9%) felt the SDP process had achieved consensus, with a minority (14%) saying it had not. Nearly a third of the respondents (30.4 %) did not answer.

More than half the respondents (52.2%) said the SDP identified practical and realistic solutions to regional issues of concern. Less than a quarter (21.7 %) disagreed and the rest (30.4%) did not answer.

Nearly three quarters of the respondents (73.9%) said participation had improved their understanding of the primary issues. A minority (8.7%) said participation had not improved their understanding and the remainder (17.4%) did not answer.

When asked if participation in the SDP had deepened their personal understanding of how transportation and land use decisions are made, more than half (60.9%) answered Yes. The rest either said No (21.7 %) or declined to answer (17.4%).

Less than a third of the respondents (30.4%) said Yes when asked if the SDP had improved inter-agency understanding of their respective policies and decision-making

process. The same number (30.4 %) said No, and the rest (43.5%) did not answer, although one wrote in “Hopefully”.

When asked if they thought the SDP had improved public understanding of how transportation and land use decisions are made, slightly more than half (52.2 %) said Yes, 21.7% said No and 30.4% did not answer.

Less than half the respondents (43.5%) thought the SDP resulted (or would result) in improved regional decision-making. A minority (17.4%) disagreed and 43.5% did not answer, although one person wrote in “Hopefully”.

Asked if the SDP had laid a foundation for continued collaboration, consensus-building and coordinated decision-making, only 39.1% said Yes, the lowest of all four programs; 17.4% said no and 43.5% declined to answer.

The pessimism continued with next question as to whether the SDP had achieved consensus on a implementation timeframe - with only 21.7% saying Yes, 34.8% saying No and 47.8% declining to answer.

Only 30.4% of the respondents felt the recommendations and implementation strategies were likely to be implemented. A minority (13 %) said they did not agree, and 56.5% did not answer.

The last four questions in this section solicited write-in responses. The responses listed here are as close to the original wording as possible. They were not ranked. Where known, the role played by the respondent is noted: C – consultant, P – Public, A – Agency Representative, G – Elected/Appointed Government Official.

The first, whether participation in the SDS had affected the respondent’s on-going decisions, planning and/or advocacy, elicited the following responses:

- Experience gained has been applied to other projects C
- More aware and knowledgeable P
- Stimulated interest in land use practices P
- Enhanced knowledge of transportation/open space/residential and commercial development G
- Information helpful when talking with constituents and other officials G

The second question asked what measures have been taken to ensure continuing collaboration between relevant agencies, officials and the public about transportation and land use issues. The following responses were given.

- Don’t know/Not aware P
- Discussed behind closed doors P
- None P
- Upcoming study on T(appan) Z(ee) Bridge P
- Open dialogue G
- Follow-up on plans included in the final report with planners G

In response to the third question, about the strengths of the Rockland SDP, the following were identified:

- Dialogue between stakeholders C
- Public education C
- Answered questions from the public at meetings P
- Good verbal communication/open dialogue/up-to date reports P
- “Innovative ideas” P
- “Inclusion of recommendations from various committees” P
- “Maintenance of local control” P
- “Public ownership” P
- “Can-do spirit” P
- Open process P
- “None” P
- Careful look at various alternatives G
- Charrettes G
- Overall conclusions G

The last question identified the following weaknesses in the Rockland SDP:

- Too much emphasis on modeling without clear results that would inform decision-making on land use issues C
- Smart Growth Index was too complex C
- Not enough public discussion about density and design C
- Meetings too far apart P
- More meetings than needed. P
- Some unrealistic solutions P
- Not enough public participation or communication with public in beginning/ Full scale mailing would have brought in more people
- Not enough information P
- Lack of real consideration of the public input/consensus. P
- Local political forces trumped inter-agency planning. P
- No mass transit/train. P
- “The DOT will do whatever it wants.” P
- Money spent unwisely on consultants unfamiliar with the area. P
- Money spent on unnecessary walkers’ bridge to a park full of bears and on placing lights in “wrong” locations. P
- Not enough emphasis on safety, landscaping, clean-up of litter. P
- Needed more material to take home P
- Too long a process G
- Too few public participants G
- Some attempts by people to drive process/influence parochial/political agendas G

Suggestions and comments pursuant to the Rockland SDP

The following suggestions were put forth in response to the question: “If you were to be involved in another SDP, what three things would you do differently?” Not all respondents chose to answer this question, and of those who did, not all answered fully. The responses included:

- Less emphasis on modeling. C
- More design workshops to increase public understanding of density. C

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- More discussion about making public transit work in a suburban area C
- Reduce number of people involved P
- “Require all local planning board members and elected representatives to at least attend.” P
- “Build more “sustainable” into the concept.” P
- “Instead of fine tuning the SDP process, use this approach in other local land use issues.” P
- Not volunteer. P
- Don’t know if would get involved, very political. P
- Rebuild West Shore Railroad. P
- Read more. P
- Look for alternative strategies to the ones proposed. P
- Hire consultants who live and work in region, and have common sense. P
- Note complaints (of public) more fully. P
- Reduce time frame. G
- Establish realistic goals and approaches to solutions. G

When asked “Do you have additional comments or issues about the SDP process that you would like to share with us?” respondents wrote:

- “I Applaud NYMTC for supporting SDS process...this is planning that makes sense!” C
- Participation in the process enabled a senior citizen to follow through with the Town Supervisor and the NYSDOT on implementing specific traffic safety improvements. P
- Obtain real statistics for future developments which will affect traffic on Rte 303. P
- Add more safety measures for Rte. 303 near Moritz Funeral Home going south. P
- Obtain a more concerted effort between the NYSDOT and the NJDOT on projects within Orangetown, NY and Northvale, NJ. P
- Questionnaire was a good idea, but came too late to remember details. P
- Decision-making was not transparent. P
- SDP was “extremely well organized.” P
- SDP approach is much preferred to the usual “study-plan-presentation-hearing-public despair model.” P
- Improvements on Rte 303 took too long/ many accidents and deaths still occur. P
- Police department does not enforce speed limits in major accident areas. P
- Rebuild West Shore Railroad. P
- Spent a lot of time trying to do the right thing and absolutely nothing happened. P
- “Good job.” Do more informing of public to get buy-in before making changes to their neighborhood. P

Summary: Rockland SDP

Taken alone, the Rockland questionnaires convey a mixture of positive and negative perceptions. It should be noted at the outset that the Rockland respondents, of all the SDP respondents, left the most questions unanswered. Of the 30 questions that were tabulated on the spreadsheet, 27 were not answered by between 3 to 13 respondents. Depending on the question, the percentage of respondents choosing not to answer questions ranged from 13% to 56.5%. It is not clear why this is the case. In the absence of an obvious pattern, one possible reason could be that the length of time between the completion of the study and the request to fill out a questionnaire was too long, and

people could no longer remember enough details. No further attempt was made in this summary to determine if the non-responses had any deeper significance.

The Rockland SDP seems to have allowed for a more public airing and discussion of the issues that were already controversial issues of concern, namely the nature and intensity of proposed new development and the resulting increase in truck traffic, congestion and accidents.

The top three reasons given for participating in the SDP were to improve the decision-making process, to change land use/transportation or other public policy and to improve inter-governmental dialogue about land use and transportation issues. Each reason was endorsed by close to half the respondents, 43.5%. The ranking of the next two reasons, educating the public, 34.8%, and responding to complaints from the public about transportation problems, 30.4%, when coupled with the write-in reasons, convey the sense that many of the respondents had long-standing concerns about traffic problems within the SDP study area.

The expectation levels for the SDS could be categorized as fairly low or, at best, mixed, given that most of the respondents had no prior experience with consensus-building processes and they were split between Skeptical/Neutral and Hopeful. But, overall, the experience of the Rockland respondents seems to have been mostly favorable insofar as the flow of factual information to the public, the explanation of the modeling process and its usefulness for analyzing potential solutions as well as coordination between the project manager and other participants. There wasn't much confusion about the consultant's role and most felt it was constructive.

In spite of the lack of experience with consensus-building, more than two-thirds of the respondents felt the process had been clearly explained. But, less than half the respondents felt the conflict resolution techniques used were effective. The large percentage, 39.1%, that did not answer this question also is puzzling. On one hand, the techniques used in this study may not have been suitable or effective. On the other, respondents unused to conflict resolution may have found the experience discomforting.

This may be noteworthy because in spite of this somewhat negative perception about the resolution techniques, more than half the respondents felt consensus had been achieved on primary issues, that solutions had been identified and understanding improved. One write-in comment that seemed to sum up the underlying perception was: The SDP was preferable to the "study-plan-presentation-hearing-public despair model."

Yet, when asked if the SDP would result in improved regional decision-making, only 43.5% said Yes, and the rest either disagreed, 17.4%, or did not answer, 43.5%. The same pessimism is evident in the response to whether the SDP had laid a foundation for continued collaboration, consensus-building and coordinated decision making with only 39% saying Yes.

It is worth noting that political support in this process was perceived by more than half the respondents as being sustained and sufficient. But, other answers about program outcomes convey the impression that while the SDP resulted in improved understanding of the issues and potential solutions, there was great skepticism about whether anything would be implemented. The implication in these responses is that the public and some elected officials were pushing for more responsiveness on the part of transportation agencies and land use planners, and collectively they felt this had not happened.

The Rockland SDP was the only program with known input from a member of the consulting team. This person suggested downplaying emphasis on the modeling, and recommended more public discussion about land use elements such as density and design. The consulting team itself was the target of some piquant commentary by the public, who noted the team's lack of familiarity with the area and its failure to respond with specific (and short-term) ideas and solutions to concerns about declining aesthetics, streetscape, and safety.

The lack of short-term implementation and of ongoing coordination with New Jersey municipalities seems to have soured public opinion about the effectiveness of the Rockland SDS. The only implementation measures to ensure continuing collaboration that were noted by respondents were "Open dialogue" and "Follow up on plans with planners", both made by elected or appointed officials. The public's responses were "Don't know" and "None".

Routes 35/202/6 and Bear Mountain Parkway, Westchester County

A total of fifty (50) surveys were delivered of which 12 were returned, resulting in a response rate of 24%, the best of the four SDPs evaluated here.

Motivation for taking part in the Westchester Sustainable Development Program (SDP)

Nine (75%) of the respondents were Advocates or the General Public (P). Three (25%) were Elected/Appointed Government Officials (G). All of them indicated that their participation was voluntary.

The respondents offered the following reasons for pursuing or participating in the SDP:

- Better quality of life/Control “wanton, unrestricted, deleterious development.” P
- “Awareness of final outcome” P
- “To try to alleviate the traffic congestion” P
- “Live in area” P
- “On Cortlandt Traffic Commission” P
- “Sustain my business” P
- Provide input/offer suggestions/find solutions to land use problems P
- “To produce a regional solution” G

Respondents identified and ranked the nature of their commitment as follows:

- 100 % Time
- 16.7% Financial
- 25 % Political
- 25 % Institutional Credibility
- 25 % Other

One of the Elected/Appointed Government respondents noted that his/her agency “participated more than any other, unfortunately.”

The reasons for participating in the Westchester SDP were in descending order:

- 58.3% Respond to complaints from the public about transportation problems
- 58.3% Improve inter-governmental dialogue about land use and transportation issues
- 50 % Improve decision-making process
- 50 % Change land use/transportation or other planning policy
- 33.3% Change capital budgeting priorities of transportation agencies
- 33.3% Educate public about land use and transportation options
- 33.3% Other
- 8.3% Respond to complaints from agencies about other agencies
- 8.3% Respond to complaints from government officials

Three (25%) of the respondents added additional goals, which were:

- “It was very nice that the public could get involved.”
- “I was interested in educating myself on the issues and process.”
- “Get something done!”

Expectations of the Westchester SDP

Most, 83 %, of the respondents were familiar with consensus building techniques; only 16.7% were not.

A majority (66.7%) were “Hopeful” about the process at the start; 25% were Skeptical/Neutral and 8.3% described their expectation level as Neutral.

Experience during the Westchester SDP

The fourteen questions in this part of the questionnaire tried to determine how effectively the SDP conveyed information considered crucial to a consensus-driven planning effort.

The first five questions dealt with basic technical data and the more challenging modeling process.

All of the respondents felt the physical boundaries and the primary purposes of the process had been clearly defined.

Nearly all the respondents (91.7%) said the consensus-building process had been clearly explained; with only one person (8.3%) disagreeing.

Asked if the flow of information and its presentation was helpful, 83.3% said Yes. One person, 8.3 %, disagreed and 8.3% did not answer.

More than half the respondents, 58.3 %, felt the modeling process was explained sufficiently, but 41.7 % disagreed.

Most respondents, 83.3%, said the modeling exercise was helpful for analyzing potential solutions; but 8.3 % disagreed and 8.3% declined to answer.

When asked whether all relevant issues were identified, more than half, 66.7 %, answered Yes, and the rest, 33.3%, answered No.

Less than half, 41.7%, felt the public education measures were effective. More than half, 58.3%, said they were not.

More than half, 58.3%, said there had been adequate coordination between the Project Manager, the Steering Committee and the Stakeholders; but 33.3% said No, and 8.3% did not answer.

Half the respondents felt the conflict resolution techniques were effective and half disagreed.

When asked if the design of the public participation workshops facilitated public understanding and input, 66.7% said Yes, and 33.3% said No.

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A clear majority of respondents, 91.7%, felt the consultant's role in the process was largely understood, with 8.3% dissenting.

The supporting role of the consultant was felt to be constructive to the process by two thirds of the respondents, 66.7%, with the rest, 33.3%, disagreeing.

Two thirds, 66.7%, of the respondents felt there was sustained and sufficient political support throughout the SDP process. (These respondents from this SDP ranked political support highest of all four projects evaluated in this report.)

Most respondents, 83.3%, felt the process had taken too long, with the remainder, 16.7%, feeling it had taken just the right amount of time.

Outcomes of the Westchester SDP

Ten of the fourteen questions in this section attempted to determine respondents' perceptions about program outcomes.

Asked whether the SDP had achieved consensus on primary issues, 58.3% said Yes and 41.7% said No.

Half the respondents said the SDP had identified practical and realistic solutions to regional issues of concern and half disagreed.

When asked if participation in the SDP had improved their understanding of the primary issues, 41.7% answered Yes, and 50% answered No, with one person declining to answer.

Asked if participation had improved their understanding of how transportation and land use decisions are made, half said Yes, and half said No.

Three quarters, 75%, of the respondents said the SDP had improved inter-agency understanding of their respective policies and decision-making process; and 25% disagreed.

However, when asked if they thought the SDP had improved the public's understanding of how land use and transportation decisions are made, 41.7% said Yes, and 58.3 % said No.

Asked if the SDP resulted (or will result) in improved decision-making at the regional level, half the respondents said Yes, and half said No.

About two thirds, 66.7%, of the respondents felt the SDP lay a foundation for continued collaboration, consensus-building and coordinated decision-making, and 33.3% disagreed.

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A quarter, 25%, of the respondents answered Yes when asked if the SDP had achieved consensus on an implementation timeframe; the rest, 75%, answered No.

Only 25% of the respondents felt the recommendations and implementation strategies were likely to be implemented, with 75% disagreeing.

The last four questions in this section solicited write-in responses. The responses listed here are as close to the original wording as possible. They are not ranked. The role played by the respondent is noted: C – consultant, P – Public, A – Agency Representative, G – Elected/Appointed Government Official.

The first, whether participation in the SDS had affected the respondent's on-going decisions, planning and/or advocacy, elicited the following responses:

- "No way" P
- "It has made me more aware." P
- (I was) "put on the Town Traffic and Safety Committee." P
- "Less likely to participate in processes such as SDP because of lack of implementation." P
- "Continued development without infrastructure has led me to be even more skeptical of new development." P
- "Showed SDP completely ignored repeated requests" and "local concerns" P
- "Very frustrated"/"Nothing done to date!" P
- "Need constant information." P
- "Hopefully we realized that the planning concept of misery loves company does not work." G
- Route 6 and 202 are at "failure", but planners have not realized this. G
- "We refer back to the study and look at long term goals." G
- "We now think regional planning can be achieved only in rare instances." G

The second question asked what measures have been taken to ensure continuing collaboration between relevant agencies, officials and the public about transportation and land use issues. The following responses were given:

- Yorktown Master Plan updated. P
- Yorktown Transportation Committee [formed?] P
- None/Not a lot/Business as usual/Not needed/Waste of Time P
- Continue to bring up the facts of the study G

In response to the third question, about the strengths of the Westchester SDP, the following were identified:

- "A vocal, passionate minority can have a lot of input." P
- Information readily available on website/ Reports/ Summary P
- Information about other areas P
- Facilitators kept discussions focused/ Kept people talking. P
- Good exchange of ideas/good input P
- Creative solutions identified, e.g. turning lane for Rte 202 P
- Getting people together/Handled groups well G
- Outlined faults of the roads G

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- “Not telling public that solution may be to hold-off development until infrastructure is fixed.” G
- Explained process/advantages to being involved G
- “Can’t find any.” G

The last question identified the following weaknesses in the Westchester SDP:

- “A vocal, passionate minority can have a lot of input.” P
- Took too long P/G
- Steering Committee met privately/had own agenda P
- No follow-up or follow through/ No implementation of suggestions P
- Too structured towards top-down concerns P
- Study to death/Waste of time P
- Informative but no action P
- No interaction with local government P
- No advertising to attract local citizens P
- No short term goals P
- Too much involvement by land use planners and consultants G
- Not enough public input G
- Not enough political support G
- “Extraordinarily poor project management” G
- No near-term deliverables to install confidence in future initiatives G

Suggestions and comments pursuant to the Westchester SDP

The following suggestions were put forth in response to the question: “If you were to be involved in another SDP, what three things would you do differently?” Not all respondents chose to answer this question, and of those who did, not all answered fully. The responses included:

- Start minor parts of project before SDP ends so public sees results. P
- Steering committee should not consist of elected or appointed officials exclusively. Stakeholders must be present to keep the officials honest. Officials met privately to tweak report to suit their respective agendas. P
- [Make a] sincere attempt to implement even minor suggestions. P
- Make some attempt to show genuine concern for public ideas, interest and input!” P
- “I thought it was very well done – no suggestions.” P
- “Not participate.” P
- “Smaller groups.” P
- Have field or on-site meetings. P
- “Demand short term goals.” P
- “Local government involvement from all towns (required) for full term.” P
- “Advertise solutions to attract more participation of others” P
- “(Place) emphasis on truth of the problem.” G
- “Be less optimistic in solutions and (obtain) more input from funding sources.” G

When asked “Do you have additional comments or issues about the SDP process that you would like to share with us?” respondents wrote:

- Original goal was courageous/however, end results were the same as the 1992 study. P
- Needs and objectives were determined in the first six months. The rest of the time was an expensive waste, especially having a traffic consultant unfamiliar with the area. P

- “So far, the process appears to have been a big bust. All that time & money resulted in no action. The carrot of funding for subsequent cooperation apparently isn’t enough to get Cooper, Puglisi & Test (sp) to work together. Maybe there should be a carrot and a stick.....fail to cooperate and lose funding....” P
- “No, I attended every meeting and nothing indicated you planned to help the traffic situation in any meaningful way! P
- “I have served on planning & zoning boards and have never seen so little accomplished in so long a time!” P
- “The concept was a good concept except funding sources appeared to be in the distant future. Many people could not conceive ten to twenty years away for solutions.” G
- “Too much emphasis on new development along the corridor by planners and not enough of preservation.” G
- “It would have been easier after the problem was recognized to have a holding pattern solution till a final solution could be implemented.” G

Summary: Westchester SDP

The motivations voiced by the Westchester respondents tended to be less specific in terms of specific site improvements, and more issue-oriented. The reasons given for participating centered on responding to complaints from the public about transportation problems, which reflected longstanding concerns within the region about traffic congestion. There also was a strong desire to improve dialogue and the decision-making process, as well as to change policy and budgeting priorities.

Unlike the Rockland respondents, most of the Westchester respondents were familiar with consensus-building techniques. This may have fueled higher expectations levels, and also accounted for some of the sharp criticisms leveled at the process and the consultants.

There seems to have been good communication about factual information, although explanations about the modeling process received lower marks. Nevertheless, most respondents felt the modeling exercise had been helpful.

Much less satisfaction was expressed with the effectiveness of the public education elements with more than half the respondents saying they were not effective. The respondents were split as to whether the conflict resolution techniques had worked. Finally, while the role of the consultants was understood, certain aspects of their performance seem to have detracted from the process.

Respondents noted the sustained political support throughout the process but did not necessarily agree with the perceived end results. The write-in comments conveyed the public’s perception that the process of obtaining public input had been a perfunctory one, at best; that the public’s concerns and issues were given less attention than top-down driven solutions.

The questions about outcome revealed that the respondents were split as to whether consensus had been achieved on the primary issues. There seems to have been a failure to explain how decisions (relating to transportation, mostly) are made, and this seems to

have colored perceptions about whether improved decision-making and implementation would ever occur. Although two thirds of the respondents felt the SDP had laid a foundation for continued collaboration, consensus-building and coordination, a third disagreed. Most telling, three-quarters of the respondents felt the recommendations were not likely to be implemented.

There were repeated comments about the lack of practical, short-term solutions either proposed or implemented. A considerable amount of skepticism was expressed about the ability of the agencies and elected/appointed officials to continue an ongoing dialogue about resolving land use and transportation problems. The only measures to ensure continuing collaboration between relevant parties about transportation and land use issues that was noted by the respondents was the updating of the Yorktown Master Plan and the formation of the Yorktown Transportation Committee.

While the weaknesses of the Westchester SDP revolved around lack of implementation, insufficient public input, insufficient political support, and poor project management, its strengths were perceived to be the clear outlay of information, the exchange of ideas and the opportunity for public input.

To their credit, the Westchester respondents offered many comments and suggestions about the SDP process. While a few some are conflicting or petty, many of the comments offered cogent and helpful insights, such as the importance of enacting short term implementation recommendations before the SDP ends in order to bolster public faith in the process. Better outreach to a wider public was suggested along with mandated involvement of local government officials for the full-term of the program. Inclusion of citizens on the Steering Committee was recommended so as to keep the governmental decision-making process more transparent. The inability of some elected officials to work together prompted the suggestion of stronger “carrot-and-stick” types of incentives.

Sustainable East End Development Strategies, (SEEDS), Suffolk County

A total of 128 questionnaires were mailed and delivered. However, only 10 responses were received, resulting in a response rate of 7.6%; the lowest of the four programs surveyed.

Motivation for taking part in the Suffolk Sustainable Development Program (SDP)

Responses from Advocates or the General Public, (P), made up 40% of the responses; Elected/Appointed Government Officials, (G), 30% and Agency Representatives, (A), 30%. Thirty percent (30%) of the respondents noted that their participation was mandatory. One of the Government Officials also functioned as a Project Manager during the last six months of the project, and the responses were tabulated here as an Appointed Government Official.

The respondents offered the following reasons for pursuing or participating in the SDP:

- Encourage local government to prioritize controlling and planning development as well as open space preservation. P
- “Have input into/and address local problems and solutions on transportation and land use.” P & G
- “Environmental protection.” P
- “Improved planning!” P
- “Foster coordination among East End Towns and Villages on integrating land use and transportation issues.” / Improve inter-governmental dialogue. A
- “To attempt to mitigate transportation problems. A
- “To address related zoning issues (land use) A
- “Implement local transit system.” A
- “To increase understanding / education of public regarding transportation options.” A
- Represented “Town Board involvement and commitment to SEEDS.” G
- “Improving mass transit.” G
- “Reducing traffic congestion.” G
- “Preserving rural character.” G

Respondents identified and ranked the nature of their commitment as follows:

90%	Time
50%	Financial
40%	Institutional credibility
30%	Political credibility
10%	Technical expertise

The reasons for participating in the SEEDS SDP were, in descending order,

80%	Improve inter-governmental dialogue about land use and transportation issues
70%	Change land use/transportation or other public policy
70%	Improve decision-making process
50%	Educate public about land use and transportation options
50%	Change capital budgeting priorities of transportation agencies
20%	Respond to complaints from the public about transportation problems

10% Respond to complaints from government officials

Thirty percent (30%) of the respondents added additional goals:

- o improve public transportation options,
- o preserve quality of life,
- o encourage land use and transportation decisions that would lead to land preservation.

The goals for participants in the Suffolk SDP clustered more strongly around improving or changing the status quo, and educating the public than any of the other SDPs, reflecting perhaps, the particulars of eastern Suffolk County with its multitudinous local governmental jurisdictions and the degree to which its transportation network is controlled by regional agencies operating over larger geographic areas.

Expectations of the Suffolk SDP

Sixty percent (60%) of the respondents had experience with consensus-building approaches to planning; thirty (30 %) did not and 10% did not answer.

Seventy percent (70%) chose “Hopeful” to describe their expectations of the process, 20 % chose Skeptical/Neutral and 10% chose not to answer.

Experience during the Suffolk SDP

The fourteen questions in this part of the questionnaire tried to determine how effectively the SDP conveyed the types of information that were considered crucial to a consensus-driven planning effort.

The first five questions dealt with basic technical data and the more challenging modeling process.

A majority, 80%, of the respondents said the physical boundaries and the primary purposes of the SDP had been clearly defined; 20% did not answer.

Asked if the consensus-building process had been clearly explained, 80% said Yes, 10 % disagreed and 10% did not answer.

When asked if the flow of information and its presentation was helpful, 80% said Yes, 10% disagreed and 10% did not answer.

More than half, 60%, of the respondents felt the modeling process was explained sufficiently; 30% said it was not and 10% did not answer.

Nearly three fourths, 70%, of the respondents felt the modeling exercise was helpful for analyzing potential solutions; 20% disagreed and 10% did not answer.

When asked whether all relevant issues were identified, 60% said Yes, 30% said No and 10% did not answer.

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Only 30% of the respondents said Yes when asked whether public education measures were effective; 40% said No. The remaining 30% either did not answer or gave an ambiguous yes/no answer that was counted as a non-answer.

When asked whether there had been adequate coordination between the Project Manager, the Steering Committee and the Stakeholders, half felt there was, and 20% disagreed. Thirty percent (30%) of the respondents did not answer this question.

Nearly a third, 30%, of the respondents felt the conflict resolution techniques had been effective; but 50 % disagreed and 20 % did not answer.

When asked if the design of the public participation workshops facilitated public understanding and input, 70% said Yes, 10% disagreed and 20% did not answer.

The consultant's role in the process was understood and felt to be constructive to the process by 90% of the respondents with only 10% declining to answer.

Most, 90%, of the respondents felt political support of the process was not sustained or sufficient, with 10 % giving an ambiguous Yes/No answer.

Most, 90%, of the respondents said the SEEDS study had taken too long and 10% declined to answer.

Outcomes of the Suffolk SDP

Ten of the fourteen questions in this section attempted to determine respondents' perceptions about program outcomes.

Asked whether the SDP process had achieved consensus on primary issues, more than half, 60%, said Yes; but 40% said No.

Nearly three fourths, 70%, of the respondents felt practical and realistic solutions to regional issues of concern had been addressed; but 20% disagreed and 10% did not answer.

Most respondents, 90%, said participation in the SDP had improved their understanding of the primary issues; and 10% disagreed.

A smaller majority, 70%, said Yes when asked if participation had improved their understanding of how transportation and land use decisions are made; and 20% said No. Ten percent, 10%, answered Yes/No.

When asked if the SDP had improved inter-agency understanding of their respective policies and decision-making process, 60% said Yes, 10% disagreed and 30% declined to answer.

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Eighty percent (80%) of the respondents thought the SDP process had improved public understanding of how land use and transportation decisions are made. Twenty percent (20%) did not answer the question.

Asked if the SDP resulted (or will result) in improved decision-making at the regional level, more than half, 60%, said yes; 30% disagreed and 10% did not answer.

Nearly all respondents, 90%, felt the SDP had laid a foundation for continued collaboration, consensus-building and coordinated decision-making. Only 10% disagreed.

None of the respondents felt a consensus had been reached on an implementation timeframe. (80% said No and 20% wrote in Unsure or yes/no.)

Asked if the recommendations and implementation strategies were likely to be implemented, 20% said Yes, 20% said No and 60% either did not answer or wrote "hopefully"

The last four questions in this section solicited write-in responses. The responses listed here are as close to the original wording as possible. They were not ranked. The role played by the respondent is noted: C – consultant, P – Advocate/Public, A – Agency Representative, G – Elected/Appointed Government Official.

The first, whether participation in the SDS had affected the respondent's on-going decisions, planning and/or advocacy, elicited the following responses:

- "Has not" P
- "Involved as Board member of Five Towns Rural Transit" P
- "The need for closer coordination with municipalities making land use decision became apparent and has been implemented." A
- "Better understanding of regional transportation concerns." A
- "Better understanding of how land use planning affects transportation." A
- "It has increased awareness of East End needs." A
- "Yes, at least for me personally; unsure about my local government." G
- "None" G
- "Trying to link land use and "Big Picture" transportation to everyday decisions." G

The second question asked what measures have been taken to ensure continuing collaboration between relevant agencies, officials and the public about transportation and land use issues. The following responses were given:

- EETC meetings (continue to be held monthly) P
- Memorandum of Agreement (has been signed by most of the participating towns) P/A/G
- Five Towns Rural Transit (concept is moving forward.) P
- "Commitment to continue dialogue with EETC." A
- "A continuing land use committee is planned." G
- "Ongoing feasibility study of transit plan." G
- "None" G

In response to the third question, about the strengths of the Suffolk SDS process, the following were identified:

- “Stakeholder meetings were numerous and input was taken seriously.” P
- “Modeling process, though poorly understood, provided interesting output.” P
- “Provided momentum for regional problem solving.” P
- “Consensus concept” P
- “Open dialogue” P
- “Technical resources of NYMTC” P
- “Extensive database” A
- “Extensive outreach” A
- “Good press coverage” A
- “Brought together neighboring municipalities to discuss common issues.” A
- Building consensus A
- “Opened dialogue among towns”/Bound municipalities together G
- “Provided guidance” G
- “Increased local awareness of consequences of build-out” G
- “Showed regional consensus among the public” G
- “Led to new ideas/greater consciousness of moving forward” G

The last question identified the following weaknesses in the Suffolk SDP:

- “Geographic region was logical, but perhaps too large. Too many directly conflicting interests in different parts of the SDS region.” P
- “Lack of participation from electeds (officials) throughout led to politicization of process and findings at end.” P
- “Money ran out, process collapsed.” P
- “Public cut out of decision-making.” P
- “Length of time” P
- “Parochialism” A
- “Lack of political support” A
- “Lack of consensus regarding waterborne access.” A
- “Lack of consensus regarding growth-land use planning.” A
- “Overemphasis on public problem solving without regard to feasibility, funding or cost-effectiveness.” A
- “Too long.” A/G
- “Cumbersome” G
- “Time intensive” G
- “Unable to provide a product” G
- “Recommendations were not specific – politicians expected specifics and immediate action.” G

Suggestions pursuant to the Suffolk SDP

The following suggestions were put forth in response to the question: “If you were to be involved in another SDP, what three things would you do differently?” Not all respondents chose to answer this question, and of those who did, not all answered fully.

The responses included:

- “Speak out more” P
- Elected officials “need to be more hands-on and participate in process so they understand goals and buy-in to process.” P

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- “Stakeholders group evolved to be small group of special interests and not necessarily representative of public opinion in general.” P
- “Not repeat same mistakes” P (No listing of mistakes was offered.)
- “Push politicians to participate consistently so they will hear public views rather than just waiting for final report.” P
- “Not sure.” A
- “Set goals and timeframes and stay within them.” A
- “Mandate town board member attendance and provide continuity of member participation.” G
- “Gauge political support for future action.” G
- Put structure in place for implementation phase. G
- “Solve problem of those who want to dominate the process.” G

When asked “Do you have additional comments or issues about the SDP process that you would like to share with us?” respondents wrote:

- “It was a big job & a lofty goal. Needed interest on the part of regional political leaders in consensus solutions among themselves and negotiation, to make study effective in having recommendations implemented.” P
- “Too much time spent on modeling (almost 1 ½ years) and not enough on developing a time table and work plan for implementation of recommendations.” P
- “There seemed to be drag and delay towards the end which tended to turn off some committed stakeholders.” P
- “I was not involved from the beginning of the process and therefore found it difficult to answer some of the questions. I think it is likely that some recommendations and implementation strategies will be implemented, but definitely not all.” A
- “I personally enjoyed my participation. I like the people I had the opportunity to meet and work with. A great educational experience.” G

Summary: Suffolk SDP

Of all the SDPs, the Suffolk respondents comprised a broader and deeper sampling of the participants. The respondents were nearly evenly divided between Advocates/Public, Government Officials and Agency Representatives. In addition, one of the Government Officials served briefly as the Project Manager, when the author of this report left that position.

The responses from the Suffolk SDP contained the next highest rate of non-answered questions, 23 of 30, with the percentage of respondents choosing not to answer ranging between 10% and 60%. However, unlike the Rockland average of nearly 5.4 non-answers per question, the average number of non-respondents per question was only 1.8. The reasons for this are not clear. Unlike Rockland, continued involvement of some of the respondents in implementing certain aspects of the Suffolk SDP, and its recent completion (the final report was published in June 2006) meant that the experience was still fresh in their minds.

Eighty percent (80%) of the respondents chose as their reason for participation: Improve intergovernmental dialogue about land use and transportation issues, followed by change public policy and improve the decision-making process (70% each). Fifty percent (50%) noted education and changing capital budgeting priorities as the next tier of reasons for

participating in the Suffolk SDP. Additional goals included improving public transit, preserving quality of life and encouraging land preservation through land use and transportation decisions. Of all the SDPs, the Suffolk responses were the most strongly aligned with a long-term planning vision for the sub-region, and changing the land use/transportation decision-making paradigm. Interestingly, these responses reflect the Steering Committee's strong emphasis of these themes throughout this SDP.

The percentage of Suffolk respondents familiar with consensus-building techniques was more than 20 percentage points lower than Westchester's 83.3%, but a far greater proportion of Suffolk respondents said they were Hopeful/Neutral in their expectations of the SDP.

The flow of factual information about the study area, and the consensus process, received high marks, although as with the other studies, explanation of the modeling process was rated lower. Nevertheless, a majority felt the modeling exercise helpful. Sixty percent, 60%, of the respondents felt the relevant issues had been identified. And, 70% felt the public participation workshops had facilitated public understanding and input, the most positive ranking of all the SDPs. Yet, interestingly, public education measures in this SDP received the lowest marks of the four projects, even though a core group of stakeholders was brought in to help improve this element.

Conflict resolution techniques employed in this SDP were felt to be effective by only 30% of the respondents, the lowest positive rating of all four SDPs. The lack of local political support in the Suffolk SDP was the highest of the four SDPs, reflecting the strong tradition of home rule within the project area, and its large geographic size.

The questions about outcome were comparable to those of the Brooklyn SDP with a majority saying consensus had been achieved; practical solutions had been identified; and personal understanding of the issues had improved. In spite of the lack of political support, the overall impression is that at the grass-roots and agency levels, this SDP was successful in improving understanding of the issues, facilitating decision-making, and laying a foundation for continued collaboration.

However, when asked if consensus had been reached on a timeframe for implementation or whether strategies would be implemented, the overwhelming shift is to the negative, with only 20% feeling that either would take place and 60% not answering the question on implementation. These responses reflect the tremendously fragmented nature of local governmental jurisdictions within the region

The measures undertaken to ensure continuing collaboration were mostly favorable with only one negative comment by a government official. The Suffolk SDP is unique in that its predecessor, the East End Transportation Council, continues to meet monthly in order to continue the regional dialogue. An MOA has been signed by all but one town and two villages, and a feasibility study of one major public transit concept (rail) is moving forward. For all its lack of political support, there seems to be a core group of individuals within the EETC who continue to inch the SDP strategies forward.

The weaknesses of this SDP were critiqued in considerable detail by the respondents and the comments focus on the lack of consistent, strong support and involvement by elected officials, the high degree of parochialism, and the lack of consensus on certain issues. One of the strongest complaints about this SDP (about the lack of a “defined product”) reflected the tendency of many local elected officials to want a concrete plan with highly specific recommendations.

The strengths of the SDP, as articulated by the respondents, were that the public had been listened to; an extensive database of information had been collected; the public outreach had been extensive, and the press coverage good (if mixed). The process was thought to have increased local awareness of the consequences of build-out under existing zoning, thereby strengthening regional support for continued land preservation.

The suggestions offered for future SDPs included mandating attendance by town board members, and putting a stronger structure in place for implementation. One person noted that something needed to be done to solve the problem of those wanting to dominate the process – a problem that elicited a similar comment in the Westchester study.

When asked for comments, the need for political leaders to step up to the plate was repeated, along with shortening the time-frame of both the study and the explanation of the model.

Coney Island/Gravesend Sustainable Development Transportation Study, Kings County

A total of 27 surveys were delivered. Four responses were received, resulting in a response rate of 14.8%. This was the smallest numerical return of the four studies.

Motivation for taking part in the Coney Island/Gravesend Sustainable Development Program (SDP)

Responses from Advocates/General Public (P) made up 50% of the total, with one Elected/Appointed Government Official (G) and one Unknown whose responses suggested he/she probably was an Advocate/General Public. All characterized their involvement as voluntary.

The respondents offered the following reasons for pursuing or participating in the SDP:

- “Owner of residential property” P
- “Employment” P
- “Traffic safety” P
- “Getting better transportation for Coney Island.”
- “Ongoing transportation issues in area” G
- “Future needs for transit” G
- “Lack of city involvement in the past.” G

Respondents identified and ranked the nature of their commitment as follows:

- 75% Time
- 25% Institutional

The reasons for participating in the Coney Island/Gravesend SDP were, in descending order:

- 75% Respond to complaints from the public about transportation problems
- 50% Improve decision-making process
- 25% Respond to complaints from government officials
- 25% Educate public about land use and transportation options
- 25% Change land use/transportation or other planning policy
- 25% Change capital budgeting priorities of transportation agencies
- 25% Improve inter-governmental dialogue about land use and transportation issues

Expectations of the Coney Island/Gravesend SDP

Half of the respondents had experience or familiarity with consensus-building approaches to planning and half did not.

Half the respondents were skeptical/neutral about the process; 25% were hopeful and 25% did not answer.

Experience during the Coney Island/Gravesend SDP

The fourteen questions in this part of the questionnaire tried to determine how effectively the SDP conveyed the types of information that were considered crucial to a consensus-driven planning effort.

The first five questions dealt with basic technical data and the more challenging modeling process.

Three quarters, 75%, of the respondents felt the physical boundaries and primary purposes of the SDP were clearly defined. The rest, 25%, did not answer.

Three quarters, 75%, felt the consensus-building process was clearly explained. The rest, 25%, disagreed.

Three quarters, 75%, of the respondents felt the flow of information was helpful and the rest, 25%, disagreed.

Half the respondents felt the modeling process was explained sufficiently and half did not.

One quarter, 25%, of the respondents found the modeling exercise helpful for analyzing potential solutions, but fifty percent (50%) disagreed. A quarter, (25%), did not answer.

Three quarters of the respondents did not feel all relevant issues were identified, but 25% thought they were.

Three quarters, 75%, felt the public education measures were effective, but the rest, 25%, disagreed.

Half the respondents thought there was adequate coordination between the Project Manager, Steering Committee and Stakeholders; and half did not.

Half the respondents thought the conflict resolution techniques were effective and half did not.

Half thought the public participation workshops facilitated public understanding and input and half disagreed.

Seventy-five percent (75%) of the respondents understood the consultant's supporting role in the process, and the rest did not.

Seventy-five percent (75%) thought the consultant's supporting role was constructive, and twenty-five percent (25%) did not.

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Half the respondents thought there was sustained and sufficient political support throughout the process. Twenty-five percent (25%) disagreed, and the remainder did not answer.

Fifty percent (50%) thought the timeframe of the SDP was just about right. Twenty-five percent (25%) thought it was too long and the rest did not answer.

Outcomes of the Coney Island/Gravesend SDP

The ten questions of the fourteen questions asked in this section attempted to determine respondents' perceptions about program outcomes.

Seventy-five percent (75%) felt the SDP achieved consensus on the primary issues, and the rest disagreed.

Half the respondents felt the SDP identified practical and realistic solutions to regional issues of concern. Twenty-five percent (25%) disagreed, and twenty-five percent (25%) did not answer.

All the respondents were thought participation in the SDP had improved their understanding of the primary issues.

All the respondents thought participation had deepened their understanding of how transportation and land use decisions are made.

Half the respondents felt the SDP had improved inter-agency understanding of their respective policies and decision-making process. Twenty-five percent (25%) disagreed and twenty-five percent (25%) did not answer.

Three quarters felt the SDP had improved public understanding of how decisions are made. Twenty-five percent (25%) disagreed.

Half the respondents thought the SDP would result in improved decision-making at the regional level. Half did not.

Half thought the SDP laid a foundation for continued collaboration, consensus-building and coordinated decision-making in the region. Half disagreed.

Half thought the SDP achieved consensus on an implementation timeframe. Twenty-five percent (25%) disagreed and twenty-five percent (25%) did not answer.

Half did not think the recommendations and implementation strategies were likely to be implemented. Twenty-five percent (25%) thought they were, and the rest did not answer.

The last four questions in this section solicited write-in responses. The responses listed here are as close to the original wording as possible. They were not ranked. The role

played by the respondent is noted: C – consultant, P – Public, A – Agency Representative, G – Elected/Appointed Government Official.

The first question, whether participation in the SDS had affected the respondent's on-going decisions, planning and/or advocacy activities, elicited the following responses:

- “We analyze our own problems and do data outreach.” G
- “Knowing what was going on.”

The second question asked what measures have been taken to ensure continuing collaboration between relevant agencies, officials and the public about transportation and land use issues. The following responses were given:

- “Community level with adequate outreach for involvement” G
- “Don't know.”

The third questions asked about the strengths and weaknesses of the Coney Island/Gravesend SDP. Seventy-five percent (75%) of the respondents did not answer. The one respondent who did answer noted that there were no weaknesses and that the strength of the process was “What was said”.

Suggestions pursuant to the Coney Island/Gravesend SDP

In response to question what would you do differently if involved in another SDP, only one person answered: “to let the people know”, which might be interpreted as a suggestion to broaden public outreach.

The additional comments or issues contained the following remarks, of which the last four properly belonged in the listing of weaknesses:

- “Very good”
- “Poorly organized” G
- “Poorly publicized” G
- “No teeth to create change” G
- “Poor timing” G

Summary: Coney Island/Gravesend SDP

The small number of respondents suggested caution in interpreting the responses. Most of the comments were from the public. The one Elected/Appointed Government Official who responded was critical of the organization of the SDP process and its effectiveness, going so far as to say that while his (or her) understanding of the issues and the process had improved, that of the public and the agencies had not: a comment routinely contradicted by the other three respondents.

Three quarters of the respondents chose the following reason for participating in the Coney Island SDP: complaints (from the public) about transportation problems. The next reason was to improve the decision making process. The remaining reasons (each by 25%) had to do with complaints from government officials, the need for education, to change policy and budgeting practices and to improve inter governmental dialogue.

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The write-in reasons for getting involved: improving transportation within the area, including public transit, traffic safety, and concerns about employment. One government official noted the lack of city involvement in the past.

The expectation level was mixed, with half familiar with the consensus approach and half skeptical/neutral about it. With regard to the flow of information about facts, and the effectiveness of the public education measures, the process seems to have been successful.

As with the other studies, the verdict on whether the modeling process was explained was split. But, unlike the other studies, the perception of the modeling exercises' usefulness was not as great: half said the exercise was not useful.

There were mixed feelings about internal coordination (among the Project Manager, the Steering Committee and the Stakeholders) about the effectiveness of the conflict resolution techniques and the public participation workshops. In each of these responses, opinion was split in half. This extended to the issue of whether political support was substantial and sustained.

Unlike the other studies, the Coney Island study timeframe was perceived to be just right by half the respondents. The SDP report was not completed at the time of the questionnaire. Additionally, the SDP process was conducted within a shorter timeframe than the others.

With regard to outcomes, the SDP seems to have been successful in identifying the issues, in improving public understanding of the issues, of how decisions are made and this perception extended to that of other agencies.

However, the group was split as to whether practical solutions had been identified, whether improved decisions would be made on regional level, whether a foundation had been laid for continuing collaboration, coordination and consensus, and whether the recommended strategies would be implemented. Again, this ambivalence may be a reflection of the fact that at the time of the questionnaire, the final report had not been issued and the SDP is still underway.

The respondents did not identify any strengths or weaknesses as such, but in the comments section they revealed widely divergent, but inadequately articulated opinions; e.g. very good, poorly organized, poorly publicized, no teeth, poor timing.

Unknown respondent

One anonymous respondent failed to identify the program he/she participated in, and the role played. The repeated references to truck traffic and the prominence of complaints about trucking suggests that this respondent may have participated in the Rockland SDP.

Motivation for taking part in a Sustainable Development Program

None of the questions in this section were answered.

Expectations of the SDP

The respondent had experience or familiarity with consensus-building approaches to planning. This respondent rated his/her expectations of the consensus-building process as Hopeful.

Experience during the SDP

This respondent felt the physical boundaries and primary purposes of the SDP were clearly defined.

Also, that the consensus-building process was clearly explained.

The flow of information and its presentation was found helpful.

The modeling process was explained sufficiently and the exercise was helpful for analyzing potential solutions.

All relevant issues were identified.

The respondent felt the public education measures were not effective.

Adequate coordination existed between the Project Manager, the Steering Committee and the Stakeholders.

The respondent felt the conflict resolution measures were not effective.

The respondent felt the design of the public participation measures did not facilitate public understanding and input.

The respondent understood the consultant's supporting role in the process and felt that this role was constructive to the conduct of the study.

Asked if there was sustained and sufficient political support throughout the SDP, the respondent answered Yes.

The timeframe of the SDP was felt to be Just about right.

Outcomes of the Program

This respondent did not think the SDP achieved consensus on the primary issues. Nor did it identify practical and realistic solutions to the regional issues of concern.

This respondent said participation in the SDP had improved his/her understanding of the primary issues, as well as how transportation and land use decisions are being made. But, this person also did not think the SDP had improved public understanding of how transportation and land use decisions are made. Nor did the SDP improve decision-making at the regional level.

Nevertheless, this respondent thought the SDP had laid a foundation for continued collaboration, consensus-building and coordinated decision-making within the region. And, that it had achieved consensus on an implementation timeframe.

The last four questions in this section solicited write-in responses. The responses listed here are as close to the original wording as possible.

The first question, whether participation in the SDS had affected the respondent's ongoing decisions, planning and/or advocacy activities, elicited the following responses:

- "Helped to a point."

The second question, which asked what measures have been taken to ensure continuing collaboration between relevant agencies, officials and the public about transportation and land use issues, was not answered.

The respondent did not identify any strengths of the SDP process, but pointed out three weaknesses:

- "Need to talk to homeowners differently"
- "need to point out the economic reasons for truck roads."
- "Knowing and limiting people who waste time at the meetings."

Suggestions and comments

The following suggestion was made in response to the question "If you were to be involved in another SDP, what would three things would you do differently?"

- "Not approach the road improvements as a neighborhood."

In reply to the request for additional comments, the respondent wrote:

- "Too many times people get a good buy on a house on a truck route and then don't like trucks on their road."

Observations

The questionnaires provided useful insights into the perspectives of various participants. While they must be interpreted with caution, they do give us a feel for the extremes in opinion about the approach and effectiveness of the sustainable development process.

IV Interview Findings

A series of interviews were held with key players within each program. In order to obtain frank assessments and critiques about the SDP process, as well as recommendations, the interviewees were guaranteed confidentiality. To the extent possible, the information revealed during the interviews is discussed here without identifying the person by name or position.

Each interviewee was given the questions a couple of days in advance of the interview to afford time to reflect on their responses. The first four questions were for the benefit of the interviewer who needed to understand the interviewee's administrative, electoral and/or professional background, his or her role in the process and, finally, objectives for engaging in the SDP process. The remaining questions were designed to obtain the interviewee's frank assessment of the process, as well as suggestions for future improvement.

1. What role did you play in the creation and design of the Sustainable Development program?
2. Why were you appointed to your position? (if applicable)
3. Why did you assume this leadership role? (if applicable)
4. What were your personal/professional/political objectives for the program?
5. What difficulties or stumbling blocks did you encounter in the process?*
6. What did you do to resolve them?
7. What positive consensus and actions resulted from the study? Short-term? Long-term?
8. Describe your working relationship with NYMTC staff.
9. If you were asked to undertake another sustainable program, what specific things would you do differently?*
10. If you were asked to undertake another sustainable program, what specific things would you like NYMTC to do differently?*
11. What insights or observations do you have for NYMTC relative to funding and designing future Sustainable Development programs?*

(* For example: *Administrative, political, financial, staffing, resources, publicity*)

Synopsis of Interviews

The observations and suggestions offered here are listed in a logical progression, and do not coincide with the order in which the programs have been discussed in this report. Some of the observations and suggestions may seem somewhat contradictory or conflicting when read in the context of this sub-section. However, the reader must keep in mind that they reflect an interviewee's perspective on his or her specific experience. To protect the identity of the interviewees (and the agencies they worked for and with), every attempt was made to critique the process generically, while using specific illustrative examples only where appropriate.

Roles

At the time of their involvement in the SDP, three of the twelve interviewees were elected officials, five were transportation agency officials, two were land use planners, and two were citizen volunteers.

Some of the interviewees had major roles in the creation and design of the SDP, while others came into the process during later stages and their involvement was supervisory in nature; typically as project managers or Steering Committee Chairs. More than a third of the group had extensive experience with the design and management of transportation or land use studies. Others played less visible, but nonetheless tangible roles, as Steering Committee or Citizens Advisory Committee members for example.

Objectives

When the interviewees were asked what their objectives were for their respective SDP, the responses ranged widely from the highly specific to the more general. For instance:

- Implement some transportation improvements.
- Solve a long-standing set of problems on the road network connecting two separate municipalities within the county and to improve access to a third.
- The creation of a viable transportation system for the East End.
- Improve transportation options within a mostly residential community.
- Identify traffic problems and bring relief to the community.
- Take a pro-active approach to the particular issues facing Coney Island/Gravesend/ neighborhoods.
- Develop a good product: a usable plan with specific recommendations for land use changes that are needed to support transportation improvements, including reduced automobile travel, enhanced transit and greater opportunities to travel by bicycle.
- Deal with traffic congestion on a strip corridor.
- Ensure local political input into regional thinking.
- Force politicians to change, to look beyond their local jurisdictions to a more regional perspective.
- Parlay Village influence on a regional level in concert with sister towns and villages.
- Provide micro-vision to the macro-vision.
- Be part of the process and of the implementation.

Some of the interviewees had approached the SDP process intending to achieve very specific goals or end products in mind, while others were more open-minded about the types of recommendations likely to come out of the process.

Stumbling Blocks & Resolutions

Interviewees were asked for frank assessments of the problems they encountered during the SDP process. Their responses were grouped into the following categories: *Political, Consulting, Funding, Agency mind-sets, Communications, and Implementation.*

Political

The interviewees identified four areas of difficulty within the Political realm:

- *Disagreements between elected officials about the SDP process, its direction and/or its findings*
- *Insufficient outreach (to town and village boards, zoning, planning and other officials) by the Steering Committee*
- *Insufficient outreach to elected officials at the county, state and federal levels of government*
- *Lack of visible interest and involvement on the part of NYMTC Council's voting members*

Each area of difficulty is explained in more detail, below.

- *Disagreements between elected officials within a project area about the SDP program, its direction and/or its findings*

In the SDP projects requiring coordination among several municipalities within the subject area, the degree of support (for the process) and the level of coordination amongst all elected officials were not consistently strong. Some elected officials strongly supported and championed the process; some took a quieter stance, while still others maintained a distance. Resolving political differences was more of a problem in SDPs involving multiple localities than those within a single governmental jurisdiction.

Political dissonance during the SDP process tended to continue through to the implementation phase. For example, in one SDP, many officials took a “wait and see” attitude about the process and its findings, with some referring to the SDP process as “just another study”. Officials who were expecting a standard planning report (with consultant-produced recommendations) expressed disappointment on receiving a list of public-driven consensus points. Disagreements about the value of the SDP process and its recommendations may have had the effect of causing a couple of local governments to decline to sign a regional Memorandum of Agreement reaffirming the consensus findings of the SDP and setting the stage for inter-municipal coordination on land use and transportation policies and projects. Change in political leadership within these municipalities may have played a role in this situation as well.

Two of the SDPs evaluated here, Westchester and Suffolk, involved multiple local jurisdictions. Their experience contrasted with that of the Rockland project which took place largely within one township, and benefited from consistent, strong political leadership, support and involvement throughout the process. This was noted as an asset (by this program's administrators) and was suggested as a pre-condition for future SDP projects.

- *Insufficient outreach to town and village boards, zoning and planning officials throughout the process*

Outreach to town and village board members was a problem, particularly in the Suffolk SDP. The Suffolk Steering Committee attempted to address this by persuading the Towns and Villages to hire a liaison between themselves and the Steering Committee. The liaison kept village/town board members informed of the SDP process at their respective work sessions. While this type of outreach helped maintain an open line of communication between the two groups, it was not fool-proof because the political reality of staggered terms of office meant the liaison was constantly educating newly elected officials.

As noted earlier, for two of the SDPs, disinterested or insufficient political engagement on the part of some local village and town board members proved to be a stumbling block during the transition phase from the SDP to implementation.

Attempts to resolve disagreements between elected officials were approached gingerly. Interviewees described having one-on-one talks with the warring parties, and soliciting help from NYMTC staff. One person noted the difficulty faced by non-elected officials in addressing these types of conflicts. Another, an elected official, felt the elected officials themselves should have attempted to resolve the differences among themselves earlier; that a more proactive approach might have helped to defuse the situation.

- *Insufficient outreach throughout the SDP process to elected officials at the county, state and federal levels of government who represent the project area*
Failure to proactively engage the support of all county and state officials with jurisdiction within the project area at the start of the process (and throughout) sometimes caused problems later, during the implementation phase, when their support was critical, but sometimes lacking.

- *Lack of visible interest and involvement in the SDP on the part of NYMTC Council members*

Interviewees from three SDPs mentioned that if the NYMTC Council members, particularly the representatives of the agencies within the region, had played a more visible role in publicizing and supporting ongoing SDP processes, it might have been easier to obtain stronger political buy-in from local governments and the agencies. One person, noting the buzz created by the appearance of a County Executive at the concluding summit meeting of an SDP within his county, said the Governor should have thrown his political weight behind the concept in the same, visible way.

Consulting

The interviewees mentioned several difficulties during the process of selecting and

working with consultants. These concerns can be categorized as follows:

- *Nature and constraints of the selection process*
- *Difficulty of adjusting or terminating the contract*
- *Skill set of consulting team*
- *Personnel changes within the consulting team*

The categories are expanded on below:

- *Nature and constraints of the selection process*
Some interviewees felt the selection process worked well. Others disagreed. Complaints came from personnel familiar with the State's contracting process as well as newcomers.

One assessment was that elected officials on a Steering Committee should not have a say in choosing the consulting firm; that a strictly professional peer assessment of a consulting firm is preferable. Another interviewee noted that the RFP should have been revised by the Steering Committee after agreement had been reached on the goals and objectives for the SDP. If this had been done, the RFP would have advertised the specific skill sets that were needed for the project.

- *Difficulty of adjusting or terminating the contract*
The nature of the contracting process, and the way it is managed by the State means that adjustments to a contract and terminations of contracts are not easily made. Interviewees in at least two of the four SDPs noted that adjustments, such as changing the scope of the original work to accommodate changing circumstances, and terminating consulting firms for unsatisfactory work, should be easier to initiate.
- *Skill set of consulting team*
The interviewees pointed to two flaws: the failure of the RFP to properly define all the anticipated skill sets that would be needed and the difficulty of amending contracts mid-point through an SDP process in order to adjust for those skill sets; an issue introduced in the previous paragraph.

Deficiencies in the skill sets of consulting teams were of concern in three of the four studies. The most frequent observation was the lack of good writers, followed by the lack of good communicators able to speak effectively with elected officials as well as the public. In two of the SDPs, the consulting firm was perceived as lacking sufficient familiarity with the project area, a feel for the community's character and sensitivity to the tenor of public discourse. Lastly, experience in Transportation Access Management, was noted as a skill set that should be included in future RFPs.

- *Personnel changes within the consulting team*

Two of the projects experienced changes in project management personnel of the consulting firm with one project experiencing three changes of managers. In each case, the team representing the firm during the interview was not necessarily the same group that worked on the project. Multiple changes in the project team composition, particularly its manager, were cited as a significant disruptive factor to the internal flow of the project.

Funding

With regard to funding, the interviews revealed two slightly different types of problems which are described here as:

- *Timing of reimbursement by agency controlling the funds*
- *Inability to hire temporary staff to facilitate in-house coordination*

The problems are explained below:

- *Timing of reimbursement by agency controlling the funds*
Sometimes the agency selected to receive the funds (to administer the SDP) wasn't sensitive to the budget cycle of another coordinating agency. This was an issue when project management and administration was split between two agencies. This mis-match resulted in delays and budgetary adjustments: a situation that could have been avoided up-front by obtaining agreements on the nature and timing of fiscal management practices.
- *Lack of funds to hire temporary staff to facilitate in-house coordination*
Although the purpose behind hiring a consulting firm is to facilitate the public consensus-building process (among other things), most inter-municipal and inter-agency coordination within an agency was handled by existing in-house staff. Most agencies have staff committed to specific types of work, and the inter-disciplinary nature of the SDP often required pulling people off their normal jobs. It was difficult for a short-staffed agency to stay fully engaged in an SDP for more than two years, particularly when they were managing other mandated studies or projects within the same time-frame.

Federal funds for the SDP could not be used to hire temporary, in-house staff to facilitate inter-agency coordination and participation. As one interviewee noted, if the agency with primary project management responsibilities had been allowed to do so, some of the funding would have been used to hire temporary staff with the necessary skill sets to leverage the project to a higher level. This observation was echoed by others who pointed out that some smaller local governments did not have the technical or financial resources to fully engage in the SDP process in a meaningful way. These communities might have vested more intensely in the process if they had received some financial assistance to hire qualified planners on a temporary basis.

While some consulting teams had skill sets which were used to counter the lack of staff and skill-sets, others did not. More than one interviewee mentioned the uncompensated use of in-house staff to re-write written material prepared by the consultant, or to act as facilitators between the consulting team and the political arena. Whether large or small, representatives of agencies and municipalities in the SDP process noted a need for temporary in-house help during the SDP process to facilitate input, review alternatives and effect implementation.

Agency Mind-sets

When asked to assess perceptions (or agency mind-sets) about their own agency as well as their observations of other agencies, the interviewees made some cogent observations, which were categorized as follows:

- *Ownership issues*
- *Lack of authority to make decisions*
- *Degree of coordination and extent of organizational change*
- *Temporary nature of coordination*
- *Composition of Steering Committee*

These observations are elaborated on here:

- *Ownership issues*
Several interviewees brought up the lack of “ownership” by some agencies or municipalities during the SDP process and afterwards. The word, ownership, was used in the following context: the degree to which a participant (e.g. a municipality or a transportation agency) took responsibility for engaging in the SDP as an equal partner in the consensus-building process. Ownership was viewed as a necessary component to effective input and implementation.

As noted earlier, if an agency had insufficient staff to devote to the SDP, its involvement tended to suffer. Additionally, if an agency viewed the SDP process as “just another planning study”, it also might view the public participation and consensus-building aspects as being onerous or mis-guided.

Agencies charged with administering the SDP, including the funds, tended to be perceived as the responsible or “parent” agency, and this often led other agencies or governmental entities to tailor their commitment level and resources to that of lesser partners. In many cases, the concept of “ownership” seemed tied to funding; whereby crafting and implementing the SDP recommendations were seen as the sole responsibility of the funded agency.

- *Lack of authority to make decisions*
Some agency personnel assigned to the consensus-building or implementation phases of the SDP had little or no authority to make decisions within their agencies. Further, some personnel appeared to have been given limited ability (or

access) to influence decision-makers within their agencies. Mention was made of the tendency of transportation agency personnel, in particular, to refrain from offering input at meetings. (In the author's observations, agency personnel may have needed to obtain clearance from upper levels of management before venturing specific ideas or suggestions.) The "disconnect" was described as being an obstacle to true consensus-building and implementation because the decision-makers in those agencies were seen as being too far removed from the SDP process.

- *Degree of coordination and extent of organizational change*
Organizational mind-sets can affect how one agency views another agency's role (and level of importance) during the site development planning process. The lack of inter-agency cooperation (e.g. between transportation officials and other agencies with control over land use and public transit services, for instance) may be due to a hidden bias. As was pointed out by one official, there remains a presumption within some municipal agencies that transportation planners are only concerned with the design and construction of transportation infrastructure; that they have no place in the early stages of a local planning process. For that reason, transportation planners often are not told about proposed development or re-development projects until it is too late for constructive input.

The "slowness" of transportation agencies (in particular) to respond to the internal flow of the SDP process was mentioned in several different contexts. One was the slow pace of responsiveness to requests for specific projects to be started or placed on the TIP list. Another was their failure to reach out to the public on a regular basis in order to advertise the connection between improvements to the transportation network and the SDP recommendations.

One interviewee quipped that the money paid to the consultant to study a potential solution would have been better spent if it had been given directly to the transportation agency, since that agency ended up doing its own study after the SDP was finished. An elected official observed that these duplicative efforts should be reduced so as to save time and money.

The greatest degree of frustration expressed by interviewees had to do with the "implementation gap", whereby the content of subsequent TIPs did not reflect SDP recommendations unless political pressure was brought to bear. One elected official noted that the consensus recommendations of an SDP should not have to be reinforced by way of joint municipal resolutions in order to get line items onto the TIP. This perspective was echoed by another elected official who felt inclusion of consensus projects into a TIP should be automatic.

- *Temporary nature of coordination*
For some municipal and agency participants, the SDP was assumed to be a temporary state of affairs; a "one-shot deal". In these instances, little internal organizational change took place in response to the interplay of ideas and

suggestions during the SDP process. Once the SDP process ended, some interviewees noted that even though continuing dialogue might be taking place between elected and planning officials, organizational inertia within some transportation agencies seemed to reinforce a “business as usual” attitude.

- *Composition of Steering Committee*
One project manager was uncomfortable with the inclusion of elected officials on this committee for reasons of wanting to run the SDP strictly as a professional study.

Communications

The interviewees were candid about the communication glitches that occurred in the course of their respective projects. These observations were grouped in accordance with the context in which they took place.

- *Coordination between Steering Committee and Stakeholders.*
- *Public education and outreach.*

The communication problems were varied within each category, and these are noted here:

- *Coordination between Steering Committee and Stakeholders*
Coordination between these two groups was an issue in at least two of the SDPs. The presence of elected officials on the Steering Committee led one interviewee to wonder about the extent to which political agendas might have driven the consensus-building process, particularly when the data did not support a specific capital investment for which there was strong political support.

In another SDP, friction between these two groups was an ongoing and serious drain on the forward movement of the process. In this SDP, the Steering Committee did not meet with the Stakeholders as frequently as did the consulting team and the Coordinator. Although the Stakeholders were invited to send an observer to the Steering Committee meetings, and money was spent to investigate specific issues of concern to them, this did not resolve what were described by one member of the Steering Committee as “personality problems”. Two influential stakeholders wanted the Steering Committee to take a much more proactive role in promoting one preferred alternative solution above all others. When told this was contrary to the design of the SDP process, they left the process and were successful in obtaining the support of a regional elected official to publicize their dissatisfactions with the SDP process.

- *Public education and outreach*
Observations about public education and outreach were mostly tied to the need to demonstrate that short and long-term capital projects ending with a “shovel in the ground” should be attributed as direct outcomes of the SDP process. Interviewees from all four SDPs noted that public outreach about the end results of the SDP

process must be improved, particularly by transportation agencies. Failure to keep the public informed about ongoing implementation causes the public to lose its belief in the value of coordinated regional planning with public input.

The credibility of the SDP process lies in the public belief in the process; namely that they were given all the facts, that their concerns were understood, that their ideas were given due consideration, and that the “business of government” really changed as a result of their input. This is critical to the success of the SDP process, and, many interviewees felt it was worthy of more attention by NYMTC and all governmental/agency participants in the SDP.

Many of the interviewees noted that the public education and consensus-building aspects of the SDP process were a greater challenge for transportation agency officials than for planners or elected officials because the latter two groups dealt with these types of tasks more often.

Only one person disagreed with NYMTC’s insistence on more public input and consensus-building because “public input should not drive the process” of deciding public investment in transportation infrastructure and this stance reflected this person’s transportation background.

Several comments were made about the importance of maintaining an ongoing and effective press presence in order to ensure the widest public exposure about the SDP and the ensuing implementation actions. Publicity must be ongoing; it cannot stop when the SDP process ends.

Implementation

Many interviewees noted the importance of showing the public that their government was listening and their observations centered on two post-SDP issues:

- *Insufficient short-term implementation actions.*
- *Lack of built-in transition mechanisms in the post-SDP phase.*

These observations were, as follows:

- *Insufficient short-term implementation actions*
Most of the interviewees felt that public perception of the SDP process had been largely favorable, (and this perception this is borne out by the questionnaire responses), but also noted that this perception would be easily undone by lack of highly visible actions executed shortly after the SDP ends.
- *Lack of built-in transition mechanisms*
Almost every interviewee mentioned the difficulty of trying, at the end of the SDP process, to create a strong mechanism to facilitate the transition from process to post-SDP implementation. Insufficient engagement by elected officials during the SDP process can be fatal at this stage. For various reasons, such as lack of staff

and funds, the transition phase tends to be tackled by the party (or parties) with the most to gain from continuing the regional dialogue. Although NYMTC's staff continues to help facilitate the implementation phase and the regional dialogue, disaffected and cynical players at the local level can remove themselves from the regional dialogue, seemingly without penalty.

The downside of an ineffective transition mechanism was mentioned in all the SDPs. The problem is not confined to local governments or transportation providers. Even where there is a forum for continued dialogue, fluctuations in political support and engagement can slow implementation.

Results: Short and Long Term

When asked to describe the positive results of participation in the SDP process, interviewees referred to specific implementation actions which are noted here (by program) along with generic short-term results:

Rockland County

- New development proposals are being sent to other municipalities and agencies for comment.
- The Orangetown Overlay district.
- Landscaping, signage, striping and other cosmetic things.
- People loved being active in the consensus-building process. The specificity of the issues was appreciated. The consultant was good at bringing the public into the discussion. People thought the process was worthwhile. DOT used the Rte 303 study to obtain 10 M for an intersection study.
- DOT used the Rte 303 study to obtain 10 M for an intersection study.

Westchester County

- There was consensus on the major transportation recommendations, e.g. to complete the Bear Mountain Parkway, to reconstruct Route 35 and to make physical changes to allow trucks on the Parkway.
- There is a better understanding across the board (meaning among all groups of participants) about what needs to be done to improve the traffic situation.
- There is a realization that the bulk of the traffic problems are caused by people living and working within the study area.
- The concept of making significant land use changes (i.e. new denser hamlet areas) did not survive public reviews though lowering of densities in non-center areas was embraced.
- An Inter Municipal Agreement was adopted.
- Yorktown adopted a comprehensive plan with public transit and bicycle components.
- The traffic model (and data) will be used.
- There was inter-agency dialogue.

- Turning lanes were installed; traffic signals were coordinated.
- There were not enough visible short term results.
- Many projects were entered into the TIP.
- All three towns passed resolutions in support of the Bear Mountain Parkway Bypass, and the Route 6 Bypass.
- Two communities passed resolutions in favor of allowing trucks on the Bear Mountain Parkway.

Suffolk

- Safe Routes to Schools efforts were initiated in some communities.
- The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has been used to support a Human Service cooperative-transportation-program between East Hampton and Southampton towns to take residents to Stony Brook University Medical Center Hospital for scheduled appointments.
- More specific and concise connections have been initiated between some of the villages.
- Most Supervisors and Mayors see the value of the MOU.
- Most participants, except for one town, agreed to sign the MOU and the psychological benefit is significant. (The refusal of one town to sign was considered to be the result of a lack of political continuity after an election, (not an inherent flaw in the SDP).
- Kick-off, in 2002, and December retreat, 2005, were very good.
- With the support of the other four towns, the Town of Southampton applied for (and received) a grant from the New York State Department of State's Shared Municipal Services Incentive Program to conduct a feasibility study for a coordinated rail and bus network on the East End of Long Island. The grant was awarded in 2006 and the study will commence in December of 2007.

Kings (Brooklyn)

- Many improvements have been identified that will make a difference in the transportation network.
- There is a feeling of goodwill by the community towards the NYCDOT.
- The NYCDOT staff felt the community outreach efforts let the residents know that the agency was "for and with" them in their efforts to improve their neighborhoods.
- Interagency coordination did improve between the NYCDOT and other agencies within New York City.

The interviewees identified the following specific, as well as generic, long-term actions as being a consequence of the SDP process:

Rockland

- The translation from short to long term has not been accomplished.

- There is a much better line of communications and a clear recognition (on the part of the public) of the connections between land use and transportation decisions. It remains to be seen if interagency coordination can work in the long term

Westchester

- New development proposals are being sent to other municipalities and agencies for comment.
- All agencies are using the same traffic models.
- In the mid-term, access management practices are taking place on the road corridors
- The Bear Mountain Parkway Bypass is in the 2015-16 TIP.
- The Route 6 Bypass is on the 2017-18 TIP

Suffolk

- The door is open to specific and precise connections between villages, and the connection hopefully will continue in the spirit of teamwork.
- The connection between land use and transportation has been made (in eyes of public and elected officials).
- A regional Land Use Commission has been formed and it has elected local officials on it.
- There is a sense of dialogue with transportation agencies which has improved – no longer an “us vs. them” relationship.
- Instead of elected officials automatically bashing transportation agencies in the press, there is a greater likelihood that they will ask staff to pick-up the phone and initiate a dialogue with agency representatives.
- Too early to tell. / Not sure if “the connections” occurred and will continue.
- Two or three programs may move forward between two or more towns or villages.

Kings (Brooklyn)

- The public asked the NYCDOT to explore the possibility of a bus route to connect the three neighborhoods within the study area. The NYCDOT thought this was a good idea and asked NYC Transit to respond to the community’s request as NYC Transit has final say on these matters.
- The degree of coordination between NYCDOT and NYCTransit in the future may depend on the degree of community pressure on NYTransit, as well as that of other agencies.
- A sense that real improvements will come about because the NYCDOT is engaged as a planning and implementation agency. For instance, specific changes will be made, e.g. bike lanes will be added and marked.

- The members of the public who got involved will see the results of their input, particularly those items under NYCDOT control.

The very real progress evidenced by these responses was tempered by frank concerns about whether the SDP process would have a long-term effect (for the better) on the way decisions are being made. By way of example, as one interviewee noted, the degree of future coordination between different transportation agencies within a region (e.g. public transit and transportation) may depend on the degree of community pressure placed on these agencies to change their procedures and service outcomes. In addition, the continued lack of publicity about SDP-driven implementation actions coupled with lingering uncertainty about who was responsible for pushing forward the recommended actions, lent credence to expressions of “it may be too early to tell” if the SDP process would effect permanent changes in the business of government.

The discussion of long-term impacts led one transportation official to note the need for ongoing education about the relationship between population density and public transit, particularly in suburban areas. For example, the reluctance of the public and elected officials to understand, much less entertain, the type of density that would facilitate efficient public transit options in suburban areas was thought to be a barrier to consensus-building about transit options.

Lessons Learned & Suggestions for the Future

In the spirit of improving a process which had mostly favorable public, agency and political support, the interviewees identified several lessons and suggestions. These are listed here, according to one of two perspectives:

- *things the interviewees would have done differently and*
- *things NYMTC could do differently in future SDP projects.*

Although edited to maintain grammatical consistency, the comments included variations on a theme.

- *Things the Interviewees would have done differently:*
 - Find a location where changes are needed and “buy-in” can be obtained.
 - Be clear about program objectives.
 - Define end products (or deliverables) during the RFP; e.g. specific remediation of the land use code or changes in infrastructure on the ground.
 - Give some thought as to whether the NYCDOT is the appropriate agency to be the sole agency in charge of an SDP.
 - Several agencies working collaboratively would be better than just one agency attempting to get cooperation from the others.
 - Structure the SDP to create buy-in by all relevant agencies at the beginning of the process.
 - If there is no ownership in the process and no (or limited) responsibility for its “success” by all agencies - then it will be difficult to implement SDP recommendations.
 - Make provisions during RFP for a multi-year contract.

- Include (require) an access management plan component.
- Design studies to relate to existing legislation and regulatory standards particularly regarding clean air and SAFETEA-LU. (Focus on measurable changes and quantifiable improvements.)
- Incorporate the concept of climate change as part of the sustainability aspect of land use and transportation issues.
- Address thorny issues such as population density, and its role in transportation decisions.
- Have towns reimbursed for staff work – not all towns have a planning staff, and it would help if they could hire someone.
- Where there is lack of clarity as to what action to take, the role of the consultant should be to make recommendations, and those recommendations should drive the consensus-building activities.
- Take the initiative to have more one-on-one conversations with the other elected officials throughout the process.
- Find somebody with credibility on both sides of the political aisle to rise above political connotations and begin the dialogue.
- Don't bring in participants from other studies: may be perceived as an unnecessary "selling tactic" by the elected officials who have committed to the process by that point.
- Obtain written commitments from municipalities up-front that they will not walk away from the process in mid-point, particularly when controversy erupts.
- Obtain commitment by town board and village board members and not just Supervisors and Mayors.
- Insist on at least one yearly, organized, one-day retreat with the respective town and village boards to bring them up to speed on what is happening within the SDP process. If necessary, have multiple retreats in order to bring all parties in.
- Make sure all elected officials are kept in the loop throughout the process and remain interested in its outcomes.
- Deal more closely with municipal officials, and listen to the points of diversion or differences.
- Stay on the political radar screen by accentuating positive aspects of the process.
- Make sure there is greater interaction between the Stakeholders and the Steering Committee.
- Require more participation by paid Steering Committee members at Stakeholder meetings (because it is difficult for volunteers to sustain this level of involvement).
- Education and public input are very important and should be continued, but the public should be exposed to other ideas and ways of doing things. (This type of exposure should not be perceived as "telling people what to think".)

- Maybe educational outreach measures (about alternative solutions to transportation problems) should be substituted for intensive consensus-building process.
- Public (and/or political) opinion should not drive the process.
- Continue to generate press publicity between kick-off event to the presentation of the final report at a summit. And, continue to build on the press coverage after the SDP ends.
- Reconvene Stakeholders after the release of the final report in order to demonstrate the results of the process.
- Give more public credit to ideas and concepts put forth by Stakeholders.
- Hold meetings in different places and times to facilitate participation by the public.
- Do more public relations to counter negative publicity and do it in a more timely fashion, particularly at the political level with elected officials.
- Where there is lack of clarity as to what action to take, the role of the consultant should be to make recommendations, and those recommendations should drive the consensus-building activities.
- Keep the process moving forward/shorten timeline.
- Intensify technical coordination between NYCDOT and NYMTC in order to improve the use of technical data and programs; the cross-fertilization of ideas and expertise would be beneficial to both agencies.
- Train NYSDOT staff in working with the public.
- Train NYSDOT staff in working with other agency officials particularly in the art of integrating different disciplines.
- Make greater effort to prepare master lists of all capital transportation projects and development proposals in the study area as agencies and municipalities don't always think to share what could be very relevant information.
- NYSDOT has to have "more palpable, visible, short term projects" to demonstrate responsiveness.
- NYSDOT should do the traffic work, not the consultant; this might result in a more seamless transition from concept to implementation (by eliminating the need for the DOT to undertake its own, separate studies of the consultant's work).
- Alternatively, hire the same firm to do the design work for the NYSDOT in order to save public money and time.
- Include sufficient money in the SDP for some short-term implementation actions.
- Make funding of recommended projects and implementation schedule more prominent in the final report of the SDP.
- Explore the cost of improvements during the SDP. (A more realistic review of the costs and funding options would be helpful financially.)
- Collaborative process would be helpful in regional planning.

Things the Interviewees think NYMTC should do differently:

- Better advertising of the benefits of participating (and the downside of not).
- The NYMTC Council members are perceived as “the parents”. The Council itself (not just staff) should be more obvious throughout the process, and, in stressing to local elected officials that they are adjuncts to the process.
- The voting council of NYMTC should take a more visible role in showing their support of the SDP process; from kick-off to presentation of final report, particularly in a multi-jurisdictional SDP because it will encourage elected officials to pay closer attention to the process.
- There is insufficient political visibility on the part of NYMTC members.
- NYMTC should devote more staff resources to SDP. This would enable NYMTC to refine Programmatic, Administrative and Political aspects of the SDP process, thereby enhancing its potential effectiveness.
(Programmatic issues include program design, technical issues, format and techniques. Administrative issues include management and budgeting. Political issues include inter-agency coordination and political support.)
- There is insufficient political visibility on the part of NYMTC members.
- Hard to say – continual change in political leadership makes it difficult to maintain momentum over time.
- Planners (land use and transportation) should be encouraged to work together on technical level.
- Short-run successes are essential to build momentum and credibility in the process.
- Don’t just dangle money in front of elected officials; as this may not be enough to encourage them to work more cooperatively and closely.
- Dialogue (between SDP participants and NYMTC Council) has to be a two-way street, with frank discussions about pros and cons.
- Approach opponents of the process and get input as to why they are against consensus process.
- Have more highly placed individuals within NYMTC staff assigned to the project; it is too big for one person to manage.
- NYMTC provided good staff resources, but they were not sufficient for a multi-year study.
- NYMTC should insist on benchmarks and timetables that must be met by SDPs or risk cut-off of funds.
- Get the Governor’s office involved, and emphasize to the public and elected officials the bottoms-up nature of the SDP process. Local politicians respond to other politicians higher up the ladder.
- Set aside a specific part of the funding package specifically for communication and coordination at the regional and local governmental levels in order to address the items noted above, about keeping elected officials engaged and supportive.

- Issue more frequent progress reports to the press, public and elected officials. Reports should convey sense of forward movement engendered by the SDP process.
- Define end products (or deliverables) during the RFP; e.g. specific remediation of the land use code or changes in infrastructure on the ground.
- The transition phase (from completion of the SDP (to a functioning regional organization or set of working relationships) capable of continuing the work started by the SDP has to be discussed upfront with elected officials. They need to understand that this will be a required part of participating in the SDP.
- The transition phase needs to be part of the closing days of the SDP and it needs to include and Implementation or Action Plan, including MOUs.
- NYMTC should be in the forefront of the transition phase and, afterwards, in the implementation phase, to keep the elected officials and agencies on point.
- Make future programs more collaborative by design.
- Don't give all the money to just one agency, as this implies that only the recipient agency is responsible to coordinate, cooperate and implement the SDP process and recommendations.
- Sustainability issues in a place as urban and densely developed as NYC are hard to deal with because of the large amount of "hard" infrastructure. Since there is limited leeway in terms of hard solutions, more creativity is needed in order to devise "soft" solutions to "hard" issues.
- There is some uncertainty as to whether the "soft" solutions being proposed in this SDP will be understood by the public because the subsequent public educational component has not been given much attention.
- Try to reduce the "mismatch between delivery targets and (budgeting) program cycles" through greater awareness during the design phase of the project.
- In general, the BPM, the current modeling tool, is not suited for use at the micro or sub-area level. The modeling process was regional in its design, focus and extent, but it has limited applicability when planning for smaller territories within a region or a city.
- More research should be sponsored in order to develop the necessary model capability that integrates regional models with local or microscopic models for sub-area applications.
- The behavioral aspects of regional models have not been integrated into the physical deterministic aspect of sub-area models. NYMTC should work towards integrating micro models at the sub-area and sub-regional levels into larger regional models.
- Ideally, it could be the role of NYSDOT to pick up the charge, expand its vision, hire planners and take on a role in the regional planning process. It is difficult to train and maintain staff at the county level to manage such "short-term" but intensive projects.

- Alternatively, NYMTC should have land use planners on staff to manage future SDPs.
 - Land use planners tend to be trained in visioning, public participation, communications, mediations, etc. and they are more used to negotiating with elected officials. The same staff working on several SDP project should reduce dependence on consultants, increase efficiency in many areas and increase confidence in the process.
- If there were more central NYMTC staff, the funding process could be simplified with contract management handled by NYMTC.
- A transition phase should be built-into the SDP process from the beginning, and it should be designed to facilitate transparency and integration in land use and transportation planning decisions.
- NYMTC should consider having someone on staff keep on top of how federal money is being spent in the broader region, and that person should be a “cheerleader” for better integration (of land use issue in transportation planning) and sustainability in all funded projects, not just in SDP processes.
- There should be more conscious spending of money (on high priority projects) and tighter program focus on integration and sustainability.
 - Currently, each agency or governmental player in the process seeks to retain hold of federal funds for isolated projects that may no longer fit the broader goal of integrated and sustainable projects.
 - Also, money is wasted when end-of-year fiscal glitches cause money to be spent on lower priority projects instead of allowing it to be applied to a higher priority project in the following fiscal year.
- If Project management responsibilities were shifted to the DOT perhaps they might engage more fully in the process, but it would have to part of a new “culture.”
- Publicity is essential, but this is not the NYSDOT’s strong point.
 - NYSDOT must credit the SDP process when it makes improvements that were recommended by the SDP or the public will fail to grasp the connection between their involvement and input and the improvements.
- Training in the facilitation of this type of process (consensus-building) is important.
- Develop relationships with one or two consulting firms and use them exclusively. Alternatively, train a core of staff at NYMTC to do this work.
- RFP process was fine; no changes needed there.
- Better guidelines would be helpful.
- Better and long-term communications with the public at large is very important.
- Blend the NYSDOT into the process in terms of evident deliverables.

- NYSDOT should put projects (agreed on during process) into TIP automatically. Elected officials should not have to push to make sure projects get onto TIP list. (*Reluctance of NYSDOT to move items into TIP without resolutions by political jurisdictions was perceived as being unwilling to engage in the political arena.*)
- Embed a facilitated mediated agreement into the process, whereby political and agency jurisdictions agree to work together.
- Focus on developing a land use/transportation model.
- Make greater use of other staff in SDP process.
- Not sure (the BPM) model really works – we didn't see results.
- NYMTC could work with NYSDOT to determine if implementation could be expedited and funds earmarked for the actions/projects recommended by the SDP.
- The NYSDOT has to learn how to manage this type of project differently.
- A longer time period (for the SDP) would have permitted implementation of some of the recommendations.
- There needs to be continuity of NYMTC staff on all SDP projects.
- Keep SDP within one municipality, (not multiple governmental jurisdictions).
- The NYSDOT needs to be better staffed in terms of skill sets for this type of work), and more pro-active, particularly about putting projects on the TIP schedule.
- Priority and ranking of projects is important.
- Put a mechanism into place to transition into implementation.
- One benefit of NYMTC sponsoring an SDP, as an outside agency, is its ability to fuel consensus-building.
- The consensus process should be used to support the implementation of a defined goal, as well as helping to define the goal.
- The NYSDOT has no internal Project Manager charged with or responsible for SDP implementation. It is not clear who is setting the priorities within NYSDOT.
- The delay in funding projects that arise out of SDP consensus-building affects the public and political credibility of the process.
- There has to be a way to expedite how funds are allocated. The formula needs to be changed and there has to be a shorter time-frame between the moment of consensus and the implementation act.

Synopsis of Suggestions and Concluding Thoughts:

The careful reader will have noted that some of the lessons and the recommended suggestions seem inherently conflicting. If we keep in mind the degree to which each SDP was different, we should not be surprised by the seeming contradictions - for they reflect the uniqueness of each SDP. If anything, we should focus on the common threads running through these observations.

To paraphrase one elected official's succinct sum-up, the strength of the SDP process is that it is a good concept. Its weakness is its unwieldiness due to the institutional and cultural differences of the players - which can and may change over time. Opportunities lie in the fact that the SDP process is an agent for change and transition. This same official also noted that "insiders to the SDP see its value, but outsiders don't". This observation was echoed by a volunteer in another study who observed that the participants initially did not believe the process was bottoms-up; and that it took a long time for this perception to change.

V Program Evaluation

Introduction

The art of regional planning requires the balancing of the common good at the local level with that of the wider region. It recognizes the following irony: the best intentions of home rule initiatives can result in competition and conflict with those of neighboring home rule actions within a region.

The need for a sustainable development program approach to resolving transportation problems can be said to be the result of a continuing trend within the planning profession: increasing specialization. It has reached the point where it is legitimate to say land use planners speak a different language than do transportation planners. Even the organizational characteristics of these two sub-specialties are different. One has a more visionary and regulatory perspective, the other a more practical, shovel-in-the-ground orientation. Most land use controls within the New York metropolitan area are exercised at the local municipal level, while many transportation projects are designed and built at a regional level, across the borders of villages, cities, towns and counties.

Background

A brief review of the philosophical and policy underpinnings of sustainable development programs (SDP) provides a useful backdrop to this chapter. The SDP examined in this report were funded by the 1998 *Transportation Equity Act of the 21st Century* (TEA-21). Earlier legislation, the 1991 *Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act* (ISTEA), had laid a foundation for revised federal policy initiatives adopted pursuant to a directive by President William J. Clinton. The revised policies encouraged a new and different way of designing and funding transportation projects within the United States.

The design of ISTEA and TEA-21 embodied a version of federalism whereby the national government attempts to influence state policy and programming through the disbursement of funds to a metropolitan planning organization, which has been described by David B. Walker as "a federally encouraged single purpose regional body" (*The Rebirth of Federalism, Slouching Towards Washington*, 2nd ed., p 290.). Barring expensive and politically controversial reform of governmental structures within the New York metropolitan region, the collaborative, consensus-driven planning process embedded within the SDP offers local and regional governments an extraordinary opportunity to reshape their inter-relational dynamics voluntarily.

The design of the SDP also reflected a shift in federal policy with roots in a broader movement to encourage sustainable use of the earth's natural resources. The definition of sustainability adopted by the World Commission on Environment and Development (the Brundtland Commission) in 1987 is: "A sustainable condition for this planet is one in which there is stability for both social and physical systems, achieved through meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." As quoted in the *National Research Agenda for Transportation and Sustainable Communities*, September 1999, the Brundtland Commission's definition was

selected as the basis of a new federal policy shift because “it acknowledges that sustainability has social and community as well as physical dimensions, and is the most broadly accepted definition of “sustainability.””

But what exactly is a sustainable development policy for a region and how to evaluate the process of creating it? Sustainability as an embedded element of federal transportation policy is still evolving. No catch-all formula exists, not the least because each region (and problem set) is different. Also, measures of sustainability can be defined in many ways, e.g. fiscal, ecological, and social, to name just three. Each parameter can be measured by standardized quantitative indices, such as percentage reduction in air pollution, in vehicle miles traveled, and the like. But, regardless of the parameters chosen, and the indices devised, the benchmarks that most resist quantification are the qualitative ones.

The facilitation of regional dialogue and cooperation in pursuit of better, more integrated land use and transportation plans, which, in turn, will translate into more effective design and construction projects, is a difficult concept to describe, much less implement. The words themselves invoke whole, separate universes of concepts, processes, and language: each with abstract components that often seem unrelated to the practical goal of building structures and services.

Additionally, the terms “better” and “more integrated” are fraught with minefields. What, exactly, is a better, more integrated way? How should we balance the value of greater efficiency (e.g. greatest volume of vehicles, goods and people in shortest time and space) against its impact on the quality of life of the people using the system? Dissertations, scientific and economic papers wrestle with this question, while cost-benefit formulas offer myriad ways of quantifying the qualitative factors. However, no matter how economists, planners and engineers try to quantify the qualitative; in the end, quality of life issues are the ultimate intangibles; the elements which shift in the wind of public opinion.

But, as every player in the field of government knows, public opinion is not always grounded in facts. Un-informed public perception can be an obstacle to effective problem solving, particularly when public pressure is brought to bear on elected officials who, in turn, lean on the gears of government in search of action. As seen in the questionnaire responses examined earlier, when the public is given the opportunity to see the situation as seen by the planners and the builders, it can definitively shape their opinion and the nature of their input for the better. This is an encouraging sign.

Instead of trying to determine whether any of these four SDPs achieved sustainability within their respective regions, this evaluation asked the following questions. Did the SDP change the mind-set of the participants towards the concept of sustainability? Did the SDP change the way government went about its business? More specifically, and importantly, did participation in the program result in permanent changes to the mechanics of inter-governmental coordination on regional transportation and land use

issues of concern? And, finally, what practical things could be done in the future to improve on the SDP process?

Analysis

The following analysis is based on the accumulated input received from the questionnaire responses and interviews. It also includes insights gained by the author during the initiation and administration of the SEEDS SDP. This analysis has a practical bent, and is aimed at improving future programs funded by NYMTC.

For the purposes of this section, the SDP process was divided into three phases: Design, Process and Implementation. The sequence corresponds to the typical chronology of the SDPs reviewed here.

During the Design phase the project area is identified, local commitments are obtained, and the funding and administrative structure is put in place. The Process phase begins with the formulation with the Steering Committee, the preparation of the Request for Proposals and the choosing of consultants (where applicable), and the designation of a Project Manager. It includes the public outreach and education sessions, the consensus-building and conflict-resolution efforts, the design of the model and assessment of its outputs, and the preparation of the final report. The Implementation phase refers to all activities subsequent to the termination of funding for the SDP, as well as ongoing coordination required to implement the recommendations from the SDP.

Design

As noted earlier, the design phase of an SDP consists of two key steps: Political commitment and Funding & administration, each of which are described, discussed and critiqued below.

Political commitment

- The start of the design stage typically consisted of formal and informal discussions between NYMTC and local or regional officials interested in resolving regional issues through the format of an SDP. In some cases, NYMTC staff made the initial contacts; in others regional officials pursued NYMTC's support. Either way, the SDP was viewed by the interested parties as an alternative approach to resolving problems *that were not being solved in the normal course of business*.
- Typically, local elected officials confirmed their commitment to the process in writing (by resolution) prior to the start of funding. In one exception, only town supervisors and village mayors (not including their respective boards) voted to commit their municipalities to participate in the SDP.
- The nature of the local commitment, its degree and other aspects of coordination and implementation generally were not spelled out in any detail beyond an agreement to engage in a sustainable development process that would require consensus-building at the grass roots, elective and agency levels.
- A recurring theme in the multi-jurisdictional projects (e.g. the Suffolk SDP and, to a lesser degree, the Westchester SDP), was the disruption caused by uneven

political support across local governmental jurisdictions. In both projects, strong political leadership on the part of at least one or more local elected officials was instrumental in keeping the process moving forward. In the Suffolk project, political support was expressed most visibly at the level of supervisory elected officials, e.g. Supervisors and/or Mayors; but maintaining support from their respective governing boards required constant effort on the part of the Steering Committee and the Coordinator; a reflection of the intense nature of home-rule within the region, and the constant turn-over of elected officials.

- The long time frame of the SDP, particularly in the multi-jurisdictional projects, required ongoing education of newly-elected officials because the transfer of institutional information within the political arena can be haphazard.
- Enlisting the commitment and support of elected officials at the county, state and regional levels was an important part of the process. Aggressive pursuit of a broader base of support from elected regional officials (so as to obtain their buy-in to the concept) helped ensure the idea that all regional dialogue about integrated land use and transportation solutions was taking place within the SDP process, not outside of it.
- In regions with a strong tradition and history of local home rule, localities may have to be persuaded to “buy-in” to the notion that cooperating with each other (and with regional authorities) is a more effective way of exercising home rule than reacting defensively against regional forces beyond their spheres of jurisdiction. The goal is not so much unanimity of political opinion and support, but rather recognition that the consensus-driven process of arriving at land use and transportation decisions of regional import is preferable to the status quo – where one locality pits itself against another, or against an agency, in a fierce combative (and political) battle for limited resources.
- At the start of three of the SDPs, there was less than full understanding (on the part of some local government and regional agency officials) about the degree to which their respective commitments to the SDP would require a transition (at the close of the SDP project) into an implementation phase. Most participants recommended giving more thought to this transition at the start of the SDP. This recommendation was mostly made by elected officials, volunteers and planners and to a lesser degree by transportation providers.

Funding & Administration

- The funding and administration of each SDP varied. For example, funding for the Rockland study went through the State Department of Transportation (DOT). In Westchester, funds went through the County’s DOT. The Suffolk project’s funds were managed by NYMTC and the Brooklyn project funds went through the City’s Department of Transportation. The import of this observation is that there were mismatches between delivery targets and program cycles. NYMTC operates on a federal budgeting cycle. Regional transportation agencies operate on county or state budgeting cycles. This situation caused some friction between participating agencies and it could be resolved or at least minimized.
- Administration of each SDP was overseen by project managers, not all of whom were affiliated with the funded agency. For example, management of the

Rockland program started in the County DOT before being passed to the County's Planning Department. Management of the Westchester program started in the County's Planning Department and was passed to the County's DOT. The Suffolk program was managed by its Steering Committee, which was comprised of representatives of the five towns, the County Planning and Transportation departments, the State DOT and whose meetings were regularly attended by NYMTC and the Federal Highway Administration staff. The Brooklyn program was managed by the New York City DOT, which also received the funding.

- Control of funding was perceived by some project managers (as well as other observers) as having a subtle (but significant) influence on the roles and degree of agency participation in the SDP. For instance, the agency receiving the funds typically was perceived as being "the parent" responsible for the SDP and, in some cases, this lessened the degree of buy-in (or ownership) by the other coordinating agencies, even if one of them was acting as the project manager.
- Project managers weren't always employees of the funded agency, resulting in some conflicts over management and organizational styles as well as timing of reimbursement. These types of conflicts are probably inevitable given the different missions, organizational chains of command and internal budgeting processes that are present when multiple agencies and levels of government interact. But, they could be minimized if taken into account at the start of the SDP.

Process

This phase of the SDP encompasses all steps of the project starting with the formation of the Steering Committee to the completion of the final report, and stops short of actual implementation of the SDP consensus recommendations.

Composition and Role of the Steering Committee

- Two of the SDPs experienced tension between the Steering Committee and the Stakeholders. Questionnaire responses from these two SDPs revealed public dissatisfaction with the composition of the Steering Committee; the predominate complaint being that no prominent member of the general public had been appointed to the Steering Committee – a situation which led some citizens to suspect undue political and agency bias towards certain potential solutions. One SDP attempted to deal with this, belatedly, by inviting a member of the core Stakeholders group to attend Steering Committee meetings. The SDP with an appointed Citizen Advocate to the Steering Committee (Rockland) seemed to have sidestepped this particular problem.
- The tension over the composition of the Steering Committee reflected the general public perception of that Committee functioning as a central decision-making body out of public view. For example, in one SDP, some stakeholders felt there was a lack of transparency about Steering Committee decisions. In another, repeated attempts at consensus-building and conflict resolution failed to resolve a disagreement between a core group of stakeholders who wanted to endorse a specific solution (and press for its implementation) before the modeling and analysis had been completed. This group of stakeholders eventually split from the

SDP process to pursue their preferred alternative more strongly. Tensions of this sort may be inevitable in any public outreach effort which enables the public to engage in the inter-agency/municipal dialogue about problems and potential solutions. The potential for disagreements will increase where multiple governmental jurisdictions are involved.

- In addition to adding a public advocate to the Steering Committee, improved (and more timely) consensus-building and conflict resolution methods might be helpful in heading off stalemates.

The RFP & the choosing of a consultant

- The SDP process requires a wide range of expertise and skill-sets: sub-specialties within transportation and land use planning professions, public outreach and education skills, visioning, consensus building and conflict-resolution techniques, and extensive writing and verbal communications. No municipality, agency or consulting firm possesses the entire package. Therefore, choosing a consultant should follow from a frank assessment of in-house capabilities, strengths and weaknesses.
- As noted in Chapter 4, some of the participants questioned the wisdom of reserving all funds for the purpose of hiring consulting firms as they felt temporary hires of in-house staff might have been more effective.
- The RFP process was seen as being in need of a couple of tweaks. There were three areas of criticism: the time-consuming, technical nature of New York State's contractual process, the substance of the RFP document and the process by which consultants were ranked and chosen. These are examined more closely in the next three sub-bullets.
 - The State's contractual process does not lend itself to making quick contractual amendments or even termination for failure to deliver. The slowness of the review process discouraged any change of course, even if circumstances warranted it. For example, if a Steering Committee became dissatisfied with the performance of the consulting firm, the regulations required re-opening the bidding process, instead of allowing the Steering Committee to tap the second firm on its list. Once the SDP process was in motion, project managers and elected officials were reluctant to stall a project for several months (as would have been required by a re-opened bid process), thereby risking a loss of momentum and public credibility.
 - The RFP did not always specify the needed skill-sets for the SDP. Lack of needed skill sets and/or dissatisfaction with the caliber of consulting staff were problems in three of the SDPs. The skill-sets noted as lacking were: transportation access management, writing skills, verbal communications skills and consensus-building techniques. In two of the SDPS, the consulting team's writing skills were deemed so deficient that in-house resources were used to re-write certain documents.
 - One project manager felt the RFP and interviewing process should be left to technical personnel familiar with the process, which suggested that the consultant selection process is viewed differently by elected and non-technical participants. In another SDP, the process of choosing a

consultant was somewhat contentious due to differing opinions within the Steering Committee about the SDP's goals and the needed skill-sets. These experiences point to the value of a frank discussion (within the Steering Committee) of project goals and in-house resources prior to the release of an RFP.

Consensus-building between agencies

- By dint of training, professional orientation and personality, planners may be more likely to be open to integrating different disciplines and mediating differences. Their jobs often require them to walk the minefields of political and public discourse. That said, not all planners involved in the SDP projects exercised authority or autonomy, for reasons such as design, default, personality, lack of training, and/or lack of direction from political levels of management.
- Transportation agency personnel, for reasons of training and organizational mission, may tend to seek quantifiable results and this typically affects the way they approach project management, public education and dialogues with elected officials. In extreme cases, public participation may be viewed as a “necessary evil” whereby some good ideas may surface but most will fail intense cost-benefit scrutiny. For example, one project manager grumbled about NYMTC staff's insistence that close attention be paid to the public outreach and consensus-building aspects of the SDP process. The “disconnect” within some transportation agencies is real and must be reduced to the extent possible. The capacity of a transportation agency to stay engaged in public dialogue with local government, and to enable feedback to flow into the organization, up the internal chain of command, will determine the degree to which it will become a strong partner in the implementation phase of an SPD.
- Interviewees (and the author) felt that the process of consensus building was hampered by the appointment of agency and government representatives who attended meetings but lacked the authority to make decisions, or, in some cases, to contribute in an engaged and substantial way. While these representatives usually did a good job of reporting back to management, other participants at the table were keenly aware that the decision-makers were not present. The viability of future SDPs may hinge on the degree to which all participating agencies and government send their decision-makers to the table.
- It is the author's observation that civil service employees, whether they work for an agency or local government, are often anxious about being targeted by elected officials who, desirous of being seen as responsive (by their constituents), may seek to pin blame on a human or institutional target. Fear (of being caught in a political cross-fire or of overstepping perceived boundaries of managerial jurisdiction) may have accounted for the reluctance of some agency and government representatives to truly engage in brainstorming and consensus-building exercises during the SDP. This was unfortunate because many civil service personnel had a profound grasp of the technical issues and of potentially viable solutions. Yet, they felt constrained about fully participating for fear of retribution or jeopardizing their jobs. The organizational climate within an agency (planning and transportation) can be as much of a barrier to creative

problem-solving as the political climate. Dissipating some of this tension might make the problem-solving, brain-storming aspects of an SDP more productive; and this, in turn, might result in greater ownership of the process and more enthusiastic implementation efforts. At the start of an SDP, leaders within agencies and political jurisdictions should be encouraged to allow their representatives (or affiliated staff) on the Steering Committee to engage in more open and creative dialogue.

- Sometimes consensus-building needs to take place within a local government in order to enable it to play a decisive role in a regional planning effort. Regional agencies are not interested in getting caught-up in disagreements within local governments. The Southold Town Transportation Access Management Commission (TAMC) provided an example of this during the Suffolk SDP. Created prior to the start of the SDP, the TAMC had been charged with advising the Southold Town Board on increasing transportation efficiency and creating attractive alternatives to individual automobile travel while preserving the scenic and historic attributes of Town, State, and County roadways. Its members consisted of representatives of the Town's Planning, Highway and Police Departments, civic groups, residents and different sectors of the business community. The Commission typically reviewed local problems such as how to reduce speeding, improve traffic safety, repair facilities, etc. The Chairman of this Commission sat on the SDP Steering Committee, thereby providing another line of communication between the SDP process and the principal transportation and land-use decision-makers within the Town. As a result, most in-house differences of opinion were resolved before potential solutions (to local issues) were discussed with regional transportation agency personnel. This practice had positive results for the Town's inter-agency relationships during the SDP and after.

Stakeholder involvement and "buy-in"

- Stakeholder involvement in the SDP process, and their subsequent "buy-in", seemed to be influenced by the quality and extent of public outreach efforts as well as the degree to which public input was acknowledged by agency and elected officials. Stakeholder involvement and ownership of the process also was influenced by the composition of the Steering Committee and the degree to which it was open to public scrutiny, as was discussed earlier.
- In order to maximize the effectiveness of an SDP, public education measures must be tailored to the region's population, its educational background, history of community activism, understanding of the issues and geographic situation. For this reason, the Steering Committee probably should include people sufficiently familiar with the region's stakeholders to provide guidance to the consultant about preferred public education techniques. Clearly, the more familiar the consulting team is with the region, the more advantageous.
 - One example of how this issue could be addressed is that of the SEEDS SDP during which, on the recommendation of the Steering Committee, the participating towns and villages hired a Coordinator, or liaison, familiar with public outreach, mediation and press relations. This person

maintained an ongoing dialogue with elected officials, the public and the press about the status of the SDP project. The Steering Committee also responded to persistent complaints about the effectiveness of the public outreach measures and material by asking a core group of stakeholders to preview presentations in advance of public information and outreach meetings. This particular group included former school teachers whose teaching skills and experience proved to be invaluable assets in improving the quality of the material, as well as enhancing stakeholder buy-in.

- The inclusion of an informed public advocate on the Steering Committee might provide valuable insights into the public mood and understanding of the issues, particularly for agency personnel not used to dealing extensively with the public. It also would put to rest charges of lack of transparency.
- The inclusion of technical people grappling with local land use/transportation issues such as planning and zoning boards, highway superintendents, police chiefs, is important to the success of an SDP, particularly where multiple jurisdictions are involved. Although they were encouraged to do so, few elected boards required these officials to become involved, and as a result, some local planning and zoning decisions probably continue to be made in isolation of the SDP consensus recommendations. Since people in these appointed positions are cognizant of the need to preserve objectivity, they probably felt uncomfortable being active in a Stakeholders Committee where their comments could be misconstrued. A Technical Advisory Committee to the Steering Committee might have allowed these officials to participate more strongly without jeopardizing their responsibility to remain objective about specific applications before them.

Public Outreach Methods

- Almost all the SDP project managers and Steering Committee members interviewed for this evaluation noted that public interest was high, if occasionally skeptical. This perception was backed by the questionnaire responses: the most succinct of which stated that the SDP approach was much preferred to the usual “*study-plan-presentation-hearing-public despair model.*” The opportunity to learn, give input and partake of a public discourse appears to have been taken seriously by most stakeholders.
- The questionnaire responses showed a keen desire on the part of most stakeholders to better understand how problems might be solved; but, in some cases, they also revealed a serious dissatisfaction about the degree to which their input was listened to, and the nature of the ensuing public dialogue. For instance, in one SDP many of the citizens responding to the questionnaire complained, after being “lectured to” (by the consultants) about alternative ways to design transportation corridors or manage access, that agency and elected officials simply ignored the substance of the ensuing public input. As proof, these stakeholders pointed to the lack of a few specific short-term implementation projects that would have addressed their immediate concerns.
- Public outreach cannot follow formulaic trajectory, e.g. standard presentations of information and written input. It needs to be interactive, with study groups, inter-

connected task forces, etc. If the public is being asked to educate itself in order to be part of a constructive regional dialogue, then public outreach measures should be designed to address them as consumers of transportation networks and services. Since the consumer experiences the network and services at a visceral level, the challenge is to convey the design (and findings) of models and plans from the abstract, statistical levels to the practical: to enable the public to “see” their part in the scheme of things, specifically how their decisions (of when and what routes or services they take to get from home to work, to school, shopping, recreation, and all the other touchstones of their existence) are seen through the eyes of the modeling programmer. The public should be given every opportunity to understand (as well as critique) the system they use daily.

- Use of Internet web sites and chat rooms, along with the placement of all documents in public libraries, were extremely useful tools to enable stakeholders to stay involved and to give input, regardless of ability to attend meetings. Taped meetings were re-broadcast on public community television outlets, thereby increasing the level of public outreach. Charrette-type outreach methods were perceived by the public and other participants as effective in concentrating public attention on resolving problems. Most program administrators emphasized that public outreach methods should be followed by short-term implementation projects so the participants can see tangible results of their involvement and input.

Modeling

- The nearly universal struggle (on the part of SDP participants and stakeholders) to understand how the model worked, the inputs used, the extrapolations made, the assumptions, etc. demonstrated how hard it is to convey complex information simply. However, complaints about the ways in which the modeling process was explained (endemic across all four SDPs) did not prevent the public from grasping the intrinsic value of modeling to improved decision-making. This suggests that improved explanations of the modeling process will enhance its usefulness in the public policy arena.
- Modeling assumptions are not sacrosanct and should be allowed to be questioned publicly. One SDP brought the programmers to meet with the Steering Committee and a core group of stakeholders specifically to review and assess assumptions. This meeting resulted in changes to improve the model’s projections.
- To paraphrase one interviewee’s insight, the modeling process used in the SDP was regional in design, focus and intent, but it had limited applicability when planning for smaller amounts of territory. More research is needed to develop the expertise to make regional models more useful in sub-area applications. Continued technical coordination and research between NYMTC staff and regional transportation agencies might result in better integration of micro models into larger regional models. Finally, behavioral aspects of regional models have not been integrated into the physical, deterministic aspect of sub-area models – and this suggests need for ongoing research and collaboration.

Political Support, Consensus-building & Ownership of process

- As noted earlier, several participants noted that some agency and government representatives involved in the process seemed to hold back on full engagement in the consensus-building process. The same observation was made of some elected officials, who chose to take a “wait and see” posture about the outcomes of the SDP process before endorsing (or, in a few cases, attacking) the recommendations.
- Within any SDP timeline, it is reasonable to assume at least one local election will take place, and this carries with it the potential to change the composition of municipal governing boards; and their mind-set towards the SDP process. Elected officials who held office throughout the SDP process were able to exert influence and pressure on newer elected officials – but their sphere of jurisdiction did not extend into other political jurisdictions or into the agencies themselves. For that reason, consensus building between elected officials is just as crucial as consensus building among agencies and the public.
 - For example, one elected official actively tried to scuttle a multiple jurisdiction SDP process by trying to withdraw his/her municipality from the program. Peer pressure was effective in preventing this from happening, but the incident highlighted the need to build-in conflict resolution at this level. Interviewees who encountered this type of problem within their SDP said they attempted to resolve the conflict through one-on-one conversations. Some interviewees felt they lacked the jurisdictional authority or political clout to act more proactively. As noted by an elected official, the key is to “Find someone with credibility on both sides of the political aisle to rise above political connotations and begin the dialogue.”
- Some elected officials expressed frustration with the difficulty of continuing consensus building with other elected officials as well as with regional agencies after the SDP process ended. This observation underlies suggestions to begin discussing implementation mechanisms earlier in the SDP process.
- Supervisors and mayors were not uniformly successful in explaining the purpose of the SDP process to their own boards, much less key appointed officials such as Zoning and Planning board members and public works or highway personnel. This situation highlighted the importance of maintaining ongoing outreach between the Steering Committee and all elected and appointed officials, perhaps through annual retreats.
- Participation by local planning and zoning board members, economic development and highway staff, for instance, was not always solicited in a way that facilitated the greatest use of their technical expertise. As noted earlier, these officials might not consider themselves Stakeholders due to the positions they hold in local governments, yet might have been willing to contribute in targeted ways, as technical advisory groups answering to the Steering Committee.
- If there is a history of elected officials targeting transportation (or planning) agency officials as being the cause of the traffic problem(s), this may account for defensive posturing, passivity, and reduced visibility of agency personnel on public or political radar screens. A political culture that fails to give agency staff

credit for creative ideas is likely to stifle true collaboration, coordination and consensus between agencies and municipalities.

- An organization's mission shapes the attitudes of its personnel. Unless there is recognition at the top and middle levels of management about the ongoing internal accommodations that must be made in order to facilitate regional resolution of land use and transportation problems, real change in the way that organization functions and interacts with other regional and local players will tend to be piecemeal and ineffective. In-house training to ease and facilitate this change might be worth pursuing.

Timing

- The two SDPs that took the longest to complete (three or more years) seemed to experience the most tension between the Stakeholders and the Steering Committee. This may be attributable to public frustration with the slow pace of government and the passage of time.

Final Report

- Releasing the final report at a public event attended by the press, elected and agency officials, stakeholders and Council members is an important part of the transition from SDP to implementation.
 - By way of examples, the Suffolk SDP report was the focal point of a college symposium on sustainability. Attendance by high ranking elected and agency officials generated needed press coverage and public exposure. It also signaled the transition to implementation. The Westchester SDP did not reconvene its stakeholders on completion of the final report, and this was deemed a mistake by one elected official as it would have brought public closure to the SDP process as well as publicizing the shift into the implementation phase.
- The Final Reports of all four SDP projects followed the standard format of land use and transportation planning studies. They contained good synopses of fact, process, principles and recommendations. However, their length, format and organization discouraged ready consumption by the general public. Additionally, they were not designed to facilitate or keep track of the implementation phase. Since the intent of the SDP was to initiate collaborative planning and obtain practical results, perhaps the Final Report should be designed as a "strategic" document, e.g. in a loose-leaf binder, with pull-out implementation schedules, time-tables, assigned tasks and status up-dates of on-going consensus projects. This type of report also would be useful to NYMTC during its deliberations about how to disburse funds within sustainable project areas.

Implementation

This part of the analysis refers to all post-SDP activities from the time the funding ended to the present.

Short and Long term Implementation Results

- It is generally acknowledged that the most immediate short-term results of an SDP are: the process of public engagement in land use and transportation issues, and the opened lines of communications between municipalities and agencies. All parties feel they have a better understanding of the issues (the connection between land use and transportation problems) and what needs to be done to improve the situation at hand. The public feels it has contributed good ideas. The process has translated into better dialogue and coordination between agencies, and, sometimes, consensus on the issues and on potential solutions that will make a difference.
- Implementation of specific, visible, short-term recommendations must take place as soon as the SDP winds down and within a few months afterwards in order to maintain public credibility and momentum.
- All implementation actions conducted pursuant to an SDP must be publicized as such, in order to demonstrate the ongoing process of collaboration.
- The SDP process has resulted in significant changes by and within participating governments. For example, some municipalities changed land use and transportation plans to include public transit and bicycle components. Access management techniques are being employed. The use of data and models within a region has been standardized. Long-term projects were placed onto the TIP list, and Memoranda of Understanding and Inter-municipal Agreements were signed. There is greater inclusion of other agencies during comment periods for new projects at the local and regional levels of government.
- Importantly, there has been a reduction in the “*us vs. them*” mentality on the part of local governments when dealing with transportation agencies. Instead of automatically bashing transportation agencies in the press, elected officials are more likely to initiate a dialogue with a transportation agency’s local representative.

Transitioning from SDP to Implementation

- Three of the four SDP projects are in the implementation phase. NYMTC staff continues to help facilitate the implementation of specific recommendations, and to encourage ongoing regional dialogues within each of the SDP sub-regions. The difficulties being encountered in this phase reinforced the belief of many interviewees that more attention should be given to the structure and form of the transition to the implementation phase at the start of the SDP process.
- Overall, planners and elected officials seem more concerned about the transition to the implementation phase than are transportation agency personnel. After the close of the SDP project, the former consistently noted that they expected the proactive coordination with transportation agency personnel to continue during the implementation phase, and were disappointed when it did not. From their perspective, many transportation agency personnel reverted “back to form” after the SDP ended.
- There were two notable exceptions to this perception. One transportation agency official noted that planning (including economic redevelopment) agencies sometimes assumed that transportation personnel had little anticipatory or

strategic input to offer in the early stages of a development or re-development project. Another planning official cautioned that the public's perception of the degree of coordination taking place may differ from what is actually happening behind the scenes. In either case, more transparency of decision-making might be for the better.

- A particular sore point with some elected officials and planners was the disconnect that seemed to ensue after the close of an SDP project. Interviewees in two separate SDP projects noted that elected officials had to push for the inclusion of specific SDP-recommended projects onto the State's regional TIP; and further, that resolutions from the local governing boards had to be supplied to the transportation agency as proof of support for those projects. Additionally, there was puzzlement about the need for certain transportation projects which were studied as part of the SDP to be re-studied, as it were, by transportation agencies using different consultants. Various suggestions (noted earlier) were made to find ways to change this situation and also reduce the time and monies spent studying implementation actions.
- Another observation, made mostly by non-transportation agency personnel, was the failure of transportation agencies to sufficiently highlight the connection between their ongoing implementation activities and the SDP recommendations. As a result, the public doesn't think some transportation agencies are being as responsive as they actually are. This perception is seen by participants as undermining the credibility of the SDP process in the public arena.
 - Suggestions to improve this ranged from providing in-house training to allowing planning agencies or local governments within the region to publicize the connections on behalf of the transportation agency.

Measuring success

- Transportation and land use agencies use different indices to determine whether (and how) to implement specific solutions or strategies. The value of public input and coordination relative to the standard indices used by transportation agencies was not clear to this author, and probably is not clear to elected officials and the public either. Defining this relationship more precisely might be worth exploring because there is value in the public policy arena to using quantifiable benchmarks to measure the effectiveness of proposed solutions. Pegging short, mid and long term implementation strategies arising out of the SDP process to quantifiable benchmarks might encourage transportation agencies to be more proactive in implementing recommendations, as well as make it easier for the public to see incremental progress.
 - To paraphrase one project manager, transportation agencies are trained to seek solutions that relate to existing legislation and regulatory standards. As a result, implementation strategies that will result in measurable changes and quantifiable improvements, (e.g. in air quality, in vehicle miles traveled, in ridership, etc.) are preferred over purely aesthetic or politically-driven solutions. This observation highlights an inherent conflict that arises during the implementation phase when transportation agency officials are confronted with a "mis-match" between regulatory standards they are

charged with meeting and public opinion which, in some cases, might run counter to good regional planning. An example of this situation might be when intensive land use patterns favorable for public transit, pedestrian and bicycle improvements are rejected in favor of encouraging suburban patterns of land and road improvements which may generate more traffic in the future.

- As noted earlier, institutional changes of a magnitude sufficient to shift the dominant *modus operandi* is difficult to achieve quickly within a single organization, not to mention multiple entities. Specific inducements, such as funding, contractual requirements, regulatory stipulations, training and political pressure, may be needed to speed the process up.

The role of public participation in affecting implementation

- The inherent challenge taken on by the SDP process is allowing the public a larger, more visible role in shaping consensus about how to solve problems which have typically been dealt with solely within the technical realm. As noted earlier, this kind of public input may clash with accepted professional (and politically endorsed) practices where infrastructure decisions often are justified using standardized, quantifiable benchmarks.
- Agencies responsible for designing, bidding and building transportation facilities and services are accustomed to operating within strict auditing and bidding guidelines pertaining to the use of public monies. However, the average voter, and some elected officials, have limited understanding of the process by which public infrastructure is designed, funded and built. They are not cognizant of the checks and balances that were built into the system to ensure public transparency. Ironically, to the public, the process seems obscure.
- However, where stakeholders (and elected officials) have grasped the logic behind the system, they have been effective in pressuring transportation agencies to shift funding and design priorities towards consensus-driven recommendations. Whether implementing these recommendations will lead towards a truly sustainable level of development is unknown at this point in time.

Ongoing monitoring and evaluation

- The questionnaires and interviews were instructive sources of feedback.
- Continued internal monitoring and evaluation of SDP projects by NYMTC staff would be a useful way to refine and improve the effectiveness of SDPs in re-shaping the regional nexus of land use and transportation planning.

Time frame of SDPs

- The questionnaires and the interviews revealed an almost universal desire for shortened time frames for future SDPs. Put simply, there is a limit to how long public attention can be held.
- Some consensus-driven solutions must be implemented shortly after the closure of the SDP in order to maintain public credibility in the process.

Recommendations

The following list is a synopsis of suggestions arising out of the questionnaire responses, the interviews and this analysis.

Design

Consider the political and functional ramifications of how funding is allocated

- The decision of how to fund the SDP should be tailored to the situation and designed to maximize ownership of all agencies/governments participating in the process.
 - Before funding is assigned and the project started, discuss whether the multiple levels of governmental jurisdictions should assemble a multi-jurisdictional team to design and manage the project.
 - Another alternative is for NYMTC to manage the funding and administrative paperwork.
- Explore the possibility of assigning some funds for use by municipalities and agencies to hire temporary staff with specialized skill sets whereby they could leverage their own participation and engagement in the SDP.
- Work out budget cycles and reimbursement schedules in advance to the extent possible.

Solidify Political and Agency Commitments to Participate and Implement

- Require resolutions from the elected members/voting boards of all participating municipalities, not just the executives; e.g. supervisors and mayors.
- Develop a standard “Resolution of Commitment” (ROC) for municipal and agency co-signature. The ROC should specify the agreement of all parties to develop an *Inter-municipal and Agency Agreement* (IMAA) by the close of the SDP.
- Agency ownership of the process has to be emphasized or locked-in at the beginning. NYMTC staff should hold pre-SDP retreats for agency personnel and elected officials about the different organizational missions and management styles, the staffing levels, competing projects and priorities, and the need for directives encouraging substantive coordination.
- Support the SDP project at the local level through enhanced visibility of participating NYMTC Council members at the kick-off event as well as other meetings with local elected officials and the public.

Process

Communications: Internal and External

- A well-publicized “kick-off” event is crucial for public and political purposes.
- Continue practice of cultivating the media through press releases, educational materials and invitations to attend public sessions.
- Continue conducting semi-annual retreats during which local elected boards, their technical staff, and county and state agency personnel, including NYMTC staff

and voting representatives within the region, can review progress to-date and share ideas and information.

- Ensure that newly-elected local and regional officials are reminded of the terms of the initial commitment, not just informed of the nature and status of the project.

Shorten time-frames

- Reduce the length of the SDP project. Consider adding more timely interactions between project management, the Steering Committee and the consulting team. Consider adding contractual stipulations, as well as additional NYMTC staff devoted to SDP projects.

Define Composition and Nature of Committees

- Improve the dialogue between the Steering Committee and the Stakeholders, by including citizen advocate representation. Alternatively, the appointment of a public advocate to a Technical Advisory Committee to the Steering Committee might serve the same purpose.
- Where appropriate, form a Technical Advisory Committee, appoint local planning, zoning and highway officials to it, and charge it with providing factual background information and input as may be needed.

Modify the RFP Process

- Encourage the Steering Committee/Project Management Team to review the RFP to ensure it states the goals of the SDP, as well as the requisite skill sets.
- Ask firms to provide examples of proficiency in writing and public outreach.
- Consider amending the RFP to specify that the team brought to the interviewing process should be the actual team that will work on the project, and failing that, with equivalent substitutions.
- Explore ways to streamline the bidding and contracting process; and make it easier to amend or terminate contracts.

Build-in Transition to implementation and ongoing consensus-building.

- Require adoption of an Inter-municipal and agency agreement (IMAA) by the close of the SDP process.
- Encourage creation of inter-agency, inter-municipal “roundtables” where consensus building and implementation dialogues can continue on a regular basis after the close of an SDP.
- During the SDP process, encourage the creation of local land use/transportation advisory commissions to facilitate ongoing dialogue about regional issues of local concern.

Modeling

- Consider retaining the services of a core group of in-house staff or consultants whose expertise in explaining modeling is exceptionally good.
- Assign some research money towards developing an educational template for explaining the modeling process simply and clearly.

- The assumptions used in the modeling process need to be clearly explained and the assumptions open to public questions, (and amendment if necessary).
- More research is needed to bridge gap between macro and micro models to improve their usefulness in the sub-regional setting.

Public outreach, consensus building and conflict resolutions

- Consider building an in-house staff and/or retaining the services of consultants whose expertise in these skill sets are exceptionally good and use them for every SDP process.

Final Report

- The Final Report should be presented to the Stakeholders for their review and comment.
- Presenting and discussing the Final Report to the public at a symposium to highlight the IMAA and the consensus recommendations will help agencies and municipalities demonstrate (to the public) their commitment, and to advertise the “roundtable” mechanism whereby they will continue to work together.
- Final Reports should include a more-proactive, strategic Implementation Schedule with projects, timetables, assignees, and program updates. The Schedule should be updated and publicized annually to facilitate public education, transparency of decision-making and tracking of progress.

Implementation

Short and Long Term

- The need to demonstrate progress to the public is of paramount importance. For this reason, it might make sense to expedite implementation of SDP recommendations by encouraging the automatic review of revisions to regional TIPs.
- Continue to target future NYMTC funding to SDP recommendations, particularly those that will achieve the sustainability goals of a region.
- NYMTC should use up-dated Implementation sections of Final Reports to gauge the effectiveness of various “roundtable” mechanisms in implementing SDP recommendations.
- Begin incorporating environmental “carrying capacity” concepts into the land use – transportation nexus in order to help achieve the ultimate goal of sustainability envisioned by the National Research Agenda for Transportation and Sustainable Communities, and as may be further defined regionally by the NYMTC Council.
- NYMTC’s Planning Division should continue maintaining a library of Inter-municipal agreements, Memoranda of Understanding and other such mechanisms.

Ongoing publicity

- Encourage transportation agencies to issue press releases tying implementation projects to the SDP recommendations.
- Alternatively, allow the “roundtable” to issue these notices.

Ongoing Evaluation

During the course of this evaluation, it became evident that the NYMTC Planning Division staff had been conducting their own ongoing assessment of how each SDP was progressing, or not. Every interviewee commented on staff's responsiveness to their concerns as new problems surfaced. The staff's internal learning curve was a steep, but quite creative.

At the same time, interviewees remarked that this Division's workload seemed heavy relative to its numbers: its talents deep, but spread too thin. Recommendations were made - by program administrators, elected officials and volunteers alike - to add additional staff to form a core team of conflict mediators, public education experts and consensus-builders, a land use planner and "implementation specialists" to assist in future SDPs.

Each of the four SDPs focused on a set of sub- regional goals, aimed at either resolving existing problems or mitigating future trends. With the possible exception of the Suffolk SDP which wrestled with how to change the focus of commuter rail service geared to serve New York City, none of these projects were designed to look at the sub-region's "place" in the larger mega-regional picture. Mostly, SDP participants struggled with the institutional and regulatory obstacles to paradigm shifts as they tried to change the way land use and transportation decisions were being made within sub- and mega- regions.

Several participants in the SDP projects pushed for integrating its consensus-building approach into the decision-nexus of land use and transportation issues, and almost unanimously endorsed its continued refinement. Towards that end, NYMTC staff should continue to facilitate feedback. The following suggestions outline a few ways in which this might be accomplished.

- A modified questionnaire, similar to the one used in this evaluation, could be mailed a few months after the official close of an SDP. A shorter interval ensures respondents' memories will be fresh, while providing some time for a more reflective perspective on the process.
- *Confidential* exit interviews of a few key personnel (such as project managers, consulting team members, elected officials, prominent citizen advocates, planners, and transportation agency representatives) will provide further insights on lessons learned and strategies to improve future SDP projects.
- NYMTC should consider designing "consistency guidelines" to ensure that funding decisions are furthering regional sustainability goals, as well as regional collaboration and consensus-building.

To elaborate on the last bullet: within the public policy arena, consistency is a vital ingredient to achieving steady progress towards a goal. The more clearly regional and sub-regional goals are defined, the easier it will be to maintain consistency of policy, funding and decisions. However, although statements of mega-regional goals have been put forth by agencies, NYMTC among them, local governments may have a difficult time

identifying with a regional perspective, much less tailoring their decisions to comply with it.

Currently there are few consequences to local municipalities who decline to actively engage in the regional dialogue. This may change over time as sustainability and regional coordination on land use and transportation issues move beyond the buzzword stage into standard practice. But, because of the long time frames between the decision to fund an SDP and its implementation; consistency is the only way to ensure everyone's eyes are staying focused on the same eight ball

Toward that end, NYMTC staff, in partnership with its voting members, might explore how other governmental programs assess whether their policy and funding decisions are in accordance with sustainability principles and regional goals. The most model most familiar to this author is that of the New York State Department of State's Coastal Resources Division (NYS DOS). The State's process is based on that of the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) which works to ensure consistent implementation of the federal Coastal Zone Management Act at the state and local levels. NOAA conducts on-going assessments with state and local agency staff to develop useful benchmarks and indices of consistency. The two-way nature of the evaluation process is refining and improving public policy and practice within the coastal zone.

Concluding Remarks

Each SDP evaluated in this report was intended to integrate regional transportation planning efforts with local land use planning efforts in order to solve region-specific problems in the forefront of the public agenda. The concept (integration) was simple. The reality was not. True integration of regional with local efforts - and sustaining that integration from the public and inter-agency consensus-building phases through to capital budgeting, construction and land use implementation - is a complex set of endeavors. And, as became evident in the analysis, the lynch-pin of the SDP process, reaching consensus, was quite different from the process of sustaining it.

The largely positive response of participants in the SDPs suggests there is a hunger for detailed information about the factors that drive land use and transportation decisions at the local and regional levels; as well as for a chance to weigh in constructively on the discourse. This suggests that the status quo (whereby irate citizens press elected officials to resolve transportation glitches, and the elected officials lean on agencies to build their way out of the problems, and land use planners despair of getting a coherent vision implemented) is not working.

It is the author's belief that public cynicism and distrust about government are the end products of lack of transparency, and, ultimately, clear, concise communications: between local and regional agencies, between elected officials and agencies, and between agencies and the public. The inability of people in key positions to communicate ideas and information, either verbally or in writing, was cited by many respondents and

interviewees as a stumbling block to better regional understanding, dialogue and decision-making. But, improved communications will solve only part of the puzzle. As noted earlier, reaching consensus is quite different from the process of sustaining it. The former requires changing public perceptions about the cause of the problems and the range of potential solutions. In order for public consensus to occur, the public's deep-seated cynicism about the ability of government to solve the problems must be overcome first. Sustaining that consensus through to implementation requires changing organizational behavior within government agencies and, in some cases, of the posture assumed by some elected officials towards those agencies. Sustaining consensus over time also may require taking another look at the viability of the region's fragmented public budgeting, policy and programming process and finding ways to improve it.

The challenge inherent in the SDP process is to recruit people with the ability to cross disciplines, to translate concepts from one professional language to another, to work flexibly with other organizational management styles and to leverage the respective strengths of each technical specialty. Each SDP in this evaluation had its share of individuals who struggled against the innate resistance to change on the part of the organizations they worked for and with. Yet, most of these people expressed optimism and faith in the capability of the sustainability approach to achieve true regional coordination on land use and transportation plans and decisions. They pointed to the need to continue refining the SDP process, and offered insightful suggestions toward that end, including extending sustainability principles into every aspect of NYMTC's funding decisions. Further, such extension would be in line with NYMTC's published statements of mission, objectives and purpose.

Three questions were posed at the beginning of this chapter. Did the SDP change the mind-set of the participants towards the concept of sustainability? Did the SDP change the way government went about its business? (In other words, did participation result in permanent changes in the mechanics of inter-governmental coordination on regional transportation and land use issues of concern?) And, what practical changes could be made to improve the process and facilitate sustainable decision-making in the region?

This evaluation found that participation in an SDP made most participants more aware of the general concept of sustainability. The SDP process temporarily changed the way government conducted its business within the land use/transportation arena. But, the continued transformation of governmental decision-making is not ensured, thus will require a continued effort.

In order to improve the possibilities of the SDP process, the respective strengths of each set of players will need to be acknowledged and leveraged. Integrated land use and transportation planning might be more easily achieved through the use of mutually-agreed on benchmarks. The more specific the benchmarks, the easier it will be to measure (and point to) progress.

As to whether permanent changes took place in the mechanics of inter-governmental and agency collaboration - the answers are yes and no. In the eyes of most participants, the

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sustainable development process raised the bar by demonstrating how much more effectively local and regional agencies of government could interact for the good of the communities they serve. Consequently, the process has won over converts, who are likely to continue to advocate for the necessary shifts in policy, personnel, funding and perspective - in order to improve on its application.

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VII Appendix

- Questionnaire: Draft Cover Letter
- Evaluation Questionnaire
- Sustainable Development Studies Matrix

Questionnaire: Draft Cover Letter

NYMTC Letterhead

Date

Name
Address

Dear Stakeholder:

As a participant in the (insert name of program), you took part in a federally-funded initiative to improve the way in which transportation problems are viewed and solved.

Currently, the New York Metropolitan Transportation Council is conducting an evaluation of the four pilot programs it has initiated within the New York metropolitan region. I am seeking your assistance in this effort to evaluate the effectiveness of these sustainable development programs in resolving regional land use and transportation planning issues.

The enclosed questionnaire asks for your observations and insights about the effectiveness of the sustainable development program in which you took part. Your input will help us improve future programs.

The questionnaire should take about half an hour of your time. Please return it by January 15 in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope. If you have any questions, please contact Valerie Scopaz, AICP, at (631) 765-5552 or vmsplanning@optonline.net.

Sincerely,

Gerry Bogacz
Planning Director

Evaluation Questionnaire for Sustainable Development Program: 2007

Your Name: _____

Program you participated in: (Check one.)

- Route 303 Sustainable Development Study, Orange County
- Route 35/202/6 and Bear Mountain Parkway, Westchester County
- Sustainable East End Development Strategies, Suffolk County
- Southern Brooklyn Transportation Study, Kings County, New York City

Your Role in Program: (Check one.)

- **Project Manager** – Person with primary responsibility for overseeing the day-to-day administration of the SDP. You may have held another agency or governmental position concurrently.
- **Elected or Appointed Government Official** – Appointed officials includes representatives of elected officials and members of legislatively appointed entities, such as Planning Commissions, Planning Boards, etc.
- **Agency Representative** – You participated as a civil service representative of a government office, such as a Planning Department, Transportation Department, regional transportation authority and regional land use or economic development agency.
- **Advocate or the General Public** – You participated in the SDP out of personal interest or as a representative of a civic organization or other public interest group.
- **Consultant** – You were paid to work on the SDP process under the direction of the Project Manager, the Steering Committee and/or NYMTC.

Motivation for taking part in SDP

- Was your participation voluntary or mandatory? V M
- What was (were) your (or your office or agency's) motivation(s) for pursuing or participating in the SDP?
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____
- What type/degree of commitment did you (or your office or agency) make to the SDP process? (Check all that apply.)
 - Time
 - Financial
 - Political
 - Institutional Credibility

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- Other (write in) _____

- What were your (or your office or agency) goals for participating in the SDP? (Check all that apply.)
 - Respond to complaints from the public about transportation problems
 - Respond to complaints from agencies about other agencies
 - Respond to complaints from government officials
 - Educate public about land use and transportation options
 - Improve decision-making process
 - Change land use/transportation or other planning policy
 - Change capital budgeting priorities of transportation agencies
 - Improve inter-governmental dialogue about land use and transportation issues
 - Other (Write in) _____

Expectations of Program (Circle one.)

- Prior to your participation in this SDP, did you have any experience or familiarity with consensus-building approaches to planning? Y N

- At the start of this SDP, what were your expectations of the consensus-building process?
 - Skeptical Neutral Hopeful

Experience of Program (Circle one.)

- Were the physical boundary and primary purposes of the SDP clearly defined? Y N

- Was the consensus-building process explained clearly? Y N

- Was the flow of information (and the way in which it was presented) helpful? Y N

- Was the modelling process explained sufficiently? Y N

- Was the modelling exercise helpful for analyzing potential solutions? Y N

- Were all the relevant issues identified? Y N

- Were the public education measures effective? Y N

- Was there adequate coordination between the Project Manager, the Steering Committee and the Stakeholders? Y N

- Were the conflict resolution techniques effective? Y N

- Did the design of the public participation workshops facilitate public understanding and input? Y N

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- Did you understand the consultant's supporting role in the process? Y N
- Was the supporting role of the consultant constructive to the conduct of the study? Y N
- Was there sustained and sufficient political support throughout the SDS process? Y N
- In your opinion, the timeframe during which the SDP took place, from start to finish, was:
 - Too long
 - Just about right
 - Too short

Outcomes of the Program

- Do you think the SDP achieved consensus on the primary issues? Y N
- Do you think the SDP identified practical and realistic solutions to the regional issues of concern? Y N
- Did participation in the SDP improve your understanding of the primary issues? Y N
- Do you think participation in the SDP deepened your understanding of how transportation and land use decisions are made? Y N
- Do you think the SDP improved inter-agency understanding of their respective policies and decision-making processes? Y N
- Do you think the SDP improved public understanding of how transportation and land use decisions are made? Y N
- Do you think the SDP resulted (or will result) in improved decision-making at the regional level? Y N
- Did the SDP lay a foundation for continued collaboration, consensus-building and coordinated decision-making in your region? Y N
- Do you think the SDP achieved consensus on an implementation timeframe? Y N
- How has your participation in the SDS affect your (or your agency or office's) on-going decisions, planning and/or advocacy activities?
 - 1. _____
 - 2. _____
 - 3. _____
- What measures have been taken to ensure continuing collaboration between relevant agencies, officials and the public about transportation and land use issues?

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- 1. _____
 - 2. _____
 - 3. _____

- In your estimation, are the recommendations and implementation strategies that arose from this SDS likely to be implemented? Y N

- In your opinion, what were three weaknesses of the SDS process?
 - 1. _____
 - 2. _____
 - 3. _____

- In your opinion, what were three strengths of the SDS process?
 - 1. _____
 - 2. _____
 - 3. _____

Suggestions for future Programs

- If you were to be involved in another SDP, what three things would you do differently?
 - 1. _____
 - _____
 - 2. _____
 - _____
 - 3. _____
 - _____

- Do you have additional comments or issues about the SDP process that you would like to share with us? _____

Please return this questionnaire by January 15, 2007 to:

Nancy O'Connell, Associate Transportation Analyst
New York Metropolitan Transportation Council
199 Water Street, 22nd floor
New York, NY 10038-3534

Questionnaire Design

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I. All respondents will fill out the same questionnaires. The respondents will be asked to identify the SDS they participated in as well as the role they played. Respondent roles will be defined as noted below. This will enable the Responses to be reviewed and tabulated by category as well as in total.

II. The categorization of respondent roles, described below, takes into account the fact that program participants in Sustainable Development Programs (SDPs) represented a wide variety of perspectives. The SDPs were designed to facilitate dialogue and consensus-building across a wide spectrum of opinions and expertise. Participants in SDPs came from diverse walks of life, had specific professional or organizational allegiances, and represented different levels of government. Therefore, it is likely that each of the five groups identified in the listing below would have varying perspectives and expectations about the SDP process.

III. Respondent Categories (and description)

- **Project Manager** - Any person whose primary responsibility was to oversee the day to day administration of the SDP. Project managers may have held another agency or governmental position concurrently.
- **Elected and Appointed Government Official** – Any person who took part in the SDP in their capacity as an elected or appointed governmental official. Appointed officials would include representatives of elected officials and members of legislatively appointed entities, such as Planning Commissions, Planning Boards, etc.
- **Agency Representative** – Any person who took part in the SDP in their capacity as a civil service representative of a government office, such as a Planning Department, Transportation Department, regional transportation authority and regional land use or economic development agency.
- **Advocate or the General Public** – A person who took part in the SDP process out of personal interest or as a representative of a civic organization or other public interest group.
- **Consultant** – A person who was paid to work on the SDP process under the direction of the Project Manager, the Steering Committee and/or NYMTC.

IV. The questions were designed to allow comparisons of perspectives and expectations of participants, as well as to reveal their personal observations of the SDS.