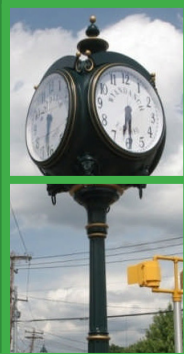


# NEW YORK METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION COUNCIL

# Transportation and a Livable Region



March 2010  
Annual Report

# ABOUT NYMTC

*The New York Metropolitan Transportation Council (NYMTC) is a regional council of governments that is the metropolitan planning organization for New York City, Long Island and the lower Hudson Valley. NYMTC provides a collaborative planning forum to address transportation-related issues, develops regional plans and makes decisions on the use of Federal transportation funds.*



## **NYMTC's Mission**

- *To serve as the collaborative forum to address transportation-related issues from a regional perspective;*
- *To facilitate informed decision-making within the Council by providing sound technical analyses;*
- *To ensure the region is positioned to capture the maximum Federal funds available to achieve the goals of the Unified Planning Work Program, Regional Transportation Plan and Transportation Improvement Program; and*
- *To focus the collective planning activities of all Council members to achieve a shared regional vision.*



**The Elements of Livability** Over the past decade, the concept of livability has evolved as new programs and policies supporting it are implemented nationally, regionally and locally. On the whole, livability is based on concepts of sustainable development that support and enhance quality of life, access to transportation, land use management, housing, economic vitality, public health and the environment. For transportation planners, improving livability means giving people transportation options in addition to driving—such as walking, biking, and using public transit—to reduce traffic congestion, protect the environment, encourage physical activity and enhance communities.

An integrated planning approach is needed to bring together all of the elements of livability. Regional transportation planners must consider land use, economic development, the environment and community design in their plans. The potential success of the livability concept as a guideline for effective planning is largely dependent on how all of these aspects work together.



## Livability and Transportation Planning in the New York Metropolitan Region

**S**itting at the crossroads of the tri-state region, in the center of the northeast megaregion, the New York metropolitan area offers many elements of livability. The challenge is to continually enhance and expand these aspects of the region and to invest in the area’s vast transportation system to support a more livable future.

In and around the New York metropolitan region, transportation planning is undertaken at multiple levels of government. Until recently, transportation planning efforts at each of the varied levels were largely disconnected from the land use planning which, as a home rule prerogative, is the responsibility of local municipalities.

Recent years have seen a growing and significant trend toward the integration of land use planning and transportation planning. Improving environmental quality and expanding economic activity are foremost among the factors driving this trend. These primary factors have led the push for increasing the efficiency of the transportation system and reducing congestion, which ultimately can only be achieved through complementary regional transportation improvements and local land use decisions.

In New York, integrated planning is particularly complex because hundreds of entities are involved in the decision-making process. Thus the march toward more integrated planning on a regional level has not shown consistent progress and often seems to be moving in fits and starts. Despite this, a gradual movement toward greater integration of transportation and land use planning is discernable.

Planning integration in the region has been influenced by regulatory requirements in the transportation planning process, including the work of federally-mandated metropolitan planning organizations, or MPOs. Eligibility for Federal transportation funding is determined by the work of these MPOs, which are required to produce a long-range transportation plan, a medium-range program of transportation improvements, an annual work program of planning activities, a regional analysis of motor vehicle emissions and an analysis and forecast of traffic congestion.

The New York Metropolitan Transportation Council (NYMTC) is the MPO for New York City, Long Island and the lower Hudson Valley. The Council members of NYMTC include five suburban county executives, the New York City and New York State transportation commissioners, New York City’s City Planning Director, and the executive directors of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority and the Port Authority of New York & New Jersey.

Collectively, NYMTC and its members have developed a shared vision to enhance livability throughout the region, based on integrated planning for sustainable growth.

### NYMTC’s Shared Vision

Increasingly over the past decade, NYMTC and its member agencies have sought to reintegrate transportation planning with planning for land use development at both regional and local levels. The Regional Transportation Plan that NYMTC adopted in 1999 set the stage for this reintegration with its inclusion of a regional Transportation-Land Use Connection goal. In pursuit of this goal,



NYMTC and its members funded pilot sustainable development studies in critical areas throughout the region to introduce a new approach to grass roots, integrated planning, bringing local municipalities' land use planning into the regional transportation planning process. NYMTC and its members also introduced land use planning more directly into various major investment studies and transportation studies targeted at specific corridors and areas.

The evolution of integrated regional transportation and land use planning reached a high point in the 2010-2035 Regional Transportation Plan adopted by NYMTC's Council members in 2009. Entitled *A Shared Vision for A Shared Future*, the 2010-

safeguarding the quality of life and health of residents, visitors and businesses, and maintaining the region's economic vitality.

The 2010-2035 Plan proposes optimizing growth, to the greatest extent possible, in ten desired growth areas through a combination of integrated land use policies and strategic transportation investments. These areas could contain up to 90 million square feet of commercial development and 70 thousand residential units. As many as 360,000 new jobs could be accommodated in these areas, nearly one-quarter of the total job growth forecasted. Similarly, as many as 210,000 residents could also be housed in these ten areas, just under 10 percent of the forecasted population

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2035 Plan defines the shared vision of NYMTC's members for sustainable regional growth and development through the identification of ten desired growth areas and 28 strategic transportation investments.

Despite the current economic situation, it is apparent from forecasts by planners, economists and demographers that the region's future will be defined by growth in population, jobs, and economic activity, and attendant growth in travel, transportation congestion, and vehicular emissions. This is an optimistic view, but it also raises pointed questions about the capacity of the current transportation infrastructure and services to accommodate such growth, while simultaneously

growth through 2035.

If this approach is successfully implemented, the impact from increases in vehicular trips and transportation congestion that would normally result from the anticipated growth in population and jobs will be lessened.

The 28 strategic transportation investments defined in the 2010-2035 Plan vary in scale and scope, but all affect the region's ability to grow sustainably. Currently, these improvements are in various stages of development. All require additional work before their costs can be ascertained in sufficient detail to program funding for their implementation.

The desired growth areas and related strategic



*The basic building blocks of livability are the transportation services and facilities that support expanded housing opportunities, economic activity and employment opportunities, while reducing environmental consequences.*

transportation investments that are the core of the Plan form the heart of NYMTC’s livability agenda, encompassing transportation services that support efficient and sustainable patterns of land use development for the region as a whole.

The Plan also offers policy guidance related to livability in areas such as transit-oriented development (TOD), transportation-efficient development (TED), parking management, walkable communities, complete streets and context-sensitive solutions in the design and implementation of transportation improvements. TOD and TED are integrated planning approaches that seek to focus land use development into compact, mixed-use patterns at different scales and levels of density. TOD initiatives focus these higher density clusters around public transit stations or centers, while TED initiatives have somewhat lower densities, and are not necessarily organized around public transit.

The member agencies of NYMTC have each focused on transportation and livability in the region through a number of individual and collaborative TOD initiatives, as outlined below.

**Initiatives in the NYMTC Region**

Coordinating transit services and land use development advances a broader regional transportation goal – to conveniently connect the places where people live, work, shop, study and play. To that end, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) promotes sustainable development patterns by enhancing existing

communities near transit through pedestrian and accessibility improvements and land use policies. The MTA is coordinating with NYMTC to advance TOD discussions, cooperation, and implementation by identifying and promoting best practices for land use, zoning, transit connectivity, parking, improved pedestrian access and joint development, and is participating in local training and planning programs.

TOD will benefit the MTA and its customers through greater convenience and transportation choices, increased ridership and fare box revenue and improved customer amenities in station areas. It will benefit the region by accommodating long-term growth in a sustainable, compact form. Regional examples of projects include MTA Long Island Rail Road’s Flushing Main Street Station TOD project and the Wyandanch Station revitalization; MTA Metro-North Railroad’s TOD projects for the Poughkeepsie, Beacon and Harrison stations; and the Tappan Zee Bridge/I-287 Corridor Environmental Assessment, in which Metro-North is partnering with New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) and the New York State Thruway Authority to offer TOD training to communities along the I-287 corridor.

Located within two desired growth areas and with planned improvements included in the 28 strategic transportation investments, the Tappan Zee Bridge/I-287 corridor offers myriad opportunities for TOD. To support these opportunities, NYSDOT developed the *Transit-Oriented Development – Building Quality Communities Around Transit*



technical assistance program, piloted in the I-287 corridor. The program provides municipalities and stakeholders with tools, resources and hands on exposure to leading-edge land use and planning techniques to meet a broad range of community goals including designs that encourage walking and cycling, streets that have good connectivity and traffic-calming features, mixed-use development that includes a blend of housing types and prices, shops, schools and other public services within neighborhoods, and parking management to reduce the amount of land devoted to parking. This training is being made available because it is anticipated that significant new transit services such as Bus Rapid Transit and commuter rail will be key transportation strategies in the overall development of the corridor.

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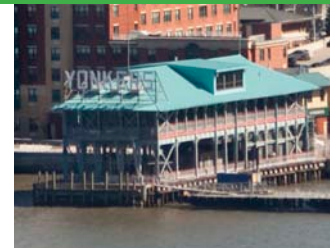
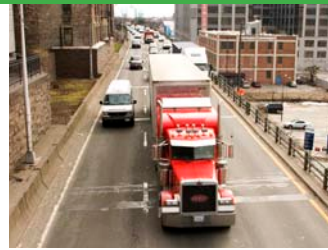
Across the portion of the I-287 corridor in Westchester County, an innovative blend of planning at the local, corridor and regional levels has resulted in a powerful set of tools to imagine the future of TOD. The county's Planning Department has been assisting the county's municipalities as part of *Westchester 2025*, its newest county-wide comprehensive planning effort. Using low-cost resources like Google Earth and Google Sketch Up, and utilizing substantial Geographic Information Systems (GIS) resources, the county developed 3-D images of transit routing, transit station locations and future TOD alternative scenarios for the Villages of Elmsford and Port Chester, and the

Town of Greenburgh. Each of these communities has considered changing zoning densities around several of the proposed BRT station locations to support future mixed-use, walkable nodes along the I-287 corridor.

For the portion of the corridor on the west side of the Hudson River, Rockland County has been actively engaged in NYSDOT's TOD technical assistance program as it strives to find solutions to help relieve congestion and improve mobility and air quality for its residents. By integrating land uses with alternative transportation and by planning communities around future transit, municipalities can use TOD to maximize the benefits and opportunities associated with those new transit options. Using TOD techniques also enables the county to take advantage of outcomes

such as improved access to transit and services, more walkable neighborhoods, better connectivity and enhanced community character. The need for TOD is also vital to the county's rapidly growing senior population – residents who will become more transit-dependent in the future and who should be able to choose to live in close proximity to both transit and the services they need and use.

Integrated planning is also taking place throughout Long Island to enhance livability and support transit-oriented development. Nassau County is currently updating its master plan with a specific emphasis on redirecting future development away from single family residential



neighborhoods and toward downtown centers near MTA Long Island Rail Road stations and MTA Long Island Bus transit routes. The county is analyzing the future impacts of compact downtown commercial and residential development in a number of areas, including property tax revenue, public sector expenditures, open space conservation, vehicular travel patterns, and public utilities. Areas of focus in this effort include the Villages of Mineola, Hempstead and Farmingdale. Another area that would benefit from TOD principles is on

by constructing a parking structure; enhancing the train station with public spaces; creating a pedestrian friendly traffic environment; reducing traffic congestion, air pollution and energy consumption; and safely accommodating pedestrians, bicyclists and transit riders.

In Ronkonkoma, the Town of Brookhaven is also developing a plan for an intermodal transit facility around the MTA LIRR Main Branch at Ronkonkoma Station. Work involved in the plan includes compiling a toolbox of economic devel-

### *Coordinating transit and land use development advances the broader goal of providing convenient, flexible transportation access within the region*

the property surrounding the Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum. These 77 acres of county-owned property represent the largest piece of developable land within the Nassau Hub, one of the ten desired growth areas identified by NYMTC's Council members.

Further east, Suffolk County also has plans to pursue TOD, with two major efforts currently underway. Both of these efforts tie into the desired growth area of the Sagtikos Regional Development Zone, supporting the further creation of a powerful transit corridor. Potential improvements to reverse commute and intra-Island travel via rail all focus on the MTA Long Island Rail Road Main Line, along which all of the projects are located.

The Town of Babylon is developing a plan for an intermodal transit facility in the hamlet of Wyandanch, which will be the centerpiece of the downtown's revitalization. Connections between bus, automobile, train, bicycle and pedestrian modes will be encouraged and made more efficient and convenient. The plan will include elements such as reducing surface area public parking lots

opment incentives to encourage revitalization of the existing business district near the train station; developing options for transport linkages to MacArthur Airport and the Veterans Memorial Highway industrial/commercial corridor; and preparing final concept plans and offering recommendations needed to develop multi-family homes and other highest and best yield opportunities for the commercial and residential components.

In New York City, development has long been centered around transit lines and services. The next steps are to support existing transit, increase options in areas that can best support growth through rezoning for new development, and enhance the experiences of all users of the city's streets through the city's Sustainable Streets program.

From 2003 to 2007, rising levels of mass transit ridership and bicycle commuting accompanied New York City's population and employment growth, while vehicle traffic levels were essentially unchanged. This trend bodes well for the long-range transportation and sustainability goals of





encouraging mass transit, walking, cycling and ferries established in PlaNYC, the city's sustainability plan for 2030, and Sustainable Streets, the New York City Department of Transportation's (NYCDOT) strategic plan.

Throughout the city, opportunities exist to enhance alternatives to motor vehicle use through continued expansion of the bike network, the addition of bus lanes and new Select Bus Service routes, and transformation of streets into places for pedestrian use and enjoyment. Specifically, NYCDOT plans to build 50 lane-miles of bicycle paths each year going forward, in addition to maintaining and improving the existing network. Various programs such as Safe Streets for Seniors, Safe Routes to School, and Safe Routes to Transit will continuously improve the walking environment throughout the city. Projects such as Greenlight for

Just to the south of Hudson Yards, in the West Chelsea area, new zoning provides opportunities for residential and commercial development, and facilitated the reuse of the High Line elevated rail line as a unique linear open space connecting west side communities.

The Greenpoint-Williamsburg rezoning in Brooklyn created opportunities for thousands of new housing units, including affordable housing, a continuous publicly accessible esplanade and new public open spaces along the waterfront; permits light industrial and residential uses to coexist in specified areas; and retains manufacturing zoning for critical concentrations of industry.

The Downtown Brooklyn Pedestrian Study formulated recommendations for improving the pedestrian experience in the desired growth area of Downtown Brooklyn, and in its surround-

*Recent years have seen a growing and significant trend toward the integration of land use planning and transportation planning. Improving environmental quality and expanding economic activity are foremost among the factors driving this trend.*

Midtown show that New York City is committed to improvements that benefit motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists and transit – improving traffic flow and safety at the same time. These efforts are further supported by land use and zoning policies that support this multi-modal transportation system.

On Manhattan's Far West Side, the Hudson Yards will allow for the expansion of the midtown business district, helping secure its position as a desired growth area. The 7 Line subway extension is underway and several million square feet of development is complete or in progress, jumpstarting the area's transformation into a dynamic, transit-oriented urban center anchored by an open space network.

ing neighborhoods, with clearer, easier, more pedestrian-friendly connections including landscaping, lighting, sidewalk treatment, and plaza improvements.

There are also other locations throughout NYMTC's planning area where integrated transportation and land use planning bring the elements of livability together. Recognizing the importance of finding compatible uses for streets that support this agenda, NYMTC has developed and sponsored walkable community and parking management workshops throughout the region. Since the inception of the initiative in 2001, NYMTC has funded close to 90 workshops



### The Relationship to Livability and the Federal Livability Initiative

The evolution of NYMTC’s transportation planning process over the last decade toward more integrated planning helped define the desired growth areas and also brought together the economic, environmental and mobility imperatives that are at the core of the livability concept. The livability outcomes will be further defined by the implementation of the transportation investments and development plans in each of these growth areas and other centers.

The livability aspects of NYMTC’s planning process are consistent with the recent national emphasis placed on the concept of livability by the Federal government. In June of 2009, the Obama Administration announced a Sustainable Communities Partnership, spearheaded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the U.S. Department of Transportation to help improve access to affordable housing, provide more transportation options, and lower transportation costs, while protecting the environment in communities nationwide.

### Next Steps

The NYMTC region’s livability efforts are underway through the development of the Council members’ shared vision, and through the 2010 - 2035 Plan. The next steps are to make as much of the shared vision a reality as possible. However, it will not be an easy task. It will require an unprecedented level of regional coordination through

integrated planning, the continued maintenance of the current transportation system, and major transportation investments for sustainable growth.

**Step 1** is continuing the collaborative and active partnership as NYMTC’s Principals to see the shared vision through to reality, using an integrated planning approach and forging new partnerships for sustainable regional growth.

**Step 2** is identifying and setting aside the resources in the both immediate- and long-term to ensure the day-to-day operations and maintenance of the transportation system and to achieve and maintain a State-of-Good-Repair for the system.

**Step 3** is full commitment to the completion of the four previously identified foundation projects, which are essential to the region’s future.

**Step 4** is moving the strategic transportation investments forward to facilitate the optimal development of the ten desired growth areas and to respond to anticipated growth generally.

**Step 5** is continuing and achieving consensus on the additional resources from within the region that can be brought to bear to finance the needs of its transportation system.

NYMTC’s Council members are committed to supporting a more livable region through sustainable growth based on integrated planning and strategic transportation investments. The members’ ongoing work to support transportation and a livable region will further local, regional and national goals of enhanced livability in communities throughout the NYMTC region.

# NYMTC COUNCIL MEMBERS

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**Amanda Burden**

NYMTC Co-Chair and  
Director New York City  
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**Steve Levy**

Suffolk County Executive

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Federal Transit Administration

**Jeffrey Kolb**

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