

Transportation Subcommittee

Introduction

The Albany Sustainability Advisory Committee (SAC) first met in August 2014. The SAC was established by the Common Council to help foster sustainable behavior and initiatives in the City. The SAC has been working in coordination with the Mayor's Office of Sustainability to reach sustainability goals and best practices, which will be outline in a report and filed with the Common Council and Mayor in June 2015. The SAC has created subcommittees to focus on specific topics within sustainability. This report focuses on the key recommendations from the transportation subcommittee.

According to the U.S. Department of Energy, transportation accounts for 71% of total petroleum consumption and 33% of total greenhouse gas emissions. An Energy Plan recently developed for the City of Albany measures transportation as 35% of the City's energy consumption. This is higher than most other Upstate cities.

Shifting single occupant vehicle trips to transit, ridesharing, walking, and bicycling will reduce petroleum use and emissions in the City of Albany. There are other opportunities to displace petroleum and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, such as switching to plug-in electric, hybrid-electric, and alternative fuel vehicles (i.e. compressed natural gas, propane, biodiesel, and hydrogen). Providing alternative fuel and electric vehicle charging infrastructure will encourage residents and those who work in the City to purchase plug-in and alternative fuel vehicles but creating a network in the City is vital for greening the City's fleet, which consists of various types of vehicles.

Changing behaviors and transportation patterns require encouragement, education, enforcement, and engineering - what are often referred to as the "4 Es." Each of the 4 Es requires the implementation of policy, programs, and projects. This report lists the existing and ongoing transportation policies, programs, and projects and select recommendations from those that the Transportation Subcommittee recommends the City focus on with the understanding that resources and capacity for implementation may be limited. Various Regional partners should be engaged to help implement these policies, programs, and projects in the long-term.

Existing Plans & Efforts

Albany Bicycle Master Plan (2009)	North Swan St. Multimodal Accessibility Study (2008)
Corning Preserve Improvement Plan (2014)	Pinebush Transportation Study (2004)
Electric Vehicle Feasibility Study (2012)	Taking Back Our Streets (2014)
Albany 2030 Comprehensive Plan (2012)	Capital Coexist bicycle safety campaign (launched in 2010)
Transit Oriented Development Guidebook (2012)	League of American Bicyclists Bicycle Friendly Community Status - Honorable Mention (2012)
Albany Education District Enhancement Study (2012)	Route 5 Pedestrian Safety Study (2015)
Albany Mansion Neighborhood Parking study (2003)	Bike Share Demonstration (2014)
Albany Bicycle Signage & Wayfinding Strategy (2013)	Albany Energy Master Plan (2015)
Bike Share Feasibility Study (2013)	
Patroon Greenway Project (2004)	
North Albany / Menands Broadway Commercial Study (2001)	

The Transportation Energy Efficiency action area includes a focus on compact and transit-oriented development, congestion reduction strategies, alternative transportation infrastructure, and clean vehicle deployment. The initiatives cover zoning and development standards, public and private fleets, transit, bike and pedestrian infrastructure, and energy-efficient streetlight improvements.

Ongoing efforts

There are multiple ongoing transportation-related efforts in the City of Albany:
Complete Streets Guide
ReZone Albany
Traffic Safety Education Committee

Capital Coexist
South End Bikeway Link Study
Bike Share
I-90 EVSE Study

Partners

Capital District Transportation Committee
Capital District Clean Communities
Business Improvement Districts
Capitalize Albany
NYS Office of General Services
New York State Energy Research & Development Authority

New York Power Authority
Capital District Transportation Authority (CDTA)
Capital CarShare
Neighborhood Associations
Albany Police Department
Governor's Traffic Safety Committee

As part of the SAC efforts, a Transportation Subcommittee was formed to focus on sustainable transportation initiatives. The Transportation Subcommittee met four times since September 2014. Former SAC co-chair and Transportation Subcommittee chair, Amanda Mansfield, coordinated the meetings and led the effort to develop a list of sustainable transportation recommendations. The Subcommittee included other members of the SAC, as well as the City's Traffic Coordinator and several interested residents. It is the opinion of the Subcommittee that the recommendations within this report should be priorities of the City of Albany and help the City become more economically and environmentally sustainable.

Recommendations

1. Increase access to alternative modes of transportation.

All residents of the City should have access to transit, sidewalks, designated bicycle facilities, multi-use paths, and a carshare vehicle. Studies show people are willing to walk 5 minutes, or about ¼ mile to work, shopping, or other appointments. People tend to be willing to walk a little longer, up to ½ mile to better transit services such as light rail and bus rapid transit, like CDTA's BusPlus service on Central Ave (a/k/a State Route 5), and to recreational facilities. Shifting trips from single-occupancy, privately-owned vehicles to alternative modes like walking and biking will reduce petroleum use and improve air quality throughout the City.

This can be supported through various policies, programs and projects, many of which are already in place.

- a. **Continue to support CDTA and their efforts to expand transit service**, especially their 100 miles of Bus Rapid Transit plan for the Capital Region. To make transit more feasible for more residents, the City should continue to implement the 2012 Transit Oriented Development Guidebook. Where necessary, bus stops should be relocated to improve pedestrian safety and accessibility, and the City should coordinate with CDTA to install bike racks as feasible.
- b. **Increase bike parking** throughout the City but especially at bus stops to encourage more transit users and residents to bike. The ReZone Albany process should include minimum requirements for bikes as new developments are built, especially those that provide parking for privately-owned vehicles. In the long-term the City should consider converting on-street parking spaces to bike parking corrals at key destinations and traffic generators, where feasible.
- c. **Commit to installing bike lanes on major and neighborhood bikeways** to make a meaningful mode shift to more bicycling. The 2009 Bicycle Master Plan should be moved forward, accompanied by the ongoing Complete Streets Guidebook, which will provide more specific types of treatments based on roadway/facility type. Protected bike lanes, which are sidewalks for bikes and use planters, curbs, parked cars, or posts to separate bike and auto traffic are essential to building a network of bike-friendly routes. While these require more study, they should be more seriously considered for major bikeways.

Figure 1. Protected bike lane



Source: <http://www.zdnet.com/article/protected-bike-lanes-safer-than-street-study-confirms/>

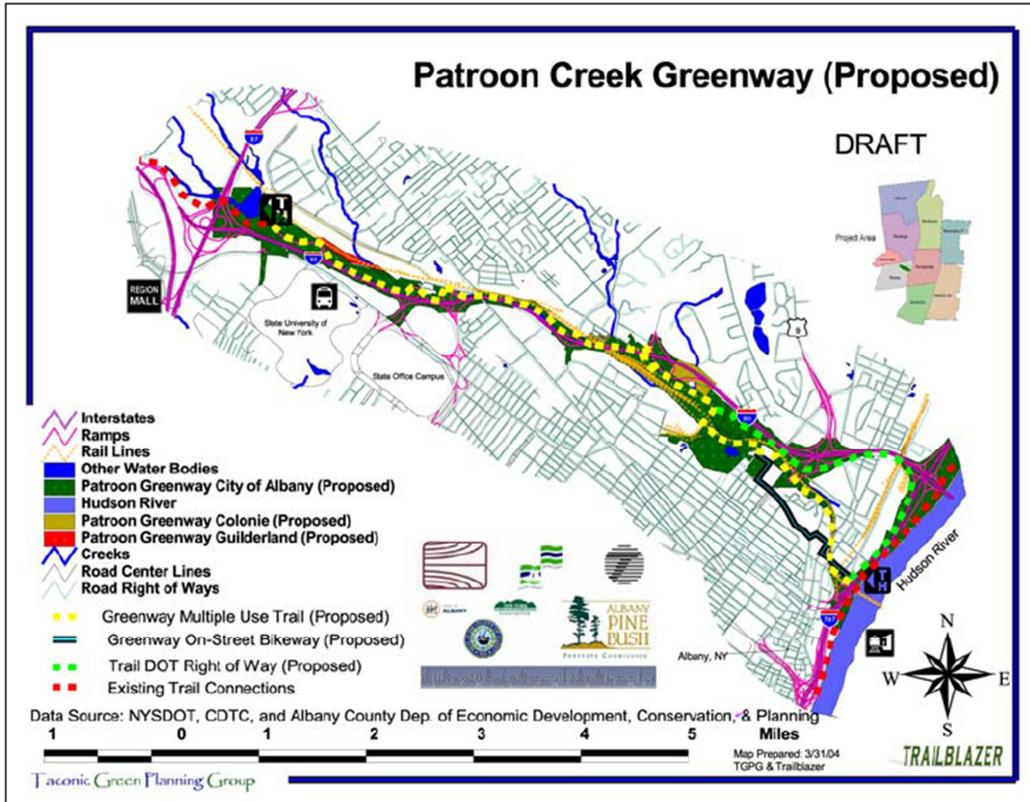
- d. **Increase enforcement of traffic laws to protect pedestrians and bicyclists.** Whether walking, bicycling, or driving, we are all subject to the same New York State Vehicle and Traffic Law and must share the road. Sharing the road is especially important for the safety of bicyclists and pedestrians, who are more vulnerable than motorists. Motorists entering the City should know that if they speed or fail to yield to the pedestrian right-of-way, they will be ticketed. More people will walk or bike if they feel safe doing so.

- e. **Support a bike share system.** Like carshare, bike sharing can help fill in the gaps in the transit network. But unlike carshare, bikeshare is feasible for visitors and does not require anything more than a credit card. A bike share system would be appealing to visitors, downtown employees, and residents who would like to have the option to travel the City by bicycle. As a follow-up to the 2014 Bike Share Demonstration in the City of Albany, the Transportation Subcommittee recommends the City support any effort to establish a bike share service in the City. While no bike share system is funded by municipal governments, they can provide administrative support and/or help make connections with large employers and businesses that operate in the City that can financially support a system.

- f. **Draft a policy to allocate curb space to carsharing organizations** in order to provide more visibility and accessibility to carsharing. As Capital CarShare expands, the City should continue their support by promoting Capital CarShare to prospective developers, large employers, and property owners with parking lots. To make carsharing more visible, on-street parking is needed. Capital CarShare, a non-profit carshare service, launched in Albany in August 2014. The organization provides an important service, making vehicles available to members by the hour, enabling Albany residents to give up the expense and burden of owning a car. The City of Albany has been very supportive of Capital CarShare since its launch.

- g. **Expand, connect, enhance, and explore new opportunities for off-road multi-use paths.** There are several multi-use paths and trails throughout the City, including in the Corning Preserve, along Hackett Boulevard and the Albany County Rail Trail which is anticipated to be completed in Fall 2015. One particular opportunity with a significant regional impact is the Patroon Creek Greenway. This proposed concept could connect Tivoli Lake Preserve with Albany Pine Bush, off-road, using mostly an Albany County-owned right-of-way. The City should work with Albany County, the Pine Bush Preserve, and other partners to seek out funding to build this proposed trail. Furthermore, the City should continue to support a pedestrian walkway on the Livingston Avenue Bridge as reconstruction plans progress.

Figure 2. Patroon Creek Greenway



Source: Patroon Greenway Project Regional Impact Report

- h. **Expand capacity of the City Engineering and Traffic Departments with additional staff.** As noted earlier, there are many plans and ongoing programs related to transportation in the City of Albany. And the City and its staff should be commended for the progress they have implementing many of these plans and pushing progressive transportation design and concepts forward. However, staff capacity in the planning, engineering, and traffic departments is limited. The Transportation Subcommittee recommends that both the engineering and traffic departments hire additional staff, preferably with bicycle and pedestrian engineering experience. Additional staff will increase each of the departments capacity to collaborate and streamline the planning and project design process.

3. Reduce vehicle emissions & petroleum use

In addition to non-motorized and alternative transportation improvements, increasing the use of alternative fuels and advanced vehicle technologies throughout the City will reduce vehicle emissions and petroleum use. Hybrid and plug-in electric vehicles (PEVs) are increasing in popularity and Albany can support this while also encouraging residents, employees, and visitors to switch to advanced vehicle technologies.

- a. **Install more publicly-accessible charging stations** to encourage the deployment of plug-in electric vehicles (PEV). Increasing the number of plug-in electric vehicles on the road in Albany will significantly reduce emissions and petroleum use, which will improve air quality. The two places PEV owners will plug-in most are at home and at work. If a potential PEV owner can plug-in at their workplace, it significantly decreases any range anxiety, as most Capital Region commuters drive less than 50 miles round trip daily. The Transportation Subcommittee recommends the City incentivize the installation of charging stations by stakeholders such as the Albany Parking Authority and large employers in the City such as the Universities and Colleges, hospitals, and various New York State offices. The 2012 City of Albany EV Feasibility Study should be used for reference.
- b. **Improve the ease and efficiency of installing EVSE for property owners and developers.** As part of the Rezone Albany process, it is recommended that new zoning language includes requirements for new developments and parking lots to include Electric Vehicle Supply Equipment (EVSE) and minimum parking requirements for PEVs. Additionally, the City should streamline permitting and inspections to make it easier for EV owners to install a home charging station and adopt EV-friendly building codes.

3. Green the City Fleet

The City of Albany has a large number and variety of vehicles in its fleet. These vehicles are used from everything from garbage collection to parking enforcement. There may be opportunities as vehicles age and breakdown to replace them with alternative fuel vehicles or other advanced vehicle technologies. There may also be opportunities to eliminate vehicles or coordinate across departments to share vehicles.

- c. **Analyze the petroleum use and emissions of the City fleet.** An inventory of vehicles, their fuel type, fuel economy, type of use, and how many miles they travel annually is a good start to plan for a fleet transition. The City could work with the Capital District Clean Communities Coalition to analyze the fleet and plan for a transition to alternative fuels.
- d. **Use Capital CarShare where appropriate.** The City can support Capital CarShare and save money by using carshare vehicles for City business where feasible. Being a Capital CarShare member will allow the City to forego purchasing vehicles.
- e. **Implement a No-Idle Policy for all City vehicles.** The City of Albany passed an anti-idling ordinance in 2013. The ordinance has not been enforced but an anti-idling campaign can be kicked-off with City vehicles as a demonstration.
- f. **Encourage City employees to use transit, walk, and/or bike to work and for City business.** The Bicycle Commuter Benefit allows employers to provide reimbursement

of up to \$20 per month for reasonable expenses incurred by employees in conjunction with their commute to work by bike. The reimbursement is a fringe benefit paid by the employer the employee does not get taxed on the amount of the reimbursement. The City may choose to extend this benefit to employees who walk or take the bus to work by allowing them to purchase transit passes pre-tax and providing a voucher or financial incentive to walk. This is an equitable solution to put employees who choose not to drive on the same footing as people who receive parking benefits.

Transportation works as a system. Making a more sustainable transportation system takes a significant amount of planning, engineering, designing, funding, and time. The Transportation Subcommittee knows the recommendations in this report may be more long-term projects, policies, or programs and funding may not be available currently or in the near future for the City to pursue, even if they wanted to. The existing plans and ongoing efforts related to transportation have put Albany on a path to becoming a more walkable, bikeable, and transit-friendly City.