

Elmira-Chemung Transportation Council

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Howard Lapple, Chemung County Council of Governments
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Planning Committee

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Jennifer Fais, Principal Planner, Southern Tier Central Regional Planning and Development Board
Ronald Hawley, Public Services Director, City of Elmira
Randy J. Olthof, Chemung County Planning Department Commissioner
Diane Patelunas, Manager, Chemung County Transit
Joseph Roman, Development Specialist, Empire State Development
Timothy Von Neida, Commissioner, Chemung County Public Services

Long Range Plan Project Steering Committee

Andy Avery, Engineer, City of Elmira
Theodore A. Bennett, Chemung County Legislator
David Bubniak, Planner, Southern Tier Central Regional Planning and Development Board
Ann L. Clarke, Manager, Elmira-Corning Regional Airport
James Clements, Planning & Program Manager, NYSDOT Region 6
Jerre Cress, Planner, Chemung County
Jennifer Fais, Principal Planner, Southern Tier Central Regional Planning and Development Board
Teresa Fischer, Contract Administrator, Chemung Transit
Patrice Hansell, NYSDOT Region 6
Ron Hawley, Public Services Director, City of Elmira
Sam Iraci, Manager, City of Elmira
Tom Kearney, Statewide Planner, FHWA
George Miner, President, Southern Tier Economic Growth
Marty Neveu, NYSDOT MPO Planning Bureau
Randy Olthof, Commissioner, Chemung County Planning
Michael Perry, GIS Transportation Analyst, ECTC
Jay Schissell, Staff Director, ECTC
Timothy Von Neida, Commissioner, Chemung County Public Services



**ELMIRA-CHEMUNG
TRANSPORTATION COUNCIL**

For the last 15 years, the Elmira-Chemung Transportation Council (ECTC) has focused its efforts on the completion of integral parts of our transportation network that were identified with public feedback through the transportation planning process. Many of these projects have been built or will be completed soon. Route 17 was designated to become Interstate 86, and new interchanges have been built in Lowman, Elmira, and at the Regional Airport. A downtown Transportation Center was constructed, and new fully accessible and appropriately sized transit vehicles have been purchased. Safety and access were improved in Hanover Square and on Woodlawn Avenue, and the southern extension of the Elmira Arterial was completed. Work continues on the Catharine Valley Trail, and work will begin soon on the Lackawanna Trail.

With the completion of major elements of our transportation infrastructure, we are now turning our attention to maintaining, optimizing and integrating a transportation system that includes our roads, bridges, rail, transit, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, as well as our Elmira-Corning Regional Airport. We also will be progressing transportation enhancements such as the Elmira Promenade, which will improve the quality of life for residents and visitors.

Our new Long Range Plan, "Destination 2025: Transportation Planning for the Future," presents a roadmap for the investment of approximately \$500 million over the next 20 years. It is important for us to anticipate trends and identify community priorities, rather than just react to them. We have developed our Plan through the efforts of an engaged Steering Committee, our consultant team, and with considerable input from the public. We believe it addresses the major transportation issues that we will be facing, such as the aging "Baby Boomer" generation, the economic development potential of I-86, and the growth of the tourism industry.

Transportation planning is an on-going and evolving process. New technology presents opportunities to provide a safer, better-maintained transportation network and will allow us to communicate more effectively with the system users. We look forward to working with the community to continue to improve the traveling experience of all the users of our transportation system.

Thomas J. Santulli
Chairman, Policy Committee
Elmira-Chemung Transportation Council



ELMIRA-CHEMUNG TRANSPORTATION COUNCIL DESTINATION 2025: TRANSPORTATION PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

About the ECTC

The Elmira-Chemung Transportation Council (ECTC) was established in 1974 as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for Chemung County. The ECTC has a 7-member policy committee, a planning committee and 2 professional staff. The MPO also relies on staff of cooperating agencies. The mission of the ECTC is to help build regional agreement on transportation investments and to balance highway, transit and other transportation network needs, leading to cost effective solutions. The ECTC is responsible for the planning and programming of any transportation project or program that includes the US Department of Transportation (USDOT), Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) or Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funding.

In accordance with USDOT regulations, the ECTC develops three key products:

- Long Range Transportation Plan (LRP): A statement of the direction a region will take in making transportation system investments over the next 20 years
- Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP): An annual document that coordinates the overall comprehensive transportation planning in the urban region, including information on which planning activities will be undertaken by the ECTC and its partner agencies during the upcoming year

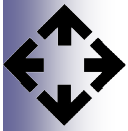
- Transportation Improvement Program (TIP): A three to five year program of transportation projects and strategies, drawn from the LRP. The tip is updating every two years.

About the Plan

Destination 2025: Transportation Planning for the Future is the Long Range Plan for the ECTC. It includes recent progress toward the goals of the 2001 LRP, updated 2004 goals, summaries of current conditions and projections of future needs for the transportation system and recommendations for prioritizing projects and implementing the plan.

As documented in Chapter 3, throughout the development of the LRP, the ECTC has actively involved affected parties and provided opportunities for them to participate. The Long Range Plan Steering Committee included representatives from the City of Elmira, Chemung County, NYSDOT, FHWA, the Elmira-Corning Regional Airport, Chemung County Transit and the Southern Tier Regional Planning and Development Board.





Public outreach included:

- 50 telephone calls to key public, private and agency representatives
- 9 public meetings at various locations in Chemung County, 4 held in early summer to solicit feedback on the draft LRP goals and 5 in the fall to review the draft plan and solicit comments
- 8 interest group meetings
- Focus group teleconferences with individuals specifically interested in bicycle, transit and freight movement

2004 Long Range Plan Goals

As documented in Chapter 2, eight new goals were drafted to guide transportation investments over the next 20 years. These goals provide a framework for prioritizing projects in an era of limited resources.

- Integrate transportation, economic development and land use planning to promote sustainable development
- Protect and enhance the natural environment, encourage conservation of energy and improve quality of life
- Maintain, operate, manage, and where necessary, upgrade the existing infrastructure, using new technology where appropriate
- Enhance the role of multi-modal systems in meeting the region's mobility and accessibility needs
- Reinforce the city of Elmira's role as the center of the region's governmental service, institutional and transportation activities
- Ensure that an adequate transportation infrastructure is in place to accommodate and attract regional development
- Support regional and statewide corridors through investments and initiatives

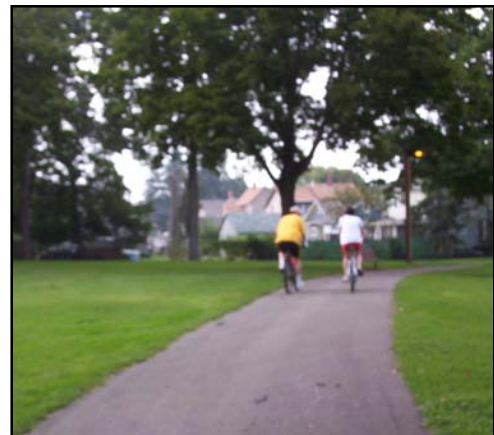
- Address the safety and security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users

About the Region

Social, demographic and economic trends directly influence transportation planning. Chapter 4 of the LRP presents current demographic, socioeconomic and business trends in Chemung County, based largely on the 2000 U.S. Census.

Representative data provided in this section is below:

- The population of Chemung County was 91,070 in 2000, 35% of which lived in the city of Elmira.
- Over 90% of commuters use automobiles to get to work, 82% of which drive alone.
- Per capita income in Chemung County was \$25,069 in 2000, 27% lower than the statewide average.



Current Conditions & Future Needs

Chapters 5 and 6 of the LRP provide descriptions of current conditions and future needs for each of the transportation modes in Chemung County.



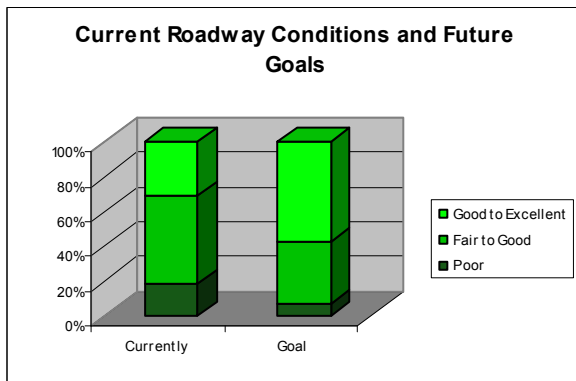
The LRP Steering Committee defined four regional corridors as important trade, intercity passenger, tourism and commuter connectors within Chemung County. These corridors are:

- Horseheads-Ithaca/Watkins Glen
- Southport-Pennsylvania
- Elmira-Horseheads and
- Elmira/Horseheads-Corning

Future project prioritization will be weighed more heavily toward projects that maintain and strengthen these areas.

Highway and Bridges

Over 500 miles of roadway wind throughout the rural and urban areas of Chemung County, providing daily mobility to commuters and travelers. Countywide, approximately 10% of roadways are in need of major rehabilitation and 15% need minor work (paving, etc) to meet LRP goals.



Bicycle and Pedestrian

Chemung County is home to miles of multi-use trails, bicycle paths and sidewalks used year round for recreational and commuting purposes. While increasing the network is beneficial, improving the safety and accessibility of existing pedestrian and bicycle routes is a top priority.

Freight

Business and industry in Chemung County rely on truck, rail and air to deliver raw materials and carry goods to the market. Improved freight corridors and intermodal transfers can promote economic development, attract new companies and retain existing businesses

Aviation

The Elmira-Corning Regional Airport is served by 27 daily commercial flights and many general aviation flights. By improving services, enhancing security and increasing accessibility, the airport hopes to attract additional passengers.



Transit

Public transit plays a vital role in a balanced transportation system. In Chemung County, there are a variety of services: fixed route buses, paratransit vehicles, park and ride services, transportation services for senior citizens and intercity buses. However, only 1% of commuters use the services, so continual efforts must be made to increase ridership, improve the public's perception of transit and make transit a more attractive alternative to automobile travel.



Recommendations

As a 20-year plan, this LRP is obligated to identify not just the specific projects that have been identified, but to guide the region with policy and programs that will continue to identify projects to address the region's evolving needs.

Each of the following recommendations reflect the goals and objectives, ensuring that each concept put forth here reflects that array of aspirations for the region. They also derive from the diagnosis of the current system and the anticipated future system. Recommendations are divided into several sections reflecting studies, projects, and planning activities.

Plans & Studies

The purpose of funding such studies is to develop an understanding of a specific issue in a manner that could lead to projects.

- In an effort to track progress through quantitative measures (such as percent deficient pavement decreased), the ECTC should determine what areas of **performance management** should be pursued based on limited resources for data gathering and organization.
- A **study regarding community master planning for bicycles and pedestrians** will evaluate the status of master plans in the communities of Chemung County and the treatment of bicycles and pedestrians in each. The outcome is likely to include recommendations to communities whose plans provide inadequate guidance.

- A **transit facility assessment** will examine what transit facilities are currently in place and their condition. The study should identify where facilities and shelters would be most use and most valuable. It should also identify best practices for site choice and design of appropriate shelters, benches, etc.
- A **pedestrian activity analysis** will investigate walking activity in the region as a basis for making investments to improve infrastructure for pedestrians.
- A **bike infrastructure inventory** will build on the findings of NSDOT's BLOS study and Cornell Cooperative Extension's riverfront study to identify the specific investments needed to complete a bicycle network, including addressing the gap between the Catherine Valley and Lackawanna Trails.



- Based on feedback about the recently-completed Transit Evaluation Network, undertake an **employment location survey**, to review work sites and employers to identify new ridership opportunities and unmet needs. Strategies to attract discretionary riders should be developed and the existing



system needs should be monitored more effectively.

- Based on the recommendations of the City of Elmira signage study, and looking to NYSDOT, FHWA and the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE), the ECTC should adopt future **transportation signage standards** and identify critical information needs, using best practices from similar communities around the country.
- From signage to interactive information systems to infrastructure that allows people visiting for the multi-use trail network to visit the entire region by bike, a **tourist corridor plan** would identify opportunities to develop a regional corridor concept built around tourism activities.

Projects

As a mature urban area, a large portion of the transportation investments will be devoted to maintenance and repair of the existing systems. Evaluations of the road and bridge networks prompted the identification of elements of those networks that require a certain degree of work, based on a scoring system of pavement conditions and bridge sufficiency.

Road & Bridge Network

- Interstate-86 will be an important northeast, statewide and regional trade and tourism corridor. The ECTC should continue to **support the completion of the I-86 project** by participating in the I-86 coalition. Once complete, the ECTC should remain engaged to

ensure the proper maintenance of the facility.

- Because of new security regulations brought about by the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, a number of desirable infrastructure changes, including the need to relocate parking, have been identified in the vicinity of the airport, including the **relocation of Sing Sing Road**. The project will have economic development benefits in and around the airport. This project is within the Elmira/Horseheads-Corning corridor.
- There has long been local support for **extending the Elmira Arterial northward**. The studies for the Route 17 (I-86) improvement in Horseheads, and engineering studies of the cost to complete Corridor U of the Appalachia Development Highway System, have identified social, economic and environmental issues related to this corridor. Recent and ongoing improvements to the transportation system will have significant impacts on local travel patterns. Following the completion of these projects, NYSDOT has committed to undertaking the necessary studies to determine and implement the appropriate connection to I-86.
- A range of **intersection improvements in the Town of Big Flats** will be prompted by increasing traffic levels in this corridor, which is clearly central to the region's continued economic development.



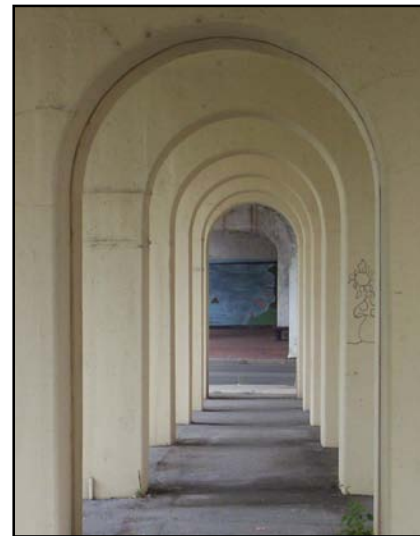
- To advance the **Route 13/14 recommendations**, local municipalities will need to update their Master Plans and coordinate plans regarding Route 13/14 with adjacent communities. The ECTC is willing to be engaged in this process. Private sector companies moving freight by truck have also indicated willingness to participate in ongoing study regarding these highways.

Other/Multimodal Infrastructure

- The instant popularity of the first half of the Catharine Valley Trail indicates how important these projects are to the region, especially as I-86 opens the area to significant growth in tourism. **Expansion of the multi-use trail network** should continue, by prioritizing routes for completion and on- or off-road connections among the trails and identifying key destinations to address, especially during any relevant reconstruction projects.
- Funding should be allocated to install **transit shelters and benches** along bus routes or improve existing facilities. Improved service information and bike racks should also be added where appropriate to improve the quality of service.
- NYSDOT has indicated that its ability to perform spot repairs and routine sweeping is limited but that it is very able to respond to specific requests for problems with roadway conditions. To expedite this process, the ECTC should help develop a **roadway condition reporting system**, utilizing the internet or other information technology, to

help users, including bicyclists, notify NYSDOT of problems.

- The **Elmira Promenade** will improve the pedestrian walkway under the railroad viaduct between Second Street and Water Street, should advance, utilizing extensive stakeholder involvement and the momentum created by the planning activities around the riverfront. The ECTC is committed to enhancing this public walkway in order to improve the connectivity of pedestrian infrastructure in the urban core. Indicate that this corridor links important regional facilities, including the regional library, transit facility, performing arts center and Riverfront Park.



- **Operation and Management** work should focus on the existing and emerging technologies such as Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) to help agencies operate and manage its facilities. The ITS architecture report identifies implementation of these technologies and should be used as a guide.



Planning Activities

The outcomes of the planning process extend beyond what the MPO should fund others to do, build, or examine. The development of the LRP also pointed to activities in which the ECTC staff should be engaged. While the studies and projects will be addressed in the agency's capital program, the following activities should be included in the agency's planning activities.

- The **Crash Reporting System** has been an important accomplishment for the ECTC and the region. In tandem with efforts to develop performance measures and a performance management plan for the region, the ECTC should develop average accident rates specific to local infrastructure to allow time-series analysis of facilities throughout the county; for the same reason, roadway inventories and traffic volume data should be updated on a regular basis to facilitate safety analyses.
- In most metropolitan areas, transportation planning relies on a regional model of travel activity based on the locations of homes, jobs, the transportation network, and socioeconomic data. A qualitative approach has been necessary for this plan because such a model does not exist for Chemung County, because the transportation network is undergoing dramatic construction. It would be prudent to **develop a travel model** for the region once these projects are complete (approximately 2010) and use it for all future transportation planning exercises.

- In conjunction with schools, public safety agencies, the county's Traffic Safety Board and other interested parties, the ECTC should take the lead on developing a **Safe Routes to School program**. Abundant information sources exist and new federal transportation legislation is expected to provide specific funds for relevant programs.
- Include Share the Road sign with the promotion of bicycling activities and the expansion of infrastructure on and off the road network, the perennial need to provide **information and training on bicycle safety** is greater than ever. Such efforts should be aimed at both cyclists (of all ages) and drivers. **Signage** is an important part of this so that residents and visitors alike can be well informed about the presence of bicyclists and how to drive responsibly around them.





- In collaboration with other entities, such as the Traffic Safety Board, the ECTC should develop a set of **safety-related design and assessment items** for transportation project design that will facilitate a standardized review of new projects. These should apply to projects from various modes, including transit, bicycles, and roadway and should address important issues, including the elderly, students, and ADA compliance.
- The **ITS Implementation Committee** should monitor the operation of existing communication of Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) and make recommendations for the use and coordination of future technology.
- The ECTC should continue to provide municipalities and committee with **ongoing, project-by-project assistance** regarding the transportation implications of land development. The ECTC staff should maintain a high level of involvement with local and regional officials and planning boards. Other committees or groups may require re-energization, as in the case of the Bicycle/Pedestrian Committee, or initiation, in such areas as transit driver and rider advocacy, and freight transportation.



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GLOSSARY

AASHTO: American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials

ADA: Americans with Disabilities Act

ATIS: Advanced Traveler Information Systems allows travelers to get up-to-date information on all modes of transportation via computers or telephones

BTS: Bureau of Transportation Statistics

CCPD: Chemung County Planning Department

CCTS: Chemung County Transportation Services

CVT: Catharine Valley Trail

DDHV: DDHV is a representation of peak hour traffic, based on the hourly volume of traffic in each direction, used for highway design

ECTC (Elmira-Chemung Transportation Council): The Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Elmira Urbanized Area

FHWA: Federal Highway Administration

FTA: Federal Transit Administration

GIS (Geographic Information Systems): A computer-based tool used to map and analyze physical features and events. GIS technology integrates powerful database functions such as querying and statistical analysis with the visualization and geographic analysis benefits offered by digital maps drawn with a computer mapping system, allowing the user to analyze data relating to specific locations on the earth.

HAL: High accident locations, identified by NYSDOT to have high accident concentrations

ISTEA: Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act. Federal legislation passed in 1991 that increased the power Metropolitan Planning Organizations and provided a set of 15 planning factors to guide in their work

ITS: Intelligent Transportation Systems

LOS: Level of Service

LRP: Long Range Plan

MPO: Metropolitan Planning Organization. A transportation policy-making organization made up of representatives from local government and transportation authorities

NAFTA: North American Free Trade Agreement

NEPA: National Environmental Policy Act. A national policy to promote the protection of the environment in the actions and programs of federal agencies

NYSDOT: New York State Department of Transportation

OA: Office of the Aging

SPECTER: Special Traffic Education Radar Trailer. A self-contained mobile radar trailer that provides vehicle speed and warning messages to the motorist

STAMP: Specialized Transportation and Mobility Program. Curb-to-curb transportation services for disabled transit users

STB: State Bike Route 17

STC: Southern Tier Central Regional Planning and Development Board

TEA-21: Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century. Congress' reauthorization of ISTEA, in which they condensed the 15 planning factors to 7.

TIP: Transportation Improvement Plan. A three to five year program of transportation projects and strategies drawn from the metropolitan transportation plan

U.S. DOT: United States Department of Transportation

UPWP: Unified Planning Work Program. The annual document that coordinates the overall comprehensive transportation planning in the urban region and includes specific information of which planning activities will be undertaken by ECTC and its partner agencies during the upcoming year

Vehicle Mile of Travel (VMT): A unit to measure vehicle travel made by a private vehicle, such as an automobile, van, pickup truck, or motorcycle. Each mile traveled is counted as one vehicle mile regardless of the number of persons in the vehicle (Source: FHWA)