

APPENDIX C: SUMMARY OF COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

BACKGROUND

ITCTC staff received comments throughout the Long-Range Transportation Plan update process. Numerous ITCTC partners, municipal staff, transportation providers, NYSDOT staff, federal partners and other ITCTC members provided input in development of the LRTP draft. The ITCTC collected public comments during widely advertised public meetings. In addition, members of the public were encouraged to telephone, mail, and email comments to the ITCTC office. A web site for the LRTP update was established early in the update process and was maintained with the latest drafts of the evolving plan (see www.tompkinscountyny.gov/itctc). An online survey was a popular option to help capture information and comments. The ITCTC Facebook page was also used to extend community outreach and provide another point of input. This appendix includes comments from these sources.

TRANSPORTATION RELATED COMMENTS GENERATED FROM THE 2045 LRTP DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The public comments received by the ITCTC are listed below along with a response. Responses may address individual comments or related groups of comments. The comments are compiled by topic area based on their content. Comments that were similar in content were combined and received a single response. In those cases, individual comments are identified. Some comments were not legible or not applicable to the LRTP. Those comments were not included below. In general, the comments are presented in their original form. Some minor editing was done by ITCTC staff to improve readability.

In addition, the ITCTC received comments related to document format and data presentation. Those comments were incorporated into the document to improve its appearance and content quality but are not included in this appendix.

Comments were compiled into transportation related topic areas based on the contents of comments themselves. Some comments may be found in more than one topic area. The topic areas are:

- **General and Miscellaneous**
- **Rail Services**
- **Public Transportation-Funding & Service**
- **Active Transportation (bicycling, walking, trails)**
- **Transportation Technology**
- **Location Specific Comments**

Public comments are listed below along with a response. Responses may address individual comments or related groups of comments as shown.

GENERAL & MISCELLANEOUS COMMENTS

- One member of the community stated that it was unclear how it was this report, and its vision relate to other planning efforts and how it reflects investments in infrastructure.
- Expand the timeline for this plan to incorporate a 100-year vision. The 2045 LRTP is too short-term.
- The one key issue that was overlooked in this plan is the lack of adequate funding needed to adequately pay for maintenance and to reach the green goals outlined in the plan.

Response: The Long-Range Plan is a federally required 20-year plan that the ITCTC is charged with developing as part of the metropolitan transportation planning process. The plan outlines data, goals, and objectives to guide the programming of federal surface transportation dollars. The ITCTC works with municipalities, the county, and the state to manage federal funds while furthering LRTP and local goals. The funding projections in the financial element of the LRTP are based on historic funding levels. Fiscal analysis is required to be constrained based on available financial resources. This analysis will be modified to reflect any potential changes in federal funding.

RAIL SERVICES COMMENTS

One member of the community brought up the issue of prioritizing rail connections as an intercity mode of travel over the Ithaca Airport, as well as making the implementation of light, high-speed, and intercity rail a priority going forward.

- Implement a high-speed rail connection to Buffalo, the Syracuse airport, and Binghamton.
- If we had a high-speed rail connection to the Syracuse airport, we might not need an airport at all.
- Funds currently being used for the Ithaca airport could be reappropriated for the rail connection.
- Bring back light-rail trolleys to Tompkins County with the following goals...
- In the short term, connect the Commons to the Cornell Campus.
- In the long term, build a Wine Trail trolley line to connect to wineries and breweries.

Response: The 2045 LRTP for Tompkins County does not address this form of passenger service within its planning time frame. Initiatives such as the restoration of rail passenger services require State and National commitment. New York State does not currently have a vision for intercity passenger service that includes Ithaca. The State Rail Plan focuses on maintenance, restoration and expansion mostly along currently established rail corridors. No specific mention is made of the rail line serving Tompkins County. For complete description of the NYS Department of Transportation's Rail Plan visit: <https://www.dot.ny.gov/divisions/policy-and-strategy/planning-bureau/state-rail-plan>

The ITCTC is supportive of the existing rail line and its role in freight movement. The rail right-of-way is recognized as an important transportation resource that should be preserved for future continuing rail use, be it freight or passenger.

Related goals in the LRTP:

MOBILITY Goal: To promote implementation of transportation services, programs and projects that enhance mobility.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION COMMENTS – FUNDING

- Cornell University should contribute more in funding to the TCAT bus system – multiple comments.
- There is not enough funding for TCAT's long-term viability as a public transport system provider.

Response: This series of comments refers to the funding challenges faced in the provision of public transportation. The LRTP provides an overview of TCAT and other Tompkins County public transportation services in the Transportation Systems chapter. It is recognized that TCAT provides exceptional service considering the size of Tompkins County. Currently the agency is working at near capacity, and it is important for all stakeholders to help address the fiscal challenges of providing public transportation in a community that has high expectations for service and where there is substantial unmet demand. The ITCTC will work collaboratively with other community partners to help advance solutions in this area. The LRTP is supportive of public transportation as an important component in its stated goals to reduce drive alone trips, reduce automobile dependency and increase mobility options for all travelers in Tompkins County. Maintaining existing transit infrastructure, as well as expanding and promoting new transit technologies and programs, are key implementation areas of the Action Plan in the LRTP.

Related goals in the LRTP:

MOBILITY Goal: To promote implementation of transportation services, programs and projects that enhance mobility.

INTEGRATION Goal: To develop an integrated transportation system for Tompkins County that is seamless, multimodal, and coordinated, that achieves greater operational efficiencies and increases the safety and convenience of users.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION COMMENTS – SERVICES

- Tompkins County should run small "jitney style" buses in rural areas that could take people to the TCAT bus stops in their towns because not everyone can afford a car or may not be able to drive one because of abilities, age, or income.
- There is not enough bus service to destination hotspots like bars, restaurants, etc. This not only makes it harder to access these locations without a car, but also contributes to higher instances of driving while under the influence.

- There should be more collaboration between TCAT and the rural school districts to supplement and/or eliminate the need for long school bus trips.
- Human services offices should work with the agencies that develop transportation plans, so everyone being served.

Response: This series of comments includes service requests and operation ideas for TCAT. TCAT is responsible for designing and implementing public transportation services and operations in Tompkins County. Route alignments, vehicle assignments, and enhancements like Park and Ride are carefully managed by TCAT staff. Currently the county has a network of 13 well-used rural park and ride lots (see p. 58). TCAT is aware of the need to better connect rural communities to their bus lines. As part of this effort to more equitably serve rural communities, in 2019 TCAT restructured its 2-zone fare pricing structure to a single fare zone pricing structure. TCAT has also released their "Strategic Plan 2018-2030" in which they outline their short and long-term modernization plans for the system. This strategic plan also evaluates the feasibility of incorporating the latest in transit technology and design, from electric buses and farebox alternatives to dedicated transit lanes Bus Rapid Transit. TCAT's Strategic Plan is available at https://www.tcatbus.com/content/uploads/2019/01/Strategic-Plan_2018-to-2030.pdf. The ITCTC will work with TCAT and other community partners to advance implementation of strategic plan concepts and to monitor new technologies and service options, including on-demand services, that will expand the reach of public transportation in Tompkins County.

The ITCTC acknowledges the importance of the travel issues raised in these comments and has forwarded them directly to TCAT for their evaluation and consideration of possible actions within the services that they provide.

Related goals in the LRTP:

MOBILITY Goal: To promote implementation of transportation services, programs and projects that enhance mobility.

INTEGRATION Goal: To develop an integrated transportation system for Tompkins County that is seamless, multimodal and coordinated, that achieves greater operational efficiencies and increases the safety and convenience of users.

ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION COMMENTS (BICYCLING, WALKING, TRAILS)

- When it came to comments on active transportation, most respondents emphasized the need for safe, protected, and comprehensive infrastructure so that residents can safely conduct all kinds of trips throughout the county. We also received many comments specifically around the need for road calming, and pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure measures in the hamlet of Forest Home.
- The planning vision in the LRTP is not bold enough to not only accomplish the area's green goals, but to also convince residents to bike and walk more. There needs to be transformative change for that to happen, and the plan as it stands fails to meet the moment.
- On community member said "Boulevard' is an odd word to use for streets which have bikes and cars but no bike lanes. A better term would be 'bike-able unrestricted streets."
- Provide infrastructure to enable the widespread adoption of e-bikes and other micromobility devices. For example, make secure bicycle parking available so users feel comfortable using their expensive e-mobility devices.
- Many pedestrian crossings have little to no lighting while dealing with high-speed traffic which makes the road too dangerous for walking.
- Pedestrian crossing signage is inconsistent and confusing across the County.
- Many sidewalks have no coherent planning vision with some making pedestrians have to cross the street multiple times in order to continue in a straight line.
- Developers should provide sidewalk access and connections when creating destinations instead of expecting all visitors to come by car or infrequent public transport.
- Protected infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists throughout the entire county, not just the urban areas, needs to be prioritized as essential pieces of infrastructure.
- Prioritize highly needed pedestrian and safe bike routes to facilitate all kinds of trips, not just ones to employment centers.
- Create a comprehensive and connected active transportation network to address dangerous gaps in the current system for both cyclists and pedestrians.

- Create sidewalks in cul-de-sacs or little used roads to increase pedestrian infrastructure coverage.
- Build a wide shoulder along Cayuga Heights Road and East Shore Drive, as well as heading southeast out of downtown Ithaca toward Ithaca College along Slaterville Road or along an alternative route.
- One person provided the following anecdote - "As an example, I previously lived in Evanston IL. After a tragic accident where a construction vehicle hit and killed a student biker, the town and University (together with state and federal funding) worked to create a protected bike lane.... along with sidewalks on both sides. This went North-South to connect Chicago, Evanston, and northern suburbs along Sheridan Road, a key artery. Many people might have thought "it's not possible - it's too narrow" but it is possible and is necessary for healthy and safe communities." - Tour of the Evanston, Chicago protected bike lane; Evanston, IL: Protected Bike Lane - YouTube

Response: This series of comments refers to issues with active transportation, primarily defined by bicycle use and walking. Generally, comments are supportive of active transportation. Most are suggesting expanding the use of future and existing dedicated infrastructure for cycling and walking to connect neighborhoods across the county, including towns, villages, and rural areas, along within hamlets and neighborhoods like Forest Home. The LRTP offers full support for programs, strategies and/or projects that strengthen active transportation, including bike lanes, boulevards, protected lanes, as well as bikeshare, etc. Bicycling and walking are two modes that can be enhanced through local efforts, and thus offer the opportunity for expansion. Bicycling has the greatest potential for expansion since there are so few dedicated facilities for this mode. Walking in Tompkins County, particularly in the City of Ithaca and adjacent urbanized area, is a mature mode with good facilities and high use. Expanding the modal share of active transportation is an important component of the multi-faceted LRTP strategy to reduce drive-alone trips in Tompkins County to minimize the negative impacts of private automobile dependency.

Specific active transportation initiatives listed in the LRTP include complete streets network (Ch.3&4) and Tompkins Priority Trails Strategy (Ch.4 and Appendices). Chapter 4, Projects for Implementation, also includes bike/pedestrian promotion and bike/pedestrian facilities planning and improvements. Expanding and promoting active transportation is one of the key implementation areas of the LRTP Action Plan (Ch. 1). There are several federal surface transportation funding lines that are available for bicycle and pedestrian projects such as the Transportation Alternatives Program and the Surface Transportation Block Grant-Flexible funds. The ITCTC will work with local partners to continue to provide active transportation facilities.

Related goals in the LRTP:

MOBILITY Goal: To promote implementation of transportation services, programs and projects that enhance mobility.

CONNECTIVITY Goal: To maintain and improve transportation networks to enhance safety, multimodal and intermodal connectivity and facilitate the movement of people and goods.

PROXIMITY Goal: To achieve land development patterns that enable the efficient provision of multimodal transportation services.

INTEGRATION Goal: To develop an integrated transportation system for Tompkins County that is seamless, multimodal and coordinated to achieve greater operational efficiencies and increase the safety and convenience of users.

QUALITY OF LIFE Goal: Develop a transportation system that sustains and enhances the quality of life for Tompkins County residents and visitors.

ENVIRONMENT Goal: To work progressively towards a transportation system that will have zero-negative impact on the environment.

EQUITY Goal: To achieve equity in transportation policy and projects that spur fundamental improvements in communities across Tompkins County.

TRANSPORTATION TECHNOLOGY COMMENTS

- There was one comment requesting that the guidelines for electric vehicle (EV) purchase incentives be expanded to also include plugin hybrids given their environmental benefits over purely gasoline fueled vehicles.

Response: The ITCTC does not have the jurisdiction to change the structure and implementation policies of EV incentives. We do however support efforts and initiatives that reduce and/or eliminate fossil fuel consumption in the transportation sector.

Related goals in the LRTP:

OVERARCHING Goal: To minimize the negative environmental impacts of transportation including: dependency on fossil fuel energy use, emissions, noise pollution and non-point source pollution.

QUALITY OF LIFE Goal: Develop a transportation system that sustains and enhances the quality of life for Tompkins County residents and visitors.

ENVIRONMENT Goal: To work progressively towards a transportation system that will have zero-negative impact on the environment.

LOCATION SPECIFIC COMMENTS

- Forest Home Drive is a high-traffic neighborhood that lacks any kind of safe bicycle or pedestrian connections for both residents and commuters to popular destinations like Cornell University, the Cornell Botanical Gardens, and nearby park areas like the FR Newman Arboretum and Mundy Wildflower Garden. There needs to be a clear separation between vulnerable road users and speeding vehicles.
- The Honness Lane extension of the East Hill Rec Path is not a real path, but a wide shoulder on a fast road.
- One person noted that. *“The Maple Ave section of the East Hill Rec Path is actually only a narrow sidewalk, not wide enough for bikes if a pedestrian is walking it. In fact, that section lacks any pavement markings to indicate that the rec path extends onto it, which results in the vast majority of rec path users being unaware that the rec path continues there at all.”*
- The traffic on route 13A (Town of Ithaca in the evening, combined with a 45mph speed limit and straightaway makes, for VERY dangerous conditions for walking, biking and checking our mailboxes. Our shrubs are taken out regularly by out-of-control vehicles.
- One person provided the following anecdote *“In early October the Homeless and Housing Task Force held its meeting at the South Hill Business Park. I could not make the bus from downtown on time, so I walked. Knowing where the Business Park is, I walked up the west side of Aurora Street, but suddenly the sidewalk just stopped. No shoulder either. I had to cross Aurora Street without a light or crosswalk. Then, at the first traffic light leading into the Business Park, a steep slope from the sidewalk down to the road, a ditch, and a guard rail prevented pedestrians on the sidewalk on the east side of the road from crossing at the light. I had to continue on to the second light, which only gets you into Ithaca College parking lots, and some locked back doors of manufacturing still there, not the public entrance to the Business Park. I eventually got in after walking a great circle over wet grass. I missed the beginning of the meeting.”*
- Another person provided this anecdote *“At a crossing on Rt 366, attending an evening event by foot at Cornell, cars simply neglected to stop at a crosswalk over about a thirty second span, with one driver even stopping 50 yards down the way to shout, “don’t step in front of moving cars, you f**khead.”*
- While Southworks is expected to provide pedestrian access, good wayfinding signage will be needed.
- When pedestrians walk up East State Street toward the City Line, people have to cross back and forth whenever the sidewalk on one side of State Street ends.
- The crossings along State St on West Hill, Green St, Cayuga St, and others are very dangerous and have low visibility.
- There are often complaints of speeding on Cornell St at Belle Sherman school. This is usually in the southbound direction; some drivers think the 15mph slowdown is only for the crossing -- it’s not clear that the 15mph duration lasts all the way past Valley Rd. Others may miss seeing the one sole sign entirely.
- The East Recway crosswalk across Mitchell uses the dull yellow advisory signs, rather than the brighter mandatory signs.
- Sometimes there are drains and storm sewers, but these are not at the lowest point in the pavement! An example is the bridge from College Ave. to the Cornell campus. In rainstorms, a big puddle used to gather at the southeast corner of the bridge, because the water couldn’t drain out.

Response: The LRTP does not address location specific issues as addressed in these comments. These are handled by the responsible jurisdiction (local, county or state) during project planning and implementation or through changes in local policies. However, the ITCTC acknowledges the importance of the travel and safety issues raised in these comments and has forwarded your comments directly to the appropriate agencies for their evaluation and consideration of possible actions.





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