



Introduction

The Newburgh Area Transportation & Land Use study team has completed the technical work and analysis and is developing a Final Report and set of recommendations. This summary provides an overview of the key “lessons learned”.

For the May 17 Orange County Transportation Council Technical Committee meeting we would like to present these lessons learned and describe the outputs of the modeling and traffic analysis process to obtain feedback from the study area communities and transportation agencies. That feedback would be essential to the study team as it refines the public presentation of study recommendations scheduled for June.

Summary of Analysis Methodology

The discussion of regional traffic conditions and potential local improvements is based on an analysis of projected year 2035 traffic growth that was developed from a set of regional land use build-outs. While two different land use scenarios were developed—“business as usual” following existing Zoning and “smart growth” which focused new development within existing or potential new centers—it was determined that traffic volumes from the two models were sufficiently similar that only one land use scenario (the “business as usual”) was input into the Orange County Travel Demand Model for analysis. Separate model runs were performed for different levels of investment in the transportation network to inform decision-makers on anticipated benefits from potential improvements. In addition, a micro-simulation was performed for the same investment scenarios for the Route 300 corridor from Route 207 to Route 52.

Key analysis parameters (e.g., land use build out and transportation network elements) were presented at a series of public outreach sessions that engaged members of the community in facilitated discussions. While these sessions were not intended as full “buy-in” to model inputs or model outputs, the contributions from the public were essential for shaping the overall analysis.

Summary of Key Lessons Learned

1. Regional Traffic Growth

To best interpret the output of the Travel Demand Model, the study team identified 18 traffic “hot spots” where congestion is known to occur or is likely to occur given future land use patterns. At each of those hot spots, future traffic volumes were assessed and a volume/capacity ratio was calculated to assess the level of congestion anticipated in the future.

That analysis shows that, of the 18 locations examined, some would be minimally affected or could have added traffic accommodated via low-cost, readily-implementable traffic improvements such as lane striping, introduction of left turn lanes, etc. Other intersections could accommodate projected traffic growth via more moderate cost improvements such as converting shoulder areas to travel lanes, minor roadway widening without ROW acquisition plus the low-cost measures cited above. Still others would be more substantially congested and would need more extensive roadway widening and lane additions and possible ROW acquisition—the intersection of Route 207 and Route 300 is a prime example of this. And there are some locations where even substantial roadway improvements might not be sufficient to accommodate traffic—the intersection of Route 300 and Route 17K and the length of Route 300 from south of Route 17K to north of the Thruway on/off ramps is a prime example of this. This range of easy-to-improve locations to difficult-to-improve locations is not unusual, and can also be used to help guide land use development decisions going forward.



The Travel Demand Model also identifies a few locations where traffic growth could have an acute effect on roadway conditions and operations. One is the Route 207 corridor from Route 300 to west of Stewart Airport; it is clear that some significant level of roadway treatment will be needed, either with the addition of through travel lanes in each direction at some locations, the inclusion of left and/or right turn lanes at other locations, and a reconstruction of the bridge carrying the Thruway over Route 207 coupled with significant widening of Route 207. A second is the length of Route 300 approaching Route 17K from the south to as far north as Route 52. Segments of Route 300 may need to be widened, while other more “creative” treatments may be needed to deal with the issues at Route 300/Route 17K where widening itself may not be desirable or sufficient. Similar issues may be expected along Route 9W from the vicinity of Fostertown Road to south of Route 52. Detailed planning and engineering studies are warranted at these locations.

Finally, the study team evaluated the potential benefit of new roadway connections—links in the network that may not have been built as part of incremental subdivision or development of land to date, and which may be considered for the future. While natural features preclude the creation of a dense network of interconnections, there may be some opportunities to create strategic linkages to take pressure off existing points of congestion or congested corridors. The Travel Demand Model did show that a parallel roadway east of Route 300 would serve to reduce congestion along Route 300, especially at the most congested intersections such as Route 52 and Route 17K. Additional study would be required to determine the feasibility of creating new roadway links. However, at a minimum, municipalities should be encouraged to retain existing roadways for through traffic and to identify opportunities to make new connections as part of the land subdivision process.

2. Regional Land Use Patterns

There are locations within the area where there are opportunities to dramatically improve the area’s land use/development, urban design and transportation, all as part of a package of treatments. Two very prominent locations that come to mind are the Broadway corridor within the City of Newburgh, and the Vails Gate area. The Broadway corridor can be redesigned for better use of its overly-generous curb-to-curb width to incorporate various roadway or urban design treatments such as a landscaped median, bike lanes, bus lanes, and corner “bulb-outs”. Reconstruction based on a new streetscape design approach could result in an exceptionally attractive urban corridor for the city. Vails Gate, with its five-legged, multiple curb cuts, and congestion-prone, difficult-to-traverse characteristics would need a major planning and design effort but doing so could vastly improve intersection operation and therefore add value to the commercial properties. Even more so if the intersection and roadway reconfigurations were designed in concert with redesign of the adjacent commercial areas.

Several of the corridors in the study area have opportunities for significant new development and several of the communities have specifically modified their comprehensive plans to identify this potential for growth. Route 17K west of Route 300 and Route 207 between Routes 300 and 747 are two areas of particular note where new economic development activity is envisioned by the local communities. While there is certainly room in those corridors to expand the right-of-way to handle additional traffic demand, in some cases the level of investment needed to handle all of the projected traffic could alter community character. The communities should proactively determine if such an infrastructure improvement is consistent with local plans.