OCL Study Session, June 17, 2015: How CNY Moves

Meeting held at **SUNY Oswego Metro Center at 100 South Salina Street** (the Atrium office building on Clinton Square) in **Room 129**

OCL: Sandra Barrett and Renée K. Gadoua; Co-chairs: Heidi Holtz and Mary Kate Intaglietta

Attendees: Elizabeth Allen, Kim Armani, Laurie Black, Tom Carlin, Barbara Carranti, Mario Colone, Bradley Fetes, Sara Freda, William Ginn, Chris Godleski, Melissa Hidek, Deborah Hundley, Peter King, Donna Knapp, Rachel Kramer, Michael LaFlair, Megan Lee, Sarah McIlvain, Melissa Menon, David Michel, Craig Milburn, Kathy Mogle, Jon Morgan, Isaac Olson, Martha Ours, Eric Rogers, Peter Sarver, Mike Sattler, Nora Spillane, Mary Thompson, Loretta Zolkowski

Program: Presentation of Maxwell School Capstone Project, "CNY Mobility: System Analysis and Recommendations for Improvement;" Megan Costa, County Planning Director

A. Maxwell School Capstone Project, "CNY Mobility: System Analysis and Recommendations for Improvement" In early spring, OCL submitted application for MPA student team to provide some background research for upcoming OCL transportation study.

Student research focused on four areas: Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) System; Complete Streets; Carsharing Programs; and Didi Taxi as a model to improve taxi service.

As background, the students defined the problem with this quote:

> *"Transportation policies can have a significant impact on employment opportunity. Lack of transportation isolates many Americans from jobs. For decades, metropolitan areas have been expanding outward, and jobs have been moving farther away from the low-income and minority people who disproportionately remain in urban cores. For many of these people, inadequate or unaffordable transportation is a significant barrier to employment."* (http://www.civilrights.org/transportation)

-- The Leadership Conference Education Fund on Transportation Equity his perspective connects with findings in 2014 OCL study on the employment skills gap.

Changes in transportation modes dovetail with changes in economy, ways of thinking about transportation, and demographic shifts.
- Syracuse population declined from a high of about 222,000 in the 1950s to about 145,000 now.
- Downtown Syracuse experienced greatest population decline (though now growing)
- Region experiencing growth of up to 1.5% in south and southeast.
- More than 27% of city's population is at or below the poverty level.

Analysis of Centro
- 38% of riders earn less than $30,000 a year; 47% earn less than $15,000 a year.

- 18,000 people ride primary Centro routes on an average weekday.
- Routes with highest ridership are James Street and Salina Street.
- Routes with lowest ridership are Townsend Street and Baldwinsville.

Job access analysis
- Some employment centers not accessible by bus.
- Many routes serve the city center, where there is high employment density.
- Total regional employment is approximately 246,400, with 82% located in city and the five largest towns (DeWitt, Clay, Salina, Cicero and Manlius.)
- Four of the region's 10 largest employers are on University Hill.
- 57% of jobs in the city are outside of downtown and University Hill.

Related issues
- Taxi service is expensive
- Syracuse Hancock International Airport contracted with Syracuse Regional Airport Taxi to provide taxi rides to and from the airport
- At least seven companies provide non-emergency medical transportation.
- Centro Call-A-Bus provides transportation for people with disabilities.
- Poor sidewalk maintenance hinders walkability and access
- Limited bike lanes.
- Non-profit Providence Services started in 2015 to provide transportations for New Americans and poor.
- Renewed interest in OnTrack.
- Not all child care centers can be accessed by the existing Centro lines.

Students reviewed the following transportation components:

1. Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), is a high-quality bus-based transit system that delivers fast, comfortable, and cost-effective services at metro-level capacities. It does this via dedicated lanes, with busways and iconic stations typically aligned to the center of the road, off-board fare collection, and fast and frequent operations.

Benefits: Faster, easier and more reliable travel; potential for economic growth; cleaner environment.

Case Study: Pittsburgh: Creating Downtown-Oakland Corridor, linking the two largest job centers in the region. Primarily privately financed, with state and federal money as well. Good collaboration in planning.

2. Carsharing is a service that provides access to a fleet of vehicles, often at a low cost. A car sharing organization (CSO) is made up of individual members who join resources to purchase and maintain one or more cars for use by members of the organization. These organizations place car sharing lots or stations at different locations in a community, where people can rent cars, usually for short trips.

Peter Sarver said this happens informally in low-income neighborhoods.

Benefits: Quality of life improves with better mobility. Creates entrepreneurial opportunities.

Examples: Ithaca Carshare, Buffalo
What is the status of Cuse Car?

3. Complete Streets

Gov. Andrew Cuomo signed complete street legislation in 2011, requiring complete street design in future planning. Design features are roadway design features that accommodate and facilitate convenient access and mobility by all users, including current and projected users, particularly pedestrians, bicyclists and individuals of all ages and abilities.

Future transportation plans "may include, but need not be limited to: sidewalks, paved shoulders suitable for use by bicyclists, lane striping, bicycle lanes, share the road signage, crosswalks, road diets, pedestrian control signalization, bus pull outs, curb cuts, raised crosswalks and ramps and traffic calming measures; and recognize that the needs of users of the road network vary according to a rural, urban, and suburban context" (State of New York Senate, 2011).

- Complete Streets is part of Syracuse's comprehensive plan.
- Fayetteville's Brooklea Drive a small complete street.
- In NYC neighborhoods, may include painting lanes, changing traffic patterns.
- Westcott Street in Syracuse: Wide sidewalks, bump out to slow traffic at Beech and Westcott streets.
- Connective Corridor "the Cadillac": major redesign, including rainwater collection plan.

4. **App-based system Didi – One example of using Smartphone technology to connect to taxi service. Uber is another.**

Didi involves voluntary participation of private, for-profit drivers and riders. Taxi services remain independent; riders can see where closest taxi is and price of service.

NYC has 26,000 Uber drivers.
In Syracuse, I'm Smart ended service in 2008.
SteerClear provides rides in owner's car.
Uber reportedly would like to operate in Syracuse.

Heidi Holtz shared YouTube video on Cleveland BRT
- Provides quality of light rail in a bus.
- Improvements in 9.3 miles in Cleveland.
- It's become part of mindset of the city: "I've got to catch the train."

She also recommends these videos:
- Animation that outlines principles: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sc-GKNecIbg
- Charlotte – images of complete streets in action: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RXcDFeKsMAk

- Bus Rapid Transit in Hartford that extends beyond the city: http://www.streetfilms.org/category/transit/
- Explaining Transit Oriented Development: http://www.streetfilms.org/transit-oriented-development-2/
- How old train tracks are used now for buses: http://www.streetfilms.org/the-cambridgeshire-guided-busway/
- An inner ring school district in Ohio where they don't have school buses: http://www.streetfilms.org/lakewood-oh-the-suburb-where-everyone-can-walk-to-school/
- Changing parking policies: http://www.streetfilms.org/parking-searching-for-the-good-life-in-the-city/
- Ride sharing through volunteering, elderly and rural solutions: http://arguably.bangordailynews.com/2014/05/09/people/how-this-maine-woman-could-revolutionize-travel-for-older-rural-mainers/
- Independent bus/shuttle services (run by nfp) for rural residents where public transit doesn't go: http://www.heraldtimesonline.com/news/local/hope-for-rural-transit/video_698408da-bed5-11e4-8ece-7723e6e1727c.html
- A biking/pedestrian cultural trail in Indianapolis: http://www.streetfilms.org/the-indianapolis-cultural-trail/

B. Megan Costa, assistant director for county planning at Syracuse-Onondaga County Planning Agency (SOCPA) presented PPT: "How CNY Plans." Highlights are here, and link to PPT is on OCL website.

SOCPA works with SMTC; departments and agencies; training and Onondaga County Planning Board (600 cases a year referred by municipalities)
All zoning and planning takes place at the local level; SOCPA offers recommendations.

Planning at regional; city/metro; municipal; neighborhood; and individual levels.
"There's a spider web of ownership in the transportation area," Costa said.
Issues include:
- Regional mobility
- Quality of highways, air, rail travel
- Mobility and safety/access
- Funding
- Transit systems
- Bike/pedestrian connections
- Quality communities: Enhance unique historic and cultural aspects.
- Multi-modal concepts.
- Segmented ownership
- Network planning
- Roads are built by municipalities with federal money, but municipality must maintain. 60-70 miles built in county in last decade.
- Who owns? Who pays? Who benefits? What land use pays enough to maintain?
- Density vs. mixed use
- Community goals vs. individual goals

- Zoning/land use is local
- What kind of neighborhood community do you want? Lots of choices and tradeoffs.
- Individual site decisions include parking, right-of-way

Trends in planning
- Biggest population is in the city, older villages and major commuter corridors.
- Residential development 1998-2010 mainly single-family buildings
- Development is scattered. Some is threatening rural character.
- Large number of workers at SU and downtown; density of jobs remains in the city
- 216,000 people live in the county and work. Of those, 202,000 work in the city. 14,000 commute out of the city for work.
- 40,000 commute to the county for work, including 19,000 from Oswego County; 9,000 from Madison County; 2,000 from Cayuga County; and 8,000 from Cortland County.
- Rural towns are greatest exporters of workers.
- Small number of people live and work in the same town.
- We love out 20-minute commute, but as housing spreads out and jobs are decentralized, commute times increase.
- 50% of workers travel to work in single-occupant vehicles.
- Houses and land parcels getting bigger while households are getting smaller.
- Trending up: median age of householder; heads of household over 71; single-person household (30%); non-traditional households.
- Trending down: Large family households; married couple households; two-parent households Gen Y interest in home ownership (growing interest in urban living and fallout from mortgage crisis.)

Principles of Smart Growth
- Provide a variety of transportation choices.
- Mixed land uses.
- Create a range of housing opportunities and choices.
- Create walkable neighborhoods.
- Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration.
- Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a sense of place.
- Make development decisions predictable, fair, and cost effective.
- Preserve open space, farmland, and critical environmental areas.
- Focus development primarily toward existing communities.
- Compact building design and efficient infrastructure design.

Tested Smart Growth concept in 2010 survey with SMTC. Findings include:
- 78% said development should occur in developed communities with available buildings or unused land.
- 77% said future development should include housing and buildings closely spaced, with sidewalks leading to nearby shops and parks, even if it means having smaller homes and less space for parking lots.
- Top priorities included protecting air and water quality; preserving natural areas; keeping the county's scenic beauty; reducing our energy usage; preserving farmland.

- 32% support creating communities where people do not have to drive as much.

Our assets:
- Great regional connections
- Good commute times
- Relatively compact metro area
- Existing system
- Good coordination
- Great traditional communities

Costa: We have fewer resources – less population and less help to maintain our transit system. We need to plan.

The region's challenges:
- Pollution
- Segmented land use decisions
- Death by 1,000 cuts: All of sudden you're not on a rural road anymore. You're on a suburban road. Who pays for that?
- Funding/maintenance
- Sprawl without growth
- Transit/bike/pedestrian support

Our opportunities:
- Better road designs.
- Cost of gas. (When cost increases, people do change patterns.)
- Market preference (less interest in owning home and car.)
- Fiscal analysis.
- Transit options.
- Public health and aging advocates becoming new partners in discussion.

Discussion comments:
- Population projects expected growth to continue, but population slowed in 1970s.
- Decline in city population created empty houses. (Still have to maintain roads in front of empty houses.)
- Under-utilized facilities in city and older communities.
- Must plan into budget that the things you're building today you need to maintain in 30 years.
- Is Smart Growth hostage to home rule? Need buy-in from consumers, planning and zoning officials; educate about state law and benefits

(**James D'Agastino** of SMTC: "It's easier to get money for shiny, new things.")

Upcoming Meetings
Tuesday, July 7, 4:30-6 p.m. at SUNY Oswego Metro Center at 100 South Salina Street (Atrium office building on Clinton Square) Room 129: **How CNY Moves by bus: Centro and Centro riders.** We will hear from Rick Lee and Steve Koegel of Centro, Sally Johnston of Centro's Accessible Transportation Advisory Committee and several other Centro users.

Wednesday, July 15, 12-1:30 p.m. at SUNY Oswego Metro Center at 100 South Salina Street (Atrium office building on Clinton Square) Room 129: **How CNY Moves to Jobs: decisions based on choice or necessity? – panel**

In coming months, our meeting schedule will follow this pattern:

- First Tuesday of the month, 4:30-6 p.m., Locations TBA
- Third Wednesday of the month, 12-1:30 p.m., SUNY Oswego Metro Center.

Please let us know if you would like to be part of a panel design subcommittee on any of the upcoming topics proposed at the meeting: How CNY Moves around the county (town planning, development, land use); How CNY Moves those in need (health, human services, equitable practices); How CNY moves visitors and cultural tourists; How CNY moves on two wheels; How CNY moves on Complete Streets; How CNY Moves sharing cars, rides, shuttles.

Mini-Presentations: We invite folks to share articles, blog posts, videos etc. in 2-minute presentations at the beginning of each session. If you come across something that you think will be interesting, thought-provoking and/or worthy of further discussion, please let us know.

Submitted by Renée K. Gadoua, study writer