

## **A. INTRODUCTION**

### **1. Study Overview**

In 2003, the North Country Transportation Study (NCTS) studied the benefits and impacts of a Regional Transportation Development Concept in the North Country at a planning-level of accuracy. Through an initial screening process, the NCTS determined that the region should pursue up to eight different modal development strategies, but further study focused on highway-based solutions. The study recommended:

- An East-West highway development approach should be pursued as part of a broader multi-modal strategy.
- Among highway alternatives, economic growth opportunities are maximized by an east-west alignment generally along the existing Route 11.
- Other improvements to north-south travel routes connecting to the Route 11 corridor are also necessary.

The conclusion was to use as much of the existing right-of-way along Route 11 as possible and to develop a four-lane expressway, or a freeway.

The product of this process was a “Recommended Overall Regional Development Plan,” which showed a North Country roadway concept: a loosely-defined zone several miles wide, centered on Route 11, where the East-West four-lane highway could be routed. The routing at the eastern end of the corridor could follow US Route 11 to Interstate 87 at the Village of Champlain, and possibly continue east to connect with the Rouses Point Bridge, or follow the NYS Route 190 corridor to connect to Interstate 87 just west of the City of Plattsburgh and possibly continue east to the Lake Champlain Ferry. Similarly, wide, loosely-defined “spurs” would serve locations north and south of Route 11 with critical North-South linkages to the Village of Lowville as well as the international crossings at the City of Ogdensburg, and the Village of Massena. Since the initial study, the overall project is now known as the “Northern Tier Expressway” (NTE).

This NTE (US Route 11) Corridor Study seeks to further define roadway improvements needed to bring implementation of the Recommended Overall Regional Development Plan to fruition, including both long-term “strategic” investments and near-term operational and capital improvements. This study will put forth a strategy for implementing a phased approach to development of the NTE over time. In addition, actions requiring further study and planning through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and/or the New York State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) processes will be identified.

### **2. Technical Memorandum #1**

This report contains information on the goals and objectives of the study as well as other information that will guide the work to be done. It is divided into four sections after this introduction covering:

- Goals and Objectives;
- Performance Measures & Alternative Evaluation Criteria;
- Decision Making Process; and
- The Public Involvement Plan.

Each of the subsequent sections presents data that will be used throughout the rest of the study as a means of maintaining consistent public input, data analysis and decision making. The information in this Technical Memorandum will serve as an operational guide for the rest of the study. The information may be updated during the course of the work if new conditions or considerations need to be incorporated into the overall process.

## **B. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

### **1. Study Goals**

The overall goal of the Corridor Study is to refine the NCTS's recommendations into a long-term plan and implementation strategy to guide future investment decisions in the NTE Corridor. More specifically, the NTE Corridor Study should include recommendations that:

- Increase mobility and reliability of the surface transportation within the NTE Corridor;
- Create greater economic competitiveness for the region;
- Maintain or enhance the compatibility of surface transportation facilities in the corridor with environmental and socioeconomic resources;
- Improve safety within the corridor; and
- Enhance the security of the region.

**Table 1-1** lists several objectives for each of these goals for the recommended improvements to the Corridor.

### **2. Study Objectives**

In order to develop recommendations that will meet the stated goals and objectives of the project, the specific objectives of the NTE Corridor Study are to:

- Provide a planning level analysis of the infrastructure and operational capacity of the corridor;
- Identify general social, economic, environmental and transportation issues that must be addressed in the development of future project plans and designs;
- Determine if, and when, the capacity of the existing facilities will be exceeded;
- Identify specific alternatives for resolving current issues and meeting future requirements, including needed capital investments;
- Conduct a planning-level analysis of alternatives from engineering, social, economic, funding and environmental perspectives and identify possible local, regional and national impacts;
- Screen alternatives and identify high priority improvements; and

- Identify planning-level estimated costs and financing options associated with each alternative.

**C. PERFORMANCE MEASURES &. EVALUATION CRITERIA**

The NTE Corridor Study will generate numerous different alternatives. The alternative may range in scale from individual intersection improvements to village by-pass potentials and possibly even larger proposals. In order to insure a thorough and consistent analysis process, the Study Team will use the performance measures and evaluation criteria tied to the goals and objectives of the project to screen the alternatives. **Table 1.1** presents the performance measures as they relate to the goals and objectives.

**Table 1.1 Goals, Objectives and Performance Measures**

<b>Goal</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Performance Measures</b>
Mobility & Reliability	Improve overall travel time through the corridor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Level of Service</li> <li>• Delay</li> <li>• Travel speed</li> <li>• Travel time between major destinations</li> <li>• Number of left turns/curb-cuts from travel lane</li> </ul>
	Improve System Reliability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of facility restrictions</li> <li>• Pavement condition rating</li> <li>• Bridge condition rating</li> <li>• Incident clearance time</li> </ul>
	Improve traveler information along the Study Corridor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number and type of informational signs</li> </ul>
	Enhance intermodal availability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number and type of intermodal connections</li> </ul>
Economic Competitiveness	Reduce the cost per mile for passenger and freight traffic in the Study Corridor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cost per mile</li> <li>• Vehicle operating costs</li> <li>• Travel time while in a vehicle</li> <li>• Travel time on-foot, in transit, or by other non-vehicle means</li> <li>• Out of pocket expenses</li> <li>• Delay</li> </ul>
	Enhance economic sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of access points to ports, international border crossings, businesses and adjacent states</li> <li>• Number of intermodal (roadway, railroad, port and air)</li> </ul>

		<p>connections</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel time between major destinations</li> <li>• Access to regional economic centers</li> </ul>
	Increase economic benefit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Market conditions</li> </ul>
Environmental and Cultural Compatibility	Transportation projects have a positive effect on the environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number and type of improvements impacting natural environment</li> <li>• Number and type of improvements impacting built/human environment</li> </ul>
	Transportation system development is coordinated with land use development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of cooperative land use and transportation plans</li> <li>• Number of projects that employ Context Sensitive Solutions</li> </ul>
	Transportation projects do not disproportionately negatively impact disadvantaged populations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of minorities impacted</li> <li>• Number of non-minorities impacted</li> <li>• Number of low income population impacted</li> <li>• Number of middle and upper income populations impacted</li> <li>• Percent of transit dependent population served</li> <li>• Number of properties impacted</li> </ul>
Safety	Reduce the number and severity of vehicular, pedestrian or bicycle crashes in the Study Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accident rate</li> <li>• Number of fatalities</li> <li>• Reduction in conflict points</li> <li>• Number of high accident locations modified</li> <li>• Incident clearance time</li> </ul>
	Provide rest areas for trucks and automobiles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distance between rest areas</li> <li>• Number and type of traveler information locations available</li> </ul>
	Correct substandard roadway conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of substandard vertical and horizontal curves</li> <li>• Miles of roadway with substandard pavement widths</li> <li>• Miles of roadway with substandard shoulders</li> <li>• Miles of substandard pavement conditions</li> <li>• Number of deficient bridges</li> </ul>

		and culverts • Number of sight restrictions • Miles of roadway with clear zone deficiencies
Security	Provide reasonable redundancy of transportation systems	• Number of redundant access points (e.g. route diversions) • Lane miles with full shoulders • Number and type of intermodal connections • Availability and placement of Advanced Informational Signage

**D. DECISION MAKING PROCESS**

Wilbur Smith Associates, as the consultant hired by the State of New York to undertake this study, will make recommendations based on input from the Study Advisory Group. Ultimately NYSDOT, in coordination and cooperation with local, State and federal agencies, will decide on the implementation and timing of all recommendations.

In general, the Wilbur Smith Associates Team will use the regularly scheduled input from the Study Advisory Group, staff of the Development Authority of the North Country (DANC), staff of the New York State Department of Transportation, and the public to:

- Complete its analysis of existing conditions;
- Define the issues and needs to be addressed;
- Develop and review alternatives to address the issues and needs;
- Select the most appropriate set of alternatives;
- Prioritize the projects which make up the most appropriate set of alternatives;
- Determine the most appropriate methods of financing and implementing the recommendations; and
- Prepare a final report on the work.

Comments received from stakeholders and the public will be recorded in a study log that will be used to help guide decision making.

**E. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROCESS**

The public involvement plan (PIP) for the NTE Corridor Study is intended to facilitate continuous opportunities for substantive public outreach and public input during the corridor study process. The PIP is also designed to build upon, rather than duplicate, the public involvement activities and products of preceding related efforts, most notably those from the North Country Transportation Study. In addition, due to the large geographic area encompassed by the NTE Corridor and relatively low population density, the PIP seeks to

use modern telecommunications technologies and techniques that allow information to be gathered and widely dispersed at relatively low cost and with great efficiency and effectiveness. This approach will allow the need for “traditional” public meetings, which are generally becoming obsolete as effective public involvement tools, to be minimized. However, public meetings will be held in all five counties in the Study Area.

The PIP is structured around three phases: (1) Study Kickoff; (2) Needs Identification; and (3) Recommendations. Each phase includes a newsletter, website update, media outreach, “live” TV/radio call-in shows and public information kiosk updates. In addition, public meetings or workshops and informational DVDs and/or Powerpoint presentations for public and stakeholder distribution are included at key strategic milestones. **Table 1.2** provides details of PIP tasks, activities and timing for the NTE Corridor Study: It also shows how the three phases relate to the tasks in the scope of work. The “R” in each task indicates which member of the Study Team has prime responsibility for that particular task.

**Table 1.2 Public Involvement Program**

Activity	Elements	Timing	Scope Task
<i>Phase 1: Study Kickoff</i>			
<b>1. Media Kit #1</b>	<p><u>Distribution:</u> As determined by DANC (R)</p> <p><u>Purpose of Kits</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide Background Data on Initial Study and Current Tasks</li> <li>• Increase Media Coverage of Study</li> <li>• Supply Information for On-Going Media Interaction</li> <li>• Provide Contacts for Further Information</li> <li>• Provide information on goals and objectives</li> </ul> <p><u>Distribution Methods:</u> As determined by DANC</p>	12/05	Task A
<b>2. Toll-Free Phone Number</b>	<p><u>Distribution:</u> Available in New York State and hosted and monitored by WSA (R)</p> <p><u>Purposes of Toll Free Phone Number:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide timely study update</li> <li>• Highlight current issues under consideration</li> <li>• Provide schedule of upcoming events</li> <li>• Provide opportunity to leave comment, ask question or request information</li> </ul>	12/05	Task A

Activity	Elements	Timing	Scope Task
3. Study Website	<p><u>Distribution:</u> Hosted by DANC with information and support provided by WSA (R) <i>(part of existing NCTS site)</i></p> <p><u>Purposes of Website:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide timely study updates</li> <li>• Highlight current issues under consideration</li> <li>• Provide a library of past study information</li> <li>• Provide schedule of upcoming events</li> <li>• Provide opportunity to leave comment, ask question or request information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 12/05 – initial NTE info on existing NCTS site</li> <li>▪ 1/06 – new NTE study web page</li> <li>▪ Update as needed</li> </ul>	Task A
4. Newsletter #1 (NCTS Vol. IV-1)	<p><u>Format:</u> Possibly single page “tabloid” that serves mainly as an announcement of study kickoff and gives contact information and study news sources.</p> <p><u>Distribution:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DANC</li> <li>• NYSDOT</li> <li>• FHWA</li> <li>• Counties &amp; Cities</li> <li>• Special Interest Groups</li> <li>• General Public</li> <li>• WSA (R)</li> </ul> <p><u>Purposes of Newsletter:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide Update on Study</li> <li>• Define study limits</li> <li>• Describe the public involvement options for this study</li> <li>• Discuss Goals and Objectives</li> <li>• Inform public of upcoming participation possibilities</li> <li>• Provide return comment card</li> </ul> <p><u>Distribution Method:</u> Email, Surface Mail, and Local Distribution</p>	1/06	Task A
5. Information Kiosks (One per County)	<p><u>Participants:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DANC (R)</li> <li>• WSA</li> <li>• Counties</li> <li>• General Public</li> </ul>	1/06	Task A

Activity	Elements	Timing	Scope Task
	<p><u>Purpose of Kiosks</u> - A changing display to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce public to study</li> <li>• Define study limits</li> <li>• Describe public outreach resources</li> <li>• Present schedule</li> <li>• Present Goals and Objectives</li> <li>• Present decision-making process and criteria matrix</li> <li>• Provide information sources for further information</li> </ul> <p><u>Publicity Needed:</u> Newsletters notice of location/emails to NCTS mailing list, Press Release (by media contact)</p>		
<b><i>Phase 2: Needs Identification</i></b>			
<p><b>6. Newsletter #2 (NCTS Vol. IV-2)</b></p>	<p><u>Distribution:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DANC</li> <li>• NYSDOT</li> <li>• FHWA</li> <li>• Counties &amp; Cities</li> <li>• Special Interest Groups</li> <li>• General Public</li> <li>• WSA (R)</li> </ul> <p><u>Purposes of Newsletter:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide study update</li> <li>• Highlight existing and future condition data</li> <li>• Provide schedule of upcoming events</li> <li>• Provide opportunity to return comment card</li> </ul> <p><u>Distribution Method:</u> Email and Surface Mail</p>	<p>3/06</p>	<p>Tasks B-D</p>
<p><b>7. Media Kit #2</b></p>	<p><u>Distribution:</u> As determined by DANC (R)</p> <p><u>Purpose of Kits</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide study update</li> <li>• Maintain Media coverage of study</li> <li>• Provide highlights of existing and future conditions</li> <li>• Provide info on the alternative</li> </ul>	<p>3/06</p>	<p>Tasks B-D</p>

Activity	Elements	Timing	Scope Task
	development process <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supply information for upcoming public interaction</li> <li>• Provide contacts for further information</li> </ul> <u>Distribution Methods:</u> As determined by DANC		
<b>8. Information Kiosks Update #1 (One per County)</b>	<u>Participants:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DANC (R)</li> <li>• WSA</li> <li>• Counties</li> <li>• General Public</li> </ul> <u>Purpose of Kiosks Update:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide study update</li> <li>• Maintain public knowledge of study</li> <li>• Provide highlights of existing and future conditions</li> <li>• Provide info on the alternative development process</li> <li>• Supply information for upcoming public interaction</li> <li>• Provide contacts for further information</li> </ul> <u>Distribution Methods:</u> As determined by DANC <u>Publicity Needed:</u> Newsletters notice of location/emails to NCTS mailing list, Press Release (by media contact)	4/06	Tasks B-D
<b>9. Radio and/or TV Call-in Show</b>	<u>Participants:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultants</li> <li>• DANC (R)</li> <li>• NYSDOT</li> </ul> <u>Purposes of Show:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide update of study</li> <li>• Discuss potential alternatives</li> <li>• Address questions from call-ins</li> <li>• Publicize public work session</li> </ul> <u>Publicity Needed:</u> Newsletters/emails to NCTS mailing list, Ads, Press Release (by media contact) <u>Possible Location/Times:</u> Watertown,	4/06	Tasks B-E

Activity	Elements	Timing	Scope Task
<p><b>10. Summary DVD or Powerpoint #1</b></p>	<p>Plattsburgh, Canton. Evenings 7-9 PM.</p> <p><u>Distribution:</u> As determined by DANC (R)</p> <p><u>Purpose of DVD/Powerpoint:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide study update</li> <li>• Provide information on alternatives under consideration</li> <li>• Supply information for on-going public interaction</li> <li>• Provide contacts for further information</li> </ul> <p><u>Distribution Methods:</u> As determined by DANC</p> <p><i>Note: Actual format TBD – options include video DVD, self-launching Powerpoint presentation, and other formats.</i></p>	<p>4/06</p>	<p>Tasks B-E</p>
<p><b>11. Public &amp; Stakeholder Work Sessions: Potential Alternatives Discussion (est. 5 sessions)</b></p>	<p><u>Attendees:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DANC (R)</li> <li>• WSA</li> <li>• NYSDOT</li> <li>• SAG Members</li> <li>• Special interest groups</li> <li>• General public</li> </ul> <p><u>Purposes of Meeting:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review Process to Date</li> <li>• Discuss potential alternatives to be considered for entire corridor, with focus on localized portion of study area (a quarter of the corridor centered on the community where the meeting is being held)</li> <li>• Publicize other study activities</li> </ul> <p><u>Publicity Needed:</u> Newsletters/emails to NCTS mailing list, Public Notices/Ads, Press Release (by media contact), on-line notices.</p> <p><u>Locations/Times:</u> Watertown, Lowville, Canton, Malone, Plattsburgh. Evenings 7-9 PM.</p>	<p>5/06</p>	<p>Tasks D-F</p>

Activity	Elements	Timing	Scope Task
<i>Phase 3: Recommendations</i>			
12. TV Call-in Show	<p><u>Participants:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultants</li> <li>• DANC (R)</li> <li>• NYSDOT</li> </ul> <p><u>Purposes of Show:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide update of study</li> <li>• Discuss alternatives</li> <li>• Address questions from call-ins</li> <li>• Publicize public involvement opportunities</li> </ul> <p><u>Publicity Needed:</u> Newsletters/emails to NCTS mailing list, Ads, Press Release (by media contact)</p> <p><u>Possible Location/Times:</u> Watertown, Plattsburgh, Canton. Evenings 7-9 PM.</p>	8/06	Task F
13. Public & Stakeholder Work Sessions: Preliminary Recommendations Discussion (est. 5 sessions)	<p><u>Attendees:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DANC (R)</li> <li>• WSA</li> <li>• NYSDOT</li> <li>• SAG Members</li> <li>• Special interest groups</li> <li>• General public</li> </ul> <p><u>Purposes of Meeting:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss selected alternatives with a focus on the local area covered by the meeting</li> <li>• Solicit comments</li> <li>• Discuss remainder of the process</li> </ul> <p><u>Publicity Needed:</u> Newsletters/emails to NCTS mailing list, Public Notices/Ads, Press Release (by media contact)</p> <p><u>Locations/Times:</u> One location in each county. Evenings 7-9 PM.</p>	9/06	Tasks F-G
14. Newsletter #3 (NCTS Vol. IV-3)	<p><u>Distribution:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DANC</li> <li>• NYSDOT</li> <li>• FHWA</li> <li>• Counties &amp; Cities</li> <li>• Involved Agencies</li> <li>• Special Interest Groups</li> <li>• General Public</li> </ul>	10/06	Tasks F-G

Activity	Elements	Timing	Scope Task
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WSA (R)</li> </ul> <u>Purposes of Newsletter:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe results of alternative analysis</li> <li>• Describe contents of draft report</li> <li>• Describe next steps in NTE development</li> <li>• Provide opportunity for individuals to request future information updates</li> </ul> <u>Distribution Method:</u> Email and Surface Mail		
<p><b>15. Media Kit #4</b></p>	<u>Distribution:</u> As determined by DANC (R) <u>Purpose of Kits</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide study update</li> <li>• Maintain press coverage of study</li> <li>• Provide highlights of draft final report</li> <li>• Provide contacts for further information</li> </ul> <u>Distribution Methods:</u> As determined by DANC	<p>11/06</p>	<p>Task G</p>
<p><b>16. Radio and/or TV Call-in Show</b></p>	<u>Participants:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultants</li> <li>• DANC (R)</li> <li>• NYSDOT</li> </ul> <u>Purposes of Show:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide update of study</li> <li>• Discuss the recommendations of the draft report</li> <li>• Address questions from call-ins</li> </ul> <u>Publicity Needed:</u> Newsletters/emails to NCTS mailing list, Ads, Press Release (by media contact) <u>Location/Times:</u> Watertown, Plattsburgh. Evenings 7-9 PM.	<p>11/06</p>	<p>Task G</p>
<p><b>17. Summary DVD or Powerpoint #2</b></p>	<u>Distribution:</u> As determined by DANC (R) <u>Purpose of DVD:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe contents of Draft Report</li> <li>• Describe next steps in NTE</li> </ul>	<p>12/06</p>	<p>Task G</p>

Activity	Elements	Timing	Scope Task
	<p>development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide opportunity for individuals to request future information</li> </ul> <p><u>Distribution Methods:</u> As determined by DANC</p> <p><i>Note: Actual format TBD – options include video DVD, self-launching Powerpoint presentation, and other formats.</i></p>		
<p><b>18. Information Kiosks Update #2 (One per County)</b></p>	<p><u>Participants:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DANC (R)</li> <li>• WSA</li> <li>• Counties</li> <li>• General Public</li> </ul> <p><u>Purpose of Kiosks Update:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide study update</li> <li>• Maintain public knowledge of study</li> <li>• Provide highlights of final report</li> <li>• Provide contacts for further information</li> </ul> <p><u>Distribution Methods:</u> As determined by DANC</p> <p><u>Publicity Needed:</u> Newsletters notice of location/emails to NCTS mailing list, Press Release (by media contact)</p>	<p>12/06</p>	<p>Task G</p>
<p><b>19. Study Final Report – Public Summary Document</b></p>	<p><u>Distribution:</u> As determined by DANC (R)</p> <p><u>Purpose</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summarize study findings and recommendations for public consumption</li> <li>• Use graphic-intensive, minimal long-text type format</li> <li>• Minimal pages for easy distribution</li> </ul> <p><u>Distribution Methods:</u> As determined by DANC</p>	<p>12/06</p>	<p>Task G</p>