

NEW YORK BICYCLING COALITION
IMPROVING BICYCLING AND PEDESTRIAN SAFETY

chapter

5

NEW YORK AGENCIES

State Agencies

Regional Agencies

Local Governments
Agencies

MYTH:

New York State bureaucracy is just too difficult to understand.

REALITY:

The programs for improving cycling and walking are varied but not complex, and the processes are often detailed, but not opaque.

Check the website for contact information and to determine your county's DOT region

www.dot.state.ny.us/pubtrans/bpcoord.html

The DOT is divided into eleven regions; see the NYS DOT website for a list of DOT regions by county:
www.dot.state.ny.us/
(click on local NYS DOT offices)

INTRODUCTION

This chapter orients the reader to New York State agencies involved in the provision and maintenance of bicycling and pedestrian facilities. In addition to the Department of Transportation, many agencies at the state, regional, and local levels have an impact on bicycling and walking. Also, most bicycling events need to be coordinated with (and often issued permits by) many of these agencies. Knowing a bit about these agencies helps advocates navigate government bureaucracy.

This section catalogues agencies with funding programs relevant to bicycling and pedestrian advocacy, which are current at the time of publication. Funding programs change all the time. Stay informed of new or altered programs through various sources, including agency contacts and agency websites.

The New York State Citizens' Guide at www.nysegov.com is an invaluable guide to NYS government. See Appendix C for more information on funding agencies and programs.

STATE AGENCIES

Department of Transportation (DOT)

The federal government is the source of most infrastructure funding. Money passes through the state, which then distributes monies to regional DOT offices.

BICYCLING & PEDESTRIAN COORDINATORS

The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA), enacted in 1991, requires each state DOT have one statewide Bicycling and Pedestrian Coordinator (B/P) and B/P coordinators for each region. In NYC, there are two-city wide coordinators, one for bicycling and one for pedestrians. The statewide and regional coordinators work with advocacy groups, MPO staff, local municipal governments, elected officials and law enforcement agencies to include B/P considerations in all DOT activities.

The B/P coordinators are important people for you as an advocate to know. They can tell you when major projects come up, when the bicycling plan is up for renewal, and when you need to express your opinions to be included in major planning decisions. For example, they can give you early notice about bridge reconstruction projects so you can negotiate bicycling and pedestrian access across the bridge.

Unfortunately, not all regions have a full-time B/P Coordinator. Often the designated person has another job, and may only be able to devote a few hours a week to B/P issues.

Check the website for contact information and to determine your county's DOT region: www.dot.state.ny.us/pubtrans/bpcoord.html

The following DOT programs and plans may be useful for bicycling and pedestrian advocates:



NYS BICYCLING AND PEDESTRIAN PLAN

Under ISTEA, all state DOTs are required to produce transportation plans that include bicycling and pedestrian provisions. The New York State Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, an Appendix to "The Next Generation. . . Transportation Choices For The 21st Century," 1997 can be ordered from the NYS DOT, Statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Program by calling 518-457-8307.

TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (TIP)

The TIP is a list (adopted every two years) of regional transportation projects proposing to use federal funds, including all highway projects and transit projects. The regional lists are combined into the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) list. The STIP includes all federally funded state and local projects approved by the FHWA (Federal Highway Administration) and the FTA (Federal Transit Administration) for the next three fiscal years.

CONGESTION MITIGATION AND AIR QUALITY IMPROVEMENT (CMAQ)

This money also comes from TEA-21. It is a good place to start when looking for funding for bicycling and pedestrian projects. As of 2001, the New York City and Syracuse metropolitan areas qualify for the CMAQ program's flexible funds. These areas do not meet the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (non-attainment or maintenance areas). Funds can be used for transportation projects and programs to meet the requirements of the Clean Air Act [NYS DOT 1997: 33].

DOT CAPITAL PROGRAM (STATE/FEDERAL FUNDS)

The Governor's Capital Program covers infrastructure spending on state and local highway and bridge improvement plans. The state funds local highway and bridge capital improvements under the Consolidated Highway Improvement Program (CHIPS) and the Municipal Streets and Highway Program (Marchiselli Funds) which assists localities in matching federal funds for projects.

Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV)

The DMV is the principal promulgator of the Vehicle and Traffic Law. Advocates who wish to see changes made in the law need to work with the DMV, especially in areas such as bicycling and pedestrian safety regulation. The legislature is unlikely make changes in these spheres without DMV support.

Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC)

DEC staff, in consultation with other agencies, municipalities and groups, develop Unit Management Plans (UMPs) for DEC properties (such as the Adirondack and Catskill Parks). These plans help the DEC assess natural and physical resources, identify recreational

USEFUL WEBSITES:

Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)
www.dot.state.ny.us/progs/stip.html

Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV)
www.nydmv.state.ny.us/



USEFUL WEBSITES:

**NYS Open Space
Conservation Plan**
[www.dec.state.ny.us/
website/opensp/](http://www.dec.state.ny.us/website/opensp/)

**The New York State Governor's
Traffic Safety Committee (GTSC)**
[www.nysgtsc.state.ny.us/
overview.htm](http://www.nysgtsc.state.ny.us/overview.htm)

opportunities, and consider the ability of the resources and ecosystems to accommodate public use.

NYS Open Space Conservation Plan

The 1998 Open Space Conservation Plan was created by the DEC, Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP), and nine Regional Advisory Committees appointed by state and local governments. It proposes open space, trails and historic sites for future preservation, and must be updated every three years. The Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) provides monies for open space acquisition. Title 7 allocates funds to DEC and OPRHP for land purchases to be included in the Forest Preserve, State Parks, State Nature and Historical Preserves, State Historic Sites, Unique Areas, trails, rails to trails and other categories. Title 9 provides funds for local governments and not-for-profit organizations to purchase, develop, and preserve park lands and historic resources. Within the Adirondack and Catskill Parks, DEC administers the Title 9 grant program through the Division of Lands and Forests, Bureau of Public Lands (New York State Open Space Conservation Plan, NYS DEC).

The New York State Governor's Traffic Safety Committee (GTSC)

The New York State Governor's Traffic Safety Committee (GTSC) coordinates traffic safety activities in the state. It consists of the heads of thirteen state agencies with traffic safety concerns. Chaired by the Commissioner of the Department of Motor Vehicles, the Committee's mission is to promote and support the state's highway safety program to provide for the safe transportation of people and goods on New York's roadways. The Committee acts as the state's official liaison with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and works closely with a network of state and local agencies, non-profit organizations and private-sector partners to deliver quality traffic safety information, projects and services across the state.

Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP)

OPRHP manages over 300,000 acres of parks, historic sites and recreation areas, which support bicycling and walking activities (for both transportation and recreation). OPRHP plans and implements the NYS Open Space Plan, Conserving Open Space In New York, (State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, or SCORP). Other funding administered by OPRHP may be used for bicycling and walking includes the Land and Water Conservation Fund and the

Municipal Parks Matching Grant Program (funded through EPF and the Clean Water/Clean Air Bond Act).

Recreational Trails Grant Program

OPRHP administers the Recreational Trails Grant Program, a federal matching grant program that provides funding to acquire and maintain recreational trails for motorized and non-motorized recreational trail use (30% motorized, 30% non-motorized and 40% mixed-use). Eligible trails must be: 1) accessible to the public; 2) developable as a trailway; 3) planned and developed to meet all state requirements; and 4) be a project identified or related to a project in the SCORP. Special consideration is given to projects which: 1) provide access for the disabled; 2) mitigate and minimize impacts to the natural environment; 3) utilize youth conservation or service corps; 4) receive Millennium Trails recognition; or 5) are National Scenic Trails, National Historic Trails or trails designated as National Recreational Trails. The NYS Trails Council, a citizens' advisory council consisting of representatives from various trail user groups, provides recommendations to OPRHP on Recreational Trails Grant Program applications [NYS OPRHP 1999: ii].

Department of Health (DOH)

The Department of Health (DOH) promotes bicycling and walking for their health benefits, and maintains statistics for injuries resulting in death or hospitalization. Often, the DOH Injury Facts for NYS publication is the most reliable source of pedestrian and bicyclist injury statistics in a county. Within the DOH, the Physical Activity Coalitions, such as the Healthy Heart Coalitions, Eat Well/Play Hard and Healthy Neighborhoods Program, also promote bicycling and walking.

I Love NY, Department of Tourism

The Department of Tourism promotes bicycling as a benefit to local economies, particularly in upstate, rural areas. The recreation and adventure section of their website contains information about local bicycling touring and rental companies, clubs, trails and places to ride.

The Department of State (DOS)

The Department of State (DOS) conducts the coastal zone programs in NYS. Many of these programs include revitalization agendas that address pedestrian and bicycling issues, sometimes including a traffic calming component. Grants for planning and implementation are available, and approved plans can be a key to obtaining the cooperation of other State and Federal agencies.

DOS also administers the Quality Communities Interagency Task Force for the Lieutenant Governor's office. This program, announced in January 2001, emphasizes safe pedestrian and bicycling systems

USEFUL WEBSITES:

Department of Health (DOH)
www.health.state.ny.us/

[www.health.state.ny.us/nysdoh/
consumer/heart/contract.htm](http://www.health.state.ny.us/nysdoh/consumer/heart/contract.htm)

I Love NY,
Department of Tourism
www.iloveny.com

The Department of State (DOS)
www.dos.state.ny.us/

USEFUL WEBSITES:

Hudson River Valley Greenway
www.hudsongreenway.state.ny.us/

as an integral component of neighborhood revitalization. DOS staff can identify programs to help communities achieve these goals.

Department of State Police (DSP)

The State Police (along with local Police) are responsible for enforcement of bicycling and pedestrian laws. Further, they investigate many accidents and are often a supplemental source of accident data and hazard judgments.

REGIONAL AGENCIES

County Governments

County governments encompass, but do not supersede, the cities, towns and villages within their borders, with the exception of the five New York City boroughs, which act as counties for certain purposes but are not organized as county governments [NYS 2000: 58].

County Highway Departments

County Highway Departments are either called Department of Transportation (DOT) or Department of Public Works (DPW). County governments maintain county roads and (often) associated sidewalks but usually do not maintain roadways within cities. Maintenance varies by county. Some counties have large, well-equipped maintenance departments and perform most of the needed work while others have only a small work force and contract with towns for maintenance [NYS 2000: 220]. See Chapter 3 for more information about aspects of maintenance that can improve bicyclist and pedestrian safety.

County Planning Boards

Counties may create planning boards to develop multi-year plans. The county legislative body may authorize planning boards to review planning and zoning actions by municipalities within the county, providing municipalities with assistance and improving communication among municipalities within the county. The coordination of planning between the State, Counties and local municipalities improves local infrastructure, reduces work and uses scheduled maintenance work to reach goals.

County Health Departments (DOH)

County health departments (and some regional offices) support health care programs throughout New York State. They promote physical activity and improved bicycling and walking infrastructure.



Hudson River Valley Greenway

The Hudson River Valley Greenway Communities Council and Conservancy is a state sponsored program developing regional strategy for the Hudson River Valley (Albany, Rensselaer, Columbia, Dutchess, Orange, Putnam, Rockland, Ulster and Westchester counties, and, more recently, NYC). Its goal is to preserve “scenic, natural, historic, cultural and recreational resources while encouraging compatible economic development and maintaining the tradition of home rule for land use decision-making.” The Greenway provides technical assistance and money for planning and project implementation, including efforts that support trails and bicycling.

USEFUL WEBSITES:

NYS Canal Corporation
www.canals.state.ny.us/

Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs)

Federal highway and transit statutes require, as a condition for spending federal highway or transit funds in urbanized areas and their surrounding region, the designation of MPOs which have the responsibility for planning, programming and coordination of federal highway and transit investments. Generally, MPOs will cover regional areas of a population greater than 200,000.

NYS Canal Corporation

NYS Canal Corporation is working to complete the Canalway Trail along the 524-mile canal system. As of 2001, over 220 miles are complete. The Canal Corporation administers a Matching Grants Program to communities along the canal system to facilitate the construction of local trails and other amenities.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT: CITIES, VILLAGES & TOWNS

A *village* is part of a *town*, and its residents pay town taxes and receive town services (the term *hamlet* actually has no meaning under New York law). Some towns have created formal departments for their operational organization. Villages range from large multi-departmental organizations similar to cities, to small villages employing a few individuals. Villages provide services such as basic road and sidewalk repair, snow removal and even large-scale community development programs. They have the power to zone the area of the village separately from the remainder of the town. The General City Law grants specific powers to cities, such as construction and maintenance of public works, expenditure of public funds, and zoning [NYS 2000: 75-76, 92, 101, 107 & 109].

USEFUL WEBSITES:

Zoning
www.planning.org

Public Works Departments

There are a variety of names given to departments responsible for maintaining road systems: Highway Department, Department of Public Works, and Streets and Facilities Departments. Contact your local municipality to find out who has the responsibility for a particular section of roadway. Like counties, local municipalities do Capital Programming for public improvement planning and financing. Capital programs list proposed projects, project financing and estimates for three years of operating costs [NYS 2000: 167-168].

Local Planning Processes

There are many ways local planning processes impact bicycling and walking. Most municipalities either have a comprehensive plan, or are updating their current one. Plans address subjects such as affordable housing, agriculture, land use, historic districts, natural resources and transportation. When a community is creating or revising their comprehensive plans, they are required to solicit and accept public input. By volunteering to be on an advisory committee, or by reading the plan and making comments, an advocate can increase the visibility of bicycling and pedestrian projects. Additionally, some communities do specialized sub-plans for transportation targeted to bicyclists and pedestrians.

Zoning

Zoning, a land-use technique, helps local municipalities implement their comprehensive plans. Through districting, zoning regulates the use of land, the density of land use, and development. Zoning regulations describe a wide variety of standards (such as building height and density). Sometimes small changes in zoning regulations can make a big difference to bicyclists and pedestrians. See the American Planning Association website for more discussion about the impact of zoning on urban development.

