

DIRECTIONS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SYRACUSE METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION COUNCIL
Fall 2025

Syracuse skyline in fall.



New 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan adopted!

The SMTC Policy Committee adopted the 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) at their September 23, 2025, meeting. The MTP guides the Syracuse Metropolitan Planning Area's transportation investment over a 25-year period. The SMTC is required to adopt a new MTP every 5 years. With the anticipated build-out of the Micron Technology semiconductor fabrication plants over the next decade and beyond, this MTP includes an unprecedented level of projected population and employment growth for our region.

The 2050 MTP is the result of a nearly two-year process that included ten Study Advisory Committee meetings with SMTC member agencies and extensive public engagement. In 2024, SMTC staff attended numerous community meetings and pop-up tabling events including farmers markets, senior centers, and even high school civics classes! We interacted with over 400 people through these events, talking with people about how they use the transportation system now and their desires for the future with one primary guiding question: "With historic growth heading our way, what transportation investments should we make today that

More info about the MTP:

smtcmpo.org/about-us/planning-process/lrtp/



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Onondaga County Safe Routes to School acknowledged as complete

The Onondaga County Department of Planning requested the SMTC to conduct the Onondaga County Safe Routes to School (SRTS) study to improve the safety of students living in Onondaga County who walk or bike to school while encouraging more students to walk or bike. While many school communities in the County lack the infrastructure, policy, and density of nearby residential development necessary to encourage students to safely walk or bike to school, this study highlights one school community as a case study of a suitable SRTS initiative.

To identify that suitability, SMTC first documented existing conditions of school communities in Onondaga County. Overall, any school community with the interest and availability to conduct a SRTS program should; however, many characteristics of a school community can influence the effectiveness of a SRTS program.

SMTC guided Chestnut Hill Middle and Elementary schools through a case study SRTS initiative. Engagement efforts included conversations with principals, a workshop with the local Parent Teacher Organization (PTO), surveys distributed to both parents and students, and a walk audit to foster conversation between planners, students, and school staff.

The surveys found that while only 7% of students walk/bike to school every day, almost a quarter of students have walked/biked to school at least a few times in the past year. This shows many families are capable of walking/biking to school but choose not to. Additionally, most parents who responded identified distance, weather, and personal safety as the greatest influences when deciding whether their child will walk/bike to school, with improving sidewalk quality being most likely to change their mind if it were improved.

Finally, this study described short-, mid-, and long-term improvements to school policy and local infrastructure around Chestnut Hill to support safer walking and biking to school, while outlining pathways to financing these improvements.

Final report available at:
smtcmpo.org/all-publications/



Students at Chestnut Hill Middle participated in a walk audit with SMTC staff.



Tactical Urbanism takes over Syracuse

Over the summer you may have noticed several colorful projects temporarily reshaping streets within the City of Syracuse. From painted curb extensions and chicanes, to a bike corral and “sharrows,” the City has experienced a burst in activity known as tactical urbanism.

Tactical urbanism employs low-cost, temporary changes to the built environment to demonstrate how streets can be redesigned to improve access, safety, and community pride. Utilizing paint, temporary barriers, and other movable objects, projects can be installed in a single day and be evaluated on their successes and failures, which help inform long-term strategies without committing the City to any specific design or expensive project until the right design is found. This year’s tactical urbanism projects came in a variety of shapes and sizes.

Community Streets

After a successful pilot year in 2024, which saw the installation of a temporary plaza by Hopeprint on the Northside and improved pedestrians crossing by Alchemical Nursery on the Near Westside, the second year of the program saw its first project installation in Downtown Syracuse. At the intersection of S Salina St and Jefferson St, the Syracuse Urbanism Collective (SUC) installed painted curb extensions utilizing the colors of the City flag along with the City’s first bike corral.

The curb extensions aimed to reinforce existing parking regulations which restrict parking within 20 feet of an intersection to improve sightlines for drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists. This policy is known as “daylighting.”



Syracuse Urbanism Collective volunteers painted curb extensions and installed a temporary bicycle corral at the S Salina St / Jefferson St intersection in Downtown Syracuse.



Painted wayfinding markings installed by the Syracuse Urbanism Collective along the Onondaga Creekwalk.



Volunteers work on a painted chicane behind STEAM at Dr. King Elementary as part of the Reconnecting Communities planning grant.

The bike corral aimed to highlight the need for more secure bike parking locations throughout Downtown. The corral was installed in an existing “No Parking” zone to minimize impact on vehicle parking, while increasing access to several businesses at the intersection. SUC has indicated a desire to re-use the corral in future years, testing out new locations to see where demand is highest.

Syracuse Urbanism Collective

Not satisfied with just one tactical urbanism project for the year, SUC also took on improving navigation along the Onondaga Creekwalk. Utilizing a standard set of stencils, SUC volunteers painted wayfinding instructions along the Creekwalk that help trail users

stay on its path while connecting to nearby destinations. Volunteers used blue paint to mark the direction of the trail and yellow paint to direct trail users towards specific neighborhoods or key destinations.

Reconnecting Communities

On a larger scale, the City’s Reconnecting Communities planning grant also utilized tactical urbanism techniques in two demonstration projects on the Southside as they explore ideas to improve east-west connections once the I-81 viaduct project is completed.

In July, City of Syracuse staff worked with art students at STEAM at Dr. King Elementary to design murals within chicanes and curb extensions that would be painted behind the school. Chicanes are curb extensions that

shift traffic from side to side, slowing vehicles as they pass through. The project was installed by dozens of community volunteers, with assistance and guidance from the project's contractors and City and SMTTC staff.

In September, a second demonstration project was installed at the S State St / Taylor St intersection. "Sharrows," or shared lane markings, were installed along Taylor St from S Salina St east to Almond St. Under the railroad bridge, curb extensions narrowed the roadway while murals and solar powered string lights helped incorporate some placemaking techniques. Walking beneath the railroad bridge can be uncomfortable, especially at night. Bringing light and color to the area can help make that walk more pleasant for all.

At the end of this planning effort, the final report will highlight both short-term and long-term strategies to improve these connections. These concepts will build off the demonstration projects and give the City low-cost

solutions that can be implemented quickly while they explore strategies to implement the more expensive and logistically complicated long-term visions.

Try your hand at tactical urbanism!

If you'd like to get involved with tactical urbanism, now is the perfect time to throw your hat in the ring. The City of Syracuse's Community Streets Program has opened up applications for 2026. Check out the program website for more details, including program guidance, project ideas and requirements, and the application form. Projects must be located within the City of Syracuse. New project applications will be evaluated as they are received, with installations occurring as early as April 2026.

For more information:

smtcmpto.org/communitystreets



Volunteers work on murals and painted curb extensions under the railroad bridge at the S State St / Taylor St intersection as part of the Reconnecting Communities planning grant.

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Directions is a publication of the Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council (SMTTC). Formed in 1966 as a result of the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1962, and the Urban Mass Transportation Act of 1964, the SMTTC serves as the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) for the Syracuse metropolitan area, and provides a forum for cooperative decision making in developing transportation plans and programs. Its committees are comprised of elected and appointed officials, representing local, state, and federal governments or agencies (member agencies) having an interest in or responsibility for transportation planning and programming.

New 2050 MTP adopted!

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future generations will thank us for tomorrow?" Over 200 people viewed the MTP introductory video on our website and over 350 people responded to a survey. People told us they want more transportation options in the region. Sidewalk connections that cross municipal boundaries, especially between the City of Syracuse and nearby suburban retail/service plazas, are a concern. People want to use the Centro bus system, but need more frequent and reliable service on the core routes and to key employment destinations. People appreciate our recreational trail system, and want to see more blueways and greenways in the region, both for recreation and to provide more active transportation options. As our regional trail system has matured, more local connections to the system are needed to provide greater access. We recognize that maintaining our roads and bridges and our transit system in good condition requires a substantial and ongoing effort. Overall, people told us that they want the transportation system to be safe and reliable for all users.

The MTP also acknowledges that a substantial investment in new housing will be necessary to accommodate the anticipated growth in our region, and the choices about the form of that growth will have a profound impact on our transportation system.

Onondaga County's new comprehensive plan – Plan Onondaga – encourages growth in "strong centers" with a mix of housing types, which can support higher frequency bus service and encourage more walking and biking.

The MTP also identifies four regional priority funding initiatives: the I-81 Community Grid, regional trail network, Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), and access to the White Pine Commerce Park (future Micron Technology site). Overall, the MTP identifies about \$5.8 billion of transportation projects to support our regional growth over the next 25 years.

Along with the 2050 MTP, the SMTC also produced an update to our very popular Transportation Atlas. The newest edition of the Atlas incorporates 2020 Census data along with other updated data sources. This is a great reference for anyone needing demographic or transportation-related data for our region!

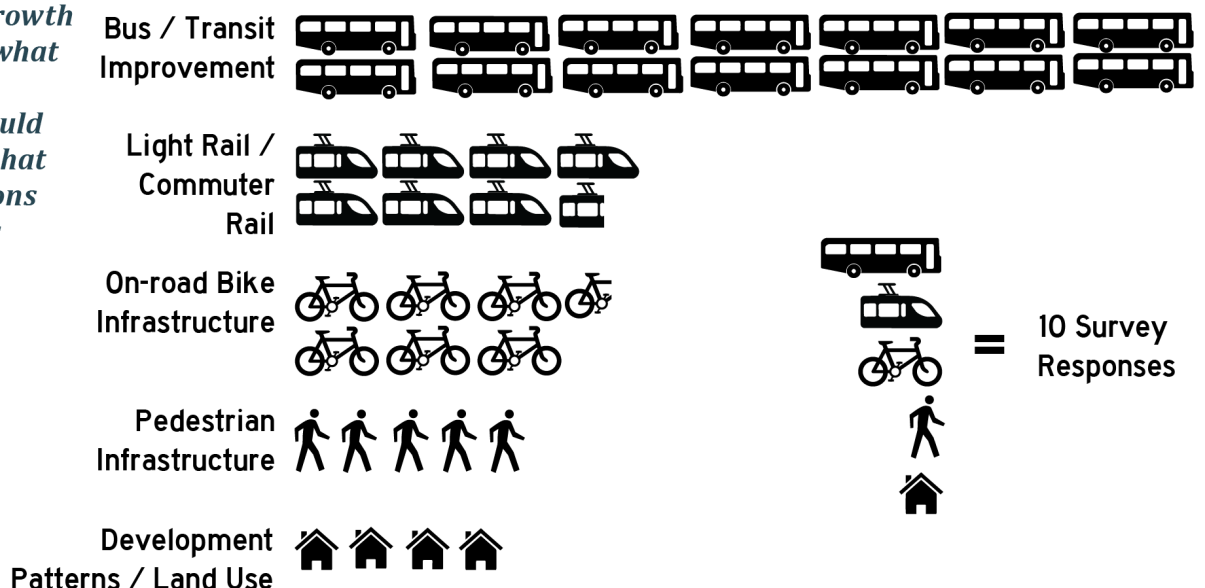
You can access the 2050 MTP and the new Transportation Atlas on our website.

More info about the MTP:

smtcmpo.org/about-us/planning-process/lrtp/

Top 5 types of transportation investments suggested on MTP survey.

With regional growth on the horizon, what transportation investments should we make today that future generations will thank us for tomorrow?



2050 MTP Goals

ECONOMY

- Support efficient and reliable freight movement
- Expand access to opportunities and services
- Address new and rapidly changing technologies

COMMUNITY

- Provide and maintain a safe, secure, and reliable transportation network
- Support targeted growth in urban, suburban, and rural areas
- Enhance mobility and accessibility between all modes of travel

ENVIRONMENT

- Protect, enhance, and connect existing natural lands and waterways
- Ensure communities are well-equipped to mitigate / adapt to the effects of climate change and support resiliency of transportation facilities

Priority Funding Initiatives

Complete the I-81 Community Grid

Including conversion of existing I-481 to I-81 and associated capacity projects, removal of downtown viaduct, completion of BL81 through the City of Syracuse, and new I-690 exit.

Continue to expand the regional trail network

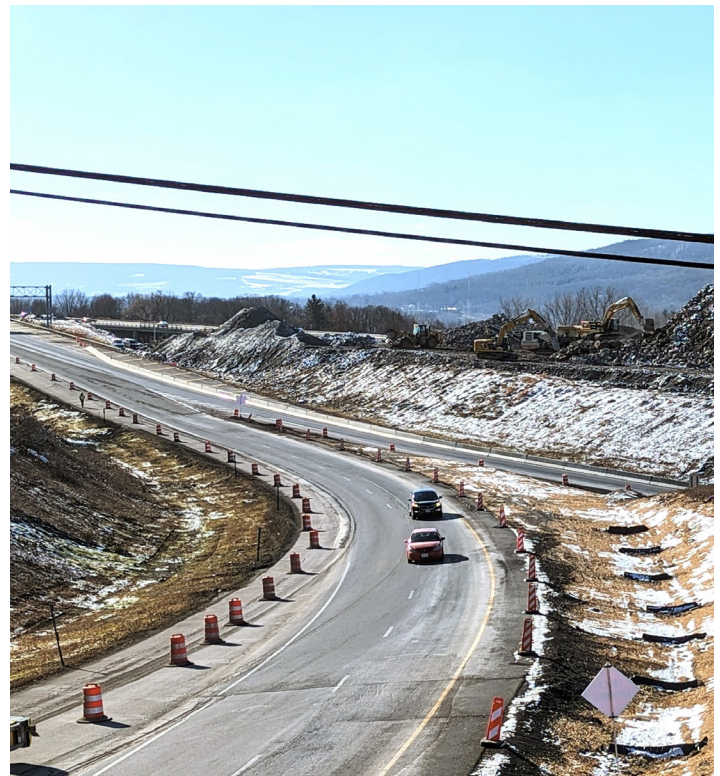
Focus on closing gaps and increasing connectivity to the primary corridors such as the Empire State Trail, Onondaga Creekwalk, and Loop the Lake Trail.

Implement the BRT System

based on the initial plan from the SMART1 study (Eastwood-OCC via James St / South Ave & SU-RTC), and continue to expand other enhanced transit options.

White Pine Commerce Park regional accessibility

Transportation projects necessary for build-out of Micron site and surrounding industrial areas.



Projects identified in the 2050 MTP range in scale from local traffic calming programs up to the I-81 Viaduct Project.

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Midler Ave / New Court Ave Multi-Modal Study

PUBLIC SURVEY

Help SMTC staff identify issues and opportunities along the study corridor based on your daily experiences! Provide insight into how you currently use the corridor and what can help improve it for all modes of transportation.

Review the Study Guide to learn about the corridor and take the survey to help identify issues and opportunities!

The survey will remain open through November 15, 2025.

Visit the project website:
smtcmpo.org/midlerstudy

