

W. Carthage & Carthage, NY: Workshop Summary

Prepared for: Tug Hill Commission and W. Carthage and Carthage officials, staff, and residents.
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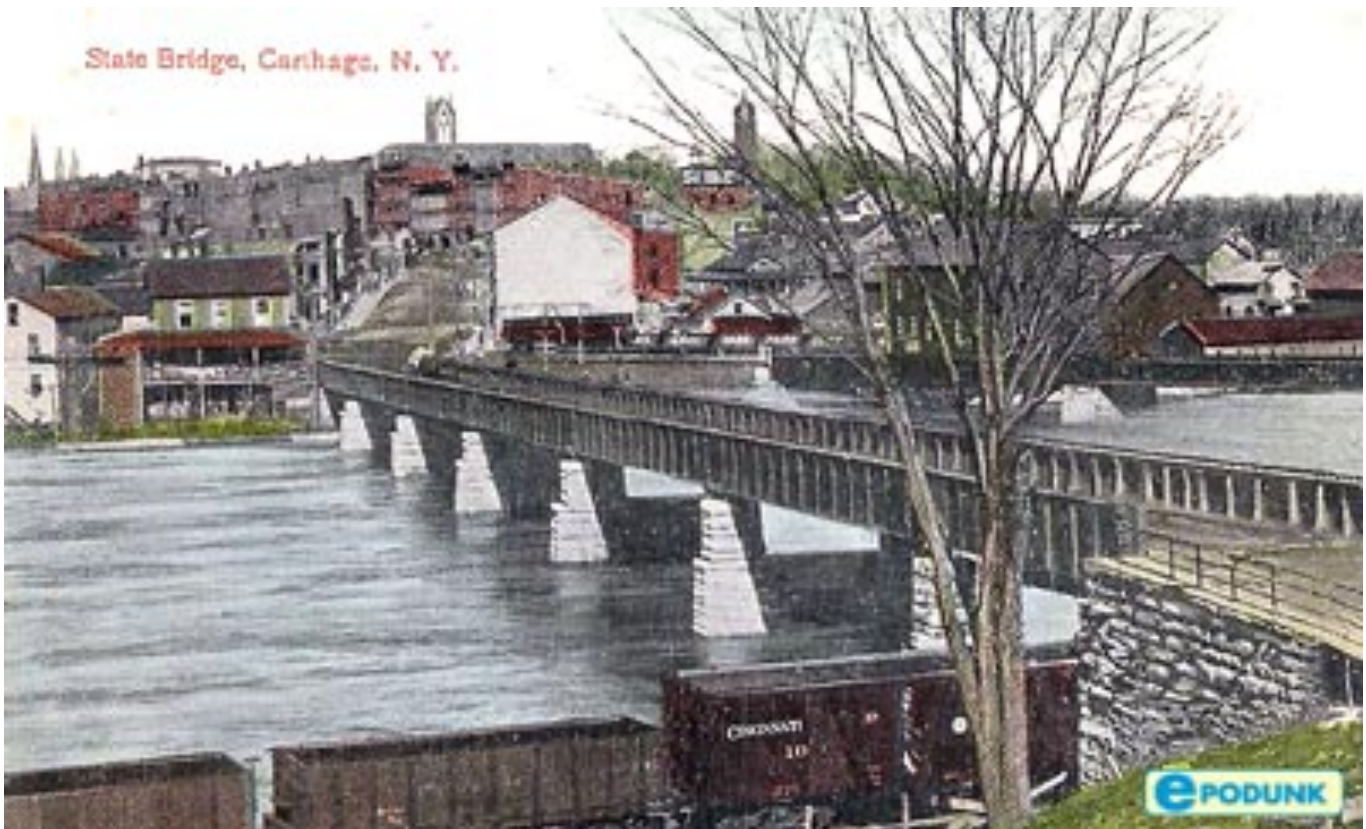


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Recommendations Supporting Healthy Community Design

On December 4th community leaders, staff, and residents in Jefferson County took part in a healthy community design workshop sponsored by the Tug Hill Commission. A number of people of varied backgrounds from towns and villages around the region joined facilitator Mark Fenton at the W. Carthage fire hall's meeting room for an opening presentation and discussion of the attributes of communities that encourage routine physical activity; a facilitated walk audit to experience this community engagement technique while exploring some typical conditions in W. Carthage on foot; and a work session in which participants developed specific recommendations for action.

During the workshop Mark summarized an overview of the key research into what creates a more livable community generally, and settings that specifically encourage increased walking, bicycling, and transit use. This included exploring the growing evidence that these factors not only support public health through increased physical activity, but also economic vibrancy, environmental sustainability, and quality of life. Four key characteristics of such thriving communities are as follows:

A. Mixed land use patterns: Compact development with different land uses and activities intermingled and close together, allowing for “live, work, shop, play, learn, and pray” destinations within walking, cycling, and transit distance, while reducing sprawl and preserving open space and agricultural land.

B. Active transportation facilities: A comprehensive and connected network of pedestrian, bicycle, and transit facilities, such as sidewalks, bicycle lanes, and non-motorized pathways, as well as frequent, affordable, quality transit service appropriate to the community scale, from dial-a-ride to scheduled buses.

C. Functional site designs: Destinations are designed to reward, not punish, those who arrive on foot, by bike, and transit, such as buildings at the sidewalk, with parking on-street (e.g. parallel or reverse diagonal parking), beside, or behind buildings; elements such as street trees, landscaping, benches, shade structures or awnings; human scale lighting; way-finding; and quality bicycle parking.

D. Safety and access for people of all ages, incomes, physical abilities and disabilities, including quality street crossings (e.g. highly visible markings, countdown timers on pedestrian signals), fully ADA-compliant design, and appropriately applied state of the art traffic calming such as curb extensions, median islands, roundabouts and mini-circles, and lane narrowing and road diets (four- or five-lane conversions to three lanes; one in each direction with a center turn lane).



Recommendations and priorities

At the end of this summary are rudimentary design maps and a grid with specific recommendations for actions that were generated during our working sessions. They are broken into the three Ps: programs (e.g. events, outreach, education, and promotional activities), projects (physical changes to infrastructure and the built environment), and policies (e.g. rules, ordinances, guidelines, practices, and procedures). And they are listed as short-term ideas that could be executed on the order of weeks to months, and long-term initiatives estimated to take months to years. This makes clear that there are certainly some low cost, near term actions that can be pursued quickly to build interest and momentum going forward.

Jefferson County, and specifically West Carthage and Carthage, have several areas in which simple, low cost applications can greatly impact the health and vitality of the community. The following is a summary of the major areas of focus that are recommended for the most immediate impact.

1. Carthage schools and hospital trail.

Develop a trail network connecting the West Carthage school complex, new hospital site, the Broad and Bridge Street intersection, and the village of Carthage. The trail leading south from the school complex and new hospital site can parallel Martin Street Rd. and should ideally be an eight-foot wide multi-use trail for use by pedestrians and bicyclists. But to reduce cost it could be a six-foot path with a soft (e.g. gravel or packed dirt) two-foot shoulder. This should then be connected to Carthage by a six-foot trail leading east along Bridge Street. Work on this trail must naturally be coordinated with the development of the new hospital site and associated transportation and parking plans.

- An eight-foot path is the ideal for two-way pedestrian and bicycle traffic. But a six-foot paved surface with two-foot soft shoulder can add trail capacity at a lower cost, and with reduced impact of stormwater run-off.
- This should also stimulate the community to consider and look for additional trail linkages and development such as a trail connecting to housing subdivisions, and to the park and sports fields adjacent to Franklin street.
- Include bench seating with shade trees, bike racks, historic signage, and general way-finding information along the trail and at key destinations.
- Link to the Carthage/W. Carthage to Lowville Rail Trail. There is rekindled interest in Lowville and Lewis County to develop a trail along the unused rail corridor connecting Lowville to W. Carthage and Carthage. This would be an amazing recreational asset and also a very effective multi-use transportation corridor linking destinations. Long term this trail could connect south to the Black River Canal trail system.



2. Broad and Bridge Street intersection redesign.

As a high traffic area near to many key destinations and something of a gateway into the community, the Broad and Bridge street intersection should be a priority for redesign. There are multiple design opportunities to allow pedestrians and bicyclists to cross to any of the businesses surrounding the intersection, the village of Carthage, and north to additional businesses and the school complex. The following examples include low cost short term options, as well as more intensive long term projects.

- Begin with high visibility crosswalk paint on all four legs of the intersection.
- Clear pedestrian and bicycle signage should warn drivers that this is a destination rich area with plenty of non-motorized traffic.
- Curb extensions might be reasonable to shorten crossing distances, slow vehicular traffic, and make pedestrians more visible to drivers. An inexpensive and reversible test can be tried with rubberized curbing material, vertical delineators, paint, planters, or other removable treatments to initially create temporary curb extensions (bump-outs).
- The ideal solution may be redesigning the intersection into a roundabout, with a mountable curb to facilitate large trucks that frequent the area. Traffic would be slowed to a safer speed along Route 26, turning movements would not require coming to a full stop if there is no cross traffic (an advantage for truck traffic), crash frequency and severity would be reduced, and pedestrians and cyclist crossings would be much safer due to the entry splitter islands associated with the roundabout.
- Note: A logical first step preceding any redesign would be examining existing traffic data, such as volumes, turning movements, and collision data for these intersections and this section of Route 26.



3. Sidewalk network completion program.

An issue in West Carthage and Carthage is an incomplete sidewalk network and maintenance of existing sidewalks. Participants identified filling in gaps, repairing damaged sidewalks, and upgrading sidewalks to a five foot minimum width as a community priority, especially in the village and residential districts. The first step is to inventory sidewalks and gaps as well as important destinations and trip generators such as schools, parks and playgrounds, retail and business clusters, residential areas, and senior housing and services. To address this need, consider a variety of funding approaches such as:

- Sidewalk Improvement Districts (SIDs) - this would define an area in which all property owners choose to contribute to a collective fund for sidewalk repair and construction.

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- Develop a general sidewalk improvement fund through a community referendum such as a 1/2% sales tax surcharge, small public utility fee, development impact fees, or other approaches.
 - Pursue unique funding streams such as grants from historic preservation, environmental mitigation, economic development, community health, and other funding streams.
 - Require property owners to repair or complete sidewalk gaps on their property. The municipality can help facilitate this through coalescing projects and creating joint contracts to gain economies of scale and reduce costs for all.
 - Explore community snow removal policies, and possibly model snow removal districts after Sidewalk Improvement Districts.

4. Skills, safety, and awareness campaign.

Develop a safety, skills, and awareness programs for students and residents focusing on best practices and skills for all modes of transportation including vehicles, pedestrians, and bicycles. This can include bicycle and pedestrian safety and skills training in the schools, community awareness campaigns for drivers, and promotional efforts to support more pedestrian, bicycle, and transit facilities.

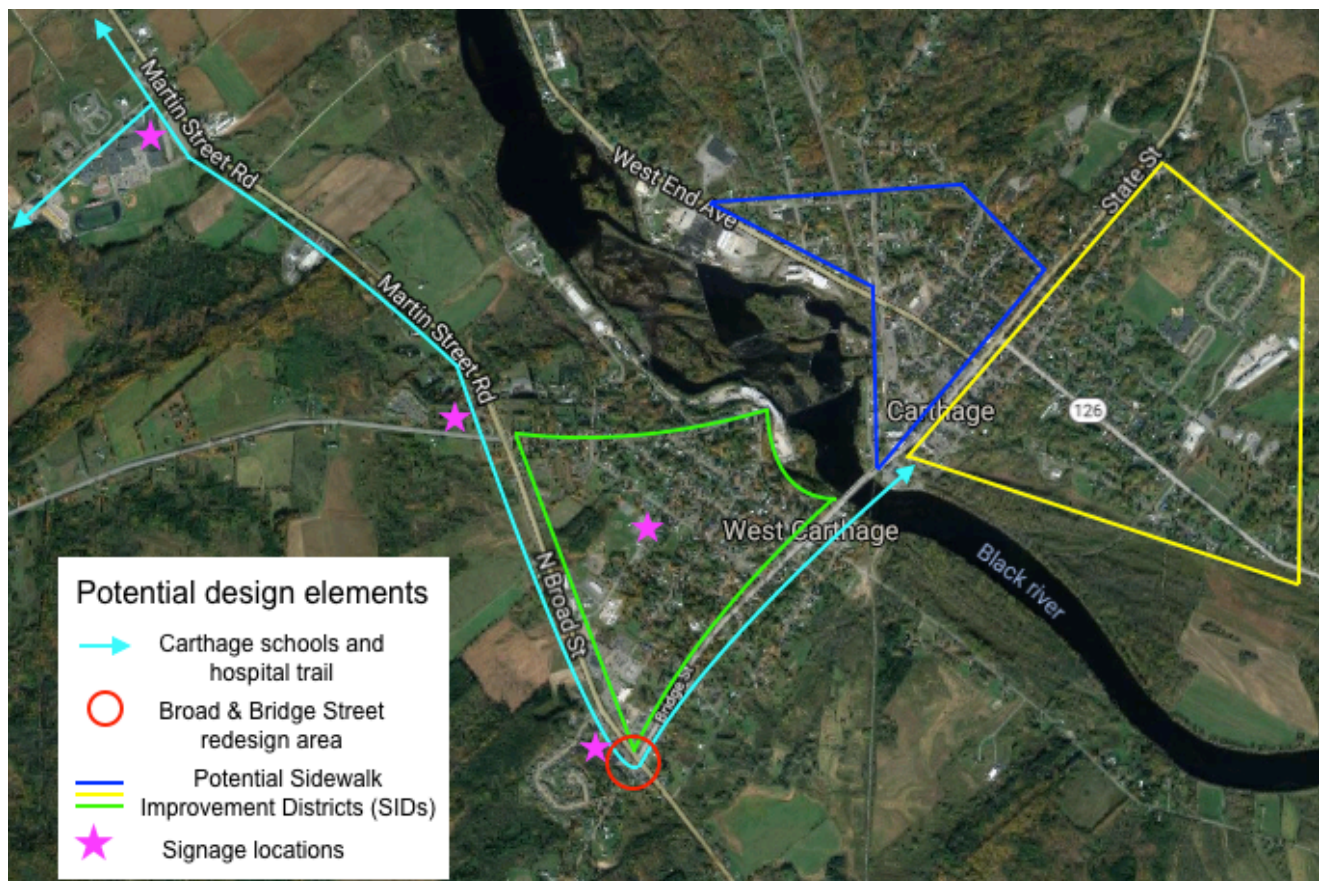
- Host complete streets demonstration day(s). Sometime called “parking day,” this is an opportunity to demonstrate what you can do in one parking space - pop-up bike parking, picnic tables or cafe seating, pop-up vending, historic or artistic installations, etc. Students can be engaged to create some of these installations, as well as a walking map of all of the parklets for visitors to explore.
- Offer bicycle and pedestrian safety events such as regular “bike rodeos” and pedestrian “safety towns.”
- Incorporate pedestrian and especially bicycle skills and safety education in schools. This can be through special safety events such as bike rodeos, but it can also be more institutional, such as inclusion of bike skills and safety training in the physical education curriculum.
- Encourage bicycle instructors to become League Certified Instructors (LCI) through the League of American Bicyclists. www.bikeleague.org
- Host regular Walk to School Day events, and launch walking school buses. Do these until regular routes and safety measures are in place for more routine walking and bicycling by students.
- Host events to encourage residents to utilize the new trails and connections. For example, create and mark a West Carthage and Carthage 5k walking loop, and hold an annual event to promote it’s quality and connection to many destinations.

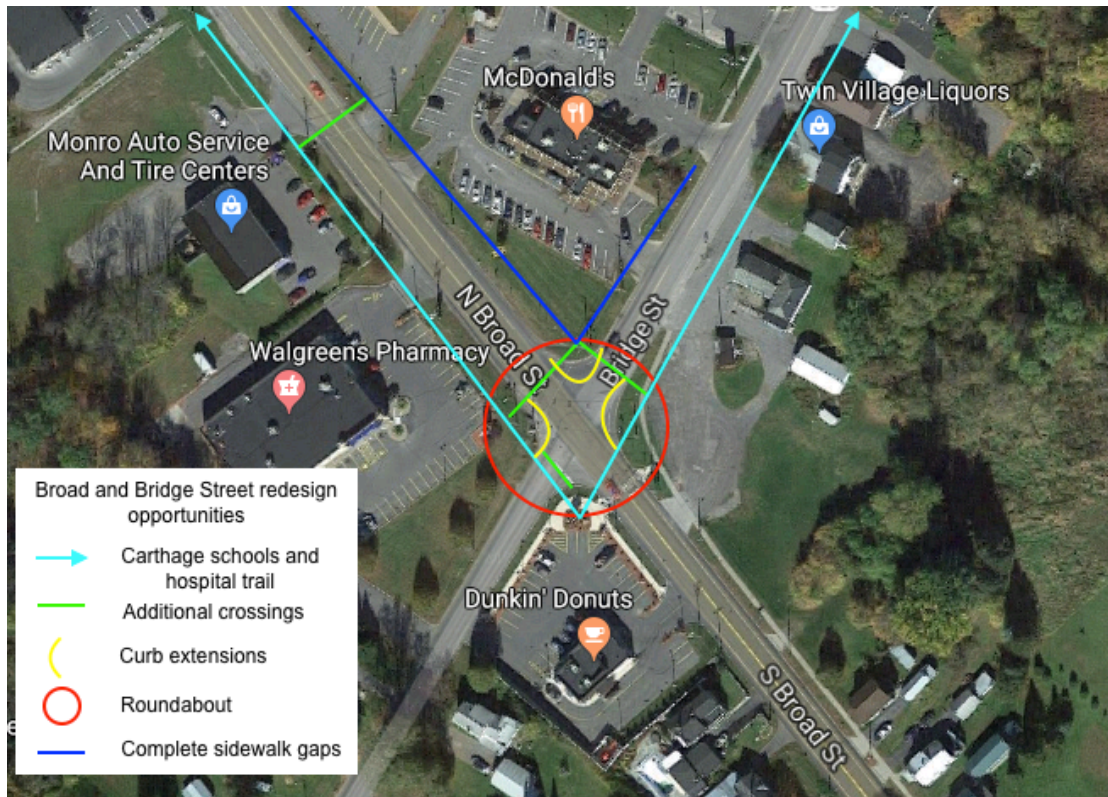
5. Zoning policies and permitting practices to ensure multi-modal transportation analysis.

Embrace Complete Streets and multi-modal transportation analysis (MMTA) and the principle that any new development, redevelopment, and work on the roads (even routine painting and maintenance) should consider pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, and drivers of all ages and abilities. For example when estimating the "trips" that will be generated by a project or development, estimate the best case walk, bike, and transit trips, not just motor vehicle trips. Then build community and professional support through the following steps:

- Revise permitting processes and create a development checklist that includes Complete Streets and MMTA practices that any entity must follow for any future development, or redevelopment of existing sites.
- Utilize existing resources such as the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) *Guidebook for Developing Pedestrian and Bicycle Performance Measures* to set community priorities on roadway and development work. This would allow road work (such as traffic calming, or a roundabout Bridge and Broad Streets) to be justified based on enhanced safety for pedestrians and bicyclists as well as drivers, increased economic activity, improved air quality, and other measures beyond just traffic movement.

Design Recommendation Maps:





Program, Project, and Policy Recommendations:

	Short Term	Long Term
Programs (e.g. events, outreach, education, promotions)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch a Complete Streets demo day where residents and businesses create pop-up parklets, bike parking, curb extensions, etc. • Engage with community members and planners on specific model projects to educate the public and local businesses. • Launch simple walk to school promotions such as walk to school day, walking school buses, and bike safety skills and training. • Launch a 5k walk connecting destinations in W. Carthage/Carthage. • Begin an inventory of destinations, sidewalks, & informal trails. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create snow clearing districts - collective clearing program for neighborhoods ready to share the cost and responsibility. • Move to a comprehensive Safe Routes to School program promoting walking and bicycling as a formal part of the school transportation policies, such as a brief safety delay on the car line at dismissal. • Include a learn to bike program, ideally with league certified instructors (LCIs); add to school physical education curriculum. • Partner w/ Clarkson University students to inventory facilities and create GIS maps.

Projects

(e.g. changes to physical infrastructure & the built environment)

- Create temporary curb extensions and median crossing islands w/ high visibility paint, soft curbing, vertical delineators, or other reversible treatments.
- Create a protected (paint, hay bales?) walkway through the Price Chopper parking lot. Replicate this at other “set back” and big-box retail sites to improve pedestrian and driver safety.
- Launch a priority sidewalk maintenance program to reduce hazards.
- Build sidewalks and crosswalks more formally into annual maintenance schedule and budget, through developing broad community support.
- Turn existing informal trails (such as along the rail corridor) into long term infrastructure upgrades.
- Specifically collaborate with Lowville and other communities to connect a trail along the rail corridor.
- Make sidewalks and bike lanes, or even better a separated side path, to the school and developing hospital site near the schools.
- Create sidewalk improvement districts, sidewalk “utility” assessments, or other means as on-going financial support for sidewalk and trail maintenance.

Short Term

Long Term

Policy

(e.g. rules, ordinances, guidelines, practices, & procedures)

- Town and village boards must pass Complete Streets resolutions to make clear that accommodating all users of all ages and abilities is a priority.
- Begin including Multi-Modal Transportation Analysis (MMTA) and Complete Streets requirements in all roadway work, and permitting discussions for all new and redevelopment.
- Adopt a formal Complete Streets policy and create a plan for implementation, with priority links and projects identified.
- Take advantage of the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) and other state and federal funds for Complete Streets implementation.
- Adopt zoning amendments to include requirements for multi-modal transportation analysis (MMTA) on all projects, with clear language in the development codes.
- Explore funding through the state’s Climate Smart Communities program.

Resources

- Better Block: Educates, equips, and empowers communities and their leaders to reshape and reactivate built environments to promote the growth of healthy and vibrant neighborhoods: www.betterblock.org
- Complete Streets: National coalition working for streets that accommodate pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, and drivers of all ages, incomes, and abilities: www.completestreets.org
- Safe Routes to School information: www.saferoutesinfo.org; www.saferoutespartnership.org
- Walk [Your City]: Helps you plan and sign your pedestrian network: www.walkyourcity.org
- *Small Town & Rural Multimodal Networks*. A comprehensive design guide for active transportation design and low cost approaches, especially (but not exclusively) useful in rural settings and small towns; from the Federal Highway Administration, 2016. <http://ruraldesignguide.com>
- *Slow Your Streets: A How-To Guide for Pop-Up Traffic Calming*. A terrific and practical guide from St. Louis-based Trailnet, to temporarily calming traffic on streets to gain community and stakeholder input, determine effectiveness, and plan permanent improvements. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0Bwr2hdQQsTewQ2hVMWJfeEpDaE0/view?pref=2&pli=1>
- *Guidebook for Developing Pedestrian and Bicycle Performance Measures*, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) 2016. https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bicycle_pedestrian/publications/performance_measures_guidebook/pm_guidebook.pdf
- NY Department of Environmental Conservation has grants available to support development of trails and open space and environmental protection. <https://www.dec.ny.gov/>
- The Tug Hill Commission provides technical assistance in planning and seeking funding to support sustainable, pedestrian, bicycle, and transit-oriented design. <http://www.tughill.org/>
- Further resources are available at Mark Fenton's website. http://www.markfenton.com/resources_data.html