WARREN COUNTY 2040: OUR BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Warren County's built environment is organized into three sections: Housing, Infrastructure, and Transportation. These three facets of the built environment go a long way towards determining where people will live, where businesses can locate or expand, and how residents and visitors will move across the County. The information provided below is intended to provide the necessary background and context for the PAG to begin identifying an overall vision for the future, goals and objectives, and key near-term strategies.

HOUSING

Housing is a central focus of community conversations at the Federal, State, and local levels. Warren County and the cities, villages, and towns within County have invested significant resources in understanding its current housing conditions, the current and future gaps in its housing offerings, and the steps that can be taken to fill those gaps to create safe, affordable, and desirable housing for current and future residents.

THE COUNTY'S ROLE

Warren County currently plays a limited role in housing today. Recent housing-related initiatives undertaken by Warren County Planning have included adopting a new Fair Housing Plan in 2022 and completing the *Housing Needs Study* in 2023. Also falling within the purview of Warren County is the Warren County Countryside Adult Home in Warrensburg. This 48-bed public, non-profit, Adult Residential Care Facility is licensed by the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) and falls under the direction of Warren County's Department of Social Services (DSS). Fifty percent of the facility's funding comes from the County, with the remainder coming from the State through reimbursements. The County is currently in the process of evaluating how and via what mechanisms to engage in addressing housing needs. This is a priority that has been identified by the Board of Supervisors as an important next step following completion of the 2023 *Housing Needs Study*.

It should also be noted that previously the County played a larger role in home rehabilitation. From 1977 through 2010, the County Planning Department administered approximately $15.5 million of awards to rehabilitate owner-occupied housing or to assist first time home buyers. These programs assisted 1,954 individual residences and provided an additional 66 units of new construction for lower income home buyers. Before ending the program in 2010, the new home ownership programs leveraged $3.3 million of private financing and $1.8 million of grant funding.

CURRENT ISSUES, OPPORTUNITIES & TRENDS

The information provided in this section builds on data from three recent housing studies: the County's 2023 *Housing Needs Study and Market Demand Analysis*, the Lake Champlain-Lake George Regional Planning Board's 2023 *Building Balanced Communities for the North County*, and the Town and Village of Lake George's *2023 Workforce Housing Market Study,* as well as recent housing data analyses prepared by Warren County Planning.

61%

of survey responses think housing is the biggest challenge facing the County

The current housing supply is not diverse. Warren County has 40,406 housing units. Of these, 71 percent are detached single-

family homes. This is substantially higher than the percentage of single-family homes in the state (42 percent) and nation (62 percent). Most occupied housing units are also owner-occupied. As of 2022, approximately 70.2 percent of occupied housing units in Warren County were owner-occupied, above the national average of 64.6 percent. Glens Falls is the only city/town located within the county where there is a fairly even distribution of renter and owner households (among the general population).

Most households in the County are one- and two-person households. As of 2022, the average household size in Warren County was 2.2 persons per household, smaller than the national average household size of 2.5 persons per household. The average household size in both the County and nation is projected to decrease through 2027. Within the county, the average household size is smallest in Bolton at 2.0 persons per household and largest in Stony Creek at 2.5 persons per household.

The new housing that is constructed does not match up with these demographic shifts. 59 percent of Warren County's housing units have 3 or more bedrooms. The only housing unit type to have statistically grown since 2016 is units with 5 or more bedrooms, increasing from 4.1 percent to 5.5 percent of the County's housing stock. Compared with New York State, Warren County has 10 percent more 3+bedroom units and 13 percent fewer studio and one-bedroom units. With rental units, two-bedroom units are the most widely available rental unit type, although nearly half of the County's overall renter households and over 75 percent of senior renter households are one-person.

The County's older housing stock can require costly upgrades to repair. Nearly a third of the housing stock in Warren County was built prior to 1950. 63 percent of homes in Glens Falls were built before 1950. This is generally similar to other counties in the region and State but is substantially older than that of the nation (16.5 percent built pre-1950). Homes built prior to 1950 are likely at or beyond their lifespan absent substantial repair.

The Warren County housing market is impacted by tourism, in terms of both seasonal homes and short-term rentals. Over the past 20 years, the number of non-locally owned homes in the County increased at three times the rate of locally-owned homes. Today, 22 percent of Warren County's housing units are seasonal, and Warren County has 934 registered short-term rentals, with approximately 570 additional unregistered units. Distribution of seasonal housing and STRs varies, with the most minimal impact in Glens Falls, where less than one percent of housing is seasonal and STRs make up less than one percent of the housing stock. In contrast, 65 percent of the housing stock in Hague is seasonal and STRs represent six percent of the housing stock. Additional information on STRs in the County was compiled by Warren County Planning here.

While average household spending on housing is generally considered affordable, current home prices are unattainable for the local market. On average, households in Warren County spend 26 percent of their income on housing costs. This percentage is in line with our neighboring counties and is considered affordable. However, the median 2022 home sale price in Warren County was $280,000, which is considered affordable for the median household income of $67,244. This disconnect is especially marked in the Town of Bolton: homes sold in 2022 in the town of Bolton exceeded affordability for the median income earner by nearly $350,000.

Renters in Warren County are considered housing burdened. 47 percent of all renter households in Warren County paying more than 30 percent of their income on rent.

Demand for housing has increased substantially in recent years. The median days from listing to pending sale in Warren County decreased from 84 in 2018 to 13 in 2023. This is an 85 percent decrease over the surveyed period, compared to a 38 percent decrease nationwide. Home sale prices in the County have also been on an upward trend. According to the Southern Adirondack Realtors Association, from 2019 to 2022, County median sale prices for all homes increase by $70,000, from $210,000 to $280,000. The Town of Bolton was the largest contributor to the County-wide increases.

The economy of Warren County, and Lake George in particular, rely on a seasonable workforce that are finding it increasingly difficult to secure housing. There is an estimated seasonal worker housing demand potential of 1,375 beds (workers) in the combined Town and Village of Lake George over the next five years. The demand is estimated to include 550-687 beds in "dormitory-style units," as well as 687-825 beds in private units.

The housing inventory is not keeping up. Since 2010, the County has added 1,680 new housing units, an increase of 4.3 percent. This is above the North Country region (2.4 percent), but below the Capital Region (6.4 percent), State (5.9 percent), and national (9.2 percent) increases. Looking ahead, most planned development in Bolton and Queensbury is owner-occupied homes, while proposed development in Glens Falls and Lake George is primarily for renter units. Minimal activity is in the pipeline in the northern part of the County.

Local resistance to change can be a hinderance to housing development. Recent housing development proposals in the region have not come without controversy. This community pushback against housing projects creates additional delays and can deter developers.

APA restrictions limit the areas within which new development can occur; however, there are opportunities to increase housing opportunities within areas under local land use control. Most of Warren County is within the Adirondack Park. Within the Park, development potential is generally limited outside of the hamlets, due to State ownership and APA land use regulations; within the hamlets, communities have control over local land use regulations and the APA encourages increasing density. The Warren County Planning Department has begun conducting buildout analyses of hamlets within the Park and communities outside the blue line to better understand development potential.

Housing vacancy rates show a housing shortage. Warren County's current overall housing vacancy rate is 3.6 percent, which is below the national average of 3.8 percent. The current vacancy rate in the rental market is 0.4 percent. Vacancy rates below 5 percent typically indicate a housing shortage.

With an increasing senior population, the housing needs of this population must be planned for. As of 2022 there are 28,802 households and 9,779 senior (65+) households in Warren County. While the number of all households in the County is projected to remain stable through 2027, while the number of senior households is projected to grow: Warren County is projected to add 633 senior owner-occupied units and 254 senior renter-occupied units by 2027.

CASE STUDY: ULSTER COUNTY

Ulster County is currently facing a severe housing crisis that was made worse by several compounding issues during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Ulster County Legislature and Ulster County Planning Department have been focused on developing and implementing innovative solutions to address the housing crisis. This has included three main components: creating the Ulster County Housing Development Corporation, developing a Housing Action Plan, and launching the Housing Smart Communities Initiative.

In 2020, the County Legislature, by resolution called on the County Executive to identify County-owned lands suitable for contributing to meeting the County's housing goals. The first site identified was the "Golden Hill property," the site of the old County jail. The Ulster County Housing Development Corporation (UCHDC) was created to receive the Golden Hill property, select the development team, and manage the project. The current concept design includes 80 units of senior housing and 80 units that are affordable at a range of 30 to 130 percent AMI.

In 2022, the Ulster County Planning Department launched the "Ulster County Housing Smart Communities Initiative" (UCHSCI) which provides guidance, support, and resources for local communities that are working towards long-term solutions to their housing supply and affordability challenges. Structured similar to the State's Climate Smart Communities program, the County identified a set of short- and long-term actions that communities can take to help to develop and secure affordable housing for all residents. Municipalities participating in the program receive support from the Ulster County Planning Department and partners and are awarded a UCHSC Certification level based on the number of weighted actions taken by the community. You can learn more about the program here.

STAKEHOLDER/PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

While the County and several partners touch aspects of housing development, there isn't a single entity whose primary focus is to advance housing solutions in Warren County and several tools that other counties are using to spur housing development - land banks, land trusts, rural preservation companies (RPCs), etc. – do not exist within Warren County. Some organizations that are involved in housing at the local or regional level include:

- The **Glens Falls Housing Authority (GFHA)** was established in 1966 and operates three low-income apartment buildings in Glens Falls (including two senior buildings, and one family complex) and one low-income senior housing building in Washington County. The Housing Authority also operates the federally funded Housing Choice Voucher rental subsidy and First Time Homeowners programs.

- The **Rural Housing Coalition of New York** is a statewide organization dedicated to revitalizing rural New York by strengthening housing and community development providers through organizational capacity development, raising public awareness and advocacy, and training and technical assistance.
- **Adirondack Community Housing Trust (ACHT)** was created to keep Adirondack Park homes affordable for them to purchase. ACHT utilizes the Community Land Trust (CLT) model to reduce the cost of home purchases for families making up to 120 percent of AMI. While staffed by the Essex County-based Adirondack Roots, the ACHT covers the entirety of the Adirondack Park.
- The **City of Glens Falls' Office of Community Development** offers housing rehabilitation grants and loans for low- and moderate-income homeowners across the County and administers a home buyer assistance program for families interested in purchasing a home in Warren County.
- The **Warren-Washington IDA**, which serves the two-County area, has offered tax incentives, in the form of PILOT agreements, to support several major housing developments in recent years, including the Sun Valley and Fowler Square developments.
- **Pride of Ticonderoga** is a non-profit organization established in 1984 for the purpose of connecting and enhancing the community through housing restoration, downtown revitalization, historic preservation, and community development programs. PRIDE's Tri-County HOME Program funds owner-occupied home rehabilitation and lead-based paint abatement for low to moderate-income residents of Essex, Washington, and Warren counties. Their Tri-County RESTORE Program funds owner-occupied home emergency home repairs for residents 60 years old and above in Essex, Washington, and Warren counties.

OTHER FACTORS

Migration: Warren County has already taken action to prepare for the migrant crisis facing the state by declaring a state of emergency and setting protocols for how migrants can be resettled in the County, As New York City looks for more counties and communities in New York State to provide housing and support services to migrants that are awaiting the asylum process, the potential future impacts of this influx of residents must be considered.

Increased State Focus: As part of her proposed 2023 executive budget for New York State, Governor Hochul called for the construction of 800,000 new housing units in the state over the next ten years. While the exact letter of the proposal did not survive the budget process, the proposal signals the severity of the affordable housing crises, the priority with which New York State intends to treat the crises, and the expectation that other significant, if less extensive, initiatives will be pursued to encourage public/private action on new builds and rehabilitations that bring more housing units to market. Funding for affordable housing development, largely through tax credit systems, is well-established in New York State and is likely to continue to grow. New York state has also clearly signaled that New York's Land Bank Initiative will be a primary vehicle by which housing development dollars are disbursed.

Climate Haven: No region, county or community is immune from the effects of climate change, but studies have shown that Upstate New York, the mid-west, and portions of the Great Plains will be less impacted because of their climates, the distance from the coast, and the moderating effect that the Great Lakes have on warming temperatures. Upstate New York is also at less risk from all five types of natural disasters – hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, forest fires, and earthquakes - and has abundant fresh drinking water. As extreme weather increases and its impacts worsen, climate refugees are going to have to relocate somewhere, and they will be highly motivated to relocate to an area where they will avoid the threats and conditions that they are fleeing in the first place.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Infrastructure, including water, wastewater, and communications infrastructure, are essential components to support current residents and businesses and future economic growth. Beyond the economy, ensuring the adequacy of wastewater and stormwater infrastructure is also paramount to preserving the quality of Warren County's natural environment, and particularly its water resources.

THE COUNTY'S ROLE

The County does not own or maintain any water or sewer infrastructure and unlike some counties, is not involved with permitting, design, and inspection of on-site wastewater facilities or monitoring public water supply sources. The County has evaluated establishing a septic inspection on transfer law, but it was not adopted and would require additional resources to implement. The County's role in infrastructure today is largely limited to assisting municipalities with securing and administering grant funding for infrastructure upgrades and expansions.

CURRENT ISSUES, OPPORTUNITIES & TRENDS

The information provided in this section reflects a recent infrastructure needs analysis conducted by Warren County Planning and information from the County's 2023 *Hazard Mitigation Plan Update*.

Water is supplied from a mix of public and private water sources. In Warren County, water is provided from various facilities as a public service or through private supplies, such as wells. There are ten municipal water districts located within the County. In addition, the City of Glens Falls supplies water to its residents and the Village of Lake George to Village residents. In total, of the parcels in the County that have water, approximately 54 percent are served by public water. The County also has numerous smaller community water systems managed by private homeowners' associations and other entities.

75%

of survey responses rated high speed internet as very important to quality of life

Infrastructure Maintenance

was identified by the largest number of survey respondents as needing to be a top priority for Warren County's government

Much of the public water and sewer infrastructure in the County is aging and in need of upgrades or replacements. Based on information provided by municipalities to County Planning to-date, in total there are 59 stormwater and sewer improvement projects totaling $44.2 million and 36 drinking water improvement projects totaling $53.2 million across the County. In addition, there are future capacity concerns at local WWTPs associated with increased volumes from septage haulers, as more Warren County properties modernize their septic systems and implement more rigorous upkeep practices.

Most of the County is not served by public wastewater infrastructure. Approximately 73 percent of the land parcels in Warren County are not located within a sewer district. When properly designed, these systems can be effective at protecting public health and the environment. However, poor routine maintenance, excessive density of systems, and undersized and overused systems can all lead to on-site system failure and water quality impacts.

There is a growing interest in septic system inspections and funding is available for replacements in priority areas. Warren County was identified by New York State as being in a priority geographic area where there is a critical need to reduce the impact of sewage effluent from septic systems on groundwater and surface water. The Lake George Park Commission's new wastewater management regulations require all properties with septic systems within 500 feet of the lake shoreline and 100 feet from all NYSDEC regulated streams flowing into Lake George to be inspected every five years, along with a pump out of the septic tank by a certified hauler. Under this program, septic systems that are found to be noncompliant with current design standards are required to be upgraded before the next inspection period. In its first year, the LGPC has found that existing septic tanks have a higher than anticipated failure rate. Properties located along the Lake George waterfront may be eligible to receive funding to repair or replace septic systems of up to 50 percent of the eligible costs, with a maximum reimbursement of $10,000 per project.

Within the Adirondack Park, some of the hamlets are not fully served by public water and sewer, limiting their development potential. Eight of the County's 17 hamlets have public water serving limited areas; however, only one hamlet is fully served by public water (Bolton Landing). Four of the County's hamlets are served by public sewer (Bolton Landing, Hague, Lage George, and Warrensburg); however, in all four hamlets, not all parcels are connected to the public sewer system. The unserved areas represent an opportunity – these are areas that are under APA regulations and can accommodate additional density, however, absent adequate infrastructure development and investment is stymied.

There is funding available for municipalities to develop drinking water source protection programs (DWSP2s), but not all eligible communities have taken advantage of this opportunity. The DWSP2 is a locally led, State-supported program that empowers municipalities to take action to improve and protect their public water sources and surrounding environment. Communities accepted into the program are provided free technical assistance to develop their own unique DWSP2 plan, leading to actionable steps the municipality can take to protect their drinking water sources now and into the future. In 2023, the City of Glens Falls completed a DWSP2 plan; the Village of Lake George and Town of Bolton are the only other municipality in Warren County that are currently preparing a DSWP2.

The County's residents are not fully served by broadband, but the County and its partners are working to address this need. The accuracy of broadband access maps has been a point of contention locally, regionally, and nationally. The LCLGRPB worked with Warren County GIS to challenge the FCCs 2022 map of broadband access, resulting in an updated 2023 map that shows that 5.3 percent of Warren County residents still do not have access to reliable broadband. The LCLGRPB is now working on developing a broadband deployment plan, which will identify additional challenges to the 2023 map and identify a path forward for addressing these infrastructure gaps. Looking ahead, funding will remain a challenge.

CASE STUDY: LEWIS COUNTY

Understanding the interconnections between infrastructure, public health, and community and economic development, Lewis County Planning has prioritized support of improvement and expansion efforts.

In 2007, the County developed a Comprehensive Public Water Supply Study that included projections of population, water needs, and system improvements over the next decade, evaluated all existing public water supply systems relative to DOH standards at the time, and made recommendations for improvements, where required. It further recommended the creation of new water systems in hamlets and evaluated the creation of an intermunicipal system (although this recommendation was deemed too costly to justify the benefits).

Since then, the County has prepared regional water studies for County sub-areas and the County also provides funding to local communities to prepare preliminary engineering report, a critical step needed for communities to access to BIL funding.

More information on these efforts are available here.

STAKEHOLDER/PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

Infrastructure-focused organizations in Warren County are primarily limited to the Towns, Villages, and City within it.

OTHER FACTORS

Federal Infrastructure Funding: Beginning in November 2021, the federal government passed legislation for significant funding in infrastructure projects, to take place over the next several years. The funding is issued through two overall pieces of legislation: the Bipartisan Infrastructure Act (BIL), and also known as the Investment in Infrastructure and Jobs Act, (or IIJA), which includes a wide range of topics, and the Inflation Reduction Act, which is focused mainly on energy.

PFAS/Clean Water: Chemicals that are generally known as PFAS and PFOA, referred to as "forever chemicals," are a large class of manmade synthetic chemicals that were created in the 1930s and 1940s for use in many industrial and manufacturing applications. The accumulative nature of these chemicals means that they do not break down easily in the

environment and can build up in human bodies over time. In recent years, New York State has issued regulations concerning the presence of PFAS and PFOA in water sources, thereby requiring that these sources be treated for toxicity. In addition, in the past several months, the EPA has begun to develop regulations that would further restrict the presence of these toxic chemicals in water sources, which, once finalized, will require that measures be implemented to treat toxicity in public water sources.

Lead Service Line (LSL) Rules: In 2021, the federal Lead and Copper Rule Revisions (LCRR) went into effect, requiring water systems to conduct and maintain LSL inventories, as well as develop LSL replacement programs. Many systems do not have accurate records of where LSLs are located, and insufficient tools to conduct thorough inventories. By October 16, 2024, every water system, with no exception, must develop an initial service line material inventory that includes all LSLs regardless of ownership and submit the inventory to its local health department. Systems must update their inventory annually or triennially depending on their monitoring frequency. Warren County GIS has taken on a lead role in meeting this deadline, assisting municipalities with their data collection.

Changes to the MS4 Geographies and Permitting Requirements: Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (MS4s) in the U.S. operate under a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) MS4 permit. The NPDES MS4 permit requires permittees to develop and implement a comprehensive Storm Water Management Program (SWMP). Currently, the City of Glens Falls and portions of the Towns of Queensbury and Lake George are in designated MS4 areas. The number of regulated small MS4s automatically expands every ten years based on population growth: urbanized areas with populations of 50,000 or more are regulated under the NPDES MS4 permit. With the release of 2020 Census data, additional urbanized areas were identified around Lake George that will now fall within a regulated MS4 and be required to implement a SWMP. Combined with this change in geography, NYSDEC recently announced updates to their MS4 permit program, including additional compliance and reporting measures, which will require additional resources.

New Broadband Technologies: The invention, deployment, and improvement to new broadband technologies represent an opportunity for innovation to fill gaps in the County. One solution noted in the LCLGRPB's *Forward Together Economic Resiliency Plan* is small cell cellular. With this technology, small wireless transmitters and receivers can be placed on structures such as streetlights, buildings, or poles. The cost advantages of small cells compared with macro cells (typical cell towers) make providing coverage to smaller communities more feasible. Another alternative technology is low earth orbit satellites. While satellite-based internet access has been available for more than 25 years from satellites in high earth orbit, due to their altitude they can be inadequate due to latency. Low Earth Orbit (LEO) satellites, the latest generation of satellites providing internet access, are smaller, lighter, and less expensive and can provide low latency and high bandwidth internet access.

TRANSPORTATION & MOBILITY

Transportation infrastructure connects residences, places of work, and places of leisure. Transportation touches nearly all of people's daily activities. Access to a variety of transportation alternatives has health, environmental, and economic benefits. The transportation and mobility sub-section looks at the roads, transit, and bike and pedestrian infrastructure that serve Warren County residents and visitors.

THE COUNTY'S ROLE

The primary County entity involved with transportation and mobility is the County's Department of Public Works (DPW). The DPW services include maintenance of approximately 243 miles of County roads, bridges and culverts, as well as Floyd Bennett Memorial Airport, which is owned by the County. Increased investments in road maintenance over the last three to five years has allowed the County to catch up on deferred maintenance and reduce the number of poor-quality roads. The program will need to be maintained for several more years to be fully caught up. The airport has also seen changes in operations that have brought it from a $800,000 deficit six years ago to only a $200,000 planned deficit for this year.

Two County agencies also provided limited transportation services: the Warren-Hamilton Counties Office for the Aging (WHCOFA) and the Warren County Veterans' Services Agency. WHOFCA provides transportation to medical appointments, with the costs shared between counties by operations managed within Warren County. There has been an increase in demand for this service that has not been matched with increased availability of volunteer drivers. The result is that the County may need to step into transportation services for some seniors. Veterans' Services provides transportation to and from the Albany Veterans' Administration Medical Center on a daily basis.

CURRENT ISSUES, OPPORTUNITIES & TRENDS

The information provided in this section builds on data from three recent Adirondack/Glens Falls Transportation Council (A/GFTC) publications: the 2021 *Regional Bike Plan*, 2023 *Rural Workforce Transportation Plan*, and 2023 *Long Range Transportation Plan*, supplemented by 2022 ACS data and 2020 Census data.

Public Transit

Received relatively low response rates for its importance to quality of life

Walkable communities

Received a higher ranking for its importance to quality of life

While most Warren County residents drive to work, the fact that a large number work within the County and/or within a short distance of the home, offers the potential to expand alternative transportation opportunities. 81% of Warren County workers over age 16 travel to work by private automobile. Less than three percent of Warren County workers walk to work, with all other modes of transportation making up less than one percent each. Despite the high reliance on private automobiles, 70 percent of County residents work in the County, and approximately one-

quarter have a total commute time of less than ten minutes. Exploring opportunities to decrease reliance on private automobile use represents an opportunity.

Transportation costs for residents in the County are exceptionally high. Although adequate access to vehicles is often the most important consideration for workforce transportation in rural areas, there are other transportation factors which influence an individual's ability to get and keep a job. These can include the cost of gas, vehicle maintenance, and insurance. Collectively, the FHWA has consolidated these factors into the Transportation Cost Burden (TCB), which quantifies transportation costs as a percentage of income of the typical household for the region. Within Warren County, the northeastern communities of Johnsburg, Thurman, and Sony Creek have the highest TCB.

Improving roadway safety is a priority for residents of the region. In 2022, the number of fatal crashes in Warren County was at a ten-year high (11).[1] A 2023 study conducted by the A/GFTC found that safety was the biggest transportation priority for survey respondents.

Warren County boasts an impressive and growing network of recreational trails; however, multi-use trails that serve to connect residents and visitors to work, shopping, and services are limited. Within Warren County, there are four off-road trail routes: the Warren County Bikeway, the Feeder Canal, Halfway Brook Trail, and Rush Pond Trail. Additional opportunities for off-road trails, including the Upper Hudson Rail Trail, have been identified in County and State plans. These existing and proposed trails serve a primarily recreational purpose. In terms of on-road facilities, while there are on-road bike facilities along some roadways in the County, there are no NYS Bike routes in Warren County and the existing bicycle network remains disjointed. Opportunities to address gaps and improve connections along the Warren County Bikeway are currently being explored by Warren County Planning.

I-87 runs through Warren County, connecting the County to key nodes and contributing to easy tourism access. Based on 2019 NYS DOT data, daily traffic volumes on the Northway range from a low of 9,861 in the northern end of Warren County to a high of 47,620 vehicles a day at the southern end of the County. The accessibility that the Northway provides to residents to access points within and outside of the County was frequently cited as an asset for the County during stakeholder outreach. Looking ahead, as the Capital Region continues to grow, access to the Northway will continue to be a driver of development.

Floyd Bennett Memorial Airport provides limited air access to the area. The airport is open for corporate, private, and recreational aviation; the airport is not served by commercial aviation. Previous plans to expand the airport in 2010 were met with opposition, and in 2019, the FAA rejected as unnecessary the expansion plans, eliminating any potential for Federal funding for the project. In terms of current utilization, the airport had 23,359 aircraft operations in 2022, and the FAA does not project a major uptick in airport utilization in their 2050 Terminal Area Forecast.

[1] Traffic Safety Statistical Repository (TSSR) • ITSMR

Consideration of the long-term future of the Warren County Railway is needed. The County purchased in the Warren County Railway with the assistance of $1.6 million in grant funding. Since then, the County has been successful in securing millions of dollars in grant funds for needed repairs and upgrades. Previous efforts to use the railway for tourism purposes have not been fruitful. New ownership in the northern portions of the route may impact the long-term utility of the corridor. Any significant repairs of bridges will need to be engineered to the type of future use planned for the railway. The desired type of use will determine the quality/strength of replacement bridges, and the scope of potential uses, including commercial, industrial, and recreational, must be considered.

The 243 miles of Warren County roads represent a component of the transportation network that the County has influence over. The County owns 78 roads. Seventeen roads representing over 16 percent of the County-owned lane miles are in the Town of Queensbury, with additional County roads distributed throughout the rest of the County. There are no County-owned roads within the City of Glens Falls. Several of these roads do fall within the County's denser, more walkable hamlets. However, not all roadways have pedestrian infrastructure. Of the 35 County road segments within the hamlets, 11 (one-third) have no sidewalks and nine (one-quarter) have only partial sidewalks. The County does not have a Complete Streets policy or any specific plans to ensure that provisions for non-motorized transportation are incorporated into planned upgrades.

The County competes against much more urban areas for transportation funding. Warren County is located within NYS Department of Transportation (DOT) Region 1, which encompasses eight counties, including Albany, Schenectady, and Rensselaer. Projects within the Region are often competing for the same funds; Warren County's more rural nature often times make it more difficult to show the need for the funding. Many of the County's smaller communities also lack the information or capacity to administer Federally funded transportation projects.

The dispersed, rural population distribution of much of the County makes the traditional approaches to public transportation difficult to implement. Greater Glens Falls Transit (GGFT) began operation in 1984. GGFT has periodically studied and considered various scheduled transit services to the rural area of Warren (and Washington) County but has consistently found insufficient demand to justify the local financial support required to make them feasible. Like all small transit operators in New York, GGFT faced a significant, ongoing drop in ridership due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The recent merger of GGFT and the Capital District Transportation Authority (CDTA) represents an opportunity for improved transit service. In February 2023, GGFT and CDTA, in conjunction with the City of Glens Falls, proposed a merger between the two transit providers. This proposal was approved by the Warren County Board of Supervisors in May 2023. The larger organization of the CDTA will be providing resources and technology upgrades. While there are no planned service expansions at the moment, the CDTA will be undertaking a plan to identify opportunities for expansion in the coming years.

CASE STUDY: FRANKLIN COUNTY

Franklin County, a rural, Adirondack county similar to Warren County, has been prioritizing improving transportation access through several measures.

In 2012, the County adopted a Complete Streets Policy and Implementation Plan. As a component of the Policy, existing County roadways are categorized by roadway type as either "local," "commuter/residential," "farm/recreation," or "bicycle routes." For each roadway type, specific facility types that should be considered are identified. For example, "sidewalks buffered from moving traffic by additional sidewalk width or a planting strip" should be considered on local County roads and "paved and striped shoulders suitable for walking/bicycling" should be considered on local, commuter/residential, and bicycle routes. The Policy also includes a Checklist that is completed when the County does any work or maintenance on County roads to identify what currently exists and what facilities are included in project, referencing back to the applicable facility improvements. Since adoption, the County has made incremental progress to implement the Policy and Implementation, including new signage and additional protected bus stops,

In addition to the Complete Streets Plan, the County has also partnered with municipalities to assist with restriping projects, providing County equipment to reduce local costs and improve efficiencies.

STAKEHOLDER/PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

There are several organizations in Warren County focused on transportation and mobility, which are listed below. Local municipalities and their respective Highway Departments are also important partners.

- Formed in 1985, **A/GFTC** is recognized by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) as the designated MPO for all of Warren County, in addition to Washington County, and the Town of Moreau in Saratoga County, New York. As an MPO, the A/GFTC's mission is to facilitate a cooperative transportation planning and decision-making process between area municipalities and State and Federal agencies and to establish a process for the allocation and use of federal highway and transit funds that are available to the region.
- In May 2023, the Warren County Board of Supervisors voted to merge **Greater Glens Falls Transit (GGFT)** with the **Capital District Transportation Authority (CDTA)**, a public benefit corporation created in 1970 that provides regional transportation services. Warren County is funding the merger through annual contributions.
- **Adirondack Cycling Advocates** is a non-profit organization whose mission is to promote safe and quality bicycling in the southeastern region of the Adirondacks.

OTHER FACTORS

Federal Transportation Funding: Programs that focus on transportation (roads, bridges, highways, and transportation planning) received most of the funding under the Federal infrastructure legislation. One example is the Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) Grant Program, which provides $5 billion over five years to regional, local, and Tribal initiatives that are focused on the prevention of roadway deaths and serious injuries.

Electric Vehicle (EV) Expansion: With the rise in electric vehicles on the road, there is an increased demand for the build-out of EV charging infrastructure and public charging stations. Counties and municipalities are encouraged to incorporate EV charging infrastructure in their master planning and transportation networks, to respond to the increased use of electric vehicles and to demonstrate sustainability efforts.