



# TOWN OF ITHACA

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## **Press Release**

**Embargoed for release on Tuesday, June 21, 4 p.m.**

For more information, contact Town of Ithaca Supervisor Catherine Valentino , 273-1721, and-or Cornell University Director of Transportation and Mail Services William Wendt, 255-4628.

### **Joint Town-Cornell study to examine campus-area transportation issues**

The Town of Ithaca and Cornell University unveiled plans Tuesday for a large-scale study of CU transportation planning and potential impacts on area traffic flows, parking and related topics. Officials briefed members of the Ithaca-Tompkins County Transportation Council at the Council's meeting Tuesday afternoon.

Cornell will voluntarily prepare a Transportation-focused Generic Environmental Impact Statement (T-GEIS) that will identify, and evaluate the transportation-related impacts of planned projects, plus hypothetical growth scenarios, over the next decade. The university will work cooperatively with the Town of Ithaca, the T-GEIS's "lead agency," which in turn will involve additional governmental agencies, as appropriate, including Tompkins County, City of Ithaca, Town of Dryden, Village of Cayuga Heights, New York State Department of Transportation and others.

For several years, the Town of Ithaca and Cornell have participated in countywide discussions on these issues, while the town, simultaneously, has worked proactively to develop its own transportation plan. For the past several months, the Town and Cornell have discussed transportation-related challenges and opportunities and agree the T-GEIS is the next logical step.

"This is truly a win-win, proactive measure by local government and the university that will provide clarity and focus for many countywide transportation challenges," said Town of Ithaca Supervisor Cathy Valentino Tuesday. "The T-GEIS will establish a cooperative town-gown venue for issues that affect thousands of residents, plus land-use and planning decisions."

"We're pleased that the Town of Ithaca will be the lead agency for this effort. We're looking forward to input from the public, as well as several municipalities, the county and state agencies," said Cornell Vice President for Government and Community Relations Van McMurtry. "This work is important and will develop an invaluable body of information and assessment of possible mitigations for transportation-related impacts on and around campus."

Valentino and McMurtry note that the T-GEIS will be flexible enough to explore hypothetical campus growth scenarios, along with background growth in the Ithaca area.

CU capital projects that have been recently approved or proposed could result in a gradual increase of employees and graduate students over the next decade, and will likely reduce the main campus's current parking inventory of 10,800 spaces. The core Cornell University campus

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extends across approximately 750 acres and three municipal boundaries - the Town of Ithaca, City of Ithaca, and the Village of Cayuga Heights. Any changes in transportation and parking on the campus may affect these entities, as well as adjoining municipalities.

"This type of transportation planning and joint strategizing is notable and will benefit all in Tompkins County," said Fernando de Aragon, executive director of the Ithaca-Tompkins County Transportation Council.

Officials noted Tuesday that the Town of Ithaca is the logical municipality to serve as lead agency in the GEIS initiative since its boundaries encircle the City of Ithaca. On a daily basis, a high percentage of campus visitors travel through the Town of Ithaca to and from their Cornell destination.

Cornell University currently manages a progressive campus-wide Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Program that was initiated in 1990. The TDM program has proven to be successful, resulting in 2600 fewer cars on campus today compared to 1990.

There is no set timetable for the completion of the GEIS, although a scoping process led by the Town of Ithaca as lead agency is expected to be completed this fall. Martin/Alexiou/Bryson, a North Carolina--based consultant specializing in college and university transportation projects, and Trowbridge and Wolf of Ithaca, have been hired to provide technical analyses.

More on the GEIS process in New York State: [www.dec.state.ny.us/website/dcs/seqr/](http://www.dec.state.ny.us/website/dcs/seqr/)

More on Cornell's TDM program: [www.sustainablecampus.cornell.edu/transport-tdmp.htm](http://www.sustainablecampus.cornell.edu/transport-tdmp.htm)

More on the project consultant: [www.mabtrans.com/](http://www.mabtrans.com/)