

**Ulster County Non-Motorized Transportation Plan
Public Meeting
Minutes
March 29, 2007, 6pm
Town of Lloyd Fire Department
Highland, N.Y.**

1. Welcome

Bill Tobin – Ulster County Transportation Council

Bill Tobin welcomed participants to the second Ulster County Non-Motorized Transportation Plan (NMTP) public meeting. He informed the audience that the UCTC is a metropolitan planning organization and that the UCTC is funded by the federal government. Two years ago the UCTC expanded its long-range transportation planning to include local and regional non-motorized transportation stakeholders. Bill explained the purpose of the meeting was to make proposals, big and small, for 100 non-motorized transportation projects that could be implemented in the County that will eventually be narrowed to 15. Bill Tobin then introduced Jeff Olson of Alta Planning and Design.

2. Introduction of the Ulster County Transportation Plan

Jeff Olson – Alta Planning and Design

Jeff opened the meeting by talking about Alta Planning and Design. Alta has worked on projects all over the United States and has offices across the county. Jeff also introduced Robin Dropkin, Executive director of Parks & Trails New York, the organization that is helping with the public outreach for the NMTP project.

Jeff discussed recent transportation trends and how they relate to Ulster County. According to the U.S. Census, trips by bicycle and walking have decreased significantly. Today, 75% percent of all trips are made by automobile travel. The Ulster County Traffic Safety Board reported two recent fatalities of cyclists hit by mirrors of passing motor vehicles. Obesity is a growing epidemic in this nation. Jeff told the audience that the planet is facing global warming and climate change. These quality of life issues will directly affect communities in Ulster County.

Jeff explained that meeting attendees would identify projects that will not only impact transportation but also education and economic development. This could be a once in a generation chance to change things in the County. Jeff used a quote from architect Daniel Burnham, organizer of the 1893 Columbian Exposition and Worlds' Fair, who once said, "Make no small plans." He used this quote to illustrate that anything is possible. For example, in Portland, Oregon, the city established a greenway program and built trails right next to highways and the river despite that many people said it could never be done. Political will and citizen support are key to successful projects.

Jeff took a few moments and asked people in the audience to introduce themselves.

After people introduced themselves and identified an issue or two they were most concerned with, Jeff held up the March 27 issue of *US News and World Report* and cited an article entitled “[Making America Better.](#)”

(<http://www.usnews.com/usnews/issue/070318/>) The story highlights how European drivers enjoy less traffic congestion because of roundabouts and fewer stoplights. It also described how Germany, Honduras, and the Netherlands are making streets safer for cycling. Europeans are recognizing the value of non-motorized transportation because it improves their quality of life. Jeff used these examples to illustrate the importance of the NMTP for Ulster County.

Jeff took a moment to illustrate the substantial price communities are paying to bus students to school. He encouraged attendees to check out the State Comptroller’s website and look up local school budgets, asserting that the cost of transportation is always one of the top five costs. Often times the cost of bussing exceeds sports, lunches, and after school programs *combined*.

To illustrate how communities rely on bussing to get kids to school, and how transportation policy has made it difficult for kids to walk to school, Jeff asked for some audience participation. He asked for a show of hands of how many people used to walk or bike to school when they were kids - 15-20 people raised their hands. He then asked of those who had their hands up, how many today would let their kids walk or bike the same route to school they used to take - 5-6 hands remained raised. Finally, Jeff asked of those who still had hands up, how many would let their kids walk or bike to school where they lived now – only 2 people kept their hands raised.

Jeff gave an example of how in his community parents often drive their kids to school even though the school is within walking distance. Some parents sit with their kids in idling SUVs at bus stops while waiting for the bus to come. Jeff asserted that this type of behavior needed to change.

3. Proposals

Jeff opted to skip the Power Point presentation

<http://www.altaplanning.com/ulsternmtp/documents.html>

in order to jump right into suggestions for projects. He also felt breakout groups were not necessary. Proposals for both countywide and local projects were recorded onto flip charts. For a list of the proposals please see the proposal list

<http://www.altaplanning.com/ulsternmtp/documents.html>

Participants were invited to draw on the County maps provided and fill out comment cards.

4. Close

Ulster County Planning Director Dennis Doyle spoke at the close of the meeting and thanked everyone for attending. He thanked the Ulster County Transportation Council Non-Motorized Transportation Plan Advisory Committee for all its hard work. He noted that Ulster County was a green space between the metropolitan areas of New York City and the Capitol Region.

“We need to preserve our sense of identity and uniqueness,” he said. He likened the NMTP to a golf course, repeating an analogy Jeff Olson had used earlier in the day. “We know where we are, at the tee box, and we know where we want to be, on the green. What we need to do is find a connection, the fairway.”

Jeff urged attendees to fill out the online NMTP survey at www.altaplanning.com/ulsternmtp/

Jeff Olson and Bill Tobin thanked everyone for attending. The meeting adjourned at 8:15pm.