

CHAPTER 5

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT INITIATIVES



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Public involvement initiatives for the Ulster County Transportation Council (UCTC) Year 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) Update process were employed to garner maximum public participation and help build a consensus on the Plan's conclusions and recommendations. A public involvement plan was developed in accordance with UCTC's Operating Procedures and federal guidelines, and places particular emphasis on the utilization of the World Wide Web and Public meetings for input. The public involvement plan is located in Appendix A.

Public Meetings

During the LRTP's update, Public informational and Public UCTC meetings were held to inform and involve the Public, special interest groups and UCTC members. Presentations and/or updates were made to these groups at critical junctures throughout the study process to explain the issues, describe the potential solutions and the impacts associated with each, and to receive input and direction.

Two rounds of Public meetings were held in different locations throughout Ulster County to facilitate access and encourage diverse participation. Public informational meetings were advertised in *Ulster Publishing* newspapers and facilitated at ADA accessible meeting locations. The first round of Public meetings occurred in May of 2010. The second round of Public meetings occurred in August and September of 2010. Public informational meetings were each held between the hours of 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. A summary of comments were recorded at each Public informational meeting and located in Appendix A. Public UCTC meetings were held throughout the LRTP update process to solicit input and feedback from the Public and members of the UCTC. Table 5-1 identifies Public meetings facilitated whereby the LRTP update process was featured and/or discussed.

Public Involvement Tools

A number of public relations tools were utilized to communicate with the Public, provide information on the progress of the study, and generate Public input in an effort to develop a consensus on key recommendations. Public involvement tools utilized for the UCTC's LRTP Update process include the following:

- E-mail Broadcasting
- Direct Mailings
- Newspaper Articles and Advertisements
- Project Web Site
- Project Logo
- Public Online Survey and Results
- Open Public Comment Period
- Open Door Policy



Table 5-1: Public Meetings Featuring or Discussing the LRTP's Update

Type of Public Meeting	Meeting Location	Date
UCTC Meeting	SUNY Ulster	February 5, 2009
UCTC Meeting	SUNY Ulster	March 5, 2009
UCTC Meeting	SUNY Ulster	May 27, 2009
UCTC Meeting	SUNY Ulster	July 16, 2009
UCTC Meeting	SUNY Ulster	December 7, 2009
UCTC Meeting	SUNY Ulster	February 9, 2010
UCTC Meeting	SUNY Ulster	March 18, 2010
Public Meeting #1	Village of Saugerties	May 13, 2010
Public Meeting #2	Village of New Paltz	May 19, 2010
Public Meeting #3	City of Kingston	May 20, 2010
UCTC Meeting	SUNY Ulster	June 23, 2010
UCTC Meeting	SUNY Ulster	July 29, 2010
Public Meeting #4	City of Kingston	August 3, 2010
UCTC Adoption of Plan	SUNY Ulster	August 31, 2010

E-Mail Broadcasting

In order to conserve resources and increase efficiency, e-mail addresses were obtained for agency personnel and members of the Public. Where applicable, project-specific information was broadcasted to individuals electronically, thereby saving on printing and postage costs associated with Public involvement efforts. Each individual's e-mail address was saved for notification of future meetings and distribution of information. E-mail notifications were the primary means of communication to the Public, elected officials, special interest groups, and other transportation agency staff.

Direct Mailing

A mailing list of names and addresses were developed by MPO staff at the outset of this study effort. The list includes individuals and agencies requesting hard copies of Plan materials either as a preference or because they do not have access to the World Wide Web. The mailing list was developed as a result of local knowledge and by incorporating the names contained in mailing databases from the following sources:

- MPO mailing list
- UC Planning Board
- UC Trails Advisory Committee
- UC Legislators
- Minority Groups
- Businesses and Chambers of Commerce
- Interested Citizens
- Local media

Throughout the study process, attendees at the Public informational and UCTC meetings were encouraged to provide their addresses (email or standard mail) so that they can be



added to the UCTC’s mailing list. The mailing list was updated continuously using the most current contact information gathered.

Newspaper Articles and Advertisements

Public Meeting notices will be sent to the following community newspapers in the Ulster County area:

- Kingston Daily Freeman (approx. 23,000 Daily Subscribers)
- Ulster Publishing (approx. 16,000 Weekly Subscribers)
- MidHudsonNews.com (online only; approx. 167,000 daily “hits”)
- Poughkeepsie Journal (approx. 40,000 daily subscribers)

The *Kingston Daily Freeman* is Ulster County’s largest circulating newspaper reporting on news within the Kingston area. Ulster Publishing is Ulster County’s second largest local newspaper publisher and operates the following affiliate newspapers: *Kingston Times*, *Woodstock Times*, *New Paltz Times*, and *Saugerties Times*. The *Midhudsonnews.com* is a website only news outlet and often covers Ulster County Transportation Council-related functions and activities. The *Poughkeepsie Journal*, while published in neighboring Dutchess County, is circulated to many southern Ulster County residents. Public meeting announcements will be sent to these news agencies 7 to 10 days prior to the meeting dates. Local news media will be contacted to generate stories, articles and public service announcements for Public and UCTC meetings. Meeting advertisements may also be purchased by any one of the agencies identified above. Copies of news stories, advertisements, public announcements related to the Year 2035 LRTP Update are found in Appendix A.

Project Web Site

A project website was developed to provide information and updates concerning the Year 2035 LRTP Update process. Website content, an online survey, interactive customer feedback, and graphics were produced by UCTC staff. The project web site is hosted by Ulster County using the following World Wide Web address:

<http://www.co.ulster.ny.us/planning/lrtp.html>

Project Logo

The UCTC’s Year 2035 LRTP Update is an entirely new undertaking. The study effort involved re-engineering the planning process and developing entirely new content. As a result of this new and unique process, UCTC staff developed a project logo, similar to the UCTC logo, to convey an identity to the new and different LRTP update process. The project logo helps to individualize and market the study effort and project a sense of purpose and change. The LRTP update project logo is identified in Figure 5-1.



Figure 5-1: UCTC's Year 2035 LRTP Update Logo

Online Public Survey and Results

An online survey was developed to solicit feedback from the Public, special interest groups, and transportation agency stakeholders. The survey was created by UCTC staff and uploaded to an online SurveyMonkey.com tool with assistance provided by Wilbur Smith Associates staff of Albany, New York. Access to SurveyMonkey.com and Wilbur Smith's assistance was provided to the UCTC free of charge by the New York State MPO Association. The survey was activated from March 24, 2010 to June 30, 2010. Hard copies of the survey were also made available to the Public at Public meetings. The LRTP online survey was located at the following address:

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/RZMNFQR>

(Survey Closed July 1, 2010)

A total of 59 persons responded to the online Public survey. Not every survey respondent completed every survey question. Additional survey data and detailed results are located in Appendix A. A summary of online survey results are as follows:

Fifty percent of survey respondents indicated they were somewhat or very satisfied with the regional transportation system. Approximately 31% indicated the quality of the Ulster County transportation system is better than it was five years ago.

A total of 88% of those surveyed believe somewhat more or much more money should be spent to maintain and improve the Ulster County transportation system.

Approximately 57% of those surveyed indicated that improved bicycle and pedestrian facilities is the most important transportation strategy.

A regional bicycle/pedestrian pathway system was the number one transportation priority (40.9%) indicated by survey respondents followed by maintaining existing roads and bridges (25%).

Approximately 68% of survey respondents drive alone when traveling.



Online Survey Comments Submitted

A number of comments and suggestions were submitted as part of the online survey. Two areas within the survey provided an opportunity for the Public to submit written comments. Question Number 5 asked survey respondents to identify transportation priorities not already identified within a range of priority examples provided. The following written transportation priorities were submitted in response to Question Number 5 (i.e. Other priorities to consider):

- “Car free city centers”
- “Bicycle lanes/enhancements”
- “Increased prioritization of bicycles and pedestrians: brick-patterned crosswalks, narrower roads with on-street parking to slow traffic. Oh, and roundabouts are nice and safe too.”
- “Safe Routes to Schools and Parks for walkers and bicyclists”
- “Wide shoulders on roads between towns and villages permitting bicycle use as transportation and not simply recreation. For instance, the Wallkill Valley Rail Trail is more for recreational bicycling than for practical commuting and transportation.”
- “Requiring complete streets policy for all funded municipalities”
- “Smart and sustainable growth-oriented transportation investment”

At the end of the online survey, the Public was invited to submit remaining comments. The following is a list of general comments submitted as part of the online survey:

- “More bicycle lanes and increased safety for bicyclists and pedestrians. Reduce congestion on NYS thruway, especially on weekends. I am not in favor of increased railways in Ulster County because of the potential for a population explosion. Ulster County is more remote, the roads are quieter, and towns are smaller. That is exactly why so many people love to visit there.”
- “Thanks for listening”
- “On my commute from New Paltz to Gardiner (by bicycle), I find some of the roads, South Putt and the northern part of Route 208, do not have wide enough shoulders. The shoulders are narrow enough to be what I would call dangerous. Cars come really, really close to me even though I'm right on the white line or to the left of it. The worst shoulder issue is between Jenkinstown Road to 44/55 on Route 208, and between the New Paltz High School and Route 32.”



- “Sidewalks for pedestrians need to be developed and maintained along County Routes in suburban areas. There needs to be adequate bike lanes throughout the region. Additional north/south and east/west rail trails with connections to shopping, workplaces, greenways, and recreational areas need to be completed and developed.”
- “My biggest complaint is City of Kingston traffic lights. There is a multiple second delay between one light turning red and the other direction turning green. Everyone in Kingston knows this resulting in people running red lights all the time. Might not be a big problem for cars that are easily visible, but not for folks on foot or bicycles.”
- “This is a great improvement on how to move forward with needed improvements for Ulster County. But like electric cars, they need to be built for people to buy into them.”
- “Whether peak oil is ahead or behind us, we need to reduce our transportation's total footprint. I've lived without a car for years in several US cities, and also traveled by bus, trolley, and train in Asia, Europe, and Israel. It is time to reverse GM's accursed destruction of the 20th century US trolley system, and restore mass transit in our region. Mass transit, even in outer suburbs, is the way to go! Fast trains, and Zip cars or other car sharing schemes could complement a comprehensive bus system. (Totally unlike the current joke of a UCAT schedule, useful only to college students and retirees!) Thanks for offering an opportunity to share my opinions.”
- “More attention to bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure could really help the economic, social, and cultural well being of Ulster County. Wouldn't it be great if Ulster County was at the forefront of counties in New York State that revolutionized transportation much like other cities in the US and across the globe are doing?”
- “Public and non-auto transit options are what we need to be focusing on, not making our already-oversized highways bigger. Utilize the Walkway over the Hudson to create pedestrian/bicycle links to Metro North. Improve Busing (with bicycle racks on the front) and enhance pedestrian, bicycle, bus and passenger rail connections overall to relieve congestion on the roads. If you make highways bigger, you end up making Ulster a nice place to drive *through*. If you make connections via various modes, then Ulster becomes a nice place to *be*.”
- “I think adding a public rail system would vastly improve the quality of life to people in the area. It would help bring in more job opportunities and tourism. It would also add access to other nearby areas for people to look for work. It seems like the number one problem in the area is the lack of good paying jobs and access to other areas with good jobs. Better access to the area would also bring in additional tourism.”



- “We need more pedestrian and bicycle friendly streets. Would love to see more trails really linking communities providing alternative means of transportation.”
- “I think that funding should focus on improving current routes for pedestrians and bicyclists, and that Ulster County should focus on active transport modes both to reduce the negative health effects and the contribution to climate change of the car culture. There are many low cost ways to make the current environment better for walkers and bikers. Also, a priority should be put on intermodal transport (i.e. bike racks on buses, places to put bikes on trains). I especially think that Kingston desperately needs to improve the walking facilities for children, elderly, and disabled children. The sidewalks in Kingston are a disgrace, and I am shocked on a daily basis to see elderly people risking their lives to get to the grocery store and disabled people riding on wheelchairs in the street.”
- “I would like to see some kind of bus connection between northern Dutchess and Kingston.”
- “Passenger rail and improving pedestrian and bike paths/trails would add tremendously to Ulster County's quality of life.”
- “I would like to be able to walk to church, work, and shopping, as well as to a bus station, train station and ferry dock. I realize I may have to use multiple forms of transportation to reach airports, and metropolitan areas, but at least the transportation will be available. When it is, I would like it to be convenient. Right now it could take an entire day to go to the city of Kingston from Saugerties for county business or a doctor's appointment by public transportation, but I can drive there and back in 3/4 of an hour. As I get older, juggling multiple routes, services, and packages may become more than my physical abilities will allow. The transportation has to get better for our rapidly aging society. Thanks for offering this forum for my thoughts.”
- “This page says "Please answer the following questions..." right above this comment box, but there aren't any following questions. There should be more carrots and sticks for communities to qualify for federal transportation funds, such as requiring current comprehensive plans, the adoption of complete streets policies and reduction of sprawl-inducing activities.”
- “+ Metropool is great + Develop standards for ecological designs and implementation of infrastructure upgrades + focus on equitable investment + publicize your work even more + facilitate complimentary economic development, including more small area design plans, but also including emerging industry and technology cultivation + BRT + BRT + BRT + Light rail seems costly compared with BRT + Aid low volume road policy and official map development in UC towns and villages + thank you”



Open Public Comment Period

The public is invited to submit written public comments on the LRTP update process at any time before, during or after the LRTP is prepared and adopted. UCTC staff will forward public comments to the UCTC for consideration. UCTC staff reminds the Public that the LRTP is a living document subject to amendments, if necessary, to adapt to the changing environment. Written comments may be submitted online via the UCTC web site, e-mail, and in writing via U.S. Mail to the Ulster County Planning Department at the following addresses:

Ulster County Transportation Council
c/o Dennis Doyle, MPO Director
244 Fair Street, 3rd Floor
Kingston, New York 12402-1800
e-Mail: planning@co.ulster.ny.us
LRTP Web Site: <http://www.co.ulster.ny.us/planning/lrtp.html>

Open Door Policy

The Public is invited to stop by in person at the Ulster County Planning Department, 3rd Floor, 244 Fair Street, Kingston, NY, to discuss and/or comment on the LRTP update process at anytime during normal business hours, Monday through Friday, 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM.

