



Urban Design  
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Planning

## Oneida County Mohawk River Greenway Corridor Transportation & Circulation Focus Group Notes

**Meeting:** Wednesday, January 30<sup>th</sup>, 3:00 p.m.  
**Issue Date:** Friday, February 08, 2008  
**Location:** 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Planning Dept. Conference Room,  
Union Station, 321 Main St., Utica

### In Attendance:

1. Harry Miller, *Herkimer / Oneida Counties Transportation Study*
2. Dave Short, *City of Utica Parks & Recreation*
3. Sal Granato, *Town of Whitesboro Highway Department*
4. Larry Felitto, *Village of Yorkville*
5. Matt Van Slyke, *Herkimer / Oneida Counties Transportation Study*
6. Paul Evans, *NYS DOT Scenic Byways Regional LA, Bike/Ped Coordinator*
7. James L. Davis, *Town of Trenton, Chair of Conservation Advisory Council*
8. Mary Kunzler-Larmann, *CNY Chapter of the North Country Trail Association*

Also there from the Work Group:

Jessica Breiton, *Oneida County Planning Department*  
Joe Homburger, *citizen, retired NYS DEC*  
Andy Schrauth, *peter j. smith & company, inc.*  
Eve Holberg, *peter j. smith & company, inc.*

### Written Responses to Booklet Questions (bulleted) and discussion notes

#### #1. Describe the character of the Mohawk River Corridor, e.g. "The Mohawk River Corridor is ..."

- An economic, historic, waterway & gateway
- Durhamville
- A forgotten area; needs regional cooperation to exploit this (resource)
- A multi-modal, historic corridor traversing some of the most pastoral and aesthetic scenery that can be found in NYS
- The historic transportation corridor (east/west) across NYS; an area of diverse historic, cultural, recreational, & economic opportunity; these resources have not been developed and marketed as a region in ways other states/regions have
- It is an unused asset, not well known, it has poor access, it has a lot of potential for helping the area
- Economically historically challenged area, poor waterway for fishing & use
- Tourism dollars doesn't help infrastructure

- Where get money to fund projects? - not from towns and villages – they don't have the money, Canal Corporation has built a lot but can't maintain it, need cash flow
- It is an historic transportation corridor, there are diverse recreation opportunities, it needs to be marketed
- Corridor holds a lot of nation's history, many have traversed it in past, used to be a manufacturing corridor
- It is a forgotten region (as opposed to western sections of the canal), not much to do here, "no sense of identity" (for this region of NYS)

## **#2. Barring all constraints, including time and money, what should be the transportation and circulation focus of the Mohawk River Corridor?**

- Access; recreation/tourism; transportation access the trail
- Flooding
- Finish bike trail along canal & connectors; limited access to the canal; establish points of interest
- Multi-use; bikes, kayaks, tour boats, historical events, organized tours by commercial operators; thinking of boat trips on the river in Europe; hate to say it but snowmobiles, horseback, ATV's on a limited basis; focus should be on events e.g. Boilermaker, Canal Bike-a-thon, Utica to Oneida Triathlon, environmental & historical tours; land acquisition to allow development of continuous trails
- Needs to become more of a destination; this area is centrally located to all of NYS; as a "destination" for conferences; many people visiting might return if the area provided opportunities of interest i.e. recreational, historic, cuisine, etc.; we live here, we take it for granted, to visitors it can be new and exciting
- Maintenance and operation of existing infrastructure; Access, development, and marketing of recreational opportunities including linkages to water-based recreation and continued development of land-based recreation (bicycle tourism)
- Keep people in area; events/tours to introduce visitors (to the area); finish the trail; transportation already there; bicycle trails; kayak/canoe access
- Future transportation/circulation depends on what land uses will be established, need to determine what happens along corridor first, should be mix of things, places, & events
- Need to finish the trail, need limited access to canal, need purpose to come here, DPW use trail for hunting, believe a lot already there but need to get things there, North Genesee Corridor study going on, canal is not used as an asset here
- Dig out and make lake to stop flooding
- Barnes is NYS DOT road and it's where they do their paving school, greenway needs signage, it needs points of interest, there are a lot in other areas of the canal, need a point of interest for our area and the money to put toward it, probably think putting resources to canal for recreation & transportation will get people coming here

- People tend to do (hike) bits of trail at a time, people need a place to start and end their trail hikes, need to have amenities and a complete trail, activities are not exclusive such as hiking and kayaking
- Financial constraints are real, typically infrastructure in planning seen as niceties – but it's not, it represents investment into area and region, draws wealth to area, need to develop the quality of life setting, need signage on trail
- Have finally just begun getting to tying trails together in this area, chip fabrication plant would be great draw for area, lot of schools in area, need to get people to come back to area, need total package for selling area
- Focus should be on events, advertise something, Boilermaker draws people, biking canal events draw people, consider a bike-a-thon, people are event crazy – consider what event can be held here, look into commercial tour outfits, there is a need for kayak input places along the canal – not a dock – need a ramp, at 9 mile creek there is not good (or pretty) access to water

### **#3. What are the most significant transportation and circulation opportunities or potentials for the Mohawk River Corridor? How can they be encouraged?**

- Trail connections; parking/access/signage; promotion
- Utica – linear park, boat access, Barnes Avenue bridge replacement, N. Genesee Street improvement
- Old Erie Towpath – no place to go; Black River Blvd. – not a nice place to go – (make it a ) parkway; coal tar (in) Utica Harbor; bridge over tracks to convention center Harbor Lock; boardwalks; right of continuous access; public transportation (light rail); park at marina; Leland Avenue bridge
- Bike trails are a growing trend – (existing system) needs to be completed; need better access to canal for small boats, kayaks, canoes, picnics, wildlife studies; better access – canoe access; purchase/lease segments to make continuous paths & connectivity; trails – trails – trails, public transportation & local public transportation
- Erie Barge Canal; NYS Thruway; Routes 5, 5S, 12, 365, & 291; Rayhill Trail; Black River Trail; Canalway Trail; Marcy Trail Link; Proctor Park – parkway trail; North Country Trail; Adirondack Scenic Railroad & Bike Trail; Utica Harbor
- Low traffic/easy travel between attractions; Adirondack Scenic Railroad; recreational traffic on canal – underdeveloped kayaking, canoeing, & rowing opportunity; well maintained state & rural road network for cycling – underdeveloped bicycle touring opportunities; strong local support for trail development
- Link everything; year-round parking; all-season trail; central area; low cost; develop central conference area - DOT has to use Syracuse (facilities); no large enough central place in Utica; public transportation & light rail; signage; promotion; better boat access and better bridging; connect to outlying attractions such as Oriskany Battlefield
- Need parking & general access, signage needed, need to promote corridor

- Utica needs park destination near water, need improvements to bridges in area to better allow trail access
- (specifically with a path) Need to incorporate Oriskany Battle Monument site to canal trail
- Need to have snow removal and parking access, “build it & they will come” is not what works
- Need connectivity, link all together, need linkage of old Erie Canal toe path & Village end of trail to rest of trail – need to connect along canal to west and east to other side of Rome
- We have extensive transportation network in our area, low traffic and easy travel between sites, rural and state roads have ample room/ shoulders for biking, have Adirondack Scenic Railroad – sometimes 300+ people on trips, have strong local support for trails that have been built
- Erie Canal Trail has certain sections where allow motorized vehicles, but not in this area, need to clean up Utica Harbor, add restaurants to harbor, put bridge across, Utica/Rome area is middle of state – consider a conference center and highlight nearness to Turning Stone Casino, need to make area a destination, need hotels to support the conference center, my organization had to have its last conference in Syracuse even though wanted to have it local
- Better access to water by canoe & kayak, need continuous connectivity and access, consider public transportation – light rail
- To the west of Rome there are few areas that one may crisscross canal by automobile

**#4. What specific obstacles and deficiencies are preventing the Mohawk River Corridor Greenway from achieving its transportation and circulation potential?**

- Safety; money; signing; maintenance; promotion; leader – champion – public support
- Canal Corporation; DEC; private land owners
- Coordinated regional plan & identity (especially have Utica & Rome in harmony); lack of public transportation – railways from town to town; allow rails with trails (as well as) rails to trails
- Money; we’re not in the “fashionable” political district, i.e. we’re not downstate; vision; forward thinking; hazardous waste issues; identity problems
- Safety & perception of safety; years of negative perceptions that stall progress; lack of a cohesive vision & message/marketing strategy – territorial issues (i.e. Utica versus Rome) need to be resolved; lack of canal access; need identification & capitalization on various funding sources and strategies
- Maintenance – perception of safety or not safe; promote positive image; separate travel lanes for pedestrian & motorized users; need ‘champion’ – a sponsor, a mayor, etc.; problems – DEC, Canal Corporation, private land owners

- Besides money...big transit problem – system going broke, need for a champion to take the lead and push for the project, need to find public official w/ power to push project
- If a trail is perceived to be safe it is more heavily used, Barnes area perceived to be unsafe, one needs to cross the railroad tracks to get on the other trail, signs are needed to make the area seem safe, Canal Corp, DEC and Private land owners are biggest problems, example of this is historic marina built on southern side of canal because land owner on north side wanted too much money to purchase the land, private ownership issues at Barnes Ave, Canal Corporation rejected city of Utica's offer to build/maintain trail portion near Utica – marina to county line – in the corporation's infancy (had a 'we can do it by ourselves' mentality)
- Noted that people are missing in the pictures on the focus group brochure
- How to get people to come? - need to get all parties to come together to be able to maintain system, Canal Corporation does not maintain its trails
- Suggest separate different trail users & different trail traffic
- Canal Corporation wants local ownership and maintenance of trail, Canal Corporation was not working in good faith with municipalities (wanted to do it all themselves without any help from others)
- Need a regional plan & identity, need Rome and Utica to coordinate, it is an obstacle to process, consider exploitation of rail corridor for commuter and public transportation, is an obstacle because we can't do it, consider a trolley, etc., trend of rails to trails - now rails with trails is becoming a trend, Genesee Valley and Town of Trenton working with to get rail w/ trail

**#5. What special issues should we be aware of as we complete the Greenway Plan for the Mohawk River Corridor?**

- This is a great way to start! Having a vision/plan is the best way to make it happen
- Funding
- Just what we have to offer in this area - great place, great history, great restaurants, & great people.
- You're working against years of momentum that has built that stalls projects. This type of planning/development is still seen as "extras" in this area. For things to change, it has to be sold as an effort that will benefit the region economically (jobs, property values, tourism, etc.)
- Preserve open space via easements? Valuable for making corridor a desirable destination – balanced with need for business development opportunities.