



Parks & Trails
NEW YORK

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April 15, 2013

Mr. Chris White
Deputy Commissioner
Ulster County Planning Department
244 Fair Street
P.O. Box 1800
Kingston, NY 12402

Dear Mr. White,

Parks & Trails New York is a statewide not-for-profit organization working to expand, protect, and promote a network of parks, trails, and open spaces throughout the state for the use and enjoyment by all. Under a contract from the NYS Department of Health's *Healthy Heart Program* we are currently providing technical support to New York State communities that are engaged in efforts to build new multi-use trails and increase usage of existing multi-use trails. Through this program, we are working closely with the Kingston Land Trust to build support for the development and maintenance of several rail trails that will connect within and outside the City of Kingston.

We have examined the two Ulster & Delaware Railroad (U&D) rail with trail feasibility studies prepared by Alta Planning and Design (2006) and the Catskill Mountain Rail Road (2013) and conclude that true rail with trail is not a suitable option for this corridor.

There has been much discussion regarding the feasibility of rail with trail for the Ulster and Delaware (U&D) Railroad corridor. However, the accepted Federal Highway Administration definition of a rail with trail facility is a "shared-use path or other trail within or adjacent to active railroad and transit rights-of way." Thus, much of what is being referred to as rail with trail is not really rail with trail but rather a separate linear facility, either on- or off-road, that runs parallel to the rail corridor.

In choosing to develop a rail with trail facility on the entire corridor, Ulster County would spend much more but receive much less. We believe rail with trail will be:

- prohibitively expensive and difficult to develop because of issues pertaining to limited corridor width, steep slopes, ROW acquisition, wetlands, drainage, bridges, and permitting;
- less likely to receive federal or state funding if the facility cannot be made fully accessible due to difficult terrain and steep slopes; and

- less attractive to visitors because of steep slopes and/or the need for on-road sections where no other options exist.

Therefore, PTNY strongly encourages the County to develop the former U&D rail bed primarily as a multi-use trail and only establish a rail with trail between Boiceville and Phoenicia where the railroad currently operates.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robin Dropkin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "R".

Robin Dropkin
Executive Director

Encl.