

BMTS Article Digest January - February 2010

BMTS Pedestrian & Bicycle Advisory Committee Members:

The following is a compilation of articles that may be of interest to BMTS Pedestrian & Bicycle Advisory Committee members. This and past digests can also be accessed in the Pedestrian & Bicycle Advisory Committee page of www.bmtsonline.com.

Scott

Take a look at the National Center for Bicycling & Walking's newsletter, **CenterLines**. You can also arrange to have it emailed directly to you.

See <http://www.bikewalk.org/newsletterarchives.php>

CenterLines is the bi-weekly electronic news bulletin of the National Center for Bicycling & Walking. **CenterLines** is our way of quickly delivering news and information you can use to create more walkable and bicycle-friendly communities.



February 8, 2010

It's here! \$2.17M Owego River Walk opens for business

*By Nancy Dooling
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OWEGO -- After a decade of waiting, Owego's River Walk is officially open for business.

For years, the 1,200 foot walkway along the Susquehanna River in Owego's historic downtown was just a dream for village residents.

Then, U.S. Rep. Maurice D. Hinchey obtained \$1.96 million from Congress to build the \$2.17 million scenic project. The rest of the money was obtained by state Sen. Thomas W. Libous, R-Binghamton.

Hinchey was in Owego on Monday to join village Mayor Ed Arrington and other local officials to dedicate the walkway.

"The Owego River Walk has been the vision of Owego residents for decades, and today that vision has finally been realized," Hinchey said.

Supporters hope the walkway will expand business opportunities in the village and prevent erosion along the waterfront. It creates riverside access to the unused cellar levels of 20 business properties for development purposes, and connects the village to the river as a recreational resource, Hinchey said.

The congressman secured \$600,000 in the Transportation Appropriations bill for fiscal year 2004 and an additional \$860,000 in the 2005 Transportation Reauthorization bill.

When village officials last year said they'd need more money to finish the project, Hinchey found another \$500,000 in federal funds.

WBNG-TV: News Sports, Weather Binghamton, New York

River Walk Plans

Originally printed at <http://www.wbng.com/news/local/82997462.html>

Binghamton, NY (WBNG Binghamton) One of the final phases of planning the Susquehanna North Bank River Trail is complete.

Neighbors were given the opportunity to weigh in before a final design is set.

And as Action News Reporter Leigh Dana tell us, many people say the project is right on the money.

It may be a little to early to be thinking about exercising outside.

But for those who like to take a break from work and go for a stroll, like Madeleine Kontz, the Susquehanna North Bank River Trail can't come soon enough.

"It will be a nice place to be when the weather and the birds are flying around and it's not freezing cold like today," said Kontz.

Design consultants presented an overview of the project's preliminary design at McArthur Elementary School.

The river trail will span from the Washington Street Pedestrian Bridge to the Exchange Street Bridge, with a length of about 4/10 of a mile.

"I mean we can do without it, but I think it would be a nice addition," said Sam Russo.

For Sam and his friends, the new river trail means more space to ride their bikes, "There will be times when we're coming back from Great Bend and that gives us a chance to get out of traffic for a short bit of time."

But before Russo can strap on a helmet, one obstacle still remains that needs the core of engineers approval.

"The only hurdle that has to be crossed is that to get from Exchange Street to the river trail, we'd have to go through the flood wall," said city engineer, Philip Krey.

Eventually, the city's entire river walk will extend up the Chenango, to Otsiningo Park, giving Binghamton nearly 2.5 miles of continuous river trails.

In Binghamton, Leigh Dana, WBNG TV Action News.

A final design in set to be complete by summer and construction is slated to begin soon after.

The project is expected to cost about \$700,000.

80% of which will come from federal funding.

The city will make up the other 20%.



The Minnesota Miracle

By Dan Buettner, January & February 2010

The extraordinary story of how folks in this small town got motivated, got moving, made new friends, and added years to their lives. The best news? They're having so much fun, they can't stop

Fifty-two. That was Brian Mattson's life expectancy. Okay, he knew he was overweight and out of shape. But 52? He was already 38. "I'm a social worker, and my job is tough," he says. "Most nights I'd come home and watch TV and eat junk food. I was pretty isolated." He was also, he admits, depressed.

Brian learned his projected life span after using an online tool called the Vitality Compass, which calculates life expectancy based on diet, exercise, and other key indicators. And he did so on the noteworthy night of May 14, 2009—an evening that helped transform not only Brian Mattson's life but the lives of nearly everyone in Albert Lea, Minnesota, his picturesque hometown. Amid a pep-rally-like atmosphere in a high-school auditorium, the 18,000-resident community kicked off the AARP/Blue Zones Vitality Project, sponsored by the United Health Foundation, a radical yet fun-to-follow program to help people eat better, become more active, connect with one another, and find a greater sense of purpose.

These four basic behaviors lie at the heart of improved health and longevity, something I learned from traveling to areas I call Blue Zones : unique regions where people have the world's longest life spans. The mission of the Vitality Project was to add healthy years to an entire town by weaving the Blue Zones principles into every aspect of the community—restaurants, businesses, schools, homes, and everyday lives.

With buy-in from the town's leadership, the transformation was remarkable. Dan Burden—a transportation expert who has helped more than 2,500 communities become more bike- and pedestrian-friendly—created plans to persuade residents to leave their cars at home. This included building a sidewalk loop around Fountain Lake, the town's stunning centerpiece. Nutrition and food-psychology expert Brian Wansink, Ph.D., author of *Mindless Eating: Why We Eat More Than We Think*, went into Albert Lea's homes and restaurants to explain some simple tricks for healthier eating, such as using ten-inch plates and putting junk food on hard-to-reach shelves. Dietary expert Leslie Lytle, Ph.D., R.D., worked with grocery stores to label "longevity foods," and with schools to change their menus—and the eating habits of students. Richard Leider, author of *The Power of Purpose*, and his colleague Barbara Hoesle led seminars that encouraged participants to pursue their talents and passions.

The ultimate goal: for the people of Albert Lea to adopt these healthy habits so naturally, so painlessly, they wouldn't even realize how radically they were changing their lives. How well did it work? By the time the Vitality Project ended in October 2009 a total of 3,464 residents of all ages had participated. The life expectancy of the 786 residents who took the Vitality Compass before and after rose by an average of 2.9 years, and all say they feel healthier—physically and emotionally. Two-thirds of locally owned restaurants added life-extending foods to their menus, from berries to broccoli, and 35 businesses pledged to make their workplaces healthier by offering more nutritious catering menus and vending machine choices, and substituting fruit for doughnuts. Residents participated in 15 Vitality Project initiatives, says city manager Victoria Simonsen, from walking groups—including "walking school buses," where parents and grandparents stroll with children to school—to healthy cooking classes. Each is expected to continue.

But more impressive than the numbers are the moving, motivating stories of the people who participated—the energetic folks who revitalized their bodies, their spirits, their lives, and their town.

"I Feel So Strong Now"

Albert Lea is a quintessential green-tree midwestern city, but Moraa Knoll found it less than idyllic. Fifty-two years old and a Kenyan by birth, she moved to Albert Lea in 2003 and struggled to connect with coworkers and neighbors. "I felt like people in America put fences around their lives," she says. "I often felt misunderstood."

Her health suffered. She gained weight, and she and her husband, Michael, developed diabetes. "I used to feel like I'd collapse when I had to climb stairs," she says.

When the Knolls heard about the Vitality Project, they thought it would be a good way to improve their health, beginning with diet. One essential strategy is to reduce portion sizes gradually, and to make those smaller meals more nutritious. At first Moraa found herself craving junk food. "I was hungry from the smaller portions, and sometimes I really wanted a pizza or a cookie or to go to a fast-food restaurant," she admits. "But I also wanted to change my health. I got rid of all the junk food and sweets in the house. What I kept around was fruit, so when I was hungry, I learned to reach for an apple or a banana."

Michael stayed active thanks to a side job delivering newspapers, but Moraa knew she needed to move more, so she joined two walking *moais* in her neighborhood. In Okinawa, a Blue Zone where average life expectancy is 82, *moai* is the word for a group of people who support one another for life. In Albert Lea roughly 600 citizens joined walking *moais* during the project, trading TVs and computers for group exercise. Biking and community gardening became popular as well.

The groups have enriched Moraa's life. "Those women reached out to me right away," she says. "We began talking as we walked, and soon we were friends. That experience has made me open up to other people."

Moraa now does occasional volunteer work, such as walking dogs for the Humane Society, with a *moai* friend, and she and Michael have dramatically improved their health: Moraa has lost about 30 pounds, Michael's waist size has dropped from 38 to 32, and their diabetes symptoms have virtually disappeared. "I'm almost nondiabetic now," Moraa reports.

Eager to spread the Vitality Project's positive results, Moraa's church has formed a group to discuss their accomplishments and encourage others to trade French fries for fruit. "But whenever we meet," she says, "we talk most about how people are connecting more because of the Vitality Project. It's made me feel better about Albert Lea—and America."

"Eating This Way Has Helped Us Save Money"

Curly fries and curling irons were once a daily mix for 47-year-old Jackie Abrego. The owner of a hair salon, Jackie would frequently eat fast food with her employees. Yes, she and her husband, John, 50, have always been active—they bike and walk and chase their four young grandkids—but the Vitality Project, John says, "has really made us conscious of eating healthy." Like Moraa, they've cut out junk food and fast food. "It was hard for me to give that up at first," Jackie admits. "But I've always heard it takes 21 days to change a habit, and we were committed. We knew we had to continuously work the program, or we'd fall back into our old ways."

Giving up fast food forced the couple to do more advance snack planning. Every Sunday night Jackie and John cut up vegetables and fruit together for the week. "It's become a kind of ritual we enjoy," John notes. "Besides making us feel healthier, eating this way has actually saved us money: we pack good, healthful lunches for ourselves."

Viva Vitality!

The AARP/Blue Zones Vitality Project lives on, as Albert Lea civic leaders convert the first floor of a downtown building into a Vitality Center. To sustain that momentum, AARP has donated an extra \$10,000 to the town, and the United Health Foundation (UHF), which made the project possible with a \$750,000 grant, has provided another \$10,000. The Albert Lea Medical Center has also pledged \$25,000. Keeping the community engaged and connected is critical, says UHF executive director Daniel Johnson: "We

believe that's what ultimately will have the most dramatic impact on the health of the community." The results "surpassed our expectations," Johnson adds, but the best may be yet to come.

—Leslie Quander Wooldridge

The hair salon has also said goodbye to candy. "We've got a tray of fresh veggies out instead," says Jackie. "One of the clients even brought us an enormous zucchini, and I made lots of zucchini bread and muffins from it and sent some to school with my niece as a snack." Now that the schools have eliminated junk food, "the kids have really gotten onboard with this," John says. "Even our oldest grandson—he's six—asks for carrot sticks and broccoli to snack on when he visits us. And what he eats, the younger grandkids will copy."

"I Used To Eat A Whole Lot of Cheesy Puffs..."

For Jen and Chris Chalmers, the Vitality Project has reinforced the good things they were already doing—"and helped us to do more," says Chris. The Chalmers—he's 43, she's 38—have three boys under ten, so they're busy people, but Chris still volunteered to be a local cochair of the Vitality Project. Hoping to bring more movement into their lives, the Chalmers are biking to church on Sundays with their kids.

"It was fun for all of us and a great way to get our five-year-old to settle down for the service," Chris says. "We're also involved in the walking school bus in our neighborhood. It's nice to see that gathering of different generations every morning, sometimes as many as 30 or 40 kids and the adults who are going to accompany them—grandparents, moms pushing strollers, and other older people in the neighborhood.

"Another thing we love is the sense of community at the weekly farmers' market—we bike there with the kids, too. Since the project began, it's been packed. More people are buying local produce instead of stuff that's come from 1,500 miles away."

Chris's ten-year-old son, Sam, like all kids, picks up on what his family and his community are doing. "I've been thinking about what I'm eating," he says. "I used to eat a whole lot of cheesy puffs. Now I know they're not good for me, so I cut them out.

"I've met a lot more people around town at all of these Vitality Project events," he adds. "They talk about how in little towns everyone knows each other, but that wasn't really true for me before. Now it is."

"Isn't It Wonderful about Brian?"

Brian Mattson, the social worker who was stunned to learn about his limited life expectancy, got involved in the Vitality Project for one reason: his mother. Jan Mattson is 66, fit, and an ambassador for the project. And she was worried about her son. "She badgered me into going to the Vitality Project start-up," Brian says. "But when I listened to what they were saying, I thought, 'Okay, these are real simple changes, so why not try?' "

He began by eating more fruits and vegetables. Then he joined a walking *moai* in his neighborhood and got a pedometer to measure the number of steps he took in a day.

"When I first began, I felt like, 'My God, I've walked 6,000 steps and I think I'm gonna die.' " But Brian persevered. He began to feel better and became friends with the people in his *moai*, particularly 53-year-old Kevin Boyer.

"Sometimes when I'm out walking with Brian, I'll say, 'I'm *this* close to ordering a pizza,' " Kevin says, "and Brian'll say, 'I'm gonna go home and make stir-fry.' Hearing that keeps me on the rails. I used to have a pizza every week, and I haven't had one in months. I'm just eating a lot less. At first that was hard to manage, but I started using smaller bowls and plates, like the Vitality Project tells you to do, and it's helped me control my portions. I've even given up putting sugar on my cereal. I didn't know you could eat it without sugar," he laughs.

Brian's life is becoming sweeter (sans sugar) as well. "At night now I think to myself, 'I'd rather go out walking than sit here alone.' And I now average 12,000 steps a day."

His mother is excited and relieved by the changes in her son's life. "People are stopping me on the street and saying, 'Isn't it wonderful about Brian?' "

As for Jan, she and her husband, Rory, 67, are eating more fruits and vegetables as well. "And I cook with olive oil instead of butter," she says. "Sometimes Rory complains about the smaller portions, but he's getting used to it."

For Brian, however, the Vitality Project changed far more than his waistline. It reinvigorated his outlook on life. "I took a purpose workshop, and it reminded me that I'm good at what I do—I have a natural talent to do social work," he says. "These days at work I'll try something off-the-wall, a new technique with a kid I'm helping. And I'm really pumped up about a role I have in a community-theater play. It's small, but I haven't done theater here in 15 years, and it's something I love. It's just incredible how much better I feel. About everything."

Dan Buettner is the author of The Blue Zones: Lessons for Living Longer From the People Who've Lived the Longest.

The Power 9

In 2000 a team of scientists and I began studying cultures where people live longest. The residents of these "Blue Zones" don't diet or belong to health clubs, but they do share common healthy behaviors. We call them the Power 9:

1 Keep Moving

Find ways to move naturally, such as walking, gardening, using fewer labor-saving devices.

2 Find Purpose

And pursue it with passion.

3 Slow Down

Work less, rest, take vacations.

4 Stop Eating...

...when you're 80 percent full.

5 Dine on Plants

Eat more veggies, and less meat and processed foods.

6 Drink Red Wine

Do it consistently but in moderation.

7 Join a group

Create a healthy social network.

8 Feed your soul

Engage in spiritual activities.

9 Love your tribe

Make family a high priority. -D.B.

January 18, 2010

Binghamton police delay report of officer's accident

By Eric Reinagel
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BINGHAMTON -- Thirty-nine days after a Binghamton police officer was involved in a motor vehicle accident, her department has released the accident report.

Officer Amanda Rose was cited in the report for failing to yield right-of-way to a pedestrian on Dec. 5. She later entered a guilty plea to the violation in traffic court, said Chief Joseph Zikuski.

He said Rose was off-duty at the time and there was no disciplinary action.

According to the five-page report, Rose was turning north onto Front Street on Main Street when David Weller and Hillary Lederman were crossing Front Street at 8:51 p.m. Dec. 5.

She told police she became distracted when she started turning because she was watching a vehicle in front of her that sped forward when the light changed and cut off another vehicle. When she turned her attention to the crosswalk, she saw the pedestrians, but did not have enough time to stop and hit them both.

Both pedestrians were taken to Wilson Regional Medical Center, but police were told by medical staff that the pedestrians only suffered superficial injuries, according to the report.

The Press & Sun-Bulletin learned about the accident from an eyewitness days after it occurred, but detectives refused to release information. A Freedom of Information Law request was filed Dec. 9, but Capt. John Chapman denied the FOIL on Dec. 22, claiming access would "interfere with law enforcement investigation of judicial proceedings." The denial letter was received on Christmas Eve. Chapman also stated the case was still open with the Broome County District Attorney's office.

The denial was appealed by the Press and subsequently overturned by city attorney Shannon K. Starowicz.

The report presented to the newspaper, however, had addresses, zip codes, birth dates, badge identification numbers and Rose's license identification number blacked out.

When asked why access to the record was initially denied, Starowicz explained: "If there is a pending investigation, we have to make sure we don't compromise it."

Zikuski said there wasn't a cover-up, but he didn't know why the record wasn't provided initially to the Press.



Alliance for Biking & Walking

Investing in Biking and Walking Could Save Lives Says Report

States with the lowest levels of biking and walking have higher traffic fatalities and chronic disease

Washington, DC - January 28, 2010 - A [new report](#) released today by the Alliance for Biking & Walking shows that lack of investment in biking and walking could be contributing to higher traffic fatalities and chronic disease rates in the U.S.

Bicycling and Walking in the United States: The 2010 Benchmarking Report reveals that in almost every state and major U.S. city, bicyclists and pedestrians are at a disproportionate risk of being killed, and receive less than their fair share of transportation dollars. While 10% of trips in the U.S. are by bike or foot, 13% of traffic fatalities are bicyclists and pedestrians. Biking and walking receive less than 2% of federal transportation dollars. Seniors are at an even greater risk. While adults over 65 make up 9% of walking trips and 4% of biking trips, they account for 19% of pedestrian fatalities and 9% of bicyclist fatalities.

"State investment choices can be a life or death issue for people who walk and bike," says Jeff Miller, President of the Alliance. "Creating safe streets for everyone will save lives and improve health and quality of life in communities."

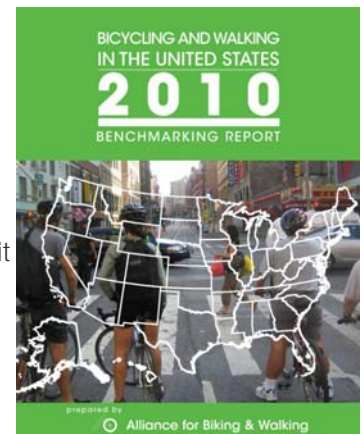
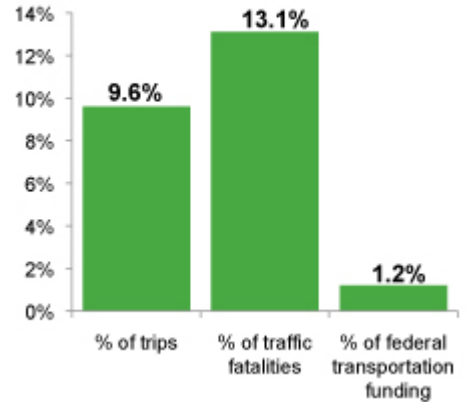
The report also highlights the fact that states with the lowest levels of biking and walking have, on average, the highest rates of obesity, diabetes, and high blood pressure. In contrast states with the highest levels of biking and walking have, on average, the lowest rates of obesity, diabetes, and high blood pressure. In addition, where rates of biking and walking are greater, more of the adult population is likely to achieve the 150 minutes of weekly moderate-intensity aerobic activity recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). According to CDC, physical activity can reduce your risk of dying early from the leading causes of death, like heart disease and some cancers.

The report also ranks states and the 51 largest U.S. cities in biking and walking levels, safety, funding, advocacy, and policies. It further compares U.S. cities to their international peers finding that overall, U.S. investment in biking and walking lags far behind that of other developed nations. This may explain why the U.S. has fewer people who bike and walk than its international peers.

Miller says, "our data show that increasing investment in biking and walking could lead to more people biking and walking. The more people bike and walk, the safer it is and the healthier the community. It's a virtuous cycle."

Bicycling and Walking in the United States was funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and made possible through additional support from Bikes Belong Coalition and Planet Bike. For more information and to download the report visit <http://www.PeoplePoweredMovement.org/benchmarking>. For a fact sheet highlighting report findings [click here](#).

Levels of Bicycling and Walking, Bike/Ped Fatalities, and Bike/Ped Funding in the U.S.



About the Alliance:

Alliance for Biking & Walking is the North American coalition of over 160 grassroots biking and walking advocacy organizations. The Alliance works to strengthen state and local organizations through research, sharing best practices, training, resources, and grants. For more information or to find a local organization visit www.PeoplePoweredMovement.org.

<http://www.treehugger.com/files/2010/01/bike-riding-7-year-old-raises-over-100000-for-haiti.php>

Bike Riding 7 Year Old Raises Over \$100,000 For Haiti

by Warren McLaren, Bundanoon, Australia on 01.24.10

CARS & TRANSPORTATION (BIKES)



The other day I [posed the question](#): "who is the more sustaining? Those who only care about themselves, or those who look out for others?" The story of Charlie Simpson, gives me hope it is the latter.

Young Charlie, all of seven years old, saw the images of the Haiti earthquake survivors and wanted to do something to help. He told his folks he wanted to organise a sponsored bike-a-thon around his local park in London, UK. He hoped to raise £500 (\$800 USD). At the time of writing he'd amassed donations for UNICEF worth over £67,800 (\$109,000 USD).

According to a spokesperson for the UK branch of the United Nations Children's Fund, UNICEF, Charlie now holds the record for most funds raised in a single day. When Charlie had raised just £9,000, UNICEF told BBC News ([see video here, with Charlie also being interviewed](#)) that money could help 900 families protect themselves from waterborn diseases. We assume £70,500 (as it now stands, by the time we had this post written up) goes much further.

To get up to his eight kilometres (five miles) of cycling, Charlie rode laps around South Park in Fulham with his dad and a friend. The BBC reported that at the 1.5 mile mark Charlie was finding it "quite tiring." But on he went. (See [BBC News footage](#) of Charlie pedaling in his park.)

"My name is Charlie Simpson, I want to do a Sponsored Bike Ride for Haiti because there was a big earthquake and loads of people have lost their lives. I want to make some money to buy food, water and tents for everyone in Haiti." From his [JustGiving](#) page, which is still open for donations. So if you want to help UNICEF support the children of Haiti, go donate, so that Charlie's passionate pedaling feat is appropriately rewarded.

Go Charlie, you rock.

Put a bicycle in the right hands, and its power to do good never ceases to amaze.

January 29, 2010

Budget ax to fall on BC Transit? Riders say it could cost them their jobs

By Nancy Dooling
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Shayla Fortner-Watrous uses the bus to get to work five afternoons a week.

Lacking a vehicle of her own, her employment options might evaporate without public transit, the Binghamton woman said.

"I probably wouldn't have a job," Fortner-Watrous said from her seat on one of BC Transit's Route 35 buses, which make more than 40 loops each day from Binghamton to Endicott and back.

On any given day, hundreds of workers use public transit to get back and forth to work -- many relying on the bus on nights and weekends. The question now being asked: Can the county afford to maintain current service, including nights and weekends, within a budget that's already stretched under the weight of a recession.

Mario Nirchi, a Democrat who represents Endicott on the Broome County Legislature, said county taxpayers are facing a possible double-digit property tax increase next year, unless county services and departmental expenses are cut. He suggested transit may be a place to trim.

Property taxes went up 6 percent in 2010 for the county's \$353 million operating budget. Weighing in next year: financing a 50 percent increase in pension costs for the county's 2,400 employees.

Transit -- and its \$12 million operating budget -- will be one of the areas scrutinized as legislators look for expenses to shave from the budget. BC Transit collected 3 million fares last year. Of those, 226,000 were on nights and weekends.

Despite those numbers, or perhaps because of them, public transit could come under close examination this year, with possible cuts in the offing. When and if those cuts will come will be a part of a larger budget discussion that will take place through the year.

"Some of these night and weekend routes are a luxury, ones we have difficulty paying for," Nirchi said. "I think we want to get the most for our money."

Last year, Nirchi objected to spending about \$225,000 in county money to get a state matching grant of the same amount to pay for additional night and weekend routes. The legislator said he's seen too many half-empty buses on weekends to believe the service is necessary.

"I think it's time for legislators to stop just accepting grants that have a cost," Nirchi said.

Cutbacks are already being considered, said George Bagnetto, Broome's public transit director.

These will likely include fewer stops and fewer trips to certain areas of the urban core.

"We will be looking at runs and their frequency," Bagnetto said.

Transit officials also will look at moving some routes to an hourly schedule instead of the current 30-minute pick-up service. Shortening the length of some routes will be considered, too. The time frame of those initiatives is indefinite.

"Maybe we don't need to go all the way out to a certain point," Bagnetto said. "These are all things we are going to look at."

Transit's costs are underwritten by taxpayers, state and federal grants, and the \$1.50 fares riders pay to get to their destinations on Broome's fixed routes.

In this year's transit budget, about \$3 million comes from federal funding, roughly \$3.8 million comes from New York state, and fares contribute about \$2.8 million, transit officials estimated. Taxpayers contribute approximately \$2.2 million.

Dividing transit's \$12 million budget by 3 million fares produces a rough cost of \$4 per fare, meaning about \$2.50 is subsidized by federal and state grants as well as local property taxes. Transit officials emphasize the figure is a rough estimate. The \$4 cost per fare also incorporates fares from both BC Lift and BC Country. Those services charge more than fixed rates. BC Lift charges \$2.50 a fare; BC Country, \$3.50. Fewer riders use the lift and country services, officials said.

The transit budget pales in comparison to the \$37 million Broome will spend this year on employee and retiree health insurance, a contractual expense, and the \$36 million it will pay out for the mandated Medicaid health insurance program for the poor.

Transit is a non-mandated program, placing it among the roughly 20 percent of county programs that can be cut. The remaining 80 percent of what the county spends on various programs, such as Medicaid and corrections, are untouchable because they are mandated by the state government.

Still, any discussion of cutting transit is worrisome for the people who depend on it.

"Yes, you can get rid of the routes, but a lot of people depend on us for their transportation," Bagnetto said. "A lot of people would be in dire straits if they lost their way to work. It's short-sighted to cut these services out."

Among the most vulnerable would be Randy Carlo Willis. He doesn't have a car and has taken the Route 35 bus to and from his Binghamton job as a dishwasher for two years.

Take away the bus service and you're taking away Willis' job. His budget doesn't allow him to take a cab.

"I'd be like a fish out of water," the West Side Binghamton man said. "I'd lose my job."

When people like Willis lose their jobs, one option in the midst of 8.7 percent unemployment, is to go on public assistance. The average household size of a family assistance case in New York state is 2.1 people. That family would get about \$580 in temporary assistance a month and about \$367 in food stamps a month. The same person also would qualify for full Medicaid coverage.

Luigi DiRusso is between jobs at the moment. The former IBM Corp. employee uses the transit system to go to job interviews and to volunteer three days a week at Meals on Wheels of Western Broome in Endicott.

"I trust it to get me where I need to go on time," DiRusso said. "And it does."

Like Fortner-Watrous and Willis, DiRusso doesn't drive. He is visually impaired. DiRusso gets on the bus, finds a seat and knows exactly when his bus stop in Endwell is looming.

He should. He's ridden the BC Transit system for 30 years, he said.

If the ax falls, DiRusso said he could get by without public transit, but many others who ride the bus with him would be seriously hurt by service cuts.

"I have a wife with a car, kids and friends to take me places," he said. "That's not everybody."

Additional Facts

BC Transit Facts

* 2010 budget: \$12 million

* Employees: 110

* Drivers: 48

FIXED ROUTE SERVICE:

Buses serve the urban core, including Vestal, Binghamton, Johnson City, Endwell, Endicott, Westover, and suburban areas of the towns of Chenango, Fenton, Kirkwood and Conklin. The first bus leaves the BC Transit hub on Hawley Street in Binghamton, Monday through Friday, at 5:20 a.m. Last bus returns at 12:15 p.m. On Saturdays, the fixed-route buses run from 5:20 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. On Sundays, buses run from 9:50 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

- * 43 full-sized buses
- * 22 routes
- * 2.7 million fares last year
- * 7 days a week
- * Fares: \$1.50

BC LIFT:

Serves Broome County residents with disabilities in the urban core and parts of the suburbs. Buses run 5:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., Monday through Friday; 5:30 a.m. to 11 p.m., Saturdays; 11 a.m. to 6:30 p.m., Sundays.

- * Rides by appointment only.
- * 76,000 fares last year (includes fares with Office For Aging Mini Buses)
- * 10 21-foot buses
- * Runs 7 days a week
- * Fares: \$2.50

BC COUNTRY:

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Pedal Power: What Academe Knows About Bikes

Paul Tolmé

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Susan Handy is the type of bicyclist that environmentalists and policymakers would like to see more of on American roadways. She commutes to work by bike, rides to the store for groceries and pedals her children to soccer practice. "Bicycling is my favorite mode of transportation," says Handy, director of the Sustainable Transportation Center at the University of California at Davis. "I can't imagine living without it." And it's worthwhile for more quantitative reasons: according to the EPA, bicycling instead of driving for five miles a day reduces individual CO₂ emissions by 1,287 pounds annually, 6% of the average U.S. individual's total emissions. Handy is one of the leading university researchers on the subject of American attitudes toward

bicycling for transportation, and she has a simple goal: "We want to understand why people do or do not bicycle." Bicycling is an affordable, healthy and climate-friendly transportation solution, and increasing the number of bike trips is a public policy goal of federal, state and local governments, but getting more Americans to hop on bikes instead of into cars has proven difficult. Just one percent of vehicle trips in the United States are by bike. In some European countries, by contrast, nearly 30 percent of trips are on bicycles.

Progress is being made, however. Census data show a 43 percent increase in bicycle commuting between 2000 and 2008. Growing that number will require both better infrastructure (bike paths, bike lanes and friendlier roadways) and changes in Americans' attitudes about bicycling, according to Handy and other researchers. Handy and cohorts have surveyed residents in some of the nation's most bike-friendly communities--Davis, Boulder, Colo., Eugene, Ore., and others--to determine the factors associated with bicycle commuting. Surprisingly, access to a bike path is not the key determinant of whether people bike. Concerns about safety, workplace acceptance of bike commuting and other social factors are just as important.

Kevin Krizek, a professor of urban planning at the University of Colorado, has studied the impact of bike lanes, paths, racks and workplace showers on rates of bicycling and says such infrastructure makes it more likely that people will get on bikes. However, these facilities must be convenient and easy to reach. People are willing to go 16 minutes out of their way on an average commute to access a bike lane, according to Krizek's research, and they are willing to ride 67 percent further, roughly 2.6 miles, to access dedicated bike lanes or paths.

Safety is another concern, even though American roads appear to be getting safer. According to **federal statistics**, the 716 bicyclist deaths in 2008 represented a six percent decline from 1998, and a paltry percentage of the 37,261 auto accident deaths in the same year. But many riders are unwilling to get into the flow of traffic if bike lanes are absent. Whether bike lanes improve safety is an open question: a study by England's University of Leeds Institute for Transport Studies found that motorists gave bicycles more space when passing them on roads without bike lanes.

Determining just what types of cycling infrastructure to build is the focus of research by Portland State University professor Jennifer Dill and Rutgers professor John Pucher. American urban planners and road engineers still have a knowledge gap when it comes to building infrastructure for bikes. In Europe, bicyclists enjoy cycling lanes separated from traffic by boundaries. Traffic calming devices and bicycle-specific traffic lights also add to the perception of safety, and European bicyclists can travel long distances without ever coming into close contact with a car. The advocacy group Bikes Belong is now undertaking a project to identify European best-practices and import them. "We are looking at what European nations do to make bicycling safe and convenient," says project leader Zach Vanderkooy, who graduated in the spring from Harvard's master's program in urban planning. "We want to figure out what bicycle-friendly means in terms of infrastructure."

The opportunity to boost American bicycling has never been greater. A record amount of federal funding--nearly \$1.5 billion, double the amount of 2008--was allocated in 2009 to build infrastructure and promote riding. Whether that money is being allocated most effectively is the focus of a recent study by Handy. Published in August, the study examines federal funding mechanisms for bicycle projects. The study shows that big-spending metro areas allocated an average of \$1.54 annually per resident for bike and pedestrian infrastructure, while low-spending metro areas spent 21 cents per resident.

Handy says federal policymakers should consider sending more funding directly to regional planning organizations rather than routing money through state transportation departments, which can be highway-focused. The federal government should also look at California's method of allocating cash for bicycle infrastructure, potentially making it a model for the nation. When possible, money should be directed to specific programs such as the popular Safe Routes to Schools initiative, Handy says. "Federal funding has clearly led to increased bike facilities. The degree to which different regions took advantage of this money varies greatly."

Even so, interest in promoting bicycling has never been greater. "We're seeing a real transformation of political will in the past few years," Vanderkooy says. In Congress, legislation has been introduced to expand the federal Safe Routes to Schools program to \$600 million annually. At the state level, five states approved new Complete

Streets policies in 2009 to make streets more bike-friendly. Colorado passed a Bicycle Safety Act that requires cars to give bicyclists three feet of space when passing. Bicycling advocates in West Virginia, once considered the least bike-friendly state, have formed a lobbying effort, and Bikes Belong cites advances in Indiana, Arizona, Mississippi, Wisconsin and Louisiana that could lead to better bicycling policies.

To improve local advocacy, the nonprofit Alliance for Biking and Walking has initiated a grant program to launch and support bike-friendly campaigns. Interest in bicycling is booming locally: this year, 43 new communities applied for the Bicycle Friendly Community designation awarded by the League of American Bicyclists. Los Angeles is taking public comments on its draft bicycle plan, which lays out the city's strategy for promoting cycling through infrastructure and policies. Portland, widely recognized as one of the most bike-friendly cities in the United States, has built a floating multi-use path for bikes and pedestrians along the Willamette River. New York City has made changes to its street design manual and built so-called cycle tracks that separate cars from bikes with a barrier. Other low-cost measures gaining acceptance in the United States include "sharrows," bicycling arrows painted on roads to signify that the roads are for sharing. Sharrows also indicate where cyclists should ride to stay out of the door zone of parked cars.

Handy says U.S. policies and strategies must improve bicycling infrastructure and land-use patterns, but must also work on Americans' perceptions and attitudes about riding. "We will never be the Netherlands, but more places in the U.S. can be like Davis," Handy says. "That's what we're striving for."

School Travel Data Reports

The Safe Routes to School Travel Data reports are national level reports based on Parent Survey questionnaires and Student Travel Tally forms submitted to the National Center by local SRTS programs throughout the country. These reports highlight key findings and provide information about student travel to/from school and parent attitudes about the school trip among elementary and middle schools that provided data.

[Learn more about the National Center's data collection and evaluations tools.](#)

Safe Routes to School Travel Data: A Look at Baseline Results



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