Press Release: U&D Corridor April 2024

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Town of Woodstock Calls on Ulster County Legislature to Update Policy for Rail and Trail on the U&D Corridor

Success of Ashokan Rail Trail And Bike and Pedestrian Safety Issues Cited As Reasons for County To Re-Evaluate Options to Connect the Corridor Between Woodstock and Kingston

Woodstock, NY — On Tuesday, April 9, 2024, the Woodstock Town Board adopted a memorializing resolution that calls on the Ulster County Legislature to flesh out its policy for use of the former Ulster & Delaware corridor between the Ashokan Rail Trail at Basin Road and Milepost 8.33, near the intersection of Route 28a and Waughkonk Road. The resolution, which was put forward by the Town's Complete Streets Committee, passed unanimously, signaling the Board's continued support for bike and pedestrian connectivity along the County-owned corridor.

In late 2015, after a months-long study of the feasibility of trail and railroad uses on the corridor, the Ulster County Legislature unanimously adopted a resolution establishing a segmented rail-with-trail policy for most of the 38.6-mile long, County-owned property. That policy called for the creation of the Ashokan Rail Trail (ART) along the north shore of the Ashokan Reservoir, and it called for an extension of the Catskill Mountain Railroad Company's operation in the section between Kingston and Milepost 8.33, with a requirement of including a trail adjacent to the tracks wherever feasible.

However, the 2015 policy stopped short of recommending one or more uses for the section between Milepost 8.33 and Basin Road. Instead, the Legislature determined that this section would require further study to determine the feasibility of rail with trail, but went on to assert that trail connectivity along the corridor between Kingston and the Ashokan Rail Trail "shall be preserved". To date, the County has taken no further action to determine the best-and-highest use of this last section of the corridor, nor has it taken any action to advance trail connectivity between the ART and Kingston.

As revealed by recent announcements and activities, the CMRR Company Inc. has forged ahead with plans for a train station at Basin Road in the Town of Woodstock – despite not having a permit allowing it to engage in any activities in this section of the County-owned U&D Right-of-Way, and without consideration for trail connectivity on the corridor, as required in the County Legislature's policy.

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Since the establishment of the 2015 policy, much has changed. The construction and opening of the Ashokan Rail Trail and other trails and bike lanes throughout the region have demonstrated the tremendous demand for safe and accessible infrastructure for biking and walking. In Kingston, the completion of several portions of the Kingston Greenline has created an effective and growing hub for multi-use trails stretching down the Route 209/Rondout Valley corridor to Ellenville and along the Wallkill Valley to Gardiner. Furthermore, recent high-profile fatalities in Kingston, New Paltz, Saugerties, Mt Tremper and Marlborough have underscored the importance of bike and pedestrian safety and the need for better infrastructure on or adjacent to major state highway corridors

“Residents in the Town of Woodstock deserve to have safe and accessible options to walk or ride a bike, especially as we all look for ways to reduce our carbon footprint and incorporate healthy activities into our daily lives,” said Town Supervisor Bill McKenna. “I applaud the County Legislature for their efforts in 2015 that paved the way for the Ashokan Rail Trail, but now is the time to take back up the issue to determine how best to connect our communities to the trail and to other destinations along the Route 28 corridor.”

“In the past ten years, we’ve seen the completion of several transformational trail projects, such as the Empire State Trail, the River2Ridge Trail, the Kingston Point Rail Trail, the Kingston O&W Rail Trail and the Hudson River Brickyard Trail,” said Grace Murphy, the Chair of the Woodstock Complete Streets Committee. “While these are great successes, the U&D Corridor represents the only locally-controlled option to establish a safe and accessible connection from the Town of Woodstock to the Ashokan Rail Trail, and from the ART to Kingston and the rest of the County’s trail system. Woodstock is requesting that the County take the next steps in making this connection a reality, for the benefit of Woodstock residents and all the other Catskill Park communities along Route 28.”