

Wasatch Transportation Academy

Promoting Informed and Engaged Transportation Decision Making along the Wasatch Front

January 23 – April 24, 2023, 6:00 to 8:30 pm (no class on 2/20 & 3/6)

Meeting in Room 128 of the Architecture Building (<https://map.utah.edu/>) and on Zoom: <https://utah.zoom.us/j/92160833406>

Instructor/TA emails:

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Have you ever wondered:

How the government makes decisions about transportation facilities?

Why are they widening that road?

Why are there two buses on this street and no buses on the next one?

Why aren't they filling that pot hole?

The Wasatch Transportation Academy is designed to provide a look into the “black box” of transportation decision making and provide participants with an understanding of the mechanics of transportation decision making, covering such topics as

Who makes the decisions and why?

What processes do they follow and what standards do they have to meet?

Where does the money come from to build what they have decided?

How can I influence this decision?

The Wasatch Transportation Academy features some of the Salt Lake region's top transportation leaders and professionals talking about what they do, how they do it, and what influences their decisions. Participants in the course will also have an opportunity to take the transportation decision making apparatus for a ride themselves, using a transportation project they create themselves.

Course Purpose & Vision

The vision of this course will center around helping community members understand how the transportation system works, particularly around how and where they can get involved in the different steps of the transportation planning process. The course aims to give students the transportation background, tools and vocabulary to understand and participate in planning processes and discussions. Students will then be able to source additional information on the

topics in which they are interested and thereby harness a deeper understanding of transportation decision making processes. This expanded skill set can, over time, empower students to serve as ambassadors to other interested community members. Ultimately, the course seeks to increase the number of Wasatch Front residents who are comfortable engaging on the topic of transportation, both directly through course graduates, and indirectly through the people they interact with in the community.

Among the many insightful comments we heard in our conversations, a few that resonate with the course objective include helping to create an “engaged not enraged” community, and fostering a group of “successful transportation influencers.”

Course Schedule

Reading assignment for January 23: Litman, Introduction to Multi-Modal Transportation Planning: Principles and Practices (https://www.vtpi.org/multimodal_planning.pdf)

January 23

Transportation’s Role in the State

Laura Hanson, State Planning Coordinator, Governor’s Office of Planning and Budget

Transportation History and Context

Keith Bartholomew, Professor of City & Metropolitan Planning, University of Utah

Transportation history is dominated by changes in technology. From the Golden Spike event in 1869 to the first appearance of e-scooters on Salt Lake City streets in 2018, transportation choices have been substantially shaped by what technologies were available, how accessible they were, and how much they cost. However, transportation history is also a story of how transportation provided access to land, how those lands developed in response to that access, and then how those developments, in turn, influenced transportation usage.

Course Framework

What is this course about? How and when do we meet? What do students need to do?

Project Workshop

Beginning project collaboration exercises

Assignments for January 30

Project: Describe your transportation interest or concern. Your description can be a single sentence or up to a page in length. Please email your description to Matt and Keith by noon January 30.

Reading: SLC Pedestrian & Bicycle Master Plan

(<https://www.slc.gov/transportation/plans-studies/pbmp/>)

January 30

Walking, Bicycling, and Rolling

Tom Millar, Director of Public Lands, Salt Lake City

Before there were cars, there was walking. It is the most basic component of transportation, implicit in every other mode. Bicycles, too, pre-date cars (but not by as much!). Human-scaled transportation, whatever the mode, is the basic component lying at the foundation of all transportation planning. It makes sense, then, that we start the semester with a session on walking, bicycling, and rolling.

Using Salt Lake City as an example, we will look into the city's policies and plans on human-scaled transportation, including its Complete Streets Ordinance and its Pedestrian & Bicycle Master Plan. These two foundational documents support current implementation initiatives. Additional instruction and discussion will tackle walking and bicycling-related topics, such as: policy, maintenance, political processes, design, land use, equity, and intersections.

Project Workshop

Project idea clearing house

Assignments for February 6

Project: Gather background information on your topic and identify possible solutions or opportunities for your transportation interest or area concern.

Reading: US DOT, Safe System Approach
(<https://www.transportation.gov/NRSS/SafeSystem>)

February 6

Safety

Carrie Silcox, Director, Utah Highway Safety Office; Gina Espinosa-Salcedo, Regional Administrator, National Highway Transportation Safety Administration

Another bedrock principle for transportation planning is safety. There is hardly anything more important to transportation than user and community safety. If one cannot be reasonably assured of arriving at their destination safely, nothing else matters.

Project Workshop

Project group formation and preliminary project articulation

Assignments for February 13

Project: Gather information (data, photos, video) on existing conditions

Reading: Salt Lake City Transit Master Plan
(http://www.slcdocs.com/transportation/Plans/SLC_TMP_FULL_FINAL.pdf)

February 13

Transit Planning

GJ LaBonty, Manager of Customer Experience, Utah Transit Authority

The Planning Department at the Utah Transit Authority consists of three areas of focus, Strategic Planning, Service Planning and the Customer Experience. Each of these functions serves a specific purpose beginning with a long range perspective down to daily operations and ultimately to the facilities and amenities that the customers will encounter. In addition to the planning of the services, the Planning Department also engages with the greater community at large. The Planning Department also has critical partnerships with Metropolitan Regional Planning offices as well as UDOT and the many cities and counties that UTA serves.

Project Workshop

What are the current conditions at the project site? How can they be displayed in meaningful ways?

Assignments for February 27

Project: Gather information on existing plans and policies related to the project or site

Reading: Connect SLC Transportation Master Plan
(<https://www.slc.gov/transportation/plans-studies/tmp/>)

February 27

City Transportation Planning

Juliane Sabula, Strategic Planning & Programming Manager, Salt Lake City Division of Transportation

The Salt Lake City Division of Transportation has responsibility for the operation, design, and maintenance of all streets in Salt Lake City that are not under UDOT authority. In addition to issues related to automobile transportation, the city has major initiatives on walking, bicycling, local transit, and urban trails. The city is currently in the midst of updating its transportation masterplan, Connect SLC.

Project Workshop

Alternative solutions: what are the options for addressing the conditions at the site?

Assignments for March 13

Project: Select 3-4 possible alternative solutions to address conditions at the site

Reading: Shoup & Homa, Principles for Improving Transportation Options in Rural and Small Town Communities ([T4-Whitepaper-Rural-and-Small-Town-Communities.pdf](https://www.t4america.org/t4-Whitepaper-Rural-and-Small-Town-Communities.pdf)
([t4america.org](https://www.t4america.org))

March 13**County Transportation Planning**

Helen Peters, Director of Regional Planning & Transportation, Salt Lake County

Not every local transportation decision is done by cities. In rural, small town, and suburban settings, Utah's counties direct transportation policy and project selection.

Project Workshop

How well do each of the alternatives perform? What are their respective costs? Are there trade-offs associated with the alternatives?

Assignments for March 20

Project: Find additional information on the costs, benefits, and trade-offs of the alternative solutions.

Reading: Utah's Transportation Vision (<https://uvision.utah.gov/>)

March 20**State Transportation Planning**

Andrea Olson, Planning Director, Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT)

The fundamental objective of UDOT's Planning Division is to help the state identify areas of future transportation need and to address that need in a way that considers all users. The division works to plan for a comprehensive state-wide transportation network that is safe, efficient, and incorporates all modes. One of the Planning Division's tasks is to implement Utah's Transportation Vision and coordinate the state-wide Unified Transportation Plan.

Project Workshop

What are the criteria decisionmakers use to select projects? How can your preferred project alternative best meet those criteria?

Assignments for March 27

Project: Refine the arguments on how your preferred project alternative meets the criteria decisionmakers use to select projects.

Reading: Wasatch Choice 2050 (<https://wfrc.org/vision-plans/regional-transportation-plan/2019-2050-regional-transportation-plan/>)

March 27**Regional Transportation Planning**

Ted Knowlton, Deputy Director, Wasatch Front Regional Council

The Wasatch Front Regional Council (WFRC) is responsible for coordinating transportation planning processes at a regional scale for Salt Lake, Davis, Weber, Morgan, Box Elder, and Toole counties. WFRC's two main products are a 30-year Regional Transportation Plan (which is updated every four years) and the annual

Transportation Improvement Program, which guides transportation spending in the region over a six-year period.

Project Workshop

Prepare a map or physical representation of your project.

Assignments for April 3

Project: Prepare slides for project presentation

Reading: TBA

April 3

Effective Transportation Advocacy

Panelists from Wasatch Area Non-profit Organizations

Although stereotypes of advocacy are sometimes presented in adversarial tones, effective advocates more often describe their work as a partnership with the government agencies with which they work. Government agency staff frequently use similar descriptions. Find out what makes the most effective advocacy tick.

Project Workshop

Finalizing project presentations

Assignment for April 10 & 17

Finalizing project presentations

April 10 & 17

Project Presentations

Projects

The question: What type of transportation improvement would you like to see made in your community?

The purpose of the project is to learn more about transportation decision-making by focusing on something that you think will improve your community or the region. In a “learning by doing” style framework, we will work with you each week during the course to:

Identify an area of interest or concern

Explore how to gather information about that subject

Discover where decisions about that subject are made, who is responsible for that area, and how they make those decisions

Develop effective methods to communicate your idea to those decision-makers

Facilitate a connection between you and that agency/decision-maker

Each week’s assignment will take you one step further along the process.

Required Readings

The required readings listed in the schedule above are all planning documents, an example of what we in academia call “primary sources.” Primary sources have the advantage of being directly connected to the topic of study. As this class is intended to connect people with decision-making structures and procedures, these assigned readings all embody those structures/procedures. These are the actual “stuff” of transportation decision-making in the Wasatch Front region—not a second-hand description made by some observer (like an academic!). However, like most primary sources, the documents are quite large, in some cases running hundreds of pages. Given the realities of people’s time and energy, I do not expect everyone to read every page of every document. Instead, I recommend that you first read the introduction or executive summary of each document. Then, scan the table of contents and read other sections that catch your eye or seem potentially interesting. Sometimes, just knowing where things are so that you can access them when you might need them in the future is a significant learning achievement.

Recommended Additional Readings

Jeff Tumlin, Sustainable Transportation Planning

US DOT / Federal Highway Administration – “A Resident’s Guide for Creating Safer Communities for Walking and Biking” (2015)

(https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped_bike/ped_cmnty/ped_walkguide/residents_guide2014_final.pdf)

Project for Public Spaces – “A Citizen’s Guide to Better Streets: How to Engage Your Transportation Agency” (2008) (<https://www.pps.org/product/a-citizens-guide-to-better-street-how-to-engage-your-transportation-agency>)

Class Mode

This class will use a hybrid participation structure, meaning that sessions will be both in person (in room 128 of the Architecture Building) and on Zoom. Students are welcome to choose whichever mode best suits their circumstances/preferences and can switch from one mode to the other, as their needs dictate. Students attending class via Zoom are required to have their camera on and be ready for full participation in class discussions. Zoom-students should use the “raise hand” function to indicate their desire to speak to the class or ask a question and should mute their microphone until they are ready to speak. All class sessions will be recorded and posted on YouTube.

The Zoom link for class is: <https://utah.zoom.us/j/92160833406>

Instructor Bio

Keith Bartholomew is a Professor of City & Metropolitan Planning at the University of Utah. Before coming to Utah, Professor Bartholomew served as a staff attorney for 1000 Friends of Oregon and was the director of “Making the Land Use, Transportation, Air Quality Connection” (LUTRAQ). Professor Bartholomew teaches and conducts research on land use law, integrated land use-transportation scenario analysis, and pedestrian- and transit-oriented design.

For-Credit Students

For students taking this course for credit, the class offers not only the chance to learn a little bit about transportation decision-making, but also to observe the deployment of one type of community engagement. The course is, in that sense, a practicum in community engagement.

As such, it also provides university students with a chance to gain some experience in mentoring. Planners and others in publicly-engaged professions often are called upon to serve in teaching or mentoring roles for others also engaged in public processes. Starting the second week of the class (Jan 30), I will be pairing each of the university students with one or two community students to work together in small groups on projects jointly selected by group members. Much of this work will be accomplished in small break out groups—settings in which fellow students can provide peer-to-peer reflection and input on each other's ideas. It is my hope/intention that university students taking this course for credit can take a lead in providing such small-group reflection as a way of practicing mentoring skills that can be useful to them later in their careers.

Course Learning Objectives. University students taking this class will:

- Receive first-hand experience in mentoring community students on the development, articulation, and communication of community transportation project proposals;
- Gain knowledge on the structure of city/regional/state transportation planning and decisionmaking;
- Learn the basic theory, structure, and content of planning academy-style community engagement initiatives.

Additional Required Readings. In addition to the required readings listed in the course schedule, university students are required to complete the following readings by the dates indicated.

January 30: Arnstein, S. 1969. A Ladder of Citizen Participation. *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, 35 (4): 216-224.

February 6: McNeil, N., Bartholomew, K. & Ryan, M. 2022. *Launching the Wasatch Transportation Academy*. Portland, OR: National Institute for Transportation and Communities.

February 13: McNeil, N. & Bartholomew, K. 2022. *Community Transportation Academy: Course Curriculum and Implementation Handbook*. Portland, OR: National Institute for Transportation and Communities.

February 20: McNeil, N., Bartholomew, K. & Ryan, M. 2023. Transportation Academies as Catalysts for Civic Engagement in Transportation Decision-making. Paper presented at the Transportation Research Board Annual Meeting, Washington DC, January 10, 2023.

Class Discussions. In addition to the class activities outlined in the course schedule, university students will be expected to engage in discussions on the additional readings listed above on the dates listed. We will hold these discussions at the end of the class sessions on those dates, after the completion of the other class activities listed in the course schedule.

I will grade students taking the Wasatch Transportation Academy for credit on attendance (50%), the quality of their project presentation (40%), and a final reflection paper (10%). Unexcused absences will

reduce the student's grade by 5%. The final reflection paper should be approximately two pages in length (single-spaced with 11 pt. font) and include the student's observations on (a) how a community-based class such as the WTA can advance community engagement objectives, and (b) how the WTA can improve in future iterations in meeting such objectives.

The Wasatch Transportation Academy is generously supported by

