



**SUNY Albany
Capital Project Plan
State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA)**

**PUBLIC MEETING,
RESPONSIVENESS SUMMARY:
DRAFT SCOPING DOCUMENT
FOR
DRAFT GENERIC ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
HELD FEBRUARY 12, 2009**

On March 10, 2009, a public scoping meeting was held at The State University of New York at Albany (UAlbany). The objective of the public meeting was to solicit comments on a Draft Scoping Document prepared pursuant to New York State Environmental Conservation Law Article 8, State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA); and Part 617 of Chapter 6 of the New York Code of Rules and Regulations. The proposed project that is the subject of this SEQRA process is a listing of capital projects over a multi-year period, starting in 2010 to be performed by UAlbany and defined as UAlbany's "Capital Project Plan." UAlbany, the lead agency for the SEQRA process, is preparing a Draft Generic Environmental Impact Statement (DGEIS) for the Capital Project Plan. The meeting was held at the SEFCU Arena, located on UAlbany's Uptown Campus, 1400 Washington Avenue. A total of 22 people signed the attendance sheet. Four people registered to speak and present comments at the meeting; additionally, three written comments were received.

The purpose of this responsiveness summary is to present the comments, verbal and written, that were made relating to the draft scoping document. Comments are paraphrased for brevity. This responsiveness summary also addresses a response by UAlbany, as the SEQRA Lead Agency for this project, as to how these comments may be considered in the context of the DGEIS for this project.

- 1) Don Reeb (verbal) – Mr. Reeb had four primary comments.
 - a. Need for a bus shelter on the corner of Western Avenue and Washington Avenue. Better facilities might encourage more use of mass transit.
Response: The comment is pertinent. This is a detail that would be evaluated during the preparation of the specific project plan, and would be dependent on the exact location of bus stops.
 - b. Try to improve the use of rapid transit over cars by students, faculty, and staff at UAlbany.
Response: That is an objective of UAlbany's transportation planning. However, there is a practical perspective regarding the planning of a sustainable level of on campus parking.
 - c. Why is the other side of Fuller Road (the "Nanotech" facilities) not addressed in the scope of the DGEIS? There are stormwater issues there that affect nearby residents.
Response: The capital construction and project work on Fuller Road is associated with a private, not for profit corporation (the Fuller Road Management Corporation) under property that was subleased by the State to advance private/public partnerships. Planned work in this location will be studied under its own planning process and through separate, stand-alone environmental impact analyses that would be coordinated with those of the university to ensure coordination and leveraging of resources and maximize the benefits to the community at large. However, to the extent that the Capital Project Plan, or individual projects in the Plan, may impact or be impacted

by the Fuller Road facilities, or there may be cumulative impacts with them or with other off campus development, the DGEIS will address such issues as appropriate.

- d. Mr. Reeb indicated a concern with the use of parking garages, their final design, and how they may impact neighbors, especially with aesthetics. He noted a similar concern with the heating plant building.

Response: Site selection for potential projects, including a parking garage, will indeed look for compatibility and integration with campus needs as well as surrounding areas.

- 2) Patrick Sorsby (verbal): Mr. Sorsby commented on the model of the University of Oregon, which has constructed facilities underground to make the best use of limited land area. He suggested that UAlbany review that model and consider similar options for placement of a parking garage or for lab functions that do not require light and are sensitive to vibration.

Response: The difficulty with a similar plan at UAlbany is that it has the potential for significant ground water impacts. Ground water at the Uptown campus is only a few feet from the surface. Therefore, ground water transport routes could be unpredictably altered, and construction would necessitate significant additional expenses for ground water control. As a result, this option unfortunately may not be suitable for UAlbany. But innovative ideas such as this are welcome and encouraged for campus planning.

- 3) Janet Reilly (verbal): Ms. Reilly had three primary comments.

- a. She spoke about concerns regarding storm water and storm runoff in the McKownville neighborhood. She indicated a concern over the potential to increase these ongoing problems as a result of the construction of multiple structures as part of this plan.

Response: New York State has a strong regulatory program for the control of runoff and storm water both as part of construction and operation of facilities. The DGEIS will address these issues.

- b. She spoke about the appreciation for current green spaces and wooded areas.

Response: Landscaping and green space improvements are components of the Capital Project Plan.

- c. If there is a bike plan, consider a bicycle garage.

Response: The comment is pertinent. This is a detail that would be evaluated during the preparation of the specific project plan.

- 4) Burt Schor (verbal): Mr. Schor had five principal comments.

- a. Mr. Schor has a concern over what appears to be an increasing issue relating to ground water intrusion in his neighborhood. He suggested the University actively monitor the water table and warned against building structures underground.

Response: No response necessary.

- b. When the new athletic fields were built, lights were left on continuously, and cites this as an energy waste.

Response: Regardless of this SEQRA process, UAlbany is evaluating measures to decrease energy use, reduce costs, and reduce the green house gas emissions and the environmental footprint of the campus. This comment will be forwarded to the appropriate parties pursuing that effort on campus, and will be considered in the context of the DGEIS.

- c. There are no sidewalks on Washington Avenue or Fuller Road for pedestrians, a safety issue given the pedestrian traffic in the area.

Response: It is uncertain at this time whether this issue is pertinent to the DGEIS or more so for local municipal planning. It is understood that planned County road improvements will address this issue.

- d. Bus stops for rapid transit should have heated waiting areas to encourage their use in inclement weather.

Response: As noted in response to a comment about bus stops and waiting areas previously herein, this is a detail that would be evaluated during the preparation of the specific project plan, and would be dependent on the exact location of bus stops. Additionally, the use of heated shelters would need to be evaluated with respect to the trade-off between the energy savings of using public transportation and the energy use for heating the shelter.

- e. UAlbany should raise the cost of on campus parking to discourage parking and encourage the use of rapid transit. The present costs of on campus parking are too low to favor mass transit use.

Response: The comment is pertinent. This is an option that would be evaluated during the preparation of the specific project plan, and will be considered for noting in the DGEIS, as appropriate. Other policy factors, like collective bargaining contracts, are also involved.

- 5) Martin Gnacik (written, email): Mr. Gnacik had three principal comments.

- a. The “school has not provided enough housing to meet the demand for affordable on campus living.”

Response: Approximately 57 percent of full time UAlbany undergraduates live on campus, a much larger percentage than similar public higher education institutions across the country. Given the space restrictions on campus, there are limitations to the ability to increase that percentage. However, this Capital Project Plan includes a project for the construction of a new on-campus living center consistent with Mr. Gnacik’s comment.

- b. “Plans presented were at best vague and did not include the ongoing development at the Nanotech campus. Last I knew that was UAlbany property.”

Response: With respect to the first part of Mr. Gnacik’s comment regarding the vagueness of the plans that have been presented to date, the appropriateness of a generic environmental impact statement to a multi-year planning project was described at the Scoping Meeting. It is implicit to that process that some projects will have less detail available than others. That said, the scoping meeting presented only a summary of the information available, sufficient to inform and request comments of the public, as is the function of the meeting. The DGEIS will contain more project detail, as is available and appropriate. Secondly, as noted above herein, the Fuller Road campus is subleased property under the management and development control of the Fuller Road Management Corporation.

- c. There is a disconnect with pedestrian patterns on municipal roads surrounding the Campus, Western Avenue, Washington Avenue, and Fuller Road.

Response: To the extent that some of these issues are under the control of UAlbany, several of the projects in this Capital Project Plan have the potential to address this issue to some degree, examples including No. 6, Purple Path Continuation; No. 15, Entry Improvements for Western and Western Avenues; and No. 18, Bicycle-Pedestrian Path. Since a municipal upgrade and reconstruction of Fuller Road is being planned, a similar comment to that planning process would be appropriate.

- 6) Patrick Flandreau (written, email): Mr. Flandreau indicated his support for the projects.

Response: No response necessary.

- 7) Neil A. Gifford, Conservation Director, Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission (written, letter): Mr. Gifford had three principal comments.

- a. While the proposed capital improvements are unlikely to directly impact Pine Bush resources, this is an opportunity for SUNYA and the Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission to work together.

Response: The team preparing the DGEIS intends to meet with Mr. Gifford in the process of preparing this DGEIS.

- b. Incorporating native Pine Bush plants in campus landscaping would benefit both SUNYA and the Preserve.

Response: Landscaping planning is underway, especially with respect to areas around the academic podium where the intent is to be compatible with the original architectural vision for the podium. However, there may be opportunities at other locations around campus that UAlbany can consider.

- c. Consider including pedestrian crossing to improve access to the Preserve entrance on Fuller Road.

Response: This is a pertinent comment for consideration in site planning and in coordination with the municipal Fuller Road improvement project.