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## **Parks and Trails New York Announces New Executive Director**

### **Paul Steely White will lead efforts to expand public access to nature and boost local, statewide impact of landmark Environmental Bond Act**

(ALBANY, NY) – Paul Steely White is the new executive director of Parks and Trails New York. The appointment comes after an extensive search started in November 2022 when PTNY’s long-standing visionary leader, Robin Dropkin, announced her retirement.

“The story of Robin Dropkin’s service to our mission is written in the parks, trails and open spaces that are now thriving because of her unique brand of collaborative advocacy,” says Jeff Bender, Chairman of PTNY. “Robin’s body of work—spanning decades—is an amazing gift to the parks movement, and to the millions who now enjoy the fruits of her dedicated effort.”

Building on Dropkin’s accomplishments with Parks & Trails New York, Paul Steely White is excited to take up the mantle. White has devoted his career to improving bicycling, walking, and public transit for communities the world over. During his tenure as the Executive Director at Transportation Alternatives (2004 - 2018), the organization grew New York City’s network of greenways and bike paths, pioneered bike share, and led broad coalitions to reclaim city parks from automobile traffic. In recognition of his impact, he received (with co-awardee Janette Sadik-Khan) the Rockefeller Foundation’s Jane Jacobs Medal for creative approaches to building a more diverse, dynamic, and equitable urban environment. In 2015 he was also

recognized by the New York Academy of Medicine for his work to make streets safer and healthier.

“Public lands must be within closer reach to those who need them most. We saw from the pandemic that parks and trails are not just ‘nice things to have,’ they are critical public health infrastructure. I am excited to join in the vital work that PTNY has been doing for decades to expand, protect, and promote New York’s public green spaces for the use and enjoyment of all New Yorkers,” says White.

“Paul is an authentic connector with a genuine interest and love of people—and a vision for what public life could be,” adds Mary Beth Kelly, Co-Founder of Families for Safe Streets, on White’s approach to collaboration and centering community.

Carter Strickland, VP Mid-Atlantic Region & NYS Director for the Trust for Public Land, agrees that White will be a strong force to move Parks & Trails New York forward with authenticity. “I have known Paul Steely White for years—he built up Transportation Alternatives into an incredibly powerful force in the greenway and bike advocacy scene in New York City, and then worked in the private sector on cutting-edge micromobility solutions across the country. Paul’s appointment shows that PTNY will continue to take a leading role in promoting trails and parks as key infrastructure for greener transportation and resilient communities across New York State.”

Dropkin, PTNY’s outgoing Executive Director, is among the voices welcoming White to helming the future of the organization, “I couldn’t be more proud of what we have accomplished together at Parks & Trails New York, nor more excited for the next chapter under Paul’s guidance. I believe Paul will bring the energy and experience to expand our vital work for the next decade and beyond, creating an even greater impact for our outdoor spaces and the communities who love them.”

Dropkin’s support and excitement for White’s new tenure is shared by other leaders in the organization. “In both the non-profit and private sectors, Paul has demonstrated an ability to build diverse coalitions and effective campaigns. Under Paul’s leadership we look forward to winning new key allies as we strive to preserve and expand parks and park access for all,” says Nadine Lemmon, PTNY Board Member and Chair of the Search Committee.

White adds, “New York State’s parks, trails, and public lands are seeing unprecedented attendance and investment. Yet much more must be done to meet the enormous latent demand for immersive natural experiences. I am excited for what we will accomplish together for the next generations of park goers, cyclists, and lovers of green space.”

About Parks & Trails New York:

Parks & Trails New York (PTNY) is New York's leading statewide advocate for parks and trails. Since its founding in 1985, PTNY has been fighting to improve our health, economy, and quality of life through the use and enjoyment of green space. In collaboration with members, supporters and partners from across the state, PTNY is a prominent voice for the protection and expansion of New York's magnificent state park system and multi-use trail network, including more than 1,500 miles of greenways, bike paths, and river walks. Learn more at [www.ptny.org](http://www.ptny.org).

About Paul Steely White, PTNY's new executive director:

Paul Steely White has devoted his career to improving bicycling, walking and public transit. While executive director of Transportation Alternatives from 2004 - 2018, he grew New York City's network of greenways and bike paths and led campaigns to reclaim city parks from automobile traffic. For this work he received (with co-awardee Janette Sadik-Khan) the Rockefeller Foundation's Jane Jacobs Medal, which recognizes those whose creative uses of the urban environment build a more diverse, dynamic, and equitable city.

In 2015, Paul was recognized by the New York Academy of Medicine for his work to make streets safer and healthier. Since 2019, Paul has worked as a policy leader in the transportation tech start-up space, helping companies like the MIT spinoff Superpedestrian grow public access to shared electric mobility and microtransit. He currently serves as board president of the New York-based Institute for Transportation and Development Policy, a global organization that works for healthier and more equitable transportation systems in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the US.

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