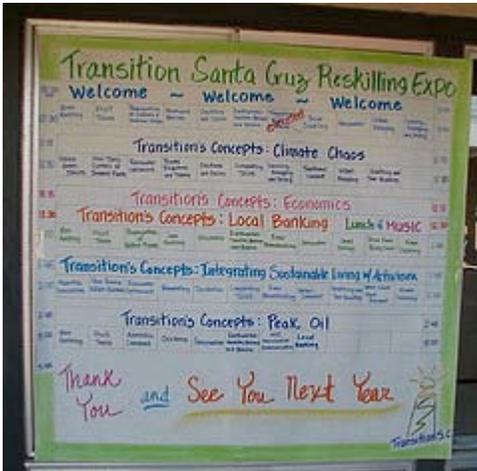




David Johnson at T4T, Vancouver



Denver Civic Center Garden



Santa Cruz Reskilling Expo



Oakland T4T



Transition US 2009 - A Year in Review



Acknowledgements

We would like to thank everyone who contributed to the growing Transition Movement in the US and around the world. Particular heartfelt thanks to Rob Hopkins and his collaborators at the Kinsale College of Further Education, and to Naresh Giangrande, Ben Brangwyn and Peter Lipman for further conspiring to advance this great idea.

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We are particularly grateful to the Post Carbon Institute for believing in Transition US and seeding the journey with support in countless ways

Transition US

Who We Are And What We Did...

1. Introduction	4
2. Vision and Mission.....	5
3. Strategic Action Goals.....	6
4. The 7 Principles of Transition.....	7
6. How Transition US supports these initiatives	8
7. Accomplishments of 2009.....	10
8. Listing the Dazzling Array of Transition Initiatives (as of February 8, 2010)	12
9. What Does Transition US Currently Look Like?	13
10. The Cheerful Disclaimer!	14
12. Thank You!.....	14

1. Introduction

Transition US began in January 2009 following closely in the footsteps of the Transition Network. By that time the Transition model had spread to several countries around the world and in the US there were already seven official Transition Initiatives. Transition US both began after much had been put in place but never less at the start of something momentous.

Transition US was made possible by support from the Post Carbon Institute and a gracious donor. It was also made possible by a small team of five committed individuals that called itself the “Transition US Initiating Group”.

Peak oil and climate change have rapidly moved up in people’s awareness in recent years and since early 2009 economic vulnerabilities have come into unrelenting focus. These three drivers trigger a sense of urgency and underscore the relevance of the Transition movement.

Since its initial emergence in Kinsale, Ireland in 2005, the Transition idea has spread virally across the UK and the US serving as a catalyst for community led responses. As the network of Transition Initiatives has grown, questions have been raised regarding how this emerging movement might structure itself. Based on a deepening and a supporting of this emergent model, on the principle that self-organization, innovation and action are to be encouraged and supported where they arise, Transition US is intent on both following where the Initiatives lead and providing resources to help them get there as well as emerging with its own identity to lead in ways that are informed by the work on the ground and the context of our times.

This document looks at the first year of Transition US from its beginnings to where it is now and where it is headed, a journey to be taken with heart.



Transition Conference, London 2009

“All living systems are networks of smaller components, and the web of life as a whole is a multi-layered structure of living systems nestling within other living systems – networks within networks”.
Fritjof Capra *“The Web of Life”*.

2. Vision and Mission

Vision

Our vision is that every community in the United States has engaged its collective creativity to unleash the most extraordinary and historic transition to a future that is more vibrant, abundant and resilient, one, which is ultimately preferable to the present.

Mission

The mission of Transition US is to be a catalyst for building resilient communities across the United States, that are able to withstand severe energy, climate or economic shocks while creating a better quality of life in the process. We will accomplish our mission by inspiring, encouraging, supporting, networking and training individuals and their communities as they consider, adopt, adapt and implement the Transition model.

The Transition model is based on four key assumptions:

1. That life with dramatically lower energy consumption is inevitable, and that it's better to plan for it than to be taken by surprise.
2. That our communities currently lack resilience.
3. That we have to act collectively, and we have to act now.
4. That by unleashing the collective genius of our communities it is possible to design new ways of living that are more nourishing, fulfilling and ecologically sustainable.



Sebastopol Community Mapping Event

“The problems of the world cannot possibly be solved by sceptics or cynics whose horizons are limited by the obvious realities. We need people who can dream of things that never were”

John F Kennedy

3. Strategic Action Goals

1. To raise awareness of the need to work together to build resilience in the face of fossil fuel depletion, climate change and economic crises.
2. To support the emergence and growth of Transition Initiatives in all regions of the United States.
3. To mirror the diversity of the United States in Transition Initiatives by supporting Initiatives' efforts to include all major cultural and demographic segments of their local communities.



Bill Wilson, Stelle T4T

4. To support the continued development and delivery of high quality education, training and consulting in support of the advancement of the Transition Movement in the United States.
5. To achieve financial sustainability for Transition US and the Transition Movement in the United States.

“As innovation becomes more central to the way we make our livings and how we tackle pressing challenges we face – from global warming to health pandemics – our well-being will depend more and more on what we share with others and create together”.

Leadbeater, C. (2008) *We-Think: mass innovation, not mass production*. Profile Books.

4. The 7 Principles of Transition

1. Positive Visioning

Transition Initiatives are based on a dedication to the creation of tangible, clearly expressed and practical visions of the community in question beyond its present-day dependence on fossil fuel. Our primary focus is not campaigning against things, but rather on creating positive, empowering possibilities and opportunities. The generation of new stories and myths are central to this visioning work.

2. Help People Access Good Information and Trust Them to Make Good Decisions

Transition initiatives dedicate themselves, through all aspects of their work, to raising awareness of peak oil and climate change and related issues such as critiquing economic growth. In doing so they recognize the responsibility to present this information in ways which are playful, articulate, accessible and engaging, and which enable people to feel enthused and empowered rather than powerless. Transition initiatives focus on telling people the closest version of the truth that we know in times when the information available is deeply contradictory. The messages are non-directive, respecting each person's ability to make a response that is appropriate to their situation.

3. Inclusion and Openness

Successful Transition Initiatives need an unprecedented coming together of the broad diversity of society. They dedicate themselves to ensuring that their decision making processes and their working groups embody principles of openness and inclusion. This principle also refers to the principle of each initiative reaching the community in its entirety, and endeavoring, from an early stage, to engage their local business community, the diversity of community groups and local government authorities. It makes explicit the principle that there is no room for 'them and us' thinking in the challenge of energy descent planning.

4. Enable Sharing and Networking

Transition Initiatives dedicate themselves to sharing their successes, failures, insights and connections the various scales across the Transition network, so as to more widely build up a collective body of experience.

5. Build Resilience

This stresses the fundamental importance of building resilience i.e. the capacity of our businesses, communities and settlements to withstand shock. Transition initiatives commit to building resilience across a wide range of areas (food, economics, energy etc) and also on a range of scales (from the local to the national) as seems appropriate - and to setting them within an overall context of the need to do everything we can to ensure environmental resilience.

6. Inner and Outer Transition

The challenges we face are not just caused by a mistake in our technologies but are a direct result of our world view and belief system. The impact of the information about the state of our planet can generate fear and grief - which may underlie the state of denial that many people are caught in. Psychological models can help us understand what is really happening and avoid unconscious processes sabotaging change. E.g. addictions models, models for behavioral change. This principle also honors the fact that Transition thrives because it enables and supports people to do what they are passionate about, what they feel called to do.

7. Subsidiarity /Self-organization

The Transition model is not to centralize or control decision-making, but rather to work with everyone so that decision-making is practiced at the most appropriate, practical and empowering level, and in such a way that it models the ability of natural systems to self-organize.

"Power is shifting from institutions that have always been run top-down, hoarding information at the top, telling us how to run our lives, to a new paradigm of power that is democratically distributed and shared by us all".

Trippi, J. (2004) *The Revolution Will Not Be Televised*. Harper Collins.

5. Supporting ‘Mullers’ to become Transition Initiatives

Transition initiatives on all scales go through a succession of stages, as follows:

The ‘Mulling’ Stage: Individuals or groups become interested in the Transition model and process. Often groups in this stage contact us but most frequently we find out about them through other groups. We proactively seek out these groups and continue to invariably let them know about resources we have available and/or what resources we are aware of.

The Forming Stage: At this stage a group of people start to discuss the Transition concept, and begin the process of enthusing each other to initiate the process. Generally they either rush into trying to become official or wait until they are so well functioning they forgot the purpose of going for official status. Applications from the former are often scant and need to be sent back for their own good then encouraged to resubmit when on more solid ground. The latter generally get around to it when they are not too busy making things happen! Suffice it to say that we estimate that for every “official” initiative there are very likely 5 or more groups doing the work of Transition.



Formal Transition Initiative: the ‘mulling’ stage can last for a few weeks or for many months, depending on the group. In order to proceed to formal status, the group completes a declaration of intention, which lists the guidelines and asks for information about the initiative, as well as checking that the initiative is in the best possible position to proceed successfully. Many initiatives cherish their official status, and are very proud of having reached that point. It is deeply gratifying to grant official status to these well-meaning, inspiring and extraordinarily talented people.

6. How Transition US supports these initiatives

Mission: Inspire • Encourage • Support • Network • Train

What follows is an outline of some of the projects and developments that Transition US has been or will be carrying out in order to realize our mission. It will continue doing these things, always bearing in mind the desirability, where possible, of projects and functions being owned by the most appropriate people/groups and at as local a level as possible.

- Continuing to co-ordinate and co-develop materials to assist those on the ground doing Transition work such as how-to guides and PowerPoint presentations
- Thinking strategically about the emerging context in which Transition Initiatives grow and develop - and when needed revise our strategies and practices as a consequence
- Radically improving our delivery of our “enabling sharing and networking” by continuing to evolve our web platform and tools and improving our website information architecture
- Continuing to develop and deepen Transition Training, increasing the quantity and ensuring the quality of Transition Training workshops (the full menu of trainings that have been developed) across the country and training core teams of Transition trainers in diverse parts of the country, in

varying socio-economic situations and affiliations

- Providing ongoing support to those trainers already qualified to deliver the training
- Continuing to improve and expand monthly on-line newsletter to highlight stories, news, successes and failures of individual initiatives
- Identifying and disseminating tools to facilitate EDAP's such as up-to-date presentations and examples of best practices, as well as a forum for people to post their own resources, be it links, papers, short films or their own powerpoints, which they think others will find useful
- Producing clearer 'maps' of how Transition Initiatives might evolve over time, how to assemble the 12 Steps and how a variety of Initiatives have designed different ways through them, drawn from the experience of various initiatives
- Setting up an online registry of Transition speakers
- Supporting the growth of, and proactively developing Working Groups, such as the Diversity working Group, Training Coordinating Group and Youth Groups etc.
- Supporting the growth of, and proactively developing, partnerships, collaborations and alliances
- Supporting and enabling action research and evaluation at a national/international level – partnering with universities where appropriate
- Helping to organize regional Transition Convergences
- Identifying the emergence of regional hubs and helping them move into leadership roles in their areas starting with inspiring, supporting, encouraging, then moving to training, and finally to taking on the networking functions as well as the development of adapted principles and offering support to newly emergent initiatives
- Supporting new emerging areas of Transition by designing specific and collaborative events such as a regional convergence in San Francisco Bay Area with a variety of partners
- Enabling processes and structures for representatives of all sectors of the Transition Movement to sit on the Transition US Board or participate in Working Groups



Whidby Island Potluck with a Purpose





Hohenwald City Council, Transition Proclamation



West Marin



Transition Newburyport

7. Accomplishments of 2009

This past year was one of new beginnings and great strides. Transition US was born in large part due to the generous help from the Post Carbon Institute and the support of a visionary donor. In place before this organizational inception was a small but committed group of five that called themselves the “Transition US Initiating Group”. What is true for most, if not all, newly forming initiating groups the journey was at times trying as we persisted in finding our way. With a strong and powerful vision, the extraordinary fellow Transition travelers we have met along the way and the continued inspiration we gather daily from this work, we have arrived at the other end of the year with some gratifying accomplishments.

Several of these are:

Governance and Management:

- Hired an Executive Director, opened an office, retained staff and set up shop
- Grew our board from 5 to 11 to include broader representation of the country and to add more stellar minds and exquisite hearts
- Became a National Hub for the Transition Movement in September 2009

Outreach & Support to Transition Initiatives:

- Developed a website that provides resources, links, tips and highlights for building resilient communities. Since its launch in April this site has been visited by over 32,000 visitors or roughly 200 people a day.
- Supported the emergence of Initiatives from 7 when we began to 58 as of this report
- Increased newsletter circulation to 17,000 recipients
- Drew on the inspiration of Transition Initiatives across the nation to feature their stories, projects and gifts in our monthly newsletter

- Expanded the base of followers on Facebook to 463 fans (growing at a rate of 40% each month); on Twitter followers increased to 690 (growing at a rate of 21% each month)
- Aided numerous 'Mullers' on their journey to becoming official initiatives through email dialogue and phone conversations.
- Networked 'Mullers' with 'Mullers', Trainers with hosts, Initiatives to mentors
- Addressed and answered up to 100 email inquires each day through office staff
- Transition activities in the US as well as Transition US have been featured in more than 20 press articles, innumerable blogs, over a dozen audio interviews and at least four television spots

Alliances:

- Awakening the Dreamer Symposium, 350.org and Business Alliance for Local Living Economy (BALLE).

Training:

- From listening to the needs of Initiative leaders (through surveys, emails and conversations) we developed audio and on-line classes, salons and discussions to address such needs as effectively working together, decision-making strategies, networking and collaborating and how and when to form Working Groups
- Facilitated 11 virtual events (primarily webinars) since October with 686 registered participants and an above industry average of 50% participation
- 1,111 leaders trained in 30 on-site 2-day *Trainings for Transition* in 16 different states

Fundraising:

- Hired grant writer and development consultants
- Supervised the submissions of over \$500,000 in donation requests with another \$1 million in proposals due shortly



Greater New Haven potluck and reskilling



Michael Brownlee at Sandpoint Unleashing

"A sustainable world can only be redesigned and re-built from the bottom up. Local self reliant and self-organized communities are the building blocks for change."

David W Orr 'Ecological Literacy'

8. Listing the Dazzling Array of Transition Initiatives (as of February 8, 2010)

1. Boulder County CO
2. Sandpoint ID
3. Ketchum ID
4. Cotati CA
5. Lyons CO
6. Santa Cruz CA
7. Montpelier VT
8. Portland ME
9. Sebastopol CA
10. Laguna Beach CA
11. Pine Mountain CA
12. Ashland OR Official
13. Berea KY Official
14. Pima AZ
15. Los Angeles CA
16. Denver CO
17. Whatcom WA
18. Mount Shasta CA
19. NE Seattle WA
20. Louisville CO
21. Newburyport MA
22. Paso Robles CA
23. Portland OR
24. San Luis Obispo CA
25. Hohenwald TN
26. Ann Arbor MI
27. Oklahoma City OK
28. West Marin CA
29. Tucson AZ
30. Greater New Haven CT
31. Santa Barbara CA
32. Stelle IL
33. Hancock County ME
34. Hardwick Area VT
35. Southern Whidbey Island WA
36. Culver City CA
37. Sunnyside, Portland OR
38. Media PA Official Arlington, VA
39. Carrboro/Chapel Hill, NC
40. Transition Houston, TX
41. Transition Olympia, WA
42. Transition Town Chelsea, MI
43. Transition Anderson, OH
44. Transition Austin, TX
45. Citizens for a Sustainable Monterey County, CA
46. Transition Northfield, MN
47. Transition Louisville, KY
48. Transition Shelburne, VT
49. Transition Van Buren-Allegan, Fennville MI
50. Transition Reno, NV
51. Transition Manchester VT
52. Hay River Transition Initiative- HRTI, Prairie Farm, WI
53. Transition Westminster/Arvada/Broomfield, Westminster, CO
54. Transition Bloomington, IN
55. Transition San Francisco, CA
56. Keene Transition Initiative, NH
57. Richmond Rivets, CA
58. Transition PGH, Pittsburgh, PA
59. Transition Albany, Albany, CA



Boulder T4T

9. What Does Transition US Currently Look Like?



♥ New Board Members

The Board of Transition US (as at February 2010)

Jennifer Gray, President, Richard Heinberg, Secretary (Post Carbon Institute Senior Fellow), Asher Miller, Treasurer (Executive Director, Post Carbon Institute), Peter Lipman, (Transition Network Trustee, Sustrans), Pamela Gray (Transition Network Trustee), Michael Brownlee (Transition Colorado, Transition Trainer), David Johnson (Transition PDX – Portland, OR, Transition Trainer), Vicki Robin, Trathen Heckman (Executive Director, Daily Acts), Patricia Benson, Dave Room (founder Bay Localize)

Staff

Carolyn Stayton, Executive Director; Carl Shuller; Shelby Tay; Kristina Vigna

10. The Cheerful Disclaimer!

Cheerful disclaimer!

Just in case you were under the impression that Transition is a process defined by people who have all the answers, you need to be aware of a key fact. We truly don't know if this will work. Transition is a social experiment on a massive scale.

What we are convinced of is this:

- If we wait for the governments, it'll be too little, too late
- If we act as individuals, it'll be too little
- But if we act as communities, it might just be enough, just in time.



12. Thank You!

We hope that what we have set out here is a model for a dynamic and powerful movement, one based on form that has been emerging naturally since the Transition concept first emerged. We are deeply grateful to the many hundreds of people across the Transition network who have contributed to the various stages of its creation.

If you would like to comment or offer any feedback, please contact info@transitionus.org or write to our office at PO Box 917, Sebastopol, CA 95473.



For more information

www.transitionus.org

www.transitionnetwork.org

www.transitionculture.org

Hopkins, R. (2008) *The Transition Handbook: from oil dependency to local resilience*