

Closing the Gaps:

A Progress Report on the
Erie Canalway Trail 2015

PREPARED BY:

PARKS & TRAILS NEW YORK
IN COLLABORATION WITH
CANALWAY TRAILS ASSOCIATION NEW YORK



Executive Summary

Extending 360 miles across New York, the Erie Canalway Trail (ECT) brings important economic, public health, tourism, and quality of life benefits to more than 3.7 million New Yorkers living within the 14 counties in which the trail is located. With 288 miles now open to the public, the Erie Canalway Trail is 80% complete and on its way to becoming the longest continuous intrastate multi-use trail in the nation as well as a world-class destination for cyclists and other outdoor enthusiasts. However, the Canalway Trail can neither realize its full potential as an internationally known tourism destination nor offer maximum economic and quality of life benefits to the more than 200 communities along its length until it is finished from Buffalo to Albany as a continuous off-road trail.

Since the “Closing the Gaps” campaign was launched in 2010 by Parks & Trails New York (PTNY) and the Canalway Trails Association New York (CTANY), in conjunction with Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, interest in completing the Erie Canalway Trail among citizens, community leaders, and local, state, and federal government officials continues to grow. As a result, significant progress is now being made on closing the gaps in the Erie Canalway Trail. Under Governor Andrew Cuomo’s administration, more than 32 miles of trail have been rehabilitated, constructed or are planned or under construction.

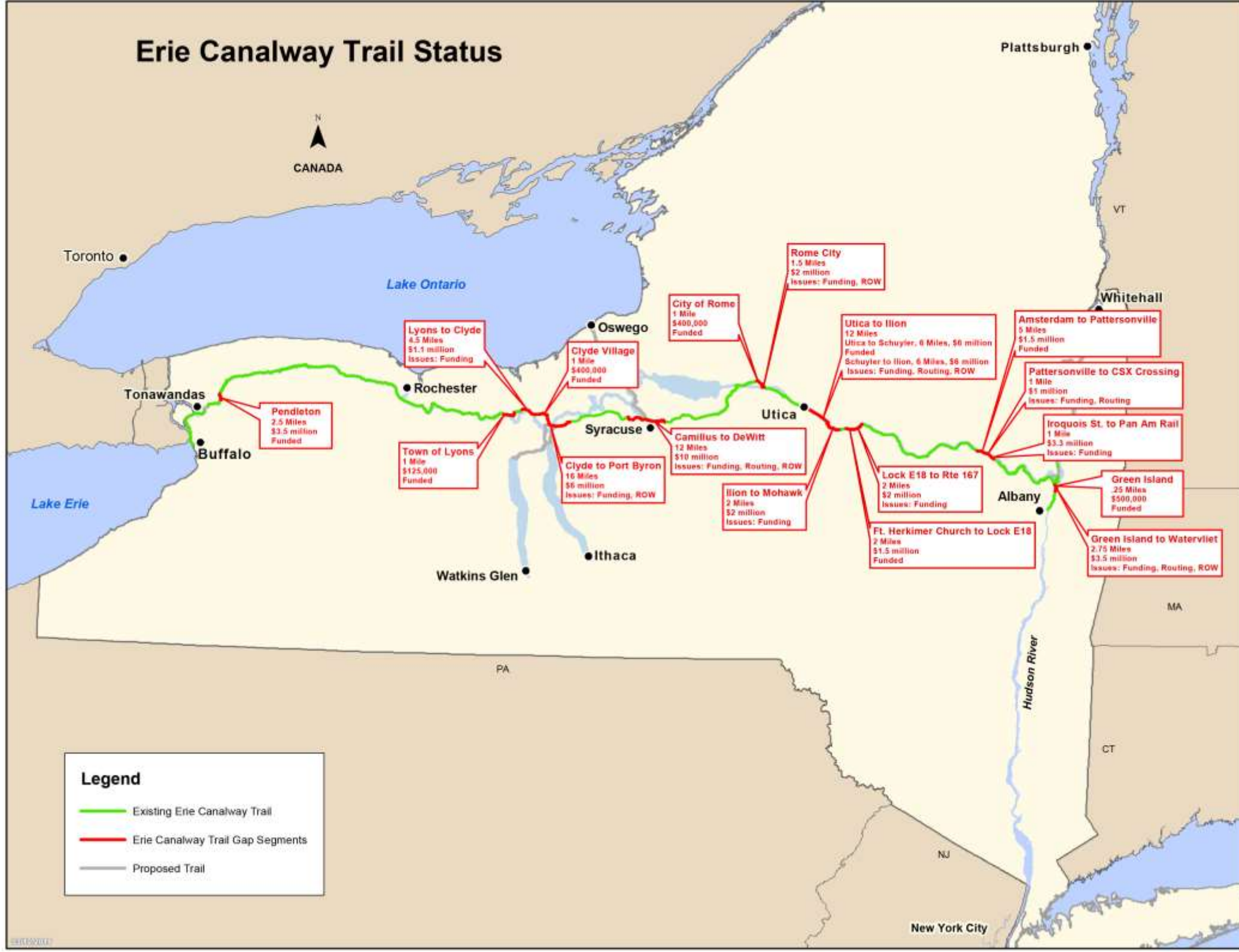
In 2015:

- **The NYS Canal Corporation completed construction of 5.5 miles of new trail**, from Lockport to Pendleton, addressing a large part of what was an eight-mile gap between Amherst and Lockport. The remaining 2.5 miles of trail are under design. When the gap is complete, it will result in more than 130 miles of continuous off-road trail in western New York.
- **The Village of Green Island in Albany County received \$44,000 in Canal Greenway funding** through the state’s Consolidated Funding Application (CFA) Program to complete an important link in the ECT from the Black Bridge to Cannon Street, a distance of 1000 feet.

- **In Amsterdam, construction began on the Mohawk Valley Gateway Overlook**, a \$16.5M pedestrian bridge that will connect Amsterdam's Southside and Erie Canalway Trail to the city's downtown and Riverlink Park. The bridge is being funded by the Rebuild and Renew New York Transportation Bond Act of 2005. In June, federal, state and local officials announced they had secured an additional \$1 million to fund artistic elements on the bridge, including a ripple design along the deck that will mimic the Mohawk River below and two circular plazas that will extend from the main span. Besides providing great views, these plazas will be large enough to accommodate performances.
- **In Wayne County, in the Town of Galen, two new sections of stone dust trail have been finished**, connecting Lock Berlin Park with Black Brook Park, and on to Old Route 31. Wayne County provided the funding for the project. This section stretches 1.5 miles. Along with funded gap sections that are under development in the Town of Lyons and the Village of Clyde, the Lyons to Clyde gap has been reduced to 4.5 miles.
- **Also in Wayne County, a working group has been formed**, with officials from various levels of government and local non-profits directing planning and design efforts for unfinished trail sections. The working group has also identified a provisional route for the future Erie Canalway Trail through Wayne County, utilizing off-road railroad corridors and on-road connections.

There still is much work to do: 72 miles of Erie Canalway Trail are unfinished. For approximately 20 of those miles there is an identified source of funding and work is programmed to start within the next three years. For an additional 53 miles of trail, an estimated \$40 million in funding is needed for corridor purchase and/or design and construction. However, by taking advantage of opportunities such as federal Transportation Alternatives Program funding available through the recently approved Fixing America's Surface Transportation or "FAST Act" and the state's Consolidated Funding Application (CFA) grant programs, and by ensuring a strong commitment to closing the gaps among all levels of government, it may be possible to have the entire 72 miles of trail under construction or in some phase of planning by the bicentennial of the start of construction on the original Erie Canal in the fall of 2017.

Erie Canalway Trail Status



Trail Gaps with Identified Funding Source

Location	Length (mi)	Issues	Status	Impact	Estimated Cost	Timeline
Pendleton	2.5		2.5 miles under design	~130 miles of continuous trail from Buffalo to Lyons	\$3.5 million	2017
Town of Lyons (Village of Lyons dissolved)	1		OPRHP/ Recreational Trails Program grant \$89,000 (2010-2011)	Helps complete the trail gap in central Wayne County	\$125,000	2016
Village of Clyde	1		2014 TAP funding for 0.8 miles of trail west of Route 414 (\$280,000)	Helps complete the trail gap in eastern Wayne County	\$400,000	2017
Rome	1		2011 Canal grant funding	50 miles of continuous trail between Dewitt and Utica	\$400,000	2016
Utica-Schuyler	6		Final Design Report & Advance Detail Plans complete	Extends the trail in eastern Oneida County	\$6 million	2020
Fort Herkimer Church to Lock 18	2		2014 TAP funding; design work underway	Helps complete the gap between Little Falls and Mohawk	\$1.5 million	2017
Amsterdam to Pattersonville	6		2014 TEP funding; OPRHP working with NYSDOT and consultant on environmental review	Extends the trail in eastern Montgomery County and helps complete the gap between Amsterdam and Rotterdam Junction	\$1.5 million	2017
TOTAL	19.5				\$13.4 million	

Trail Gaps without Identified Funding Source

Location	Length	Issues	Status	Impact	Est. Cost	Timeline
Lyons to Clyde	4.5	Funding	Final Design Report and Final Plans Complete	~140 miles of continuous trail from Buffalo to Clyde	\$1.1 million	Not Programmed
Clyde to Port Byron	16	Funding, Route, ROW	Concept Planning	180 miles of continuous trail from Buffalo to Camillus	\$6 million	Not Programmed
Camillus to DeWitt	14	Funding; Determining route/corridor through the City of Syracuse, Towns of Camillus, Geddes (Village of Solvay) and DeWitt that is off-road to the extent possible	On-road trail directional signage installed by City of Syracuse (2014 Canal grant); on road-signage plans in progress for other gap communities (Dewitt – 2014 LWRP); Long-term gap study nearing completion; Ideas competition for Syracuse to Dewitt section	Connects trail through Syracuse; Will aim to remove route from streets as much as possible	~\$10 million (range of \$5 to \$20+ million)	Not Programmed Interim on-road route signage posted in Syracuse in 2015; Long-term Syracuse gap route study to be completed early 2016
Rome	2	Funding, ROW, wetlands	Concept Planning	Connect 55 miles of continuous trail from Utica to Dewitt	\$5 million	Not Programmed
Schuyler-Ilion	6	Funding, Route, ROW, wetlands, cross CSX line	Final Design Report complete	Extends trail in Oneida and Herkimer Counties	\$6 million	Not Programmed
Ilion-Mohawk	2	Funding	Final Design Report & Final Plans complete	Extends trail in Herkimer County	\$2 million	Not Programmed

Lock 18 to Little Falls Route 167	2	Funding	Final Design Report & Final Plans Complete	Connect 50 miles of continuous trail in Montgomery and Herkimer Counties	\$2 million	Not Programmed
Pattersonville to CSX Rail crossing	1	ROW, Funding	Concept Planning	Helps complete gap in western Schenectady County	\$1 million	Not Programmed
Iroquois Street to Pan Am Rail	1	Funding	CFA funding \$150,000 & 2015 Brownfield Opportunity Area designation	Links trail in Capital District and Mohawk Valley	\$3.3 million	Not Programmed
Cohoes-Green Island-Watervliet	4	Funding, route, ROW, local support	\$40,000 in CFA Canal grant to Village of Green Island for Black Bridge to Cannon Street trail	Connect Niskayuna/Colonie to Corning Preserve in Albany	\$4 million	Not Programmed
TOTAL	52.5				\$40.4 million	

Purpose of this Report

The idea of constructing a multi-use trail along the length of the Erie Canal corridor has existed for nearly 40 years. Today the trail is 80% complete as an off-road path primarily paralleling the current or historic route of the canal. When finished, it will not only bring additional economic, public health, tourism, active transportation, and quality of life benefits to more than 3.7 million New Yorkers living within the 14 counties where the trail is located, but it will also become a premier international tourist destination for cyclists and other outdoor enthusiasts.

In 2014, PTNY released the first comprehensive study of the Erie Canalway Trail visitor, *The Economic Impact of the Erie Canalway Trail: An Assessment and User Profile of New York's Longest Multi-use Trail*. The study, which was funded in part through grants from the New York State Canal Corporation and the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, demonstrates that the trail receives an annual trail traffic volume of more than 1.58 million visits per year, which generates an economic impact of approximately \$253 million and supports 3,440 jobs in the local economies within the trail corridor.

However, as demonstrated by a recent study conducted after completion of a long-standing gap in Durham, North Carolina's American Tobacco Trail, for the Erie

Canalway Trail to achieve its full potential for visitors and residents, it is essential that it be complete. In the case of the American Tobacco Trail, research conducted by the Institute for Transportation Research and Education found that after construction of a bridge joining the northern and southern



Cyclists enjoy the Erie Canalway Trail in the Mohawk Valley.

segments of the 22-mile trail, annual trail usage increased by 133% and persons visiting the trail spent an additional \$3.7 million on goods and services per year, an increase of 154%.¹

In order to focus attention on the need to complete the remaining 72 miles of trail, 53 of which have right of way issues and/or no identified source for the estimated \$40 in funding million needed, Parks & Trails New York (PTNY), in collaboration with the Canalway Trails Association New York (CTANY), has prepared this sixth annual report. It is hoped that the report will update canal corridor communities and national, state, and local decision makers on recent progress and current trail status as well as underscore the need for the resources and political support to ensure the Erie Canalway Trail is quickly finished.

¹ Cook, Thomas J., Sarah Worth O'Brien, Kristy N. Jackson, Sarah Searcy, Daniel J. Findley, *Behavioral Effects of Completing a Critical Link in the American Tobacco Trail: A Look at Impacts on Health, Transportation and the Economy*, Institute for Transportation Research and Education, Durham, NC, 2014. <http://www.itre.ncsu.edu/Public/bikeped.html>

ERIE CANALWAY TRAIL CURRENT STATUS

2015 Accomplishments

Trail completion

- **Lockport to Pendleton – 5.5 miles**

NYS Canal Corporation constructed 5.5 miles of new trail and on-street facilities within what was formerly an eight-mile gap segment of Erie Canalway Trail between Amherst and Lockport in western New York. The new 10-foot wide asphalt trail stretches from Stevens Street in the City of Lockport to Fisk Road in the Town of Pendleton, over wooded spoil piles created when the current Erie Canal was excavated in the early 20th century. The project also includes a new 180-foot pedestrian bridge crossing Tonawanda Creek, eliminating the need for trail users to use the New Road bridge to cross the Creek, and a signed on-street link from Stevens Street to Erie Canal Locks 34 and 35 in Lockport.

- **In Wayne County, Town of Galen – 1.5 miles**

In Wayne County, in the Town of Galen, two new sections of stone dust trail have been finished, connecting Lock Berlin Park with Black Brook Park, and on to Old Route 31. Wayne County provided the funding for the project. Taken together, these sections stretch 1.5 miles. Along with funded gap sections that are under development in the Town of Lyons and the Village of Clyde, the Lyons to Clyde gap has been reduced to 4.5 miles.

Planned Construction

- **City of Rome – 1 mile**

Construction on an additional mile of off-road trail between Old Erie Canal State Park and North Charles Street was scheduled to begin in 2015. However, construction was delayed and is now scheduled to start in 2016. The work, which is funded by a 2011 \$50,000 Canal Corporation (CFA) grant, will involve rehabilitation of an existing section of Old Erie Canal towpath.

Beyond the one-mile gap section that has been funded, there remains an unfunded gap section in Rome. This gap was previously reported as a mile, with estimated costs of \$2 million for completion. Local planners have revised the mileage to two miles, with an estimated cost of \$5 million due to the presence of wetlands and the needs for culverts and other costly infrastructure. This funding has not been secured, and no date has been set for design or construction.

- **Town of Pendleton – 2.5 miles**

Design is ongoing for the 2.5-mile gap in the Town of Pendleton. Construction of this segment is anticipated to begin in 2016. When complete, this project will close a key gap in the trail and create more than 130 continuous miles of trail between the City of Buffalo in Erie County and the Town of Lyons in Wayne County.

- **Town of Lyons – 1 mile**

The Town of Lyons has taken over direction of development of one mile of new trail. This section of trail lies within what was formerly the Village of Lyons, which has now been dissolved. The project's funding comes from a Recreational Trails Program grant awarded to the Village in 2010-2011. The Town hopes to begin construction in 2016.

- **Village of Clyde – 1 mile**

The Village of Clyde plans to construct 1 mile of new trail, west of Route 414, in 2017. This project received \$280,000 in Transportation Alternatives Program funding in 2014, to apply towards a total estimated cost of \$400,000.

2015 Funding awards

- **NYS Consolidated Funding Application (CFA) Canalway Grants**

- The Village of Green Island in Albany County received \$44,000 in Canalway Grants funding to install 1,000 feet of new asphalt trail from the Black Bridge to Cannon Street, completing an important link in the ECT. The project will also involve construction of new sidewalks on Cannon Street.

- Montgomery County was awarded \$100,000 to pave two sections of the existing Erie Canalway Trail between Fort Hunter and the Town of Root. These sections are currently surfaced with stone dust.
- Schenectady County was awarded \$75,000 to resurface two miles of existing asphalt Erie Canalway Trail from Lock E-8 to the Thruway exit 26 bridge over I-890.
- Schenectady County received \$15,000 to conduct a Bike Trail Feasibility Study for construction of a new off-street segment of the Mohawk Hudson/Erie Canalway Trail along the southern shore of the Mohawk River. The trail will have to pass under a CSX bridge to connect the local Front Street Park and Riverside Park with a trail segment, presently under development, adjacent to the future Mohawk Harbor and Rivers Casino.
- **Federal Funding**
 - Schenectady County received funding to install new bollards and gates at 13 access points along the Rotterdam section of trail.

Trail Enhancement

- Schenectady County completed paving of approximately two miles of ECT in Rotterdam, a project which was funded by a 2014 CFA grant.
- Wayne County has made improvements and completed maintenance, including trimming brush and cutting grass, to a 2.5-mile section of naturally-surfaced trail connecting Route 31/Cole Road to Lock Berlin Park. The County hopes to install stone dust surfacing in this section, as well as completing shoulder work and installing signage.

Defining of a trail route

- **City of Syracuse**

The Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council (SMTC) continued work on Part II of the *Erie Canalway Trail - Syracuse Connector Route Project* on behalf of the City of Syracuse. In 2015, the Study Advisory Committee (SAC) reviewed several routing options for the permanent ECT route from Camillus to Dewitt, eventually asking for comments on three final options along with section drawings and perspectives for locations along Erie Boulevard East. The final route options and comments were presented at a public meeting in December. The final step of the project will consist of SMTC staff incorporating public comments into a final report.



On-road Erie Canalway Trail route signage, installed on Water Street, in Syracuse, 2015.

SMTC also reported progress in implementation of Part I of the Connector Route Project, which was officially complete in 2013. Part I examined the existing un-signed, on-road Erie Canalway Trail route in Syracuse as defined on the Parks & Trails New York website and in the *Cycling the Erie Canal* guidebook (3rd edition). Since completion of Part I, SMTC has assisted the City of Syracuse in creating a signage location plan for posting Erie Canalway Trail trailblazers within Syracuse. In 2015, the City received trailblazers from the Canal Corporation and posted them along the on-road route. SMTC also began working with the Town of Dewitt to install temporary on-road route signage. SMTC plans to initiate similar efforts with the Village of Solway and the Town of Camillus in the near future.

Identification in regional plans and proposals

- **Mohawk Valley**

The Mohawk Valley Regional Economic Development Council (MVREDC) included completion of the Erie Canalway Trail by 2025 as an economic development strategy in its proposal for funding through the Upstate Revitalization Initiative, a competition among seven REDCs for \$500 million in funding per region. Specifically, MVREDC called for completing the Trail from Sylvan Beach to Amsterdam, including on-road sections, and enhancing connections to trail networks and tourist attractions. Although the Mohawk Valley proposal

was not selected to receive funding, the proposal did reaffirm the Erie Canalway Trail's role as an economic development and tourism generator.

Previously, MVREDC identified completion of the Erie Canalway Trail from Rome to Amsterdam as a key regional initiative in its 2011 Strategic Plan.

- **Capital District Transportation Committee Long Range Transportation Plan**

In September, the Capital District Transportation Committee (CDTC) released an updated version of its long range transportation plan, New Visions 2040. The plan specifically recommends completing the regional gaps in Rotterdam and Green Island/Watervliet as part of the MPO's goals to complete a regional greenway network that will serve as a recreation and transportation resource.²

- **Canal 2025: Canal Recreationway Plan Update – New York State Canal Corporation**

The Canal Corporation is updating the Canal Recreationway Plan, which was initially adopted in 1995. The plan update, called Canal 2025, will summarize the accomplishments made since the Canal Recreationway Plan was completed and recommend new projects and initiatives going forward through 2025, the bicentennial of the opening of the original Erie Canal. The project study area encompasses the New York State Canal System, including the Erie, Champlain, Oswego and Cayuga-Seneca Canals and the Canalway Trail.

Local support growing

- **“Closing the Gaps” continues to garner corridor-wide recognition and support**

A growing number of elected officials, businesses owners, and Canalway Trail community residents are using the term “Closing the Gaps” while noting that completion of the trail is vital to their economic interests. Continued media attention has helped more people appreciate how completing the Canalway Trail can improve the state's economy, tourism appeal, and quality of life.

- **Closing the Gaps Bike Ride and Postcard Delivery to Governor Cuomo**

² <http://www.cdtcnewvisions.com/assets/New-Visions-2040-Plan-Sept-3-2015.pdf>, p 118.

In September, approximately 30 cyclists participated in the first annual Close the Gaps ride and postcard delivery, hosted by Parks & Trails New York and Bike Barn Cycling and Fitness. Traveling from Watervliet to Albany on the Mohawk-Hudson portion of the statewide Erie Canalway Trail, the riders delivered hundreds of postcards, signed by users of the trail from across the state, urging Governor Cuomo and the legislature to continue to close the gaps that remain in the 360-mile trail. Coverage of the ride appeared in the Albany *Times-Union*.

- **City of Syracuse and Town of Dewitt Elevating Erie Competition**

The Town of Dewitt, City of Syracuse, and New York Department of State launched the Elevating Erie Ideas Competition in the fall of 2015. The competition seeks creative ideas for developing a multi-modal urban transit corridor in the current Syracuse gap section, with a special focus on creating a workable Erie Canalway Trail route in this area. The design drew proposals from amateurs and professionals in a wide range of disciplines, from across the world. Project submissions were due in December 2015, with review and selection of four overall winners in February 2016. An exhibition of projects from finalists and the four overall winners will be held at the Erie Canal Museum in spring 2016.

- **Wayne County Close the Gaps Ad Hoc Committee**

In Wayne County, a working group has been formed consisting of town, village, county, state and federal officials as well as representatives from the NYS Canal Corporation, Cornell Cooperative Extension, Savannah Chamber of Commerce, Savannah Planning Board, Montezuma Audubon Center, Trail Works, the Wayne County Historian and the Town of Montezuma Historian. In 2015, the group toured gap sections from the Town of Lyons through the Town of Galen, Village of Clyde, and Town of Savannah, ending at the Town of Montezuma in Cayuga County. Wayne County also has been working on the Lyons to Galen gap, in order to make it accessible for bicyclists and pedestrians. East of Clyde, the working group is advocating for the Erie Canalway Trail to follow Bike Route 5/State Route 31 towards Savannah as an interim solution, then to continue onto the West Shore Trail/Park, which is owned by the Town of Savannah. From there, the Trail will follow the Seneca River before rejoining State Route 31 near the Town of Montezuma.

- **Wayne County Submission to Finger Lakes REDC Upstate Regional Initiative**

Wayne County submitted a request to include development of 21 miles of ECT from the Village of Lyons to Lock E-25 at Mays Point in Seneca County as part of the Finger Lakes Region's Upstate Revitalization Initiative. The Finger Lakes Regional Economic Development Council (FLREDC) previously identified extension of the Erie Canalway Trail between Lyons and Port Byron as a priority project consistent with the strategic goals that the council will, when appropriate, pursue and develop over the next five years. Parks & Trails New York supported the County's submission with a letter.

The land for this trail section - village, town and county parkland; NYSDEC and Canal Corporation properties; and a Wayne County-owned former rail road bridge crossing the Erie Canal - is already in public ownership.

- **City of Albany Linkage Study**

In 2015, the City of Albany was awarded funding to study connections between a new trail, the Albany County Helderberg-Hudson Rail Trail, and the well-used section of the Erie Canalway Trail (Mohawk Hudson Bike-Hike Trail) in the Corning Preserve. The *Waterfront Bikeway Connection Feasibility Study* is part of the Capital District Transportation Committee's Community and Transportation Linkage Planning Program. The study assesses the feasibility of various on- and/or off-road treatments for the 1.5-mile gap between the two trails which will allow cyclists and walkers to more safely access both the ECT and the Helderberg-Hudson Rail Trail, thereby giving local residents and visitors non-motorized access to Albany's Hudson River waterfront and downtown.

Brownfield Opportunity Area Designation

- **Rotterdam Junction**

In December, a 570-acre area in Rotterdam Junction that includes the Iroquois Street to Pan Am Rail gap was designated as a Brownfield Opportunity Area by the state.

The Brownfield Opportunity Areas (BOA) Program provides resources to New York communities to establish effective revitalization strategies that return dormant and blighted parcels into productive, catalytic properties. While the designation does not bring any funding

with it, or guarantee future funding for a designated site, brownfield sites and proposed projects within them are often given special consideration for funding.

In 2006, the Town of Rotterdam applied for grant funding and received \$150,000 from the state to do a Brownfield Opportunity Area nomination study, which they finished in 2013. That study, *“Canal to Railroad to Bikeway” Rotterdam Junction’s Revitalization Plan*, led to BOA designation. Rotterdam also has \$150,000 in unspent Canalway Grants funding, and possibly NY Rising funding remaining to apply toward the overall project cost of \$3.3 million.

Ongoing Challenges to Closing the Gaps

Since the NYS Canal Corporation assumed responsibility for much of the trail corridor in 1995 and began implementing the Canal Recreationway Plan, more than 200 miles of Erie Canalway Trail have been built, resulting in 287 of the trail's 360 miles now open to the public. However, several factors continue to contribute to a delay in closing the remaining gaps.

Funding

An estimated \$40 million in funding is needed for corridor purchase and/or design and construction to complete the 52.5 miles of trail in the remaining unfunded gaps. For some gaps, such as the two miles between Lock 18 and Route 167 in Little Falls and the two miles between Ilion and Mohawk, construction funding is the major barrier to moving forward.

- **More recognition in regional economic development plans needed**

Of the Regional Economic Development Commissions (REDC), only the Mohawk Valley region included completion of the Canalway Trail as a priority in the latest economic development plan, in this case the MVREDC's proposal for Upstate Revitalization Initiative funding. This omission makes it harder for local governments and nonprofits in regions other than the Mohawk Valley to be competitive when applying for projects that could enhance the trail or close minor gaps. While local governments recognize the importance of completing the trail and enhancing its appeal to tourists, the opportunity exists to take fuller advantage of funds from the CFA grant program for Canalway Trail projects.

Trail Sections without Funding

Location	Length	Issues	Status	Impact	Est. Cost	Timeline
Lyons to Clyde	4.5	Funding	Final Design Report and Final Plans Complete	~140 miles of continuous trail from Buffalo to Clyde	\$1.1 million	Not Programmed
Clyde to Port Byron	16	Funding, Route, ROW	Concept Planning	180 miles of continuous trail from Buffalo to Camillus	\$6 million	Not Programmed
Camillus to DeWitt	14	Funding; Determining route/corridor through the City of Syracuse, Towns of Camillus, Geddes (Village of Solvay) and DeWitt that is off-road to the extent possible	On-road trail directional signage installed by City of Syracuse (2014 Canal grant); on road-signage plans in progress for other gap communities (Dewitt – 2014 LWRP); Long-term gap study nearing completion; Ideas competition for Syracuse to Dewitt section	Connects trail through Syracuse; Will aim to remove route from streets as much as possible	~\$10 million (range of \$5 to \$20+ million)	Not Programmed Interim on-road route signage posted in Syracuse in 2015; Long-term Syracuse gap route study to be completed early 2016
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Lock 18 to Little Falls Route 167	2	Funding	Final Design Report & Final Plans Complete	Connect 50 miles of continuous trail in Montgomery and Herkimer Counties	\$2 million	Not Programmed
Pattersonville to CSX Rail crossing	1	ROW, Funding	Concept Planning	Helps complete gap in western Schenectady County	\$1 million	Not Programmed
Iroquois Street to Pan Am Rail	1	Funding	CFA funding \$150,000 & 2015 Brownfield Opportunity Area designation	Links trail in Capital District and Mohawk Valley	\$3.3 million	Not Programmed
Cohoes-Green Island-Watervliet	4	Funding, route, ROW, local support	\$40,000 in CFA Canal grant to Village of Green Island for Black Bridge to Cannon Street trail	Connect Niskayuna/Colonie to Corning Preserve in Albany	\$4 million	Not Programmed
TOTAL	52.5				\$40.4 million	

Right of way

- **No defined corridor or route**

Over the years, parts of the canal have been relocated and the historic canal and towpath have been lost to other development. Publicly-owned abandoned rail lines offer the best possible alternative off-road routes. However, in several locations no such alternatives exist: between Schuyler and the Village of Frankfort and through Green Island. In these places it will be necessary to acquire right-of-way, utilize utility or highway corridors, or establish safe on-road routes.

- **Utility reluctance to enter into long-term agreements.**

Federal funding cannot be obtained to develop trail unless the land is secured with at least a 25-year lease or easement. There are former rail corridors, now owned by utilities, that could be used to close some of the remaining gaps, but they are essentially unavailable because of the utility's reluctance to grant leases of that term length. Legislation should be considered that would extend liability protection for recreational use to landowners of railroad and utility corridors as in other states such as Massachusetts.

Focus for 2016

Additional progress in closing the gaps will result from the efforts of multiple individuals and communities continually working to address specific needs in discrete segments of the trail. In the year ahead, PTNY, in collaboration with CTANY, will continue to vigorously advocate for “Closing the Gaps” through the following means:

1. Set the bicentennial of the start of the Canal’s construction, October 2017, as a target date for the start of construction, completion of design work, and/or securing a commitment for funding for the remaining 72 miles of gap segments.
2. Rally local government and citizen support for “Closing the Gaps” and its ability to attract more tourists, grow local economies and positively impact the health of the region’s residents.
3. Continue to meet with local and state legislators, Congressional representatives, and the regional economic development councils to emphasize that completion of the Canalway Trail is a priority project that will make a significant contribution to quality of life attributes needed to attract and retain jobs and improve the economy of more than 200 communities upstate.
4. Advocate for local governments and coalitions of communities to submit applications for federal transportation funds and, through the CFA process, state municipal park and Canal and Waterfront Revitalization grant funds in order to build new trail segments in those places where funding is the only barrier to construction.
5. Supply support letters for funding applications that promote completion of gap segments.
6. Foster communications and meetings between the appropriate parties to resolve issues and remove barriers to trail development.

7. Advocate for pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure projects to receive \$20 million in state funding in the FY 2016-2017 budget to address unmet demand in canalside and other communities.

Trail Background

The Erie Canalway Trail, stretching across the state between Buffalo and Albany, is the central element of an envisioned Canalway Trail System that also will include the Champlain, Cayuga-Seneca and Oswego Canalway Trails and total more than 500 miles. It also will serve as the backbone of an emerging network of similar multi-use trails reaching into all parts of the state.

As early as the 1960s, some canal communities that had lost most of their commercial canal traffic were seeking new ways to benefit from the canal and began building local trails on remnants of the old towpath. The first public expression of the Canalway Trail concept came with the release of the NYS Canal Recreation Development Plan in the early 1970s. Soon thereafter, the NYS Office of Parks and Recreation, today the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP), and the NYS Department of Transportation entered into a formal agreement to jointly develop the 524-mile canal system, encompassing the Erie, Cayuga- Seneca, Oswego, and Champlain Canals, for recreational purposes. Many sections of the Canalway Trail were constructed during the next two decades.

In 1992, the NYS Legislature transferred responsibility for the Canal System to the NYS Thruway Authority and its subsidiary the NYS Canal Corporation and created the NYS Canal Recreationway Commission to advise the Thruway and NYS Canal Corporation on canal-related activities. In 1995 and 1996, respectively, the NYS Canal Corporation adopted the Canal Recreationway Plan and the NYS Canal Revitalization Plan to guide development of the Canal into a recreation system. Among the major recommendations made in the NYS Canal Recreationway Plan was the completion of an end-to-end Canalway Trail along the canal system.

In 2000, the U.S. Congress recognized the national significance of New York's canal system by establishing the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor which includes the Erie, as well as the Cayuga-Seneca, Oswego, and Champlain Canals and their historic alignments. In 2014, the Erie Canal was listed on the National and State Registers of Historic Places.

Since 1995, when the Canal Corporation assumed responsibility for the Canalway Trail and began implementing the Canal Recreationway Plan, more than 200 miles of Erie Canalway Trail have been built. Ownership, maintenance and management of the Erie Canalway Trail are split, with the NYS

Canal Corporation, NYS OPRHP, and counties and local municipalities each owning about one-third of the trail corridor.

Erie Canalway Trail Partners

Canalway Trails Association New York (CTANY) is an all-volunteer organization that works both statewide and locally with citizens, state agencies and municipalities to develop the Canalway Trail System as a world-class multi-use recreational trail and international bicycle tourism destination. CTANY functions in partnership with the New York State Canal Corporation, the agency leading Canalway Trail development statewide. It operates under the non-profit status of PTNY.

www.ptny.org/get-involved/volunteer/canalway-trails-association

Parks & Trails New York works statewide to expand, protect and promote a network of parks, trails and open space for the use and enjoyment of all. It advocates for completion of the Canalway Trail System and promotes the trail through events such as its annual *Cycle the Erie Canal* bike tour, the annual Canal Clean Sweep, and *Bicyclists Bring Business* community roundtables and publications such as *Canalway Trail Times*; *Cycling the Erie Canal: A guide to 400 miles of adventure and history along the Erie Canalway Trail*; and *Bicyclists Bring Business: A Guide for Attracting Bicyclists to New York's Canal Communities*. In addition, it supports the Canalway Trails Association New York in managing the Adopt-a-Trail Program. www.ptny.org, www.CycletheErieCanal.com

New York State Canal Corporation Created by the New York State Legislature in 1992, the New York State Canal Corporation operates, maintains and promotes the 524-mile New York State Canal System, comprised of the Erie, Champlain, Cayuga-Seneca, and Oswego Canals. A world class recreationway and resurgent commercial waterway, the iconic Canal System has been enlarged twice and has been in continuous operation for 190 years. Today, though still used for commercial transportation, New York's Canals are primarily seen as a world-class destination for tourism and recreation, and the Canal System remains vital to many communities, businesses, industries and farming operations for its abundant, reliable and inexpensive supply of water. The Canal Corporation also oversees the development and promotion of the statewide Canalway Trail System and has directed the construction of more than 200 miles of Canalway Trail since 1995. www.canals.ny.gov

The **Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor** spans more than 500 miles across the full expanse of upstate New York, encompassing the Erie, Cayuga-Seneca, Oswego, and Champlain Canals and their historic alignments, as well as more than 230 canal communities. The Erie Canalway National

Heritage Corridor preserves our extraordinary heritage, promotes the Corridor as world class tourism destination, and fosters vibrant communities connected by the waterway. www.eriecanalway.org

The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation manages and protects the state's system of state parks and historic sites and also is charged with coordinating and developing a statewide trails plan. OPRHP owns approximately one-third of the Erie Canalway Trail corridor, including Old Erie Canal State Park, in the central portion of the route. In some cases, the agency contracts with counties to maintain the trail.

Local governments play an important role in completing and maintaining the trail in the more than 200 municipalities and 14 counties through which the Erie Canalway Trail passes. About one-third of the Canalway Trail is owned by local governments, including counties, towns, and municipalities.