

Saratoga County, N.Y.  
**Champlain Canal Trail Concept Plan**  
Final Version  
October 1, 2002



**The Canalway Trail Partnership**



**New York Parks & Conservation  
Association**  
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## Table of Contents

1	Introduction.....	2
2	Executive Summary.....	3
3	Opportunities.....	5
4	Constraints.....	11
5	Corridor Mapping.....	18
6	Concept Plans.....	27
7	Schematic Cost Estimates.....	35
8	Next Steps.....	37
9	References.....	39

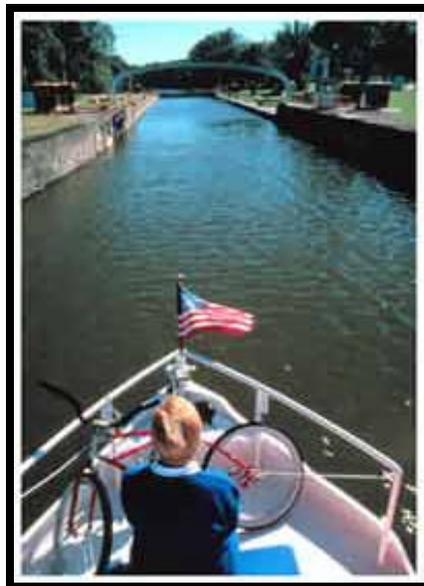
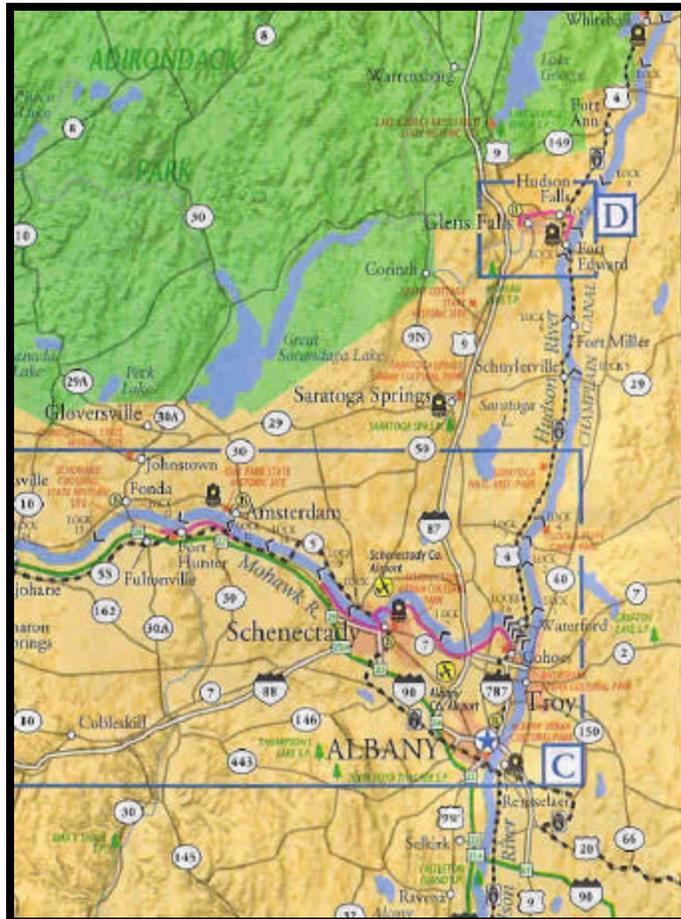


Photo: NYS Canal Corp

Cover Photo: Bicycling along the 225-mile KATY Trail along the Missouri River between Kansas City and St. Louis.

# 1 Introduction

The Champlain Canal Trail Concept Plan for Saratoga County proposes a walking and bicycling path the length of the county from Northumberland to Waterford. The trail is part of the New York State Canalway Trail system, which includes the Erie and Champlain Canals. **Saratoga County is the only county in the state which borders both canals**, and is in a unique position to capitalize on this significant economic, tourism and recreation opportunity. Where possible, the Concept Plan incorporates projects currently under development or proposed along the corridor, and emphasizes the use of existing public lands. The 26 -mile route from the Erie Canal to the Washington County line follows both the old and new Champlain Canals, and passes through areas steeped in Revolutionary War, War of 1812, railroad, Native American and early European settlement history. Along this historic path, the trail will parallel the Hudson River and connect the communities of Waterford, Mechanicville, Halfmoon, Stillwater, and Schuylerville.



NYS Canal Corporation map of the Erie and Champlain Canals in the Capital Region.

Support for this project is provided by The Canalway Trail Partnership and the New York Parks and Conservation Association. The project consultant is Jeff Olson, R.A.-*Trailblazer* of Saratoga Springs, N.Y.

## 2 Executive Summary

The Champlain Canal Trail is a significant opportunity for the residents, businesses and visitors of Saratoga County. More than half of the potential trail right-of way is currently in public ownership, and there is growing support within local communities along the route. Creating the Champlain Canal Trail would be the highest and best use of this unique, nationally significant resource. A trail for walking, bicycling, running, skating, horseback riding, canoeing, cross country skiing and other uses will be an asset for local communities. As with any project of this type, there are some significant issues regarding liability, maintenance and ownership which must be resolved. This Concept Plan represents a positive step towards creating a trail which will be a valuable asset to local communities, the state and the nation. A phased action plan, based on input from the public, non-profit and private sectors, is presented with the following priorities:

**Phase 1 – “The Legacy of 225.”** Since 2002 is the 225<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battles of Saratoga, it is appropriate to use this historic moment as the starting point for a new legacy along the Champlain Canal. Specific steps include:

- **Organize.** Establish a non-profit “Friends of the Champlain Canal Trail” group to advocate for the trail and establish the resources for its development.
- **Adopt this Plan.** The Saratoga County Board of Supervisors should pass a resolution adopting the concept of creating a trail along the Champlain Canal.
- **Preserve the Canal.** All publicly accessible land, easements and rights-of-way along the trail corridor should be maintained in public ownership.
- **Make Basic Road Repairs.** Saratoga County, New York State DOT and local communities should work cooperatively to enhance NY State Bike Route 9 as an on-road route and interim alignment for the Champlain Canal Trail.

**Phase 2 – “50 % in 5 Years.”** Within the next 5 years, a series of strategically focused projects can result in building more than half of the Champlain Canal Trail in Saratoga County:

- **Mechanicville – Waterford Trail.** Completion of this section will create a continuous 9-mile shared use path from Waterford to Mechanicville.
- **Schuylerville Trail.** The existing path should be upgraded to a stone dust surface from Lock 5 through the Village of Schuylerville to the Schuyler House. Funding for the Dix Bridge should be secured as part of the proposed Bi-County Park project.
- **Stillwater / Saratoga Battlefield Trail.** Priority should be given to the 3 miles of the old Canal adjacent to the Saratoga National Historical Park. The existing County-owned right-of-way should be developed into a trail and serve as a model for addressing drainage, liability and other issues raised by adjacent landowners.
- **Trail Master Plan.** A hydrologic and engineering study of the canal should be developed in order to determine the appropriate maintenance strategy for the waterway. A detailed property ownership inventory should also be conducted along

the entire corridor to identify alternatives for the ‘missing links’. These studies should be incorporated into a master plan for the entire 26-mile trail corridor.

**Phase 3 – “Plan 250: Complete the Trail in 10 Years.”** Within the next 10 years, an off-road Champlain Canal Trail could be completed in Saratoga County, and this corridor should continue to be enhanced and mature in time for the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battles of Saratoga in 2027. The trail will serve as a symbol of the County’s patriotism and community spirit. Recommended actions include:

- **Right-of-way:** Develop opportunities to create publicly accessible rights-of way to complete the missing segments, including potential utility, abandoned rail, state highway and other lands.
- **Work with Willing Donors:** Establish easements, tax benefits and other opportunities for creating public access along the entire corridor, in cooperation with adjacent landowners, non-profits and local government.
- **Establish a “Made in Saratoga” Trail:** Incorporate local materials such as crushed stone, sod, dairy products and sculpture as an integrated element of design.
- **Implement Major Projects:** The Dix Bridge, completion of the ‘missing links,’ connections to Lakes to Locks Passage, new trailheads and a comprehensive interpretation and marketing program will be developed in this phase.

By the year 2027, similar projects will have developed along the entire New York State Canalway Trail system, creating a more than 500-mile network across the state. Saratoga County will be in the unique position of being the only county which has trails along both the Erie and Champlain Canals. The Lake George Bikeway, Glens Falls Feeder Canal, the Saratoga County Heritage Trail and the Mohawk-Hudson Bikeway will create an interconnected system of alternative transportation, recreation and heritage tourism. The Champlain Canal Trail will be a legacy that Saratoga County - and the entire nation – will celebrate.



The Old Champlain Canal Trail will be a year-round facility which benefits residents, visitors and businesses in Saratoga County, as shown in these renderings by local artist Lee Nichols.

### 3 Opportunities

The Champlain Canal Trail corridor in Saratoga County provides a significant opportunity to capitalize on the region's historic, tourism and economic development potential. The corridor has a rich heritage of canal, military and railroad artifacts and locations, including sections of both the original "old" Champlain Canal and the modern Champlain Canal along the Hudson River. Local communities are actively involved in a variety of initiatives which the trail will help to connect. The opportunities for the Saratoga County Champlain Canal Trail are summarized as follows:

1. **Economic Development.** Greenways and trails have been documented to have significant economic benefits. Based on the 1998 study "Thinking Green" by the Florida Department of Environmental Conservation, day use trail expenditures range from \$3.97 per day to \$14.88 per day. Typical spending for overnight visitors can range between \$25 and \$125 per day. Key factors include the length of the trail system, duration of stay, location in relation to population centers, and availability of facilities.

Other studies from across the nation show annual average expenditures between \$1.5 million and \$4 million dollars per year along similar trail corridors. In Minnesota, a 1990 study of the 36 mile Root River Trail showed the average visitor traveled 82 miles to reach the trail, stayed 2.5 hours and spent approximately \$10. Before the trail opened in the community of Lansboro, there was only one place to stay overnight. As of May 1994, there were more than a dozen. Local food and drink receipts increased 84% and lodging receipts in the county increased 800% between 1986 and 1992. Similar numbers have been achieved along the 35 mile Pinellas Trail in Florida and the 20 mile Northern Central Rail Trail (NCRT) in Maryland. The NCRT supports an estimated 264 jobs, with visitor spending estimated at \$3.3 million / year and with an annual tax revenue of more than \$300,000. The following table shows a cross-section of data on trail expenditures from seven trails in the U.S.:

TRAIL NAME & LOCATION	LENGTH (Miles)	ANNUAL VISITORS	TOTAL EXPEND. BY USERS	EXPEND. PER VISITOR	PAVEMENT TYPE
Heritage Trail Dubuque, Iowa	26	135,000	\$1,571,400	\$11.64	Compacted Limestone
St. Mark's Trail Tallahassee, Florida	16	170,000	\$2,368,100	\$13.93	Paved
Lafayette/Moraga Trail Berkeley Hills, CA.	7.6	400,000	\$2,008,000	\$5.02	Paved
Little Miami Warren County, OH	27	162,000	\$2,268,000	\$14.00	Paved
Northern Central Rail Trail Baltimore Co., MD.	20	450,000	\$4,027,930	\$8.95	Crushed Stone
Elroy-Sparta Trail Western Wisconsin	32	60,000	\$2,183,432	\$36.39	Crushed Stone
Katy Trail East-West across Missouri	225	250,000	\$3,575,087	\$14.30	Crushed Stone

Source: Schenectady Urban Bike Route Master Plan, Edwards & Kelcey / Trailblazer 2002

The Elroy-Sparta Trail, a 32 mile crushed stone facility in Wisconsin, reported in 1997 that peak season hotel rooms along the trail are booked up to a year in advance. More than half the users surveyed reported annual incomes above \$50,000 and trail related spending exceeds \$2.1 million per year. **“There has been tremendous economic growth as a result of the trail,”** said Sharon Berns, director of the Sparta Area Chamber of Commerce. Businesses supported by trails include campgrounds, motels, coffee shops, bed and breakfasts, bike shops, quick markets, gas stations and restaurants. The benefits of a trail will depend on a variety of factors, but these examples provide a cross-section of success stories which Saratoga County can emulate.

2. **Heritage Tourism.** Travel for the purposes of touring historic and cultural sites is a significant resource in Saratoga County. More than 150,000 visitors come to the Saratoga National Historical Park (“the Battlefield”) each year. The new National Veterans Cemetery, General Schuyler’s house, the Waterford Canal Harbor Visitor’s Center, the Saratoga Apple Farm, the restored Battle of Saratoga Monument, and the Visitor’s Center at Schuyler’s Canal Park are just a few of the trail’s attractions. Additional opportunities include cultural tours of the Italian heritage in Mechanicville, the Hudson River Valley’s transportation history, and interpretation of the Old Champlain Canal. The County’s waterfront border is the junction of New York’s three major heritage corridors – the Hudson River National Heritage Corridor, the Mohawk Valley Heritage Corridor, and the Lakes to Locks Passage All-American Road. All three corridors merge at Waterford within the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor.



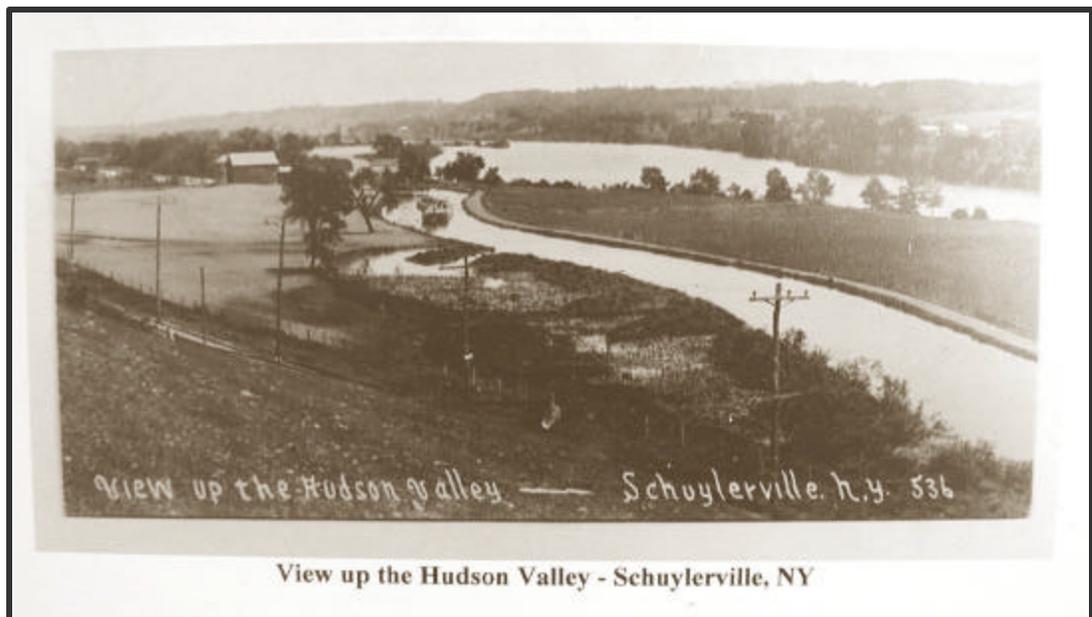
Junction of the Erie and Champlain Canals in Waterford, Saratoga County

The following excerpts from the recent Lakes to Locks Passage All-American Road designation provides an important perspective for the Champlain Canal Trail in the context of heritage tourism in Saratoga County.

“...Lakes to Locks Passage interconnects the story of North America’s first commercial waterway – which has served as a route for migratory birds and native peoples, European explorers, colonial armies, industrial and commercial enterprises and diverse recreational activities – and has built the nations of the United States and Canada. Lakes to Locks Passage, “The Great Northeast Journey,” is your ticket to a unique American experience. Between the Mohawk River in upstate New York and Quebec, Canada flows North America’s first inter-connected waterway that shaped the nation-building

## CHAMPLAIN CANAL TRAIL CONCEPT PLAN - SARATOGA COUNTY, NEW YORK

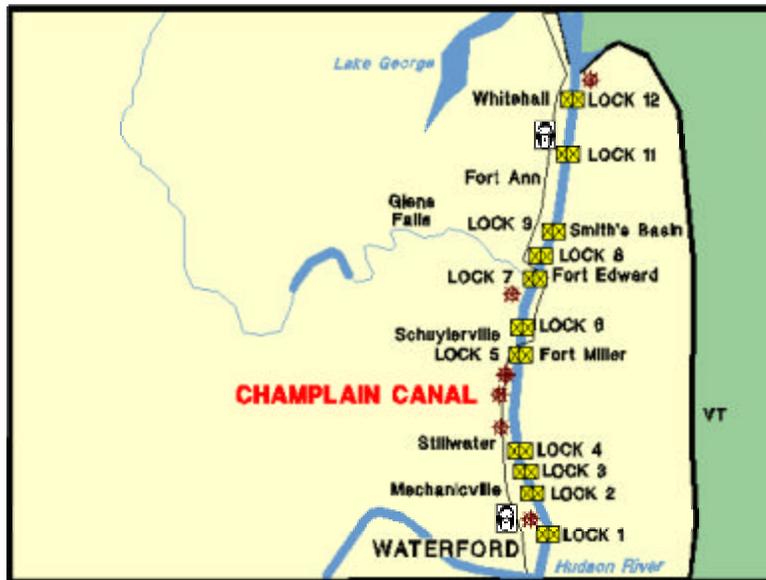
activities of the United States and Canada. By bike, foot, boat or car, Lakes to Locks Passage provides access to diverse historic and recreational sites along 200 miles of the waterway used by migratory animals, explorers, armies, commercial enterprises and now, Byway enthusiasts... "Heritage Tourism" was born in the region we now call Lakes to Locks Passage. The first trips to see our history were made when future American Presidents Thomas Jefferson and James Madison visited the region to escape the heat of Congressional politics in Philadelphia, and see where the battles for freedom were fought. The same historic battlefields and forts that they came to visit in 1791, are open today – Saratoga Battlefield at Stillwater, Schuylerville, Fort Edward, Whitehall, Fort Ticonderoga, Crown Point, and Valcour Island – all offer tours and reenactments. There is no doubt that Lakes to Locks Passage is the world's premiere destination to learn about the nation-building activities that have led to the peace and prosperity found in today's United States and Canada. The story of Lakes to Locks Passage's varied past comes alive in the buildings of our villages and hamlets! A series of "Waypoint Communities" have been designated to "meet and greet" the visitor of the byway. Nearly every one now has a biking/walking tour which allows the visitor to find the wealth of the iron industry written in the flamboyant style of commercial buildings, and appreciate the 19th-century resort atmosphere and architectural details milled from local lumber..."



An historic photo of the Old Champlain Canal in Saratoga County shows both the original "old" canal and the Hudson River, which is the route of the modern Champlain Canal.

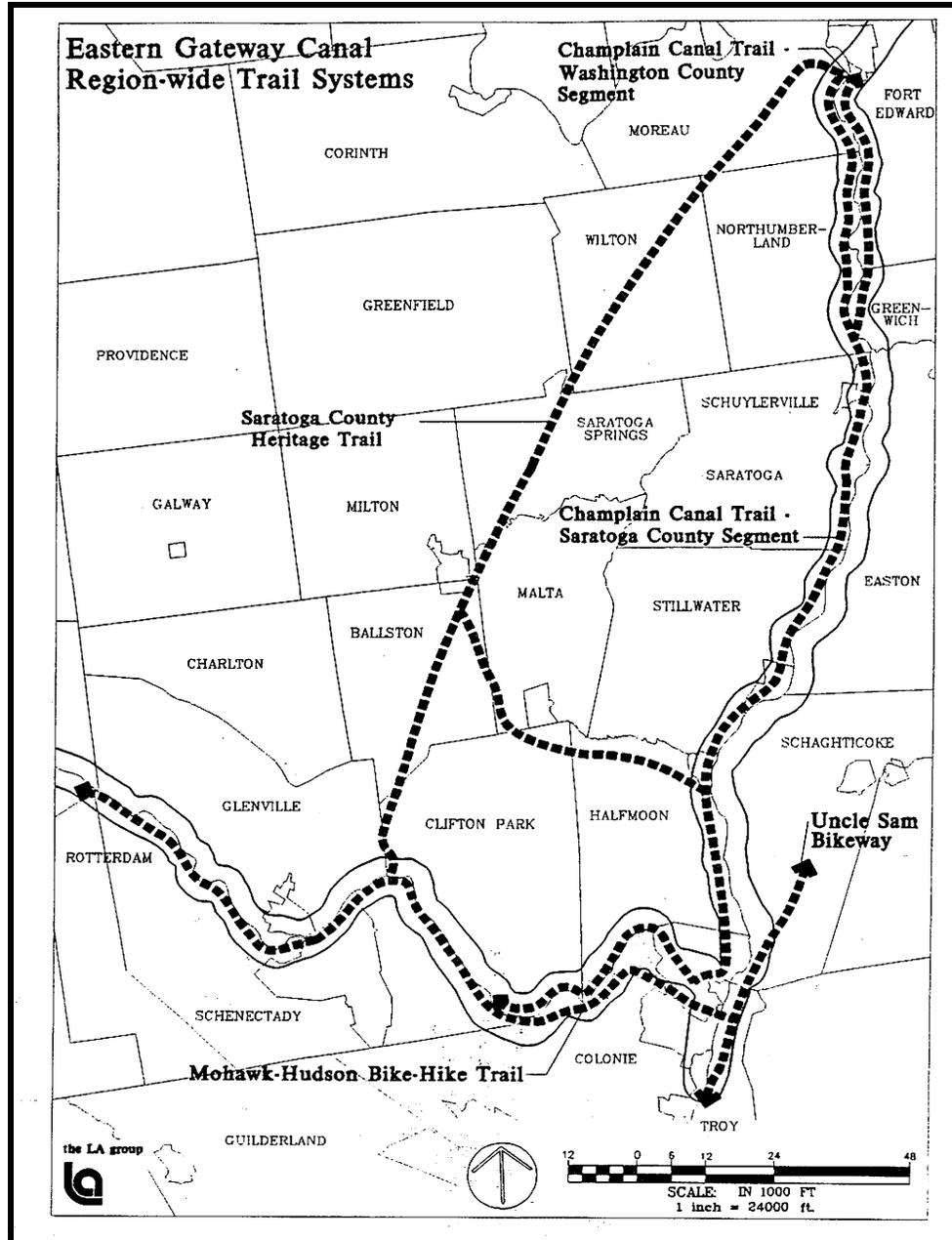
In order for this extraordinary heritage tourism experience to reach its potential, the historic resources of this corridor must be preserved, interpreted and enhanced. The existing sections of the Old Champlain Canal are virtually invisible to modern travelers on Routes 4 and 32. There are currently only a handful of historic markers, and most of these are in locations without roadside turnouts, information kiosks or other visitor amenities. But the potential for eastern Saratoga County to turn these hidden assets into an international heritage tourism destination is significant.

3. **Transportation & Recreation.** Shared-use paths can serve both transportation and recreation purposes. This relationship is similar to the 'transportation' purpose of a road to a ski resort or a beach – the facility is used for travel between destinations, some of which is utilitarian in nature and some of which is for pleasure. Although few trips along the Champlain Canal would likely be bicycle commuters to Albany or Glens Falls, the path will provide for routine transportation between and within the communities of Schuylerville, Stillwater, Mechanicville and Waterford. This will include trips to school, shopping and other utilitarian travel. In addition, the Champlain Canal Trail would connect with the Saratoga County Heritage Trail system along the former D&H Railroad corridor from Mechanicville through Round Lake, Malta and Saratoga Springs.



Map showing locations of Champlain Canal Locks and NY State Bike Route 9 in Saratoga County

At the regional scale and from a tourism / recreation perspective, the Champlain Canal Trail in Saratoga County forms a missing link between existing trail systems in Warren and Albany Counties. The Glens Falls Feeder Canal Trail System and the Warren County / Lake George Bikeway form an extensive off-road network to the north. This system was originally constructed in 1977 with three federal grants totaling over \$640,000. Use counts in 1980 showed more than 2300 trips / week. In 1995, a Warren County follow-up study showed those numbers had more than tripled with total use exceeding 100,400 trips annually. Recently, the Warren County bikeway was extended into downtown Glens Falls, and it is expected that the annual use numbers will continue to increase. (Source: Warren County Bikeway Survey, 1995). A similar study was conducted by Schenectady County in 1998 to evaluate use along the existing Erie Canal / Mohawk-Hudson Trail. That facility was shown to have more than 450,000 visits by bicyclists, runners, skaters and pedestrians. (Source: Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail Analysis of Trail Use, November 1998). With such heavily used facilities located to the immediate north and south of Saratoga County, the potential exists to create a facility with equal or greater use.



Potential Saratoga County trails identified in the 1994 Eastern Canal Gateway Master Plan.

4. **Funding.** Federal transportation funding (ISTEA and TEA-21) has provided significant resources for the Canalway Trail. Washington County and NYS Canal Corporation have obtained a Federal Transportation Enhancement grant to complete the portion of the Canalway Trail from Ft. Edward to Ft. Ann. That construction is scheduled for 2003/2004. In 2002, the City of Mechanicville applied for similar funding to develop its section of the Champlain Canal Trail. The Village of Schuylerville is developing the trail between Lock 5 and the Schuyler House, and this project will connect with the Bi-County Park proposed by Saratoga and Washington Counties.

The Village of Stillwater has applied to the Empire State Development Corporation for Community Enhancement Facilities Assistance Program (CEFAP) funding to develop a Riverfront Park in the Old Champlain Canal corridor. It is important to note that the current federal legislation (TEA-21) is in the process of being reauthorized by Congress, and the potential exists for the Saratoga County Champlain Canal Trail to receive some of this new transportation funding. Other state and federal resources are available, including the Land and Water Conservation Fund and the NYS Environmental Protection Fund. There are also a variety of potential local public, private and non-profit opportunities to support development of the trail.

- 5. Community Support.** The local Saratoga County Heritage Trails Committee has existed since the early 1990's. In 1996, the group published the *Saratoga County Heritage Trails Handbook for Action*. The group has been formally designated as the Saratoga County Bikeway / Greenway Committee by the Board of Supervisors. Local efforts are also underway with active groups in Waterford, Mechanicville, Halfmoon Stillwater and Schuylerville. The National Park Service has played a supportive role and provided technical assistance in developing the *Handbook for Action*. The Saratoga Land Trust acquired an important section of Old Champlain Canal right-of-way in the early 1990's when it was sold by the County as part of a tax auction. The 1994 Eastern Canal Gateway Plan included the Old Champlain Canal trail. Local community master plans, such as the Town of Stillwater Comprehensive Plan, include the trail. The Lakes to Locks Passage project has created significant interest in the local business community, and received national recognition with the designation of the byway as an All-American Road by the U.S. Department of Transportation.

There have been a number of outreach efforts associated with the various initiatives along the Hudson River and the Champlain Canal in Saratoga County. In April, 2002, a public meeting was held in Stillwater to discuss the possibilities for the Old Champlain Canal Trail. The meeting included both supporters and opponents to the project. Key issues included the lack of trails in the community, liability concerns, flood management, economic development and trail management. A summary of the meeting provided by Councilwoman Joanne Winchell stated in part, "...*The purpose was to furnish information and to solicit views from residents. This goal was accomplished. Of the twenty-three residents present, only three families adjacent to the proposed concept spoke in opposition.*"

As part of the development of the Saratoga County Champlain Canal Trail Concept Plan, another public meeting was held on August 20, 2002 at Olympian Hall in Schuylerville. More than thirty-five people from throughout the region participated. Presentations were made about the New York State Canalway Trail System and the potential for trails in Saratoga County. Breakout groups identified the issues, opportunities and constraints presented in this Concept Plan. At the conclusion of the meeting, a participant (who had initially been perceived as opposing the trail) summarized the meeting by saying, '*This trail is a great idea – but only if we can resolve the issues identified by adjacent landowners.*' Additional meetings were held with property owners in Stillwater, the National Park Service, the New York State Canal Corporation, Lakes to Locks Passage and the Adirondack School. A second public meeting was held at Schuylerville High School on September 24, 2002. Specific constraints identified during the planning process and potential solutions are presented in the following sections.

## 4 Constraints

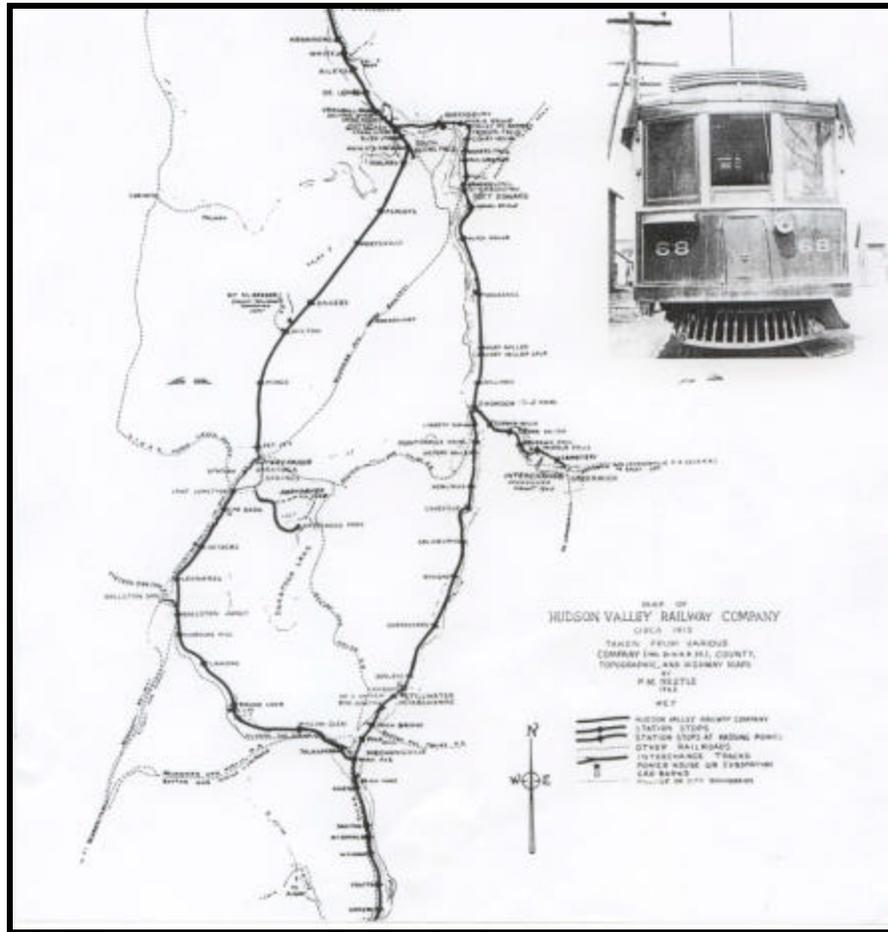
As with any project of this scale and scope, there are issues which need to be resolved in order for the project to succeed. Solutions must be identified in partnership with local communities, adjacent landowners, public agencies and other partners. The constraints which have been identified along the Saratoga County Champlain Canal Trail corridor are summarized below.

1. **Right-of-Way.** Public land ownership along the Champlain Canal is identified in the NYPCA Gap Assessment report as follows:

*“Saratoga County has the opportunity to make a major commitment to the development of trails linking the various historic sites and centers of population within its borders. The county owns an historically important segment of the Old Champlain Canal in the Towns of Stillwater and Saratoga, and can be a major player in the development of the off-road section of the trail. The land which could be used for the trail in this section is owned mainly by NYS Canal Corporation, the City of Mechanicville and Saratoga County. The Village of Schuylerville and NYS Canal Corporation own the trail within the village. The on-road sections are on State Highway or, on city streets in the City of Mechanicville. The Saratoga County Land Conservancy owns approximately one mile of the Old Champlain Canal Towpath in the Town of Stillwater. These landowners all understand the importance of Canalway Trail development and participate actively in seeing the trail completed through Saratoga County.”*

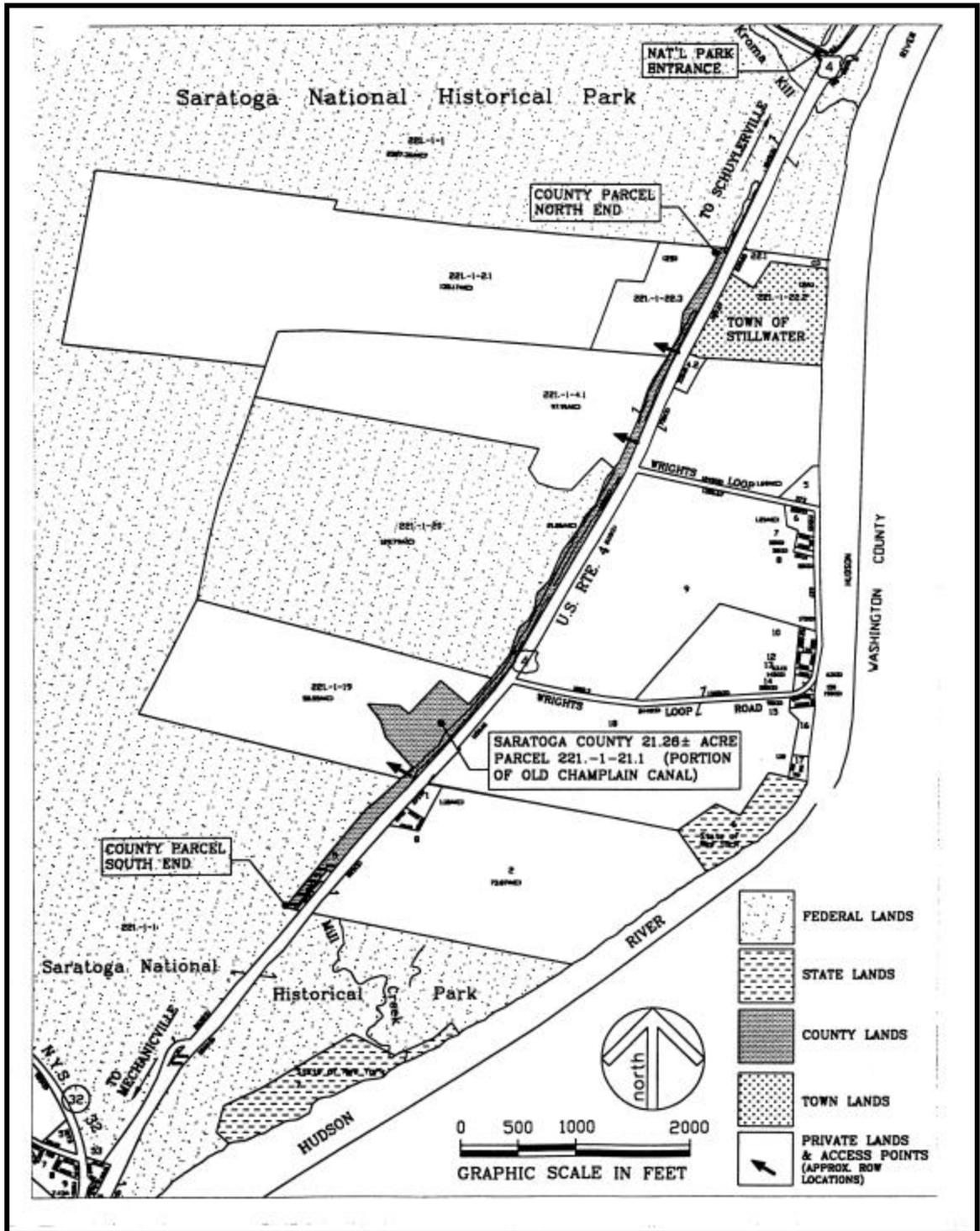
While there is not a continuous publicly owned right-of-way along the entire corridor, more than half of the Old Champlain Canal in Saratoga County is currently in public ownership. Saratoga County, the National Park Service, The Land Trust of Saratoga County, the City of Mechanicville, and the Villages of Schuylerville and Waterford are currently among the largest landowners. The Old Champlain Canal right-of-way offers one of the most significant opportunities for trail development in New York State. While there are gaps in the 26 miles along the route, these segments should be seen as ‘missing links’ which can be connected over time. The longest sections where public access for a trail corridor is not currently identified are between Schuylerville and the Saratoga National Historical Park and from the Village of Stillwater to Mechanicville.

It is possible that missing links in the right-of-way could be identified using utility lines (including water, sewer, fiber optic and other linear systems), highway or railroad properties. Historically, the Old Canal corridor also served as the route of the Hudson Valley Railroad, as shown in the map on the next page. “Rail with Trail” projects, which combine limited use rail lines and carefully designed trails within the rail right-of-way, are another possible resource. The Ballston Lake Trail is example of this type of trail in Saratoga County. Future trail development may include ‘hybrid’ rights of way, which combine utilities with trail uses within the same corridor. This could provide both public access and potential revenue for the trail. While it is beyond the scope of this Concept Plan, a complete right-of-way inventory should be conducted along the entire corridor, including an analysis of tax parcel data and identification of all potential rights-of-way and adjacent property owners.



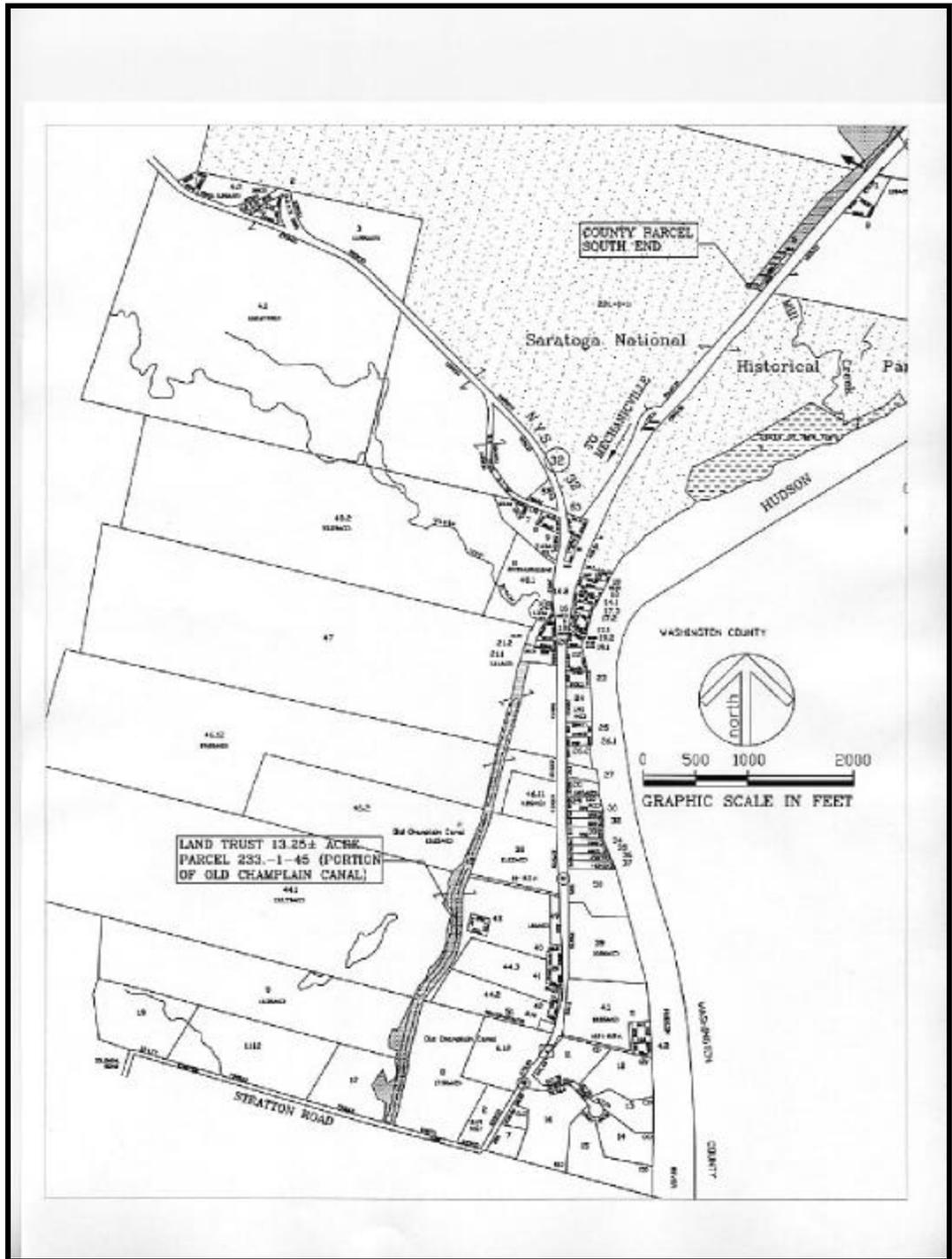
Map of the Hudson Valley Railway Company, ca. 1915 by P.M. Nestle

A significant issue exists related to the potential transfer of Old Champlain Canal property by Saratoga County to adjacent landowners in the Town of Stillwater between the Saratoga Battlefield and Route 4. This land is adjacent to the proposed Riverfront Park in Stillwater, and is referenced in the current Town of Stillwater Comprehensive Plan. This section of trail would complete a loop trail for the Saratoga National Historical Park, connecting the Battlefield to the Hudson River along the historic transportation corridor. As with any linear right-of-way, once segments have been transferred to non-trail uses on adjacent property, re-creating continuous public access becomes virtually impossible. Therefore, Saratoga County should be encouraged to maintain ownership of this land. The county could enter into agreements with other public or private non-profit agencies to develop the trail and manage associated drainage issues. Maps produced from Saratoga County property tax data, showing the right-of-way currently owned by the County and the Land Trust, are shown on the following pages.



Tax parcel data for the County-owned Old Champlain Canal right-of-way adjacent to Saratoga National Historical Park. Map by Paul Olund, Saratoga County Heritage Trails.

CHAMPLAIN CANAL TRAIL CONCEPT PLAN - SARATOGA COUNTY, NEW YORK



Tax parcel data for the Land Trust section of the Old Champlain Canal right-of-way between Stratton Road and Bemis Heights, south of Saratoga National Historical Park. Map by Paul Olund, Saratoga County Heritage Trails.

2. **Drainage.** The historic New York State canals were a sophisticated hydrologic system which combined natural flows with man-made construction to create a navigable channel. Drainage and water supply to the remaining segments of Old Champlain Canal have been significantly compromised, resulting in a linear corridor of drained sections, flood-prone sections and often stagnant water. Although it is unlikely that the Old Canal can be restored for large boats, it is accessible by canoe and kayak for many sections, and simple portages could create a significant water trail system. In addition, field observations confirm that the entire Old Canal towpath from Mechanicville to Waterford can be traveled in its current condition by bicycle with only one small creek crossing south of the Saratoga County Water Treatment facility. Upgrading this section is a worthwhile priority project.

In the Spring of 2002, flooding caused a significant breach in the Old Canal prism along Route 4 and 32 in Stillwater. The resulting temporary repair work was done by NYSDOT, and Saratoga County was billed for the cost of the repairs by the State. Other Old Canal sections have been filled by the construction of Routes 4 and 32, and a variety of land uses have affected the lands which could prevent reconnecting historic flows. Based on field observations, the existing old canal structure can be developed as a multi-use path, but a solution must be implemented to insure proper water flow, drainage and flood prevention.

It is important to note that ownership of Old Champlain Canal rights-of-way may include obligations and responsibilities to maintain the canal waterway. This requirement is included in deed restrictions conveyed when the State transferred ownership of the Old Canal to other public and private entities. A sample deed restriction reads as follows: *"..this deed is given upon the conditions that the party of the second part herein shall drain the land herein conveyed when requested to do so by the proper State authorities in a manner and according to plans and specifications to be drawn up or approved by said State authorities..."*

For a variety of reasons (including historic preservation and habitat protection) it would be preferable to maintain as much of the original structure and waterway as possible, and draining additional sections of the canal should only be seen as a last resort where it may be necessary to bypass obstructions or other right-of-way issues. Although it is beyond the scope of this study, a complete analysis of the historic canal structure should be conducted. The National Park Service will be conducting a hydrologic and engineering study of the Old Canal beginning in the Fall of 2002. The recommendations of that report should lead to a cooperative management program for maintaining the Old Canal waterway.



Photo showing the recent repair to the Old Champlain Canal along route 4.

3. **Liability.** In a June, 1999 paper entitled *Rail Trail Liability Issues – Risk Assessment*, Richard R. Wilson, Esq. states: *‘Ownership of a recreational trail, whether by a governmental entity or a non-profit corporation, provides a host of liability considerations. Ownership of a railroad corridor 60 feet wide and many miles long upon which the public is invited for recreational purposes ensures that there will be numerous liability questions for which the trail organization must anticipate and plan. Indeed, much of the administration and management of a rail trail is directed to minimizing risks and reducing liability exposures by providing a safe and user friendly recreational experience for the trail patron.’*

Generally, there are three ways to deal with liability issues: 1) protections provided by state law, 2) by insurance and 3) through appropriate risk management. Under New York State’s General Obligations Law, sec. 9-103, landowners who allow public use of their land for recreational use without fee are generally not liable for trail-related injuries. This protection can be summarized as follows:

*“A landowner is not required to keep their premises safe or to warn visitors of hazardous conditions, structures, or activities on their property. However, landowners cannot deliberately endanger people who enter for recreational purposes. People entering and using privately owned lands for recreational purposes are responsible for exercising due care in their use of the land. This liability protection is not valid if the landowner collects fees or rent for the use of the land...”*

The New York Recreational Use Statute and the Private Landowner  
NPS Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program, [www.nps.gov/rtc](http://www.nps.gov/rtc)

Most publicly-owned trails are covered by insurance policies based on the jurisdiction’s land area. Since trails are generally long, narrow corridors with small amounts of acreage, the cost of including a new trail is generally covered within existing municipal policies. For non-profit land trusts, trails can be covered by “Green Umbrella” insurance provided by the Land Trust Alliance. Most private properties adjacent to public trails are covered by existing homeowners or general property insurance policies. Trails located on private property can also purchase additional liability coverage through their insurance provider. Appropriate risk management strategies include careful design of trail-roadway crossings, maintenance of the trail surface, signage indicating rules and regulations, trail patrols and emergency response plans.

4. **Multiple Use:** While the general discussion of this Concept Plan is oriented to walking and bicycling, a full range of multiple uses will be included in the trail corridor. Running, in-line and ice skating, skiing, wheelchairs, equestrian, nature watching and other non-motorized uses will make up the majority of trail travel. Because of the requirements of certain funding sources and the nature of the trail surface, motorized trail uses, including ATV and snowmobile use will need to be addressed on a local level. For example, the restored Dix Bridge over the Hudson River will provide an important corridor for snowmobile use in the winter, but National Park Service lands will have different regulations which limit use, including motorized trail vehicles and in-line skating. With careful coordination amongst the full range of trail user groups, win-win solutions can be developed for all users.

5. **Adjacent Landowner Concerns.** As with many developing trail projects, the issues of property ownership are critical concerns which must be listened to and resolved. Near the Saratoga Battlefield, access across the right-of-way is needed for agricultural equipment. Potential trespassing by equestrians onto the Saratoga Sod Farm and adjacent private property has been raised as an issue. Security and potential vandalism of nearby homes has been a particularly significant concern for property owners in the vicinity of Stratton Road in the Town of Stillwater. In that section, the Saratoga Land Conservancy owns a mile-long section of the Old Canal right-of-way. This property is partially landlocked by private lands, and some adjacent landowners have expressed opposition to the trail. Similar issues have been raised and resolved on a variety of trails in New York State, and it essential that these issues be taken seriously along the Saratoga County Champlain Canal Trail.



Cyclists passing through a farm equipment crossing along the Erie Canal Trail in Colonie, N.Y.

6. **SEQRA / Preservation & Environmental Issues** The Old Champlain Canal was nominated for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places in 1973. The listing is included in the National Register Information System ([www.nr.nps.gov/iwisapi](http://www.nr.nps.gov/iwisapi)) as designation number 1976-09-01. The original application included the following quote: *“Although today the old canal route is abandoned and the locks are full of grass, Saratoga and Washington Counties should not forget that they owe the development of their communities to this ditch of stagnant water – once a marvel of the day – the Old Champlain Canal.”* This statement is still true today, and field observations confirm that nationally significant historic resources exist throughout the Old Champlain Canal route in Saratoga County. The canal corridor is also included in both the State Open Space Plan and the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP).



Historical marker at the location of General Gates home (L) and an intact Old Canal lock located south of the G.E. facility in Waterford (R) are examples of the historic resources along the Old Champlain Canal in Saratoga County.

**NOTE:** It is significant to recognize that the inclusion of the existing publicly-owned Old Champlain Canal right-of-way on the National Register requires that any attempted sale or transfer of the property would have to follow a public review process in compliance with the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQR) in New York State. While these regulations do not prohibit the transfer of Old Champlain Canal lands, they do require adherence to the law in order to avoid litigation. Specifically, SEQR Section 617.4 (9) states that the following would constitute a Type 1 action:

“...any Unlisted action (unless the action is designed for the preservation of the facility or site) occurring wholly or partially within, or substantially contiguous to, any historic building, structure, facility, site or district or prehistoric site that is listed on the National Register of Historic Places...”

A Type 1 action would require a coordinated review, with the potential for a state agency serving as the lead agency, an environmental assessment process and a public comment period.

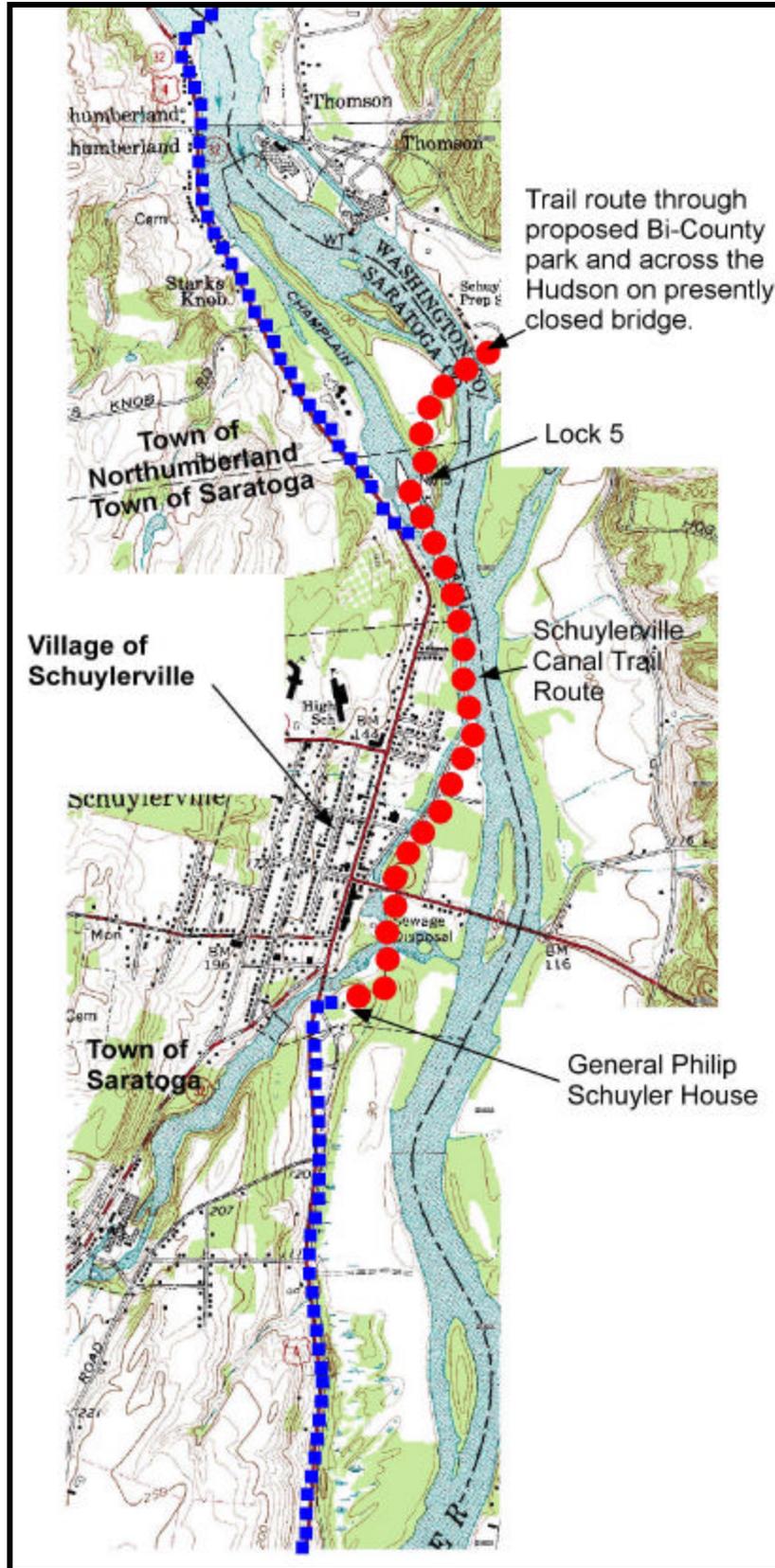
Additional studies of the trail corridor should also document the former canal as wildlife and plant species habitat. Recent field observations of fauna included deer, beaver, great blue heron, kingfisher, white heron, red-tail hawk, turtles and rabbit along the corridor.

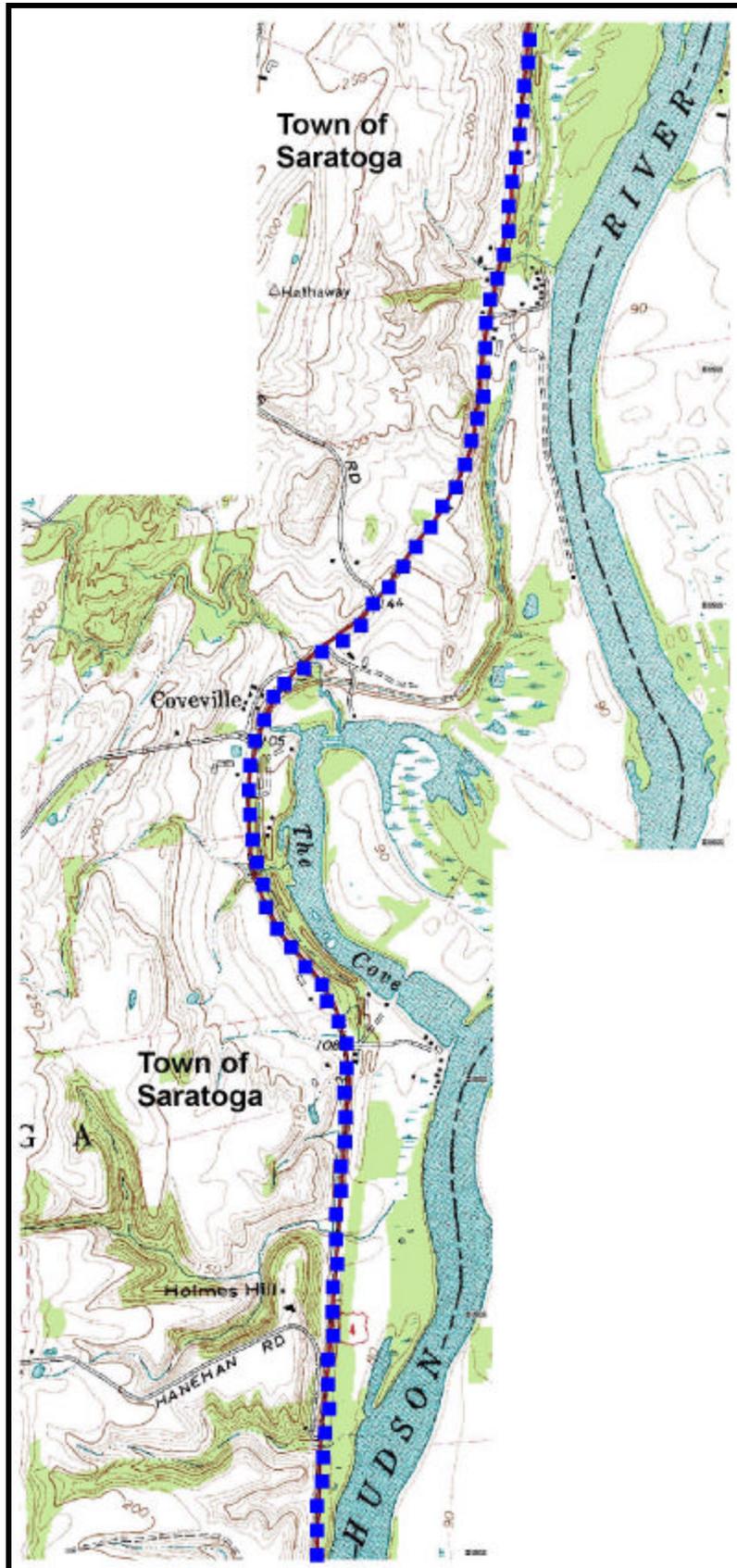


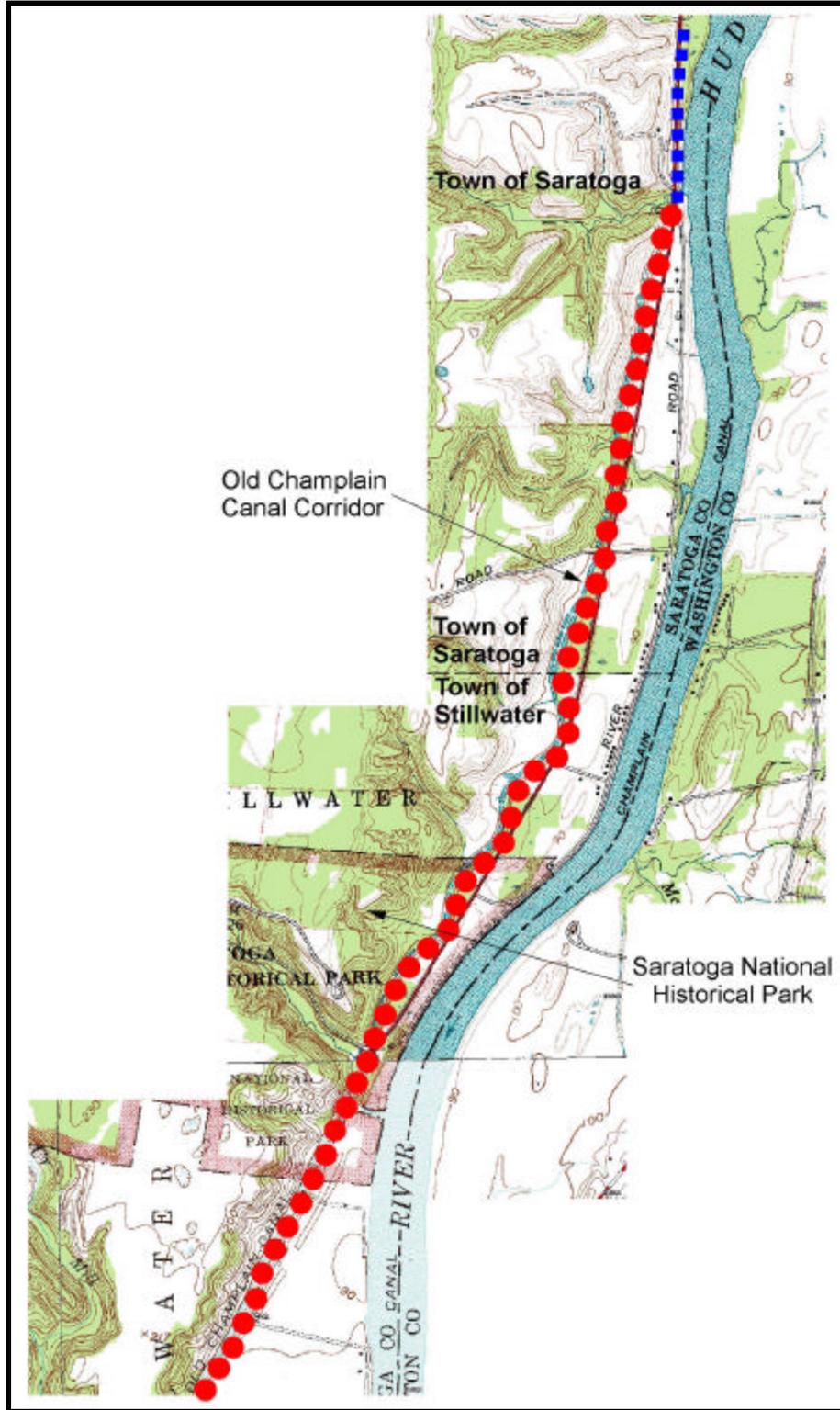
Deer crossing Route 4 in Stillwater. The Old Champlain Canal is an important wildlife corridor.

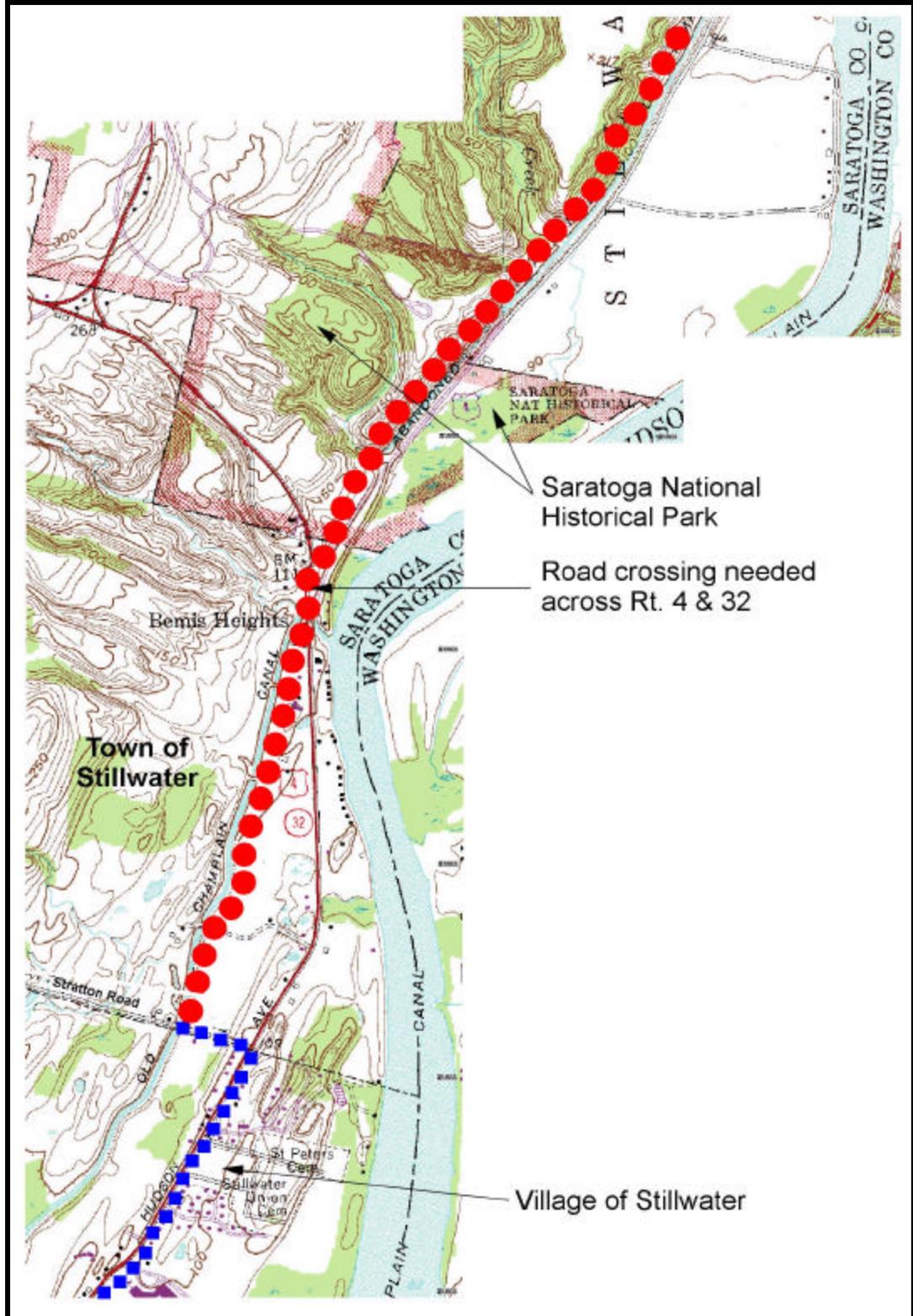
## 5 Corridor Mapping

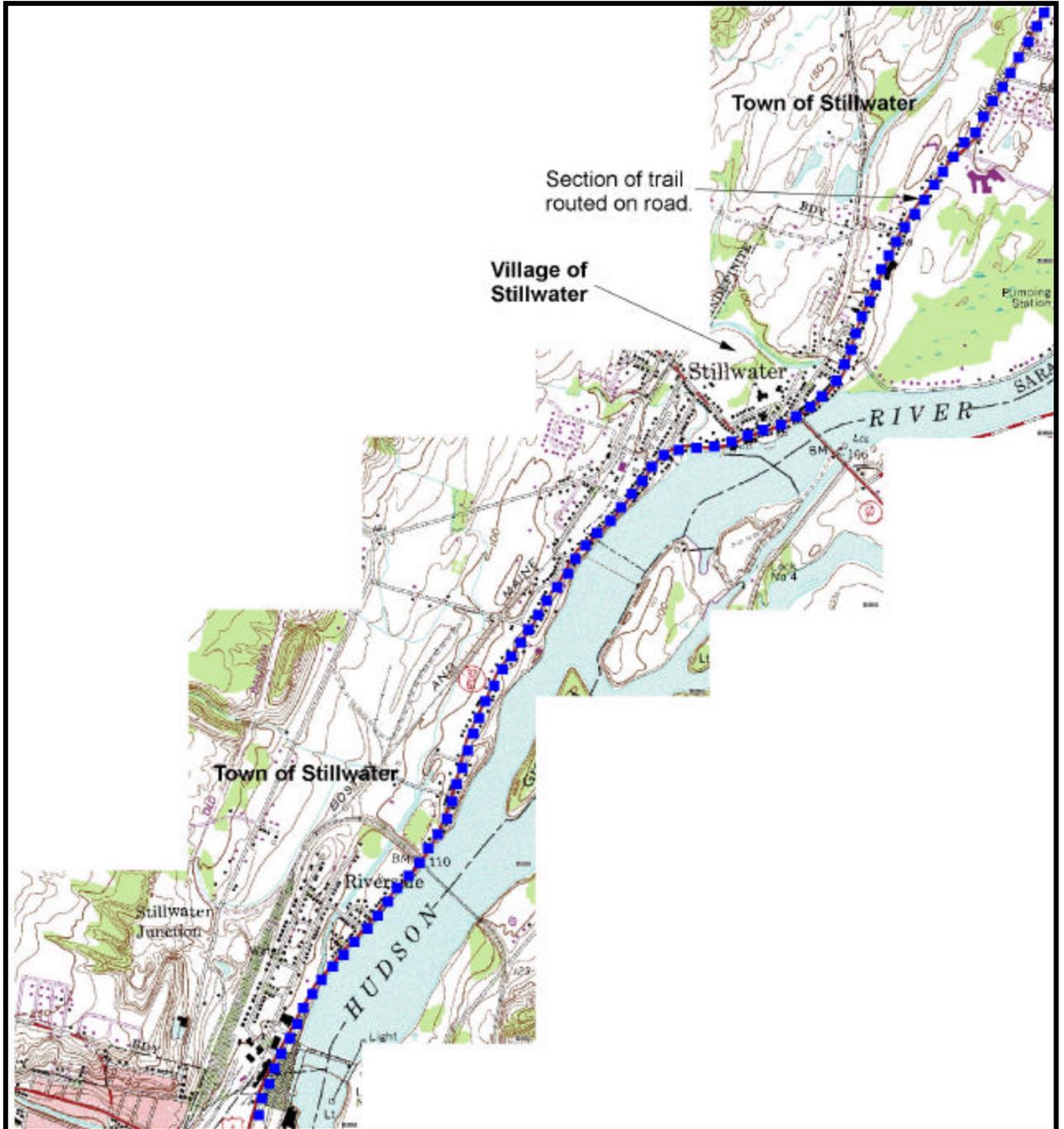
In 1999, the New York Parks & Conservation Association (NYPCA) produced a *'Gap Segment Assessment Report'* for the New York State Canalway Trail Partnership. That report was based on County tax maps and other existing data. Ongoing development of detailed segments of the corridor should include detailed property parcel data prior to advancing specific trail improvements. The following maps are reproduced from the NYPCA document to illustrate the general extent of public land ownership along the corridor in Saratoga County and the potential for developing these lands into the Champlain Canal Trail. The maps are oriented in sequence from north to south, beginning in Northumberland and ending in Waterford. Red circles indicate areas with a majority of land in public ownership, blue squares indicate on-road sections.

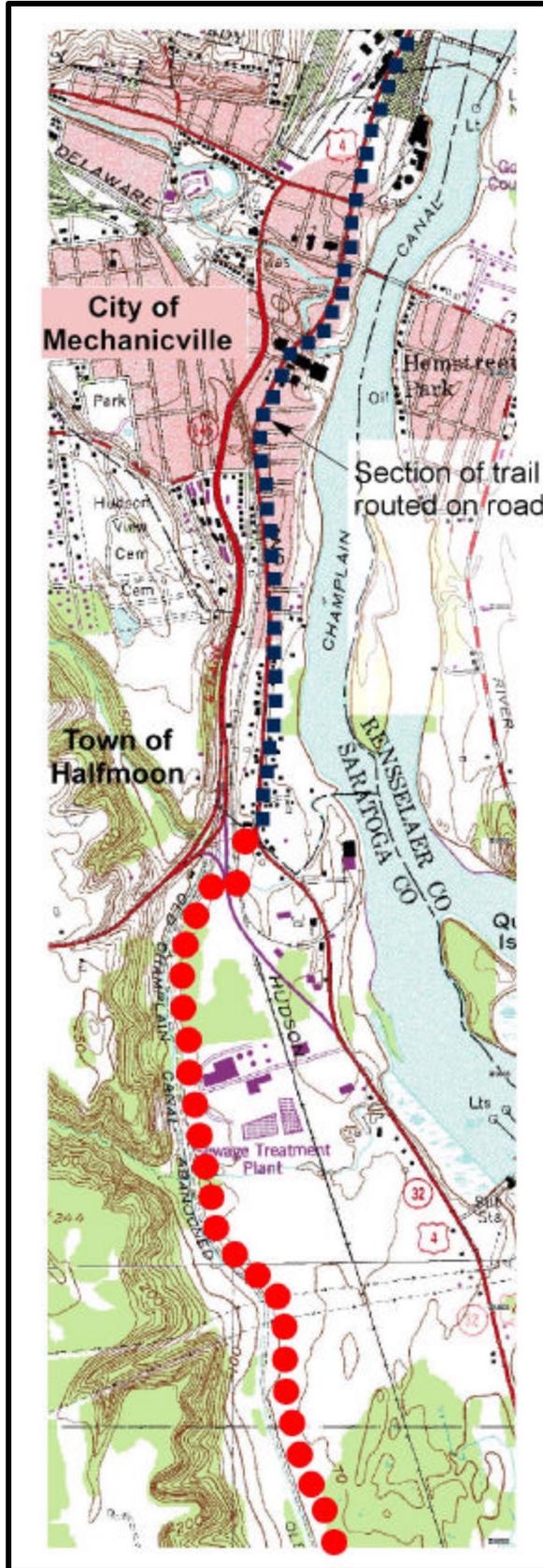


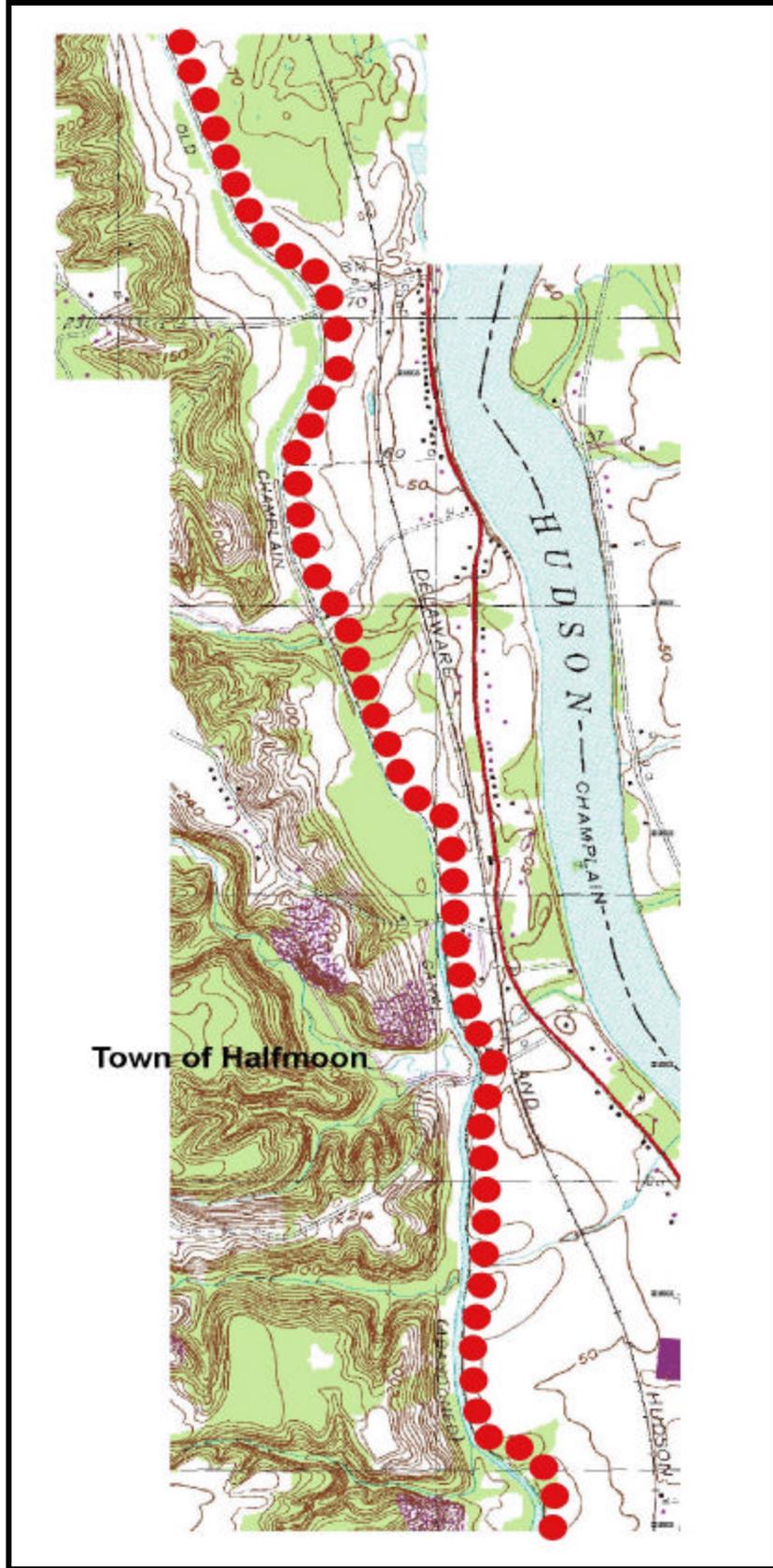


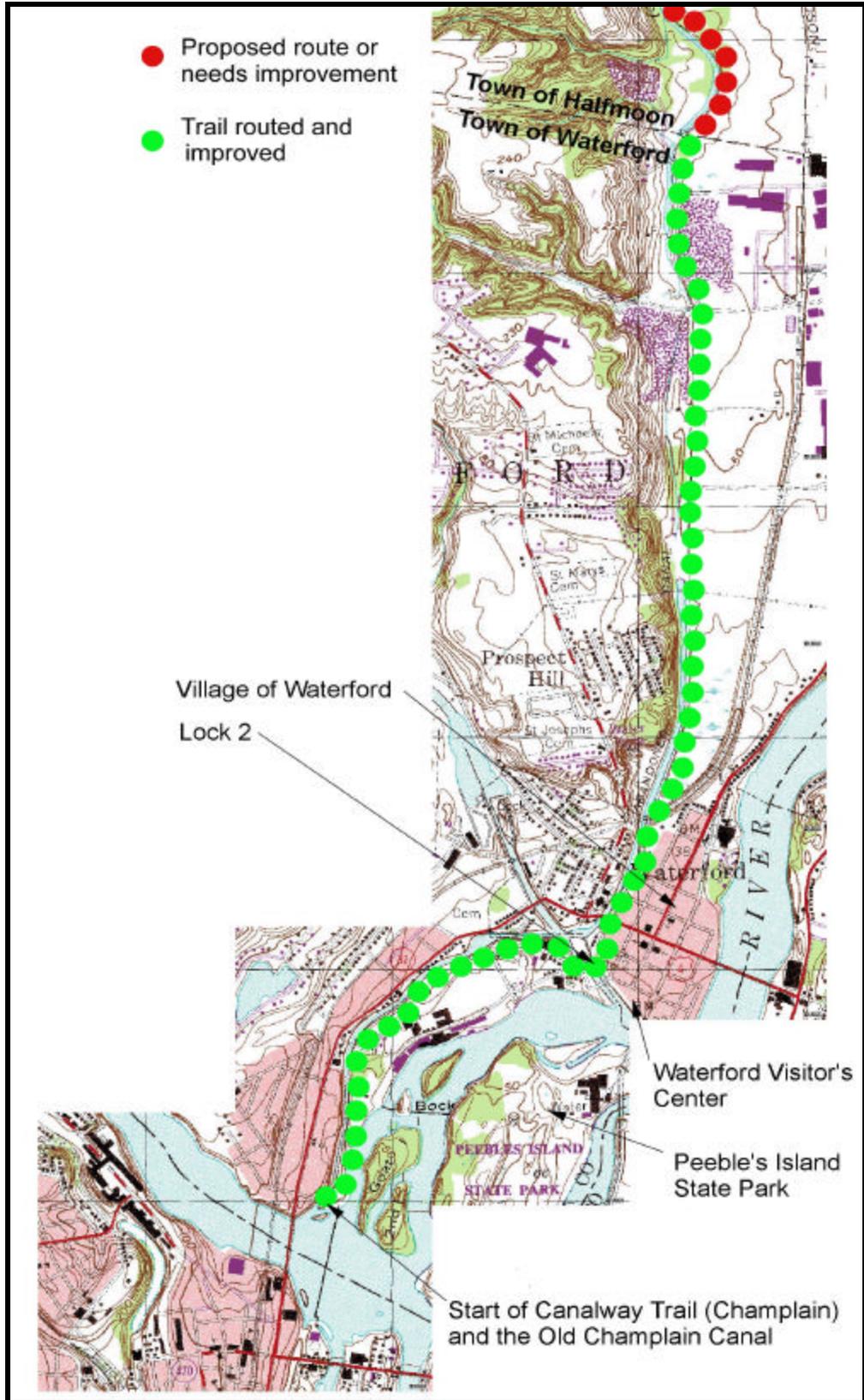






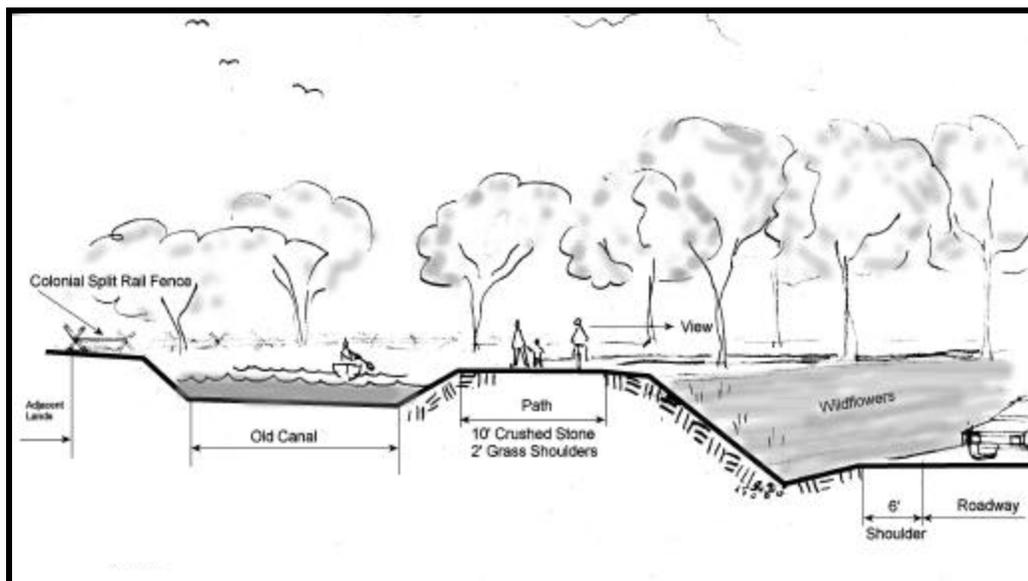






## 6 Concept Plans

- Concept # 1 - Shared Use Path.** A shared use path, separated from the road and traveling along the preserved Old Champlain Canal right-of-way would be an ideal solution for this corridor. Currently, approximately half of the corridor includes public ownership of the right-of-way. The remaining sections include urban sections of Mechanicville, Stillwater and Schuylerville, and sections in other communities where right-of-way has not been preserved. A separate right-of-way is well suited to families, seniors, pedestrians and others who do not want to travel along the roadway with its noise, fumes, large trucks, speeding vehicles, exposure to the sun and distance from the historic canal resources.

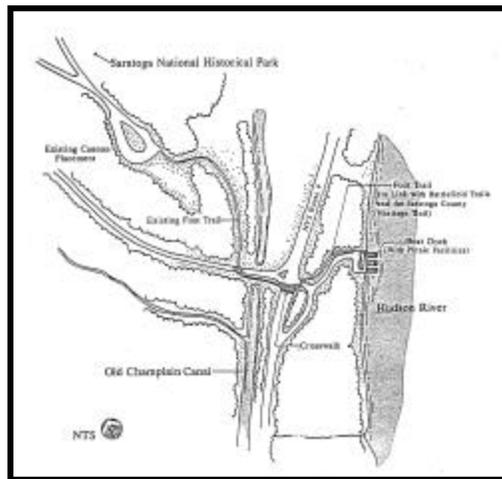


Cross-section showing multi-use path along the Old Champlain Canal towpath.

This type of design is similar to the recently completed section of the Erie Canalway Trail near the Oriskany Battlefield National Historic Site, which was developed with federal transportation funding. Segments where it is possible to implement shared-use path segments along existing Old Canal rights-of-way in Saratoga County include:

- Waterford to Mechanicville:** The City of Mechanicville, in partnership with the Town of Halfmoon and the Town and Village of Waterford has submitted a TEA-21 Transportation Enhancements grant application to NYSDOT for the 6-mile section from the Waterford landfill north to Route 146 in Halfmoon. The proposed project cost is \$1.355 million dollars, including a value of \$271,000 for municipally-owned right-of-way and an estimated \$1.084 million dollar construction cost. This amounts to approximately \$225,000 per mile. The proposed trail surface in this section is asphalt, and one small bridge is included in the project. This section will connect to the existing section of trail from the beginning of the Old Champlain Canal through the Village of Waterford, creating a total of 9.5 miles of trail between Mechanicville and the junction of the Erie and Champlain Canals.

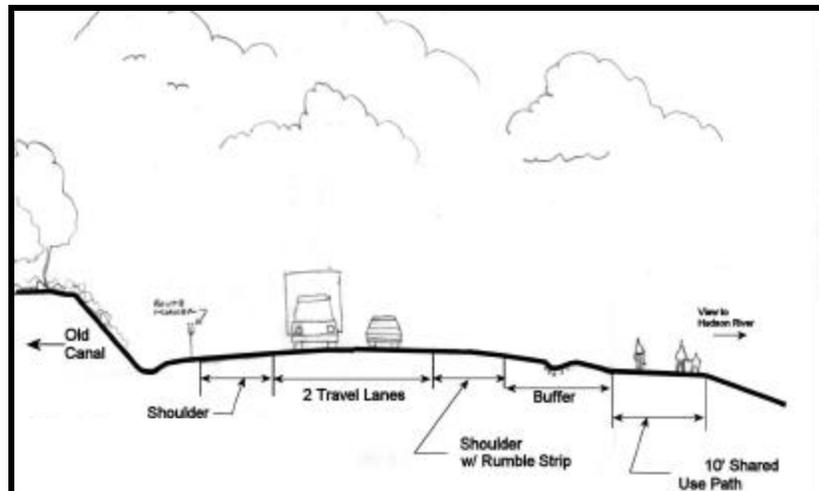
2. **Schuylerville to Bi-County Park:** The Village of Schuylerville has been working with the National Park Service and several community organizations to develop the Old Champlain Canal trail through the village from the Schuyler House National Historic site north to Champlain Canal lock 5 and the old Dix Bridge to Washington County. Saratoga and Washington counties have been cooperating to create a bi-county park which would include re-opening the Dix bridge to trail use. The existing trail through Schuylerville is an unimproved grass and soil surface suitable to walking and cross country skiing, and to a limited extent, bicycling. The Dix Bridge is closed to all traffic due to needed repairs to its footings in the Hudson River. This section of the trail includes some of the most significant historical sites in Saratoga County, including the field where the British surrendered in the Battle of Saratoga. Current cost estimates for this section of trail include approximately \$1.5 - \$2 million for the Dix Bridge restoration, and another \$500,000 for the trail through the village, including two small bridges over the canal to allow boat traffic into the center of town. This section is approximately 1.5 miles long.
  
3. **a) Saratoga Battlefield / Old Canal Trail:** Saratoga County, the National Park Service and the Land Trust of Saratoga County currently own most of the Old Champlain Canal right-of-way between Stratton Road in Stillwater and the junction of River Road and Route 4 in the town of Saratoga. The 3 miles section between Bemis Heights and Lohnes Road offers the potential for both the Canalway trail through the county and for completing the loop trail system within the Saratoga Battlefield. In 1998, The New York State Canal Corporation submitted an unsuccessful application for \$787,000 in federal Public Lands Highways funding to build this section of trail. Completing this section will require detailed agreements with adjacent landowners, the National Park Service and other partners. Key issues are maintenance of the canal drainage system, and resolution of liability concerns for adjacent landowners. The National Park Service has already improved .5 miles of this section with a grass surface and excellent interpretive displays. The 1994 Eastern Canal Gateway Plan called for improved access to the Hudson River at this location, which would also serve as an important trailhead for residents and visitors, as shown below:



Graphic from the 1994 Eastern Canal Gateway Plan by the LA Group.

**b) Stillwater to Bemis Heights Trail:** The 1-mile section between Bemis Heights and Stratton Road in Stillwater will require careful negotiation and partnership. This section should be considered as a subsequent phase once solutions have been identified for the northern section in the Town of Stillwater. There are significant concerns by some adjacent property owners in the vicinity of Stratton Road in Stillwater. The land owned by the Land Trust of Saratoga County is landlocked at its northern end by private properties. In addition, NYSDOT is considering a reconstruction of the intersection of Routes 4 and 32. Field observations of archeological investigations at this location revealed evidence of the Old Champlain Canal within the project area. It is possible that the intersection project will create an opportunity to create a safe trail crossing and resolve the issues raised by residents in this area.

4. **Missing Links:** A detailed, property-by-property analysis will need to be completed in order to determine the potential for completing missing links along the trail. A 'willing donor' system could be established for landowners who wish to donate, sell or establish public access to the Old Champlain Canal right-of-way or parallel pathways which will connect existing trail segments. The potential exists in Mechanicville for a 'rail-with-trail' corridor along the existing freight tracks west of downtown. State Department of Transportation, utility and other rights-of-way may provide alternatives to following the literal route of the Old Canal in some locations. Providing a trail on a new alignment parallel to the State highway requires filling and drainage of adjacent lands, will not provide the same quality of experience as being adjacent to the canal and will require new land acquisitions. This alternative is preferable only when it is not possible to provide the trail along the old canal.



Where other right-of-way options do not exist, or to bypass specific constraints for a short distance, a shared-use path could be developed adjacent to the highway.

2. **Concept # 2 – On Road Route.** One alternative for the Champlain Canal Trail in Saratoga County is to develop an on-road route for bicycling. New York State DOT has already included Route 4 and 32 along the Hudson River as part of State Bike Route 9, which runs from New York City to Montreal. The State Bike Route System was developed in the mid-1990's as an alternative to off-road trails for experienced cyclists who are capable of sharing the road with motor vehicles. Most of Route 4 has

paved shoulders which meet NYSDOT criteria for on-road cycling, although pavement conditions in several sections are deteriorated and in need of repair. Signage, pavement markings, interpretation, rest stops and lane striping could also be upgraded to enhance the cycling experience.



New York State Bike Route 9 signs along NYS Route 4 (L). Heavy truck traffic exists along the route, along with vehicle speeds in excess of 50mph. (R)



Bicycle pavement markings only exist in a few locations along Bike Route 9. Bike route symbols (L) and tour markings for special events (R) provide information for cyclists and motorists.



Pavement conditions and shoulder widths vary along Bike Route 9 in Saratoga County.

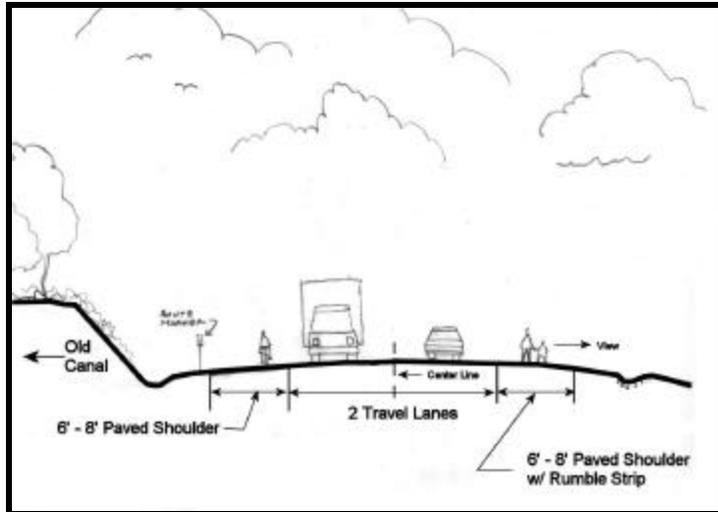
The on-road route will not provide the quiet, tree-lined, traffic-free experience of a separate trail. The road surface will probably not serve as a pedestrian facility, since cross-slope grades of the paved shoulders may exceed the minimum grades required for ADA accessible routes. An on road route will also not provide a safe facility for

inexperienced cyclists and families. Ideally, the on-road route will serve as an interim system until a separate path can be constructed which serves the needs of the majority of pedestrians and cyclists. Once a system of separated paths is developed, the on-road route will continue to serve experienced road bicyclists who travel at higher speeds than most trail users. The on-road route would be significantly enhanced by integrating it with Lakes to Locks Passage. Every opportunity should be made to preserve and enhance the heritage tourism potential of the cycling experience, since many scenic byway trips will include combinations of travel by car, bus, boat and bicycle. The following description from Lakes to Locks emphasizes this point:

“Most of the byway route for Lakes to Locks Passage is designated as NYS Biker Route 9, and can accommodate bicycle and pedestrian travel. In addition, within the Lakes to Locks Passage corridor, planners have identified and developed interpretive Bikeway and Walkway routes that utilize rural backroads or public right-of-ways to minimize conflicts between automobiles and bike/ped travel. The terrain and outstanding landscape features of Lakes to Locks Passage makes it an outstanding destination for biking and walking as recreation, as well as modes of transportation along the byway. The byway also allows for water-based travel - the inter-connected lake and rivers allow access by water from anywhere in the world....Begin your travels on US Route 4 in Waterford at the Canal Visitor Center, the junction of the Champlain and Erie Canals where the Mohawk and Hudson Rivers come together. Continue your drive north on US Route 4 through Mechanicville and Stillwater. While driving along US Route 4, note that the Champlain Canal is running parallel to the roadway, often just a "stone's throw" away. Most of the Canal locks have parks and interpretation about the Canal system - keep an eye out for the signs. Be sure to note the junction of US Route 32, and the signs to Saratoga National Historical Park and Saratoga National Cemetery. Continue north through Fort Edward, and on to Whitehall...”

Specific recommendations to enhance the on-road bicycling facility (and as an interim pedestrian path) include:

1. **Pavement Markings:** Provide consistent pavement markings showing both a bicycle and a directional arrow. These markings are included in the NYS Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD).
2. **Shoulder Width:** Provide a continuous six-foot (2m) minimum shoulder along all of Bike Route 9 in Saratoga County, with 8 foot widths included where possible. Consider adding bicycle-compatible rumble strips and wide edge striping to improve safety.
3. **Signage:** Integrate Bike Route 9 and Scenic Byway signage to provide a consistent level of historic interpretation, destination and services information.
4. **Linkages:** Develop clearly marked connections between on and off-road trail segments, with high-visibility crosswalks and appropriate signage. Provide small scale ‘rest areas’ with benches and drinking fountains at key locations.
5. **Mechanicville Route:** Currently, Bike Route 9 is signed on Routes 4 and 32 through the City of Mechanicville. It is recommended that this route be relocated to follow Main Street, which is closer to the Hudson River and the Champlain Canal, has lower traffic volumes, and avoids complex intersections at both Route 67 and Route 4.



Sketch of improvements to the on-road bicycling route along the Old Champlain Canal.

### Concept # 3 – Combined On and Off-Road Trail

It is possible to envision developing the Champlain Canal corridor with a combined on and off-road trail, providing solutions which capitalize on available resources and opportunities. The project can be developed in phases, with reasonable targets and timeframes. These phases are described as follows:

1. **Phase 1 – “The Legacy of 225”** Since 2002 is the 225<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the historic battles of Saratoga, it is important to begin the trail in this year and achieve some ‘early wins’ to generate momentum. In this way, the celebration of Saratoga County in 2002 can become a step towards the future. Short term actions include:
  - a. **Adopt this Plan.** County Board of Supervisors should pass a resolution formally adopting the concept of the trail .
  - b. **Conserve the Canal.** All publicly accessible land, easements and rights-of-way along the trail corridor should be maintained in public ownership.
  - c. **Make Basic Road Repairs.** Saratoga County, NYSDOT and local communities should work cooperatively to enhance Bike Route 9 as an on-road route and interim alignment for the Champlain Canal Trail.
  - d. **Advocacy:** A county-wide ‘friends of the trail’ organization should be established with the resources to support a project of this scale.

2. **Phase 2 – “50 % in 5 Years.”** With a focused effort and the cooperation of public, private and non-profit partners, it is possible to complete half of the off-road trail in Saratoga County in the next five years. This will provide a great opportunity to showcase the long-term potential of the trail. This phase of the project can be described as follows:

- a. **Mechanicville – Waterford Trail.** Pending the outcome of the current funding application, this 6-mile section is ready to be advanced to construction. Completion of this section will create a continuous 9-mile shared use path from Waterford to Mechanicville.
- b. **Schuylerville Trail.** The existing path should be upgraded to a stone dust surface from Lock 5 through the Village of Schuylerville to the Schuyler House. This will provide a year-round facility for bicycling, walking, running, skiing and other uses and will provide an starting point for the trail in the northern half of the county.
- c. **Stillwater / Saratoga Battlefield Trail.** The existing Saratoga County-owned right-of-way should be developed into a trail, but only if key issues raised by adjacent landowners are addressed. The northern 3 miles of this section should be the first priority, and it will serve as a model for other trail segments. Specifically, trespassing by trail users across agricultural lands, liability for adjacent landowners, privacy screening and management of the canal waterway must be resolved. A potential solution to these issues is for the County to enter into agreements with a public or private non-profit agency to develop the trail and manage associated drainage issues. Clearly defined rights-of-way across the trail for adjacent landowners at selected locations would provide the landowners with a minimal liability exposure. Fencing, signage, trail management and landscape design could further mitigate privacy concerns.

Once the northern part of this section is resolved, the trail from Bemis Heights to Stratton Road could be advanced. The trail in Stillwater will serve as a critical milestone: completion of a total of 13.5 miles of trail, more than half of the 26 miles of Old Champlain Canal trail in Saratoga County.

- d. **On-Road Enhancements.** Provide bike lanes, pavement markings and signage within the villages, and continuous 6'-8' paved shoulders along the entire route. Ensure that connections between 'off'road' and 'on-road' sections are clearly defined. Provide bike parking, benches and interpretive elements.

3. **Phase 3 – “Plan 250: Complete the Trail.”** By the time of the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battles of Saratoga, the entire corridor should be developed and operating as a major feature of the New York State Canalway Trail system. This date should serve as a patriotic rallying point for public,

private and non-profit support – but the majority of the actions needed to complete the trail should be accomplished in much less than 25 years.

Within 10 years (by 2012) the following tasks should be accomplished:

- a) Create a continuous public right-of-way along the approximately 10 miles of ‘missing’ trail.
- b) Develop a comprehensive interpretive design of wayside exhibits, signage and other visitor amenities along the route.
- c) Establish a ‘milepoint’ sculpture program with local artists.
- d) Integrate lodgings and historical sites with the Lakes to Locks Passage scenic byway program.
- e) Work with local landowners to establish a ‘willing donor’ program for easements and contributions of wildlife habitat and historic sites along the trail.
- f) Create an economic development program to support trail-oriented businesses including camping, restaurants and retail shops.

With these actions accomplished, the trail will have the opportunity to mature over time into the world-class facility for Saratoga County. By the year 2027, targets of 200,000 trail visitors per year could be reached, along with economic benefits of more than \$2 million dollars per year, based on 80% day use visitors at an average spending rate of \$12 per day and 20% overnight visitors at an average of \$70 per day. When the United States celebrates the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battles of Saratoga, the Old Champlain Canal will be one of Saratoga County’s most important landmarks.



The Champlain Canal Trail will bring together Saratoga’s past, present and future.

## 7 Schematic Cost Estimates

In the 1999 Gap Assessment Report, NYPCA identified the following costs for the proposed Champlain Canal Trail: *“The standard cost estimate for stone dust trail surfacing being used by NYS Canal Corporation for the Canalway Trail at this date is \$85,000 per mile. This estimate does not include trail amenities such as benches, kiosks, parking areas, bridges, camping or picnic areas or signage. In this trail section a portion of the cost has been estimated for on-road signage and striping.”* NYPCA estimated the cost of the project at \$1.160 million dollars. While this amount may be reasonable for a 9.5 mile crushed stone path and 13 miles of minor roadway improvements, these figures should be considered as a ‘baseline’ or first phase of trail development. They do not take into account the complete range of improvements required for full development of the Champlain Canal Trail in Saratoga County.

Ultimately, the corridor should include a both shared use path and a bicycle-friendly roadway design, along with preservation of the Old Canal and interpretation of the historic and cultural significance of the corridor. In the long term, it is possible to create a continuous shared-use path the full length of the County, along with an upgraded Bike Route 9 on-road facility. Typical trail sections are assumed to be 10-foot path surface with 2-foot shoulders each side. Taking into the account the drainage, road crossings, interpretive facilities and other aspects of this corridor, unit cost projections for the Old Champlain Canal trail can be projected as follows:

### Preliminary Unit Costs: Saratoga County Champlain Canal Trail

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>QUANTITY</u>	<u>COST</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>NOTES</u>
**Crushed Stone Surface	Miles	\$ 100,000 / mile	\$ 1.4 million	Preferred in rural sections between towns (20 miles total, 3 existing)
Asphalt Surface	Miles	\$ 225,000 / mile	\$1.35 million	For high maintenance urban sections (approx. 6 miles)
Urban Bike Lanes	Miles	\$ 10,000 / mile	\$ 60,000	Enhancement of Bike Route 9 in urban sections (approx. 6 miles)
Signage / Markings	Miles	\$ 5,000 / mile	\$ 130,000	Integrate with Lakes to Locks Passage
*Culverts / Drainage	Approx. 20 locations	\$ 10,000 each	\$ 200,000	Provide for canoe and kayak access
Parking and Trailheads	5 Locations	\$ 25,000 each	\$ 125,000	Provide in urban areas to enhance economic development
Interpretation	Multiple locations	\$ 5,000 / mile	\$ 130,000	Includes signage and milepoint sculptures
Trail Maintenance	Per year	\$ 6,500 / mile	\$ 169,000	Source: Trails for the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century
Marketing / Promotion	Per Year	\$ 10,000	\$ 10,000	Maps, brochures, etc.

**CHAMPLAIN CANAL TRAIL CONCEPT PLAN - SARATOGA COUNTY, NEW YORK**

Notes:

\* Culverts / Drainage: Includes crossings of minor roads and adjacent landowner access. Proposed costs to repair structure, paint and install new deck on the Dix Bridge over the Hudson River have been estimated at \$1.5 - \$2 million as part of the proposed Bi-County Park. Schuylerville / Old Champlain Canal Lock Repairs for downtown boat harbor access is estimated at approximately \$500,000. These costs are not included in the above figures since they are elements of other ongoing projects.

\*\*Trail Surface: The 6 mile City of Mechanicville has applied for funding for a 6-mile section based on an asphalt surface for \$1.3 million dollars, or \$225,000 / mile. For the purposes of this document, a crushed stone surface is proposed for rural sections between towns, with asphalt provided in urban areas. This is consistent with the NYS Canal Corporation trail development program. Costs do not include acquisition of rights-of-way or improvements associated with maintaining the Canal waterway.

These are conceptual amounts which represent a range of potential costs. More information on land ownership, hydrology and engineering analysis will be required to develop detailed estimates of project costs. These schematic costs represent a long-term range of between \$3 to \$5 million dollars for development of the 26-mile trail corridor the length of Saratoga County, with both on-road and off-road improvements. The first phase implementation of a crushed stone surface on the existing 13.5 miles of publicly owned right-of-way combined with upgrades to the Bike Route 9 on-road route is estimated at a base cost of \$1.16 million. Also note that a significant opportunity exists for this trail to be built with local products and materials as a 'made in Saratoga' project. Examples include local crushed stone for the trail surface, local sod for the grass shoulders, milepoints designed by local artists and rest stops serving local ice cream and farm products. With an estimated 200,000 trail users per year and an economic development potential of \$1.5 to \$2 million dollars per year, this trail would represent a significant positive investment.



The new Waterford Harbor Visitor's Center is a model for the future of the Champlain Canal in Saratoga County.

## 8 Next Steps

Turning this plan into action will require a coordinated effort of public, private and non-profit partners. With the 225<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Battles of Saratoga this year, now is the time to organize, develop and implement the Champlain Canal Trail in Saratoga County.

### Phased Implementation

**Phase 1 – “The Legacy of 225”:** These actions represent short-term goals which can be achieved within the next year to develop a foundation for the future.

- b. **Organize.** Establish a non-profit “Friends of the Saratoga Champlain Canal Trail” group to advocate for the trail.
- c. **Adopt this Plan.** County Board of Supervisors should pass a resolution formally adopting the concept of a trail along the Old Champlain Canal.
- d. **Conserve the Canal.** All publicly accessible land, easements and rights-of-way along the trail corridor should be maintained in public ownership.
- e. **Make Basic Road Repairs.** Saratoga County, NYSDOT and local communities should work cooperatively to enhance Bike Route 9 as an on-road route and interim alignment for the Champlain Canal Trail.

**Phase 2 – “50 % in 5 Years”:** Within the next 5 years, a series of strategically focused projects can result in building more than half of the Old Champlain Canal Trail in Saratoga County:

- f. **Mechanicville – Waterford Trail.** Completion of this section will create a continuous 9mile shared-use path from Waterford to Mechanicville.
- g. **Schuylerville Trail.** The existing path should be upgraded to a crushed stone surface from Lock 5 through the Village of Schuylerville to the Schuyler House. Funding for the Dix Bridge should be secured.
- h. **Stillwater / Saratoga Battlefield Trail.** The existing county-owned right-of-way should be developed into a trail and serve as a model for addressing issues raised by adjacent landowners. First priority should be given to the section between Bemis Heights and Lohnes Road adjacent to the Saratoga National Historical Park.

**Phase 3 – “Plan 250: Complete the Trail.”** Within the next 10 years, an off-road Old Champlain Canal Trail should be completed in Saratoga County, and the corridor should continue to be enhanced over the next 25 years. This trail will serve as a symbol of the County’s patriotism and community spirit. Recommended actions include:

- i. **Right-of-way:** Conduct a comprehensive inventory of all potential rights-of way along the 10 miles of existing segments, including potential utility, abandoned rail, state highway and other lands.
- j. **Work with Willing Donors:** Establish easements, tax benefits and other opportunities for creating public access along the entire corridor, in cooperation with adjacent landowners.
- k. **Establish a “Made in Saratoga” Trail:** Incorporate local materials such as crushed stone, sod, dairy products and sculpture as an integrated element of design.
- l. **Implement Major Projects:** The Dix Bridge, the 10 miles of ‘missing links,’ connections to Lakes to Locks Passage, new trailheads and a comprehensive interpretation and marketing program will be integrated in this phase.

By the time of the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battles of Saratoga, the entire trail should be completed in Saratoga County. By that time, similar projects will develop along the entire New York State Canalway Trail System, creating a more than 500 mile network across the state. Saratoga County will be in the unique position of being the only county in the state which has trails along both the Erie and Champlain Canals. The Lake George Bikeway, Glens Falls Feeder Canal, Saratoga Heritage Trail and the Mohawk-Hudson Bikeway will create an interconnected system of alternative transportation, recreation and heritage tourism. This will be the legacy that Saratoga County - and the entire nation - celebrates in 2027.



A sign of the future for Saratoga County...

## 9 References

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