

Canalway Trail Gap Segment  
Assessment Report  
Champlain Canal  
Lock C-5 to Ft. Edward  
Washington County,  
New York

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Report Prepared by

**Canalway Trail Partnership Project**

New York State Canal Corporation

National Park Service Rivers, Trails and  
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New York Parks and Conservation Association

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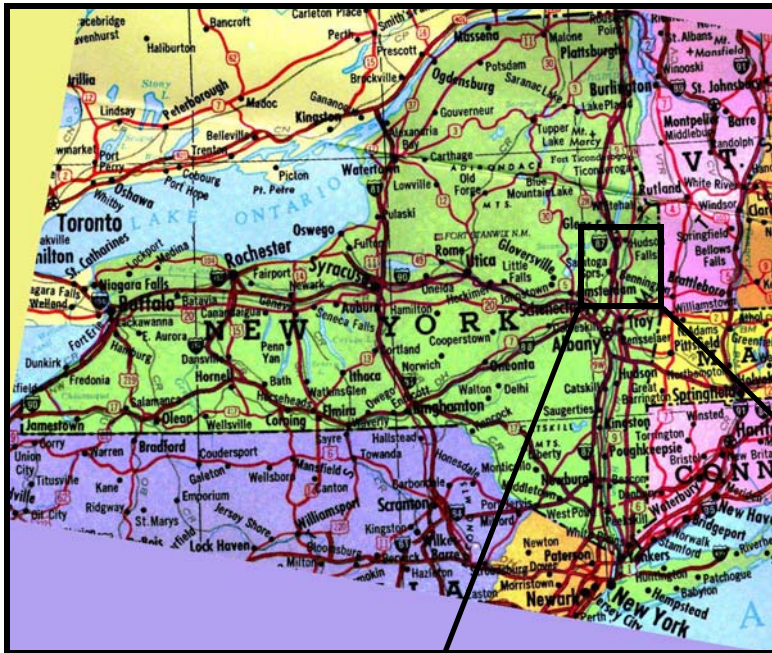
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## Introduction

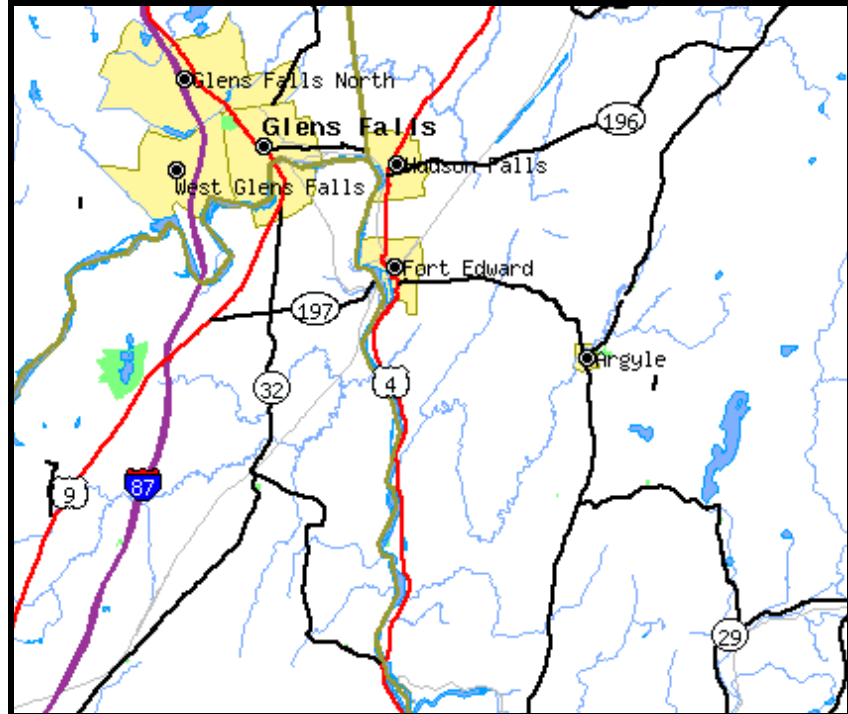
The 11-mile trail section discussed in this report is located in Washington County. It begins on the east side of the Dix Bridge over the Hudson River, at the site of the proposed bi-county park near Lock C-5. The trail enters Washington County in the Town of Greenwich, near the hamlet of Thompson and proceeds north to the Town of Ft. Edward and the City of Ft. Edward. The trail segment will be part the Champlain Canalway Trail which will parallel the Champlain Canal/Hudson River. The trail in Washington County will connect Whitehall, Ft. Edward, the Glens Falls Feeder Canal Trail, and the western Washington County communities. This trail segment will also link to the proposed Champlain Canalway Trail in Saratoga County, and to the Erie Canalway Trail in Waterford. This trail segment links in the north with the trail from Ft. Edward to Ft. Ann. Washington County and NYS Canal Corporation have obtained a Federal Transportation Enhancement grant to complete that portion of the Canalway Trail. This trail segment will also provide connections to Lake George and Lake Champlain in the north. In the south the Saratoga County portion of the trail links to the Capital District, and resources such as the Waterford Visitor's Center, Peebles Island State Park, Saratoga National Historical Park and the Saratoga National Cemetery.

Completion of this segment of the trail will attract tourists and local trail users. It will also attract long range riders coming from other parts of the Canalway Trail system. Riders coming south from Lake Champlain Bikeways and other points north of Whitehall will pass through this segment to link with the statewide Canalway Trail system. This connection will provide access to the recreation and tourism resources in Washington County. The trail will also provide an excellent recreational resource for the communities along its path, improving individual health and quality of life.

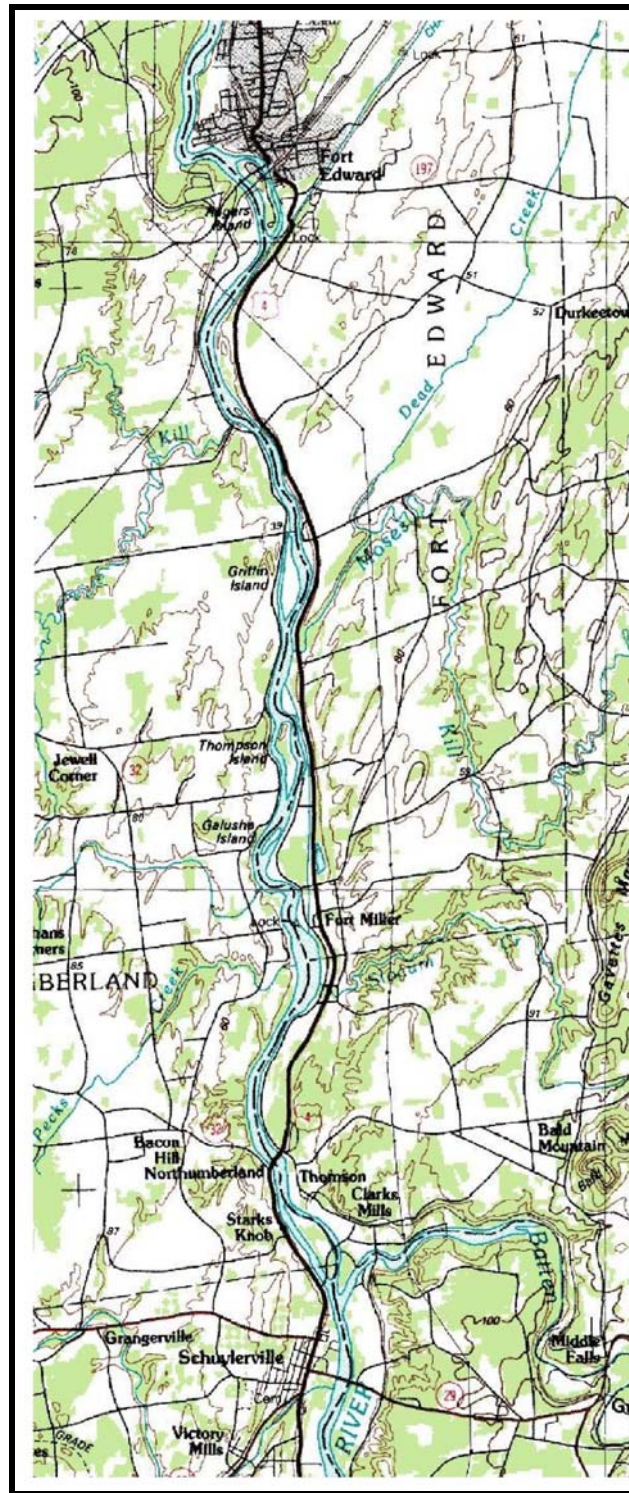
This document is a product of the Canalway Trail Partnership Project, which has been providing technical assistance to further the planning and development of this segment of the Canalway Trail. Under the Canalway Trail Partnership Project, New York Parks and Conservation Association (NYPCA), in partnership with the NYS Canal Corporation is organizing and assisting canal communities to plan and develop the Canalway Trail where critical gaps exist. When completed, the Canalway Trail will be a 524-mile continuous multi-use pathway along the New York State Canal System. NYPCA is a statewide non-profit citizens' organization dedicated to protecting New York's parks and helping communities create innovative and popular forms of park land such as greenways, rail and canal trails and heritage corridors.



**Figure 1 Location of Assessment Area in New York State**



**Figure 2 Detail of Assessment Location**



**Figure 3 Assessment Study Area**

## ***Location***

The trail segment in this assessment is an 11-mile route through Washington County from the Saratoga County line at Dix Bridge, near Lock C-5 to Lock C-8 in Ft. Edward. The proposed trail segment will be generally adjacent to the Hudson River and Champlain Canal. In Ft. Edward the trail will also link with the Glens Falls Feeder Canal Trail. Where possible, the proposed trail is routed directly adjacent to these waterways. Where this is not possible the proposed route is on road or on land owned by Washington County or other municipalities. The complete Washington County section of the Champlain Canalway Trail will go through the historic canal communities of Thompson, Ft. Miller, Ft. Edward, Kingsbury, Ft. Ann and Whitehall. The trail will pass through a part of the state that is rich with historic resources from the old Champlain Canal, the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, and the early European settlements in North America. The Saratoga National Historical Park is just south of this segment and contains numerous historic canal resources such as locks and canal walls.

The location of this trail segment makes it part of the critical segment required to connect Washington County and the Champlain Region tourist destinations with the Capital Region and the rest of the Canalway Trail System.

## ***Landscape Character***

The character of landscape that this trail segment passes through varies from village and small city urban to rural. The trail passes through wooded areas, second growth open fields, farmland, urban downtowns, village centers and industrial areas. This section of the historic Champlain Canal was enlarged to the present canal early in the 20th Century. The original canal prism is sometimes visible.

The towns and villages that this segment of the trail passes through greatly enhance the tourism experience. The Villages of Ft. Edward and Whitehall offer glimpses into Champlain Canal history and provide the traveler with services such as restaurants and lodging.

Industrial and commercial development in the Village of Clarks Mills (just to the south of the trail) and Town of Ft. Edward is more recent and denser than in the villages to the north. However, both communities provide restored and interpreted historic resources, and varied shopping and dining experiences.

## ***From Canal Recreationway Plan***

The Canal Recreationway Plan of 1995 identifies this section as composed of part of the following segment in exhibit 7-7 *Canal Trail Route Segments*:

1. CT-1. Cohoes to Fort Edward. 40 Miles. Ownership - Canal Corporation; NYS DOT; Unknown. R.O.W. status 3<sup>1</sup>. Comments - No continuous ROW available along river - best alternative is to follow NYS DOT Bike Route 9 (Routes 4 and 22) and Old Champlain Canal ROW west side of Canal.

This characterizations correctly describes the state of the Canalway Trail planning in this area in 1995. This document updates that information. The part of CT-1 that is dealt with in this assessment is from the Dix Bridge Crossing to the end of the trail in Ft. Edward. Property ownership is updated.

## ***Trail Partners***

The goal of the Canal Corporation is to complete a Canalway Trail along the entire NYS System, including the seventy-mile Champlain Canal. Other partners in the planning and development of the Champlain Canalway Trail include New York Parks and Conservation Association, the National Park Service, Saratoga County, Washington County and the various municipalities in the corridor. The Canal Corporation encourages the formation of partnerships with the municipalities in the corridor to complete the Champlain Canalway Trail.

An active partner, Washington County has made a major commitment to the development of trails linking historic sites and centers of population within its borders. The county is participating in the formation of a bi-county park at the Dix Bridge and is involved in the development of the Lakes to Locks Passage Scenic Byway.

Another important partner is the Canalway Trails Association of New York (CTANY). Although at the time of this writing, the Regional Canalway Trail Group—Friends of the Champlain Canalway Trail is inactive, the volunteers in this organization have made important progress in the establishment of this segment of the trail. It is the intention of the CTANY to attempt to re-establish the Friends of the Champlain Canalway Trail and to continue to support its efforts to move this project ahead. Partnerships with local municipalities, the county and townships is essential in achieving this goal.

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<sup>1</sup>The Canal Recreationway Plan divides the status of trail R.O.W.s into four groups as follows:

1. Improved Trail in use
2. R.O.W. assembled—Trail needs improvement
3. Trail sited, R.O.W. or easement to be acquired
4. Trail not sited.



Another important partner is the Lakes to Locks Passage. This route is now a National Scenic Byway and All-American Road and can offer information and connections to many other tourism resources in the area. The trail segment proposed in this assessment is part of the recommendations of the Champlain Canal Scenic Byways Management Plan which was adopted by the Lakes to Locks Passage.

## Resources

The most important resource in this section of the trail is the diversity in the landscape character. In the extreme southern end the trail begins at the proposed bi-county park near Lock C-5 in the Hudson river. This park will provide spectacular views up and down the Hudson and across to it's banks. The rural character of the landscape at this location affords a nice spot for resting and viewing. This park also allows visitors access to Lock C-5, a fully operational lock on the Champlain Canal/Hudson River.

The scene just south of where the trail enters Washington County, at Clarks Mills, offers a view of an operating industrial site with a glimpse of the type of industry that grew up in the canal corridor.

As the proposed trail route goes north it passes through bucolic farmland and scenes of river banks. At Thompson, a dug section of the Champlain Canal begins and operating locks are available for viewing at Thompson and Ft. Edward. Sections of the Old Champlain Canal can be seen on the east side of Route 4 including the remains of an historic canal aqueduct crossing Moses Kill.

Ft. Edward is an historic Canal Town and offers the visitor numerous canal related sites. The Glens Falls Feeder Canal Trail joins the Champlain Canalway Trail in Ft. Edward. This gives trail users an opportunity to travel to Glens Falls or Lake George, or to continue on the Champlain to the north or south.

## Economic Opportunities

This section of the Canalway Trail is located in a position that makes it the link between Washington County and Lake Champlain and the rest of the Champlain Canal section of the Canalway Trail. It can play a significant role in providing that link to bring tourism development to the area. Additionally, the connection with the Saratoga County segment and to the Erie Canalway Trail, in Waterford, connects it to the cross-state network of bike trails which will bring cycling tourists from the Hudson Valley, Finger Lakes, Central and Western New York State.

It is also anticipated that residents of the area will be able to use the trail as an alternative to driving to and from work in Ft. Edward, Glens Falls and other locations to the north and south, and as an important regional recreational re-



source, improving their health and quality of life. The trail also greatly increases the ability to access the Glens Falls Feeder Canal Trail by bicycle from the south.

When this section of the trail is completed it will help link the communities of the Champlain Canal corridor. It will also help the link to the Cities of Albany, Glens Falls and Troy, and the Lake Champlain region to the north. Area business leaders should be aware that the completion of this segment will result in many bicyclists traveling through who are visiting the areas to the west, north and south. Hiking and bicycling tourists from these areas will bring revenue through meals, shopping, repairs, or overnight stays. (A National Park Service study showed the bicycle tourists spend \$65-\$120 per day.) The facilities that exist will enjoy increased usage and new opportunities will appear. The potential for bicycle and hiking based tourism, including rentals and equipment repair and sales will increase. Development of trail-side restaurants and overnight boarding establishments would enhance the trail experience and further encourage visitors and residents to take advantage of the recreational potential of the canal.

The completion of this segment of the Canalway Trail will provide an important recreational, health and transportation facility for area residents and showcase the significant historic resources of the canal. This will measurably add to the quality of life and the view that this is a great place to live and work. The economic implications are significant. The perceived quality of life in a community is a major factor in many businesses' decisions either to stay in a community or to relocate there.

## Trail Route Description/Condition of the Trail/Ownership

This description of the trail route proceeds from south to north. The trail route or route options are on-road in some places where the possibility of a canal or river-side route has been lost due to intervening construction, changes in ownership, or topography.

The descriptions given below are preliminary. Detailed routing will be done considering site-specific conditions and may differ somewhat from these descriptions. The final trail route may also change to some degree when the trail is constructed.

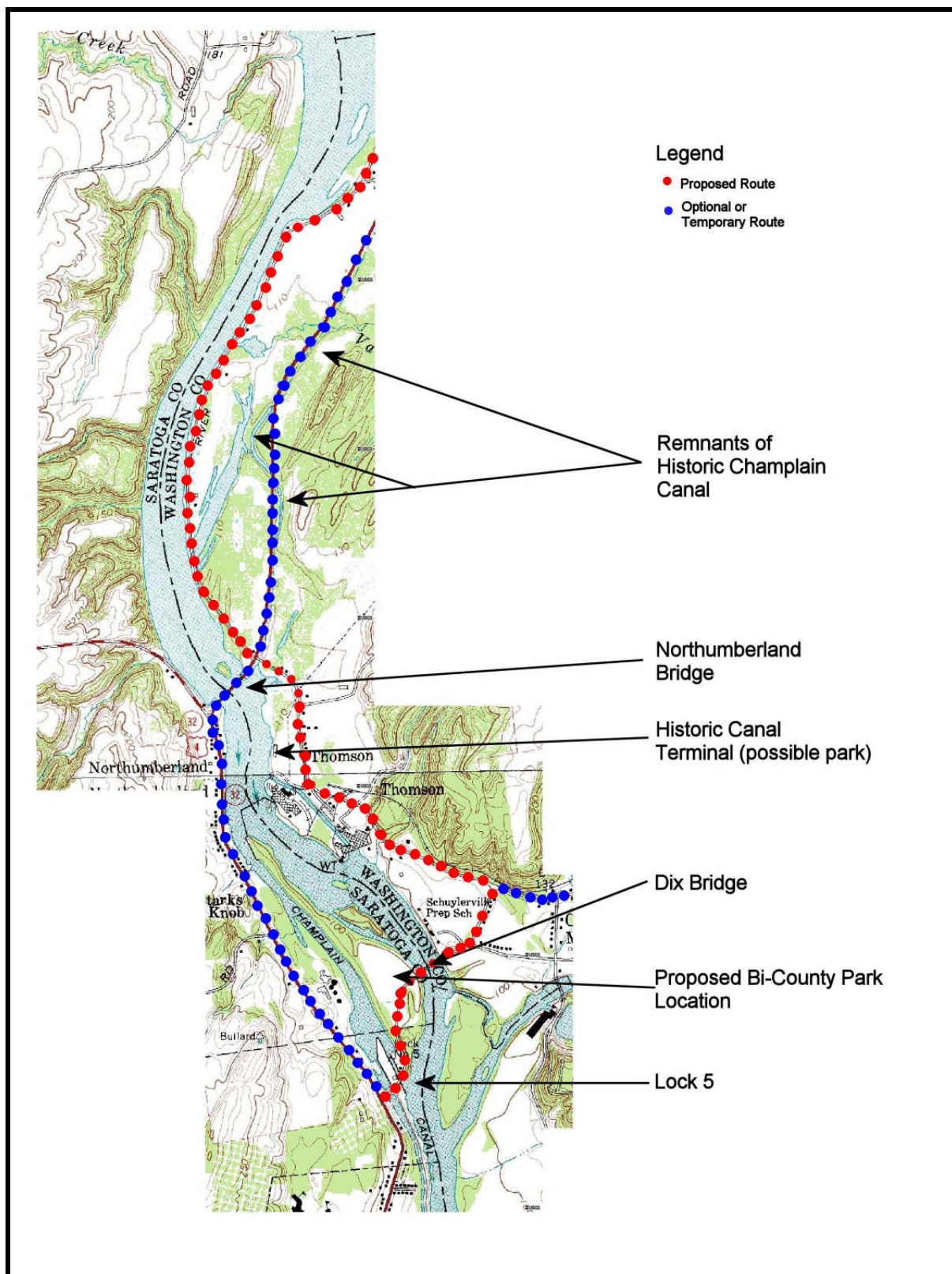
### ***Ownership***

The land used for the proposed route in this section is owned by NYS Canal Corporation, Washington County, the City of Ft. Edward and the NYS Department of Transportation. Some of the land on the banks of the Hudson River appears to be owned by Canal Corporation to the "blue line" but the exact location of this boundary in the field is under question. A property line survey is recommended at the end of this assessment.

<b>Proposed Route Description</b>	<b>Present Condition of Trail</b>	<b>Ownership</b>
Town of Greenwich		
<b>Dix Bridge (Thompson) to Town Line</b> <b>3 miles</b> The proposed route starts at Lock C-5 and crosses the Champlain Canal/Hudson River on the Dix Bridge. On the east side of the river the route is on road, following State Rts. 70 and 70A. The proposed route crosses Rt. 4 and proceeds north on River Road. An optional spur to the south of the Dix Bridge on Rt. 70A and Rt. 113 to Clark's Mills is also possible.	The Dix Bridge is currently closed to vehicular and pedestrian traffic. The Bridge is in need of rehabilitation before it can be opened to pedestrian and bicycle traffic. The section that is on road in the Hamlet of Thompson south of Rt. 4 is not striped or signed for bicycle traffic. The section which is north of Rt. 4 on River Road is on well maintained dirt road and can be signed for shared roadway.	Washington and Saratoga Counties jointly own the Dix Bridge. The NYS DOT owns the Rt. 70A road portion to the south of Rt. 4. The Town of Greenwich owns River Road from Rt. 4 to the town line with the Town of Fr. Edward.

Proposed Route Description	Present Condition of Trail	Ownership
Town of Ft. Edward		
<p><b>Town Line to Lock 6 (Ft. Miller)</b>  <b>.5 miles</b></p> <p>The trail continues north on River Road to the Lock C-6 Park in Ft. Miller.</p>	<p>The section on River Road is on well maintained dirt road changing to asphalt and can be signed for shared roadway. The section through the lock park is unimproved and will need grading and surfacing for the trail.</p>	<p>The part of this section on River Road is owned by the Town of Ft. Edward. The Lock park is owned by the NYS Canal Corporation.</p>
<p><b>Lock 6 to Patterson Road.</b>  <b>2.5 miles</b></p> <p>At the Lock C-6 Park the proposed trail will follow the land on the east side of the canal between the Canal and Route 4. The trail proceeds north until the dug portion of the canal ends. A parking area exists in this section.</p> <p>At this point the proposed trail route would follow the towpath of the Old Champlain Canal to where it intersects with Rt. 4 near Patterson Road.</p> <p>An optional route is to place the trail on Rt. 4 at the point where the dug canal ends.</p>	<p>From the Lock 6 park to the end of the dug canal the land is grassy and rolling with few obstacles to trail development. Two road crossings will be necessary where bridges cross the canal and some brush will need to be cleared where the ROW becomes narrow. Numerous remnants of the Old Champlain Canal are visible across Rt. 4.</p>	<p>NYS Canal Corporation owns this section.  NYS DOT owns Rt. 4.</p>

Proposed Route Description	Present Condition of Trail	Ownership
<p><b>Patterson Road to The Village of Ft. Edward</b></p> <p><b>5 miles</b></p> <p>The trail continues North on Rt. 4. Approximately .5 miles north of Patterson Road a spur trail is proposed to the site of the Moses Kill Aqueduct. At this point the trail continues north to a point where the Old Champlain Canal Towpath is accessible on the West side of Rt. 4. The proposed trail route follows the Towpath and the East shore of the Hudson River for approximately .3 miles to a point where the Old Champlain Canal crosses back to the East side of Rt. 4. At this point the proposed trail route is on Rt. 4 to the village line. Here the trail links to the proposed trail section between Ft. Edward and Ft. Ann.</p> <p>The option of using Rt. 4 as the trail is illustrated on the accompanying figures. Several options exist using Rt. 4 for the entire trail or for sections where the old towpath is not available.</p> <p>Wherever possible the trail should be on the Old Champlain Canal Towpath.</p>	<p>The towpath of the Old Champlain Canal is overgrown with trees, shrubs and other vegetation. It has numerous breaks due to lack of maintenance, and in some places is virtually lost.</p> <p>Additionally, there are many places where the possibility of encroachment exists. Current leases include provisions for the trail.</p> <p>However, with proper construction and negotiation with neighbors it is likely that a significant portion of the towpath in the proposed trail route could be developed into trail.</p> <p>The option of Rt. 4 should be seriously considered at least in the interim. Rt. 4 is part of NYS Bike Rt. 9. Some sections accommodate bikes and pedestrians better than others and NYS DOT should consider upgrading those sections that are inadequate.</p>	<p>The Old Champlain Canal Towpath and sections along the Hudson are owned by NYS Canal Corporation.</p> <p>Rt. 4 is owned by NYS Department of Transportation.</p>



**Figure 4 Proposed Trail Route—Dix Bridge to Bloodget Road**

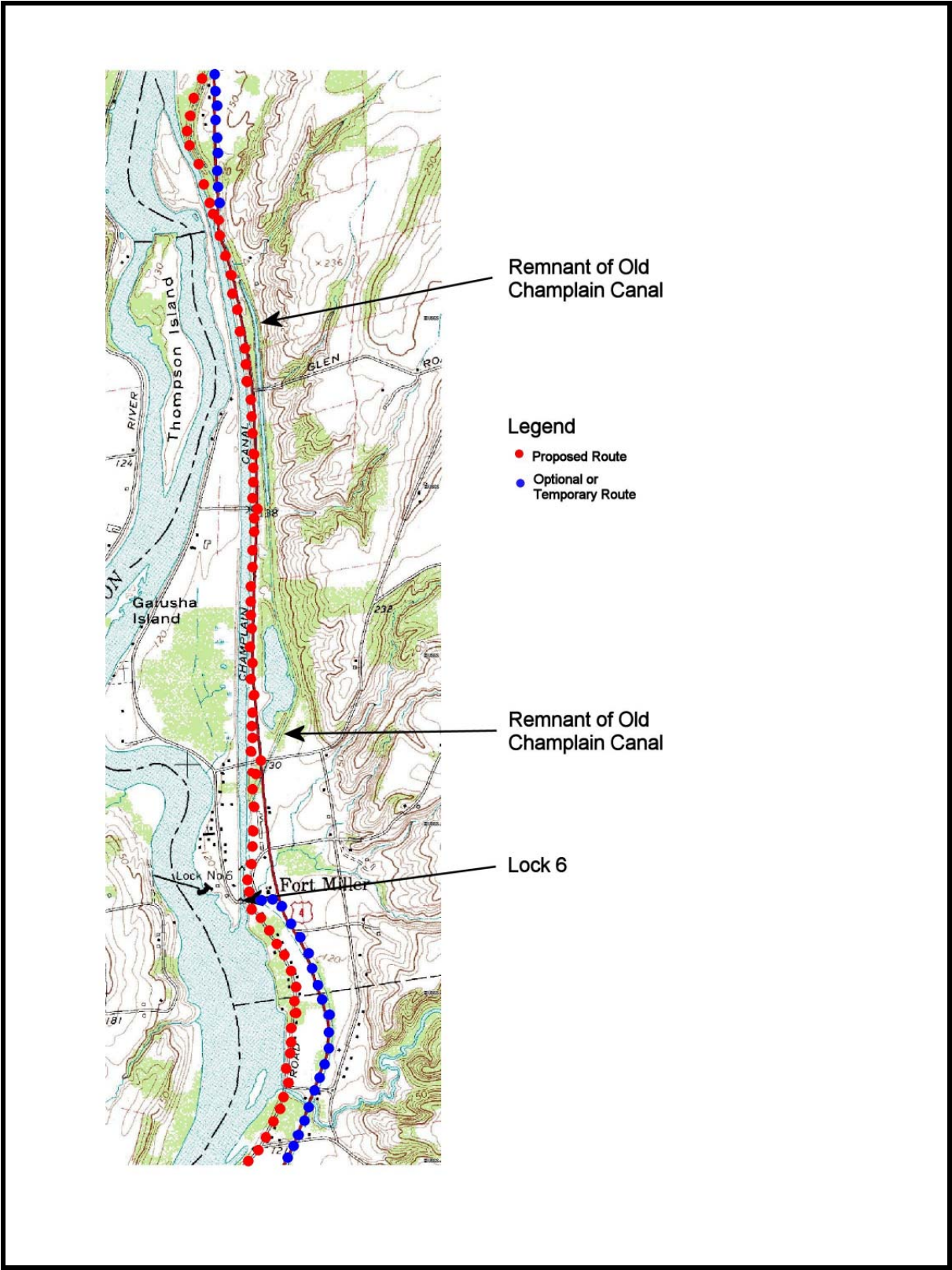


Figure 5 Proposed Trail Route—Bloodget Road to Patterson Road



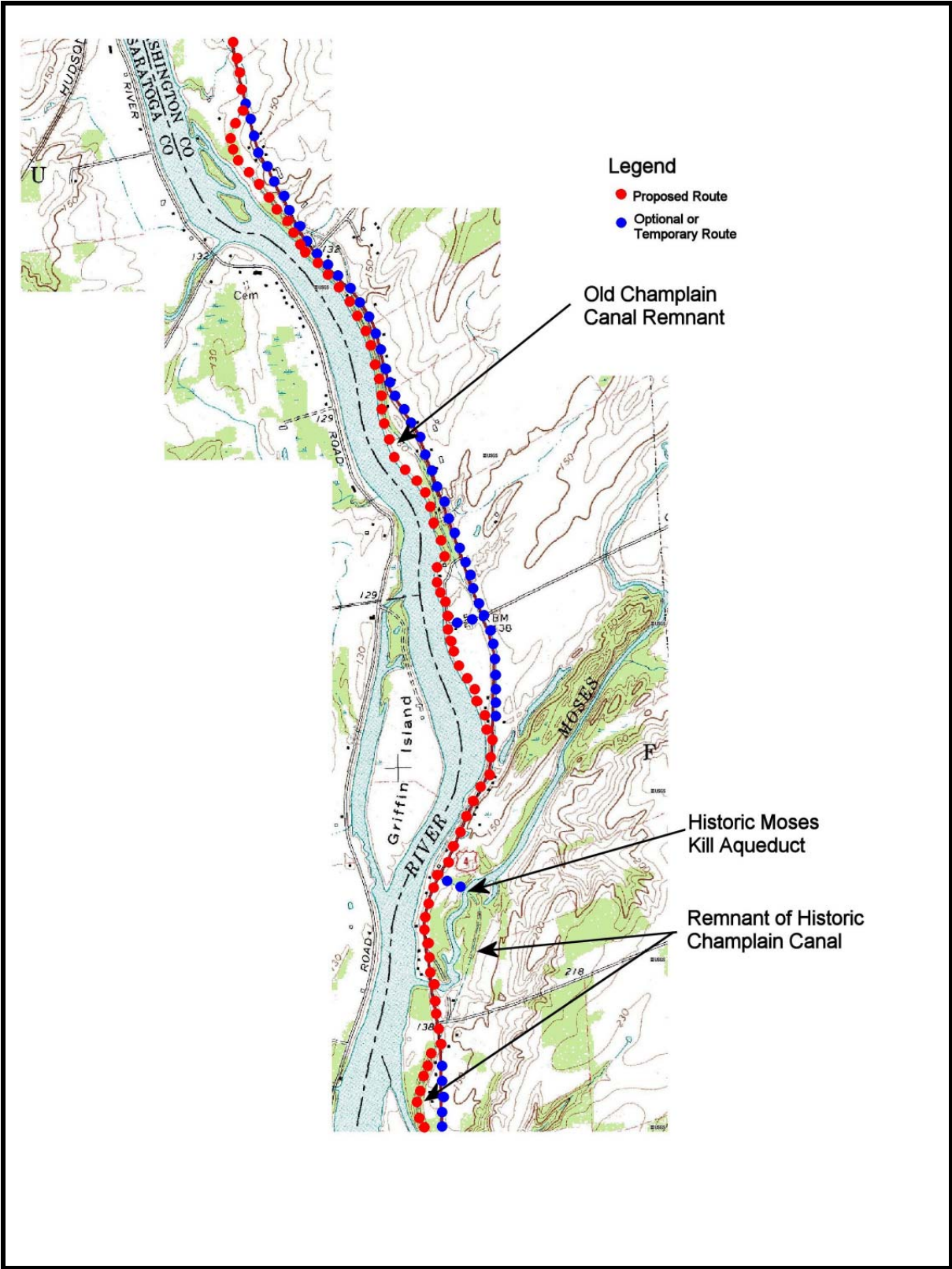


Figure 6 Proposed Trail Route—Patterson Road to Blackhouse Road



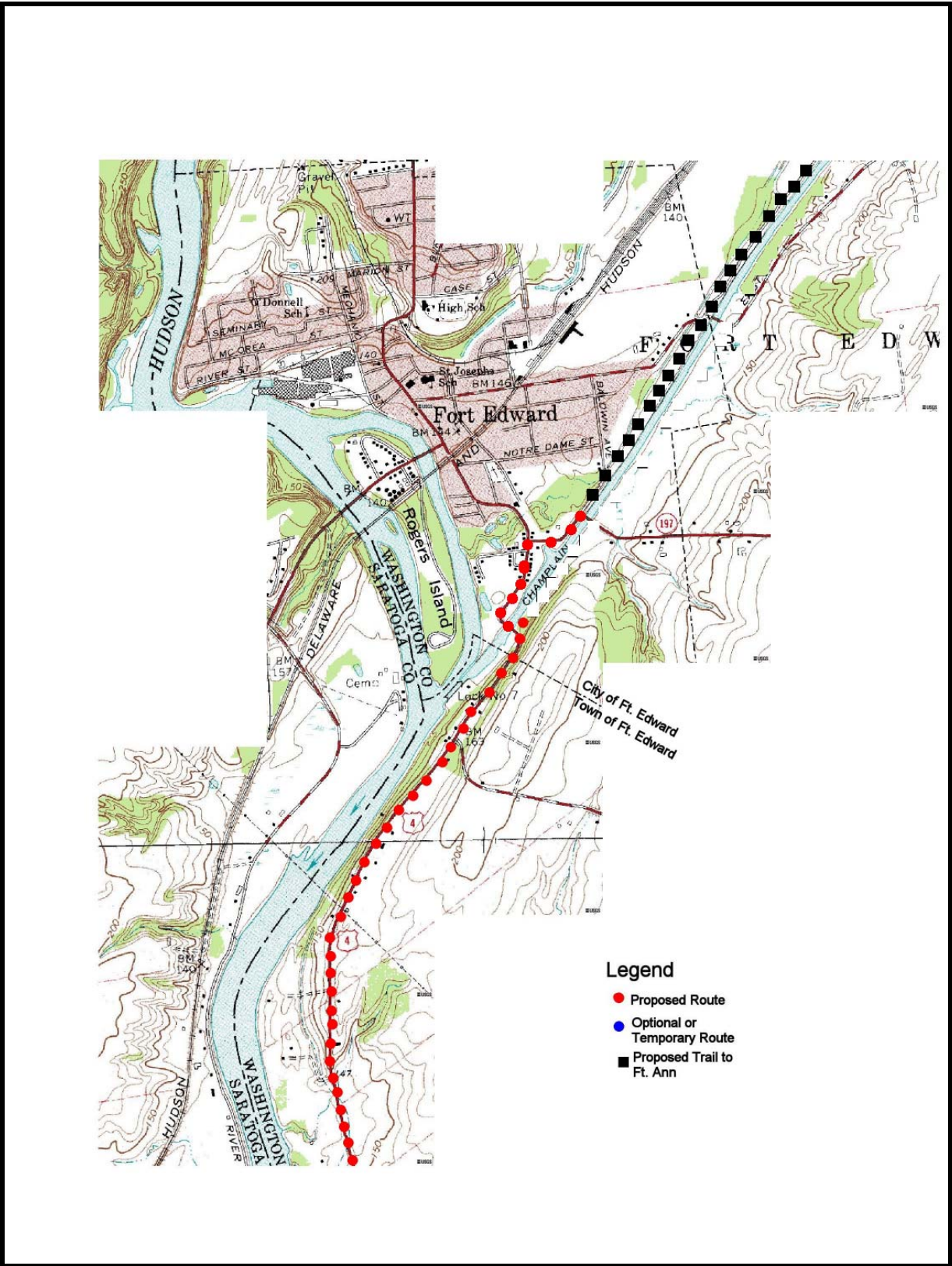
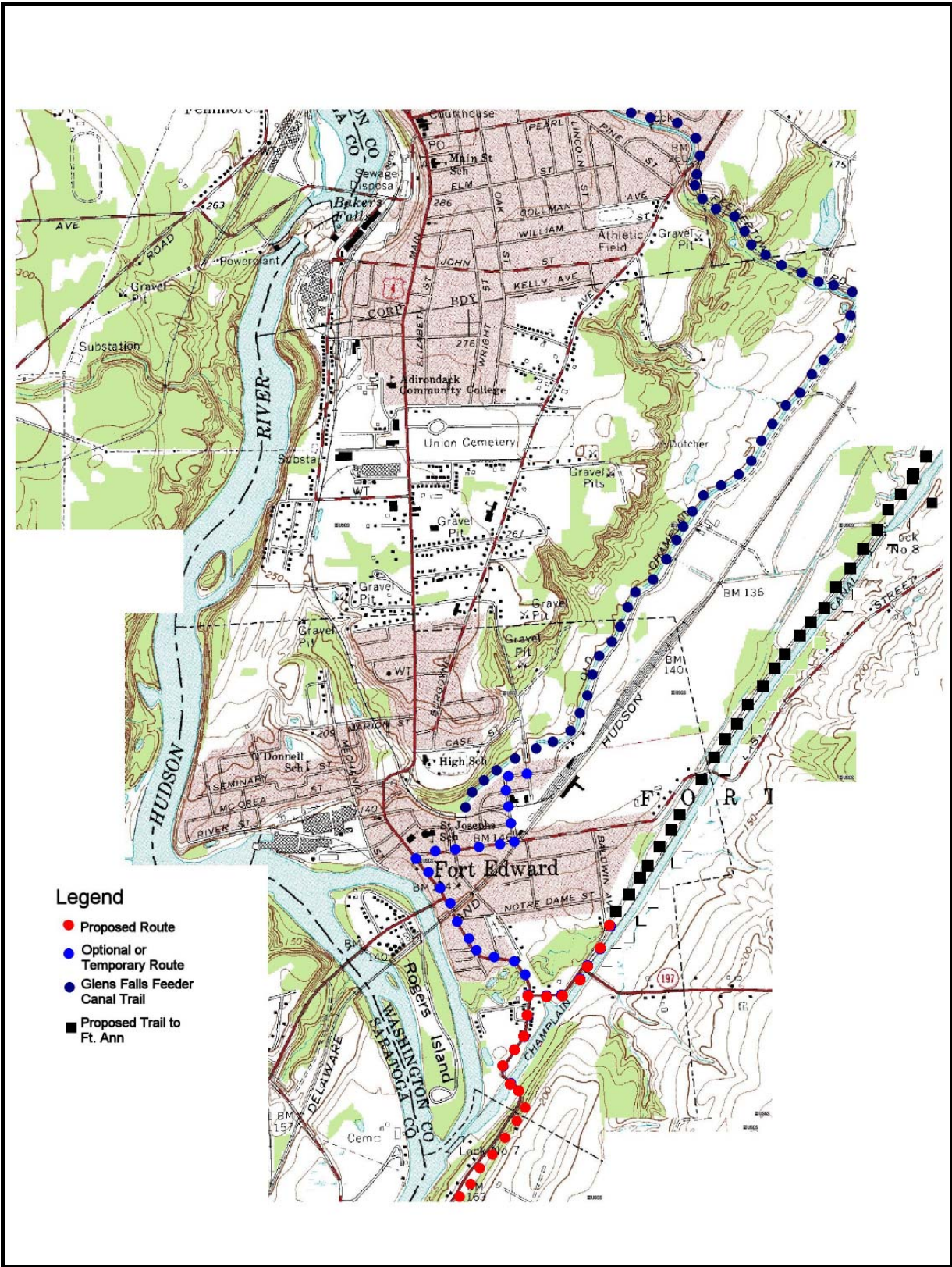


Figure 7 Proposed Trail Route—Black House Road to Fort Edward





### ***Acquisition needs***

Until the lands in question are surveyed there is no information on needs for acquisition.

## **Constraints**

### ***Easements***

After a property survey is produced there may be easements that are needed to route the trail through private, town or county property.

### ***Abutting Property Use***

There are many places along the proposed trail route where residential property abuts the trail. At these points it may be necessary to provide fencing or landscaping that will help shield the trail from the residential uses. At other sections there is abutting industrial or commercial uses. These uses may need separation for trail safety purposes.

The prevalence of standard Canal Corporation permits in the residential sections produces a need for evaluating these permits. The Canal Corporation property line could be surveyed and the possibility of routing the trail along the river's edge considered.

### ***Dix Bridge***

The Dix Bridge is proposed for the route crossing the Hudson River from the proposed bi-county park at Lock C-5 to the eastern bank in Washington County. This bridge is closed at the moment because of concern that the footings in the Hudson River have been eroded.

Washington and Saratoga Counties jointly own this bridge. Before the trail can be safely routed across the Dix Bridge, an engineering investigation should be made into the nature and extent of the repairs needed and the repairs done. Until that time, the temporary option of routing the trail up Route 4, north of Schuylerville and across the Northumberland Bridge should be taken. The trail can turn North onto River Road after crossing the river. It should be noted that the Northumberland Bridge is not a suitable permanent solution to crossing the Hudson River by bike or walking. The bridge deck is too narrow to accommodate such traffic with motorized vehicles. Additionally the steel deck makes riding bicycles difficult. Because of this, the Dix Bridge should be evaluated and fixed as soon as possible.

## Cost Estimates

This cost estimate assumes that all the proposed off-road trail sections can be built with a 10' stone dust surface. If the optional on road sections are used then the cost estimate would need to be adjusted accordingly. This estimate does not include trail structures or amenities such as bridges, benches, kiosks, parking areas, bridges, camping or picnic areas, signage, etc. However, in this trail section a portion of the cost has been estimated for on-road signage and striping. The cost of rehabilitating the Dix Bridge is also omitted.

Item	Cost	Amount	Unit	Sub Total
Stone Dust Surfaced Trail	\$100,000	7	Mile	\$700,000
Signage	\$7,000	11	Mile	\$77,000
Striping Streets for Bike Lane	\$5,000	4	Mile	\$20,000
<b>Total</b>	Corrected to include contingencies and rounded up to the nearest ten thousand dollars.			<b>\$1,000,000</b>

## Key Needs and Opportunities

### *Role of Trail Partners*

**NYS Canal Corporation.** The Canal Corporation has a goal of completing the Oswego Canalway Trail and encourages partnerships to accomplish this.

Additionally, the Canal Corporation owns a significant amount of property on the shores of the Champlain Canal/Hudson River and adjacent to the Old Champlain Canal. Due to the amount of time intervening since the last survey, the location of the Canal Corporation property line (also known as the "blue line") are uncertain in the field. A property line survey should be undertaken as soon as possible to determine the precise location of property lines and facilitate trail planning.

**Washington and Saratoga Counties.** As stated above; Washington and Saratoga Counties are important partners in developing the trail route through the bi-county park and over the Dix Bridge.

**Towns and Villages.** The towns, cities and villages can also be important promoters and developers of the trail in Washington County. Partnerships between the municipalities and the counties and the state will continue to be important in Champlain Canalway Trail progress.

**Bi-County Park Association.** This body, made up of officials and citizens can assist in the development of the trail through the proposed park and with

advocating for the rehabilitation of the Dix Bridge. The intrinsic value of the park will be enhanced by the trail being routed through it and the trail will benefit greatly from the amenities planned at this location.

**Canalway Trails Association of New York.** The role of this organization is discussed below in the “Volunteer Organization” section.

**Lakes to Locks Passage.** The National Scenic Byway designation of this resource may open up access to sources of funding through the Scenic Byways Program. This program can also help with and be a strong boost for attracting tourists through their promotional activities.

### ***Trail Development***

It is important that state (Canal Corporation), county and local governments in Washington and Saratoga Counties work together to develop the trail to the standards required to obtain Canalway Trail designation. Where there is opportunity to develop the trail off-road, the on-road alternative is not satisfactory in that the purpose of Canalway Trail development is to provide off-road routes as much as possible. This is because the off-road route enhances the user's experience, especially where it can be on the towpath of the historic canal. Additionally the off-road alternative can accommodate a greater variety of users, including inexperienced cyclists and families.

The ***Canal Recreationway Commission*** approved the formation of a Canalway Trail Management Organization (CTMO) in 2000. In 2001 the ***Canalway Trails Association of New York*** was formed to be that organization. One of the association's initial tasks was to develop standards for trail design, development and maintenance across the state. These guidelines, in draft form, are now available. The purpose of these guidelines is to assure consistent standards and an enjoyable and safe visitor experience on the trail. It is understood that providing a high-class multi-use trail is essential in order to promote tourism. It is expected that the trail and the historic resources along its length will attract tourists from all over the country and the world, and that, in order to promote the trail to these audiences, it needs to consistently meet certain performance standards along each mile of its 524-mile length. These standards constitute a benchmark to be used for designating sections of the trail as Canalway Trail. Only sections with this designation will be signed as part of the Canalway Trail system and included in promotional material for the trail distributed by the New York State Canal Corporation.

### ***Volunteer Organization***

Another important opportunity in this corridor would be to develop grassroots trail committees by forming a Regional Canalway Trail Group (RCTG) that will help support trail development and maintenance in this corridor. This group would focus on the entire trail section rather than in any one municipal

division. It is important to ensure each owner's control over its own property and at the same time construct a vision for the section as a whole. This group would be made of a mix of representatives from the trail route owners, businesses, municipal and county officials, trail users and community residents. Participants for this group should be actively recruited and meetings should start as soon as possible.

During trail development the committee could organize volunteers to help in trail clearing and construction activities. The committee could recruit volunteers and businesses willing to donate time, money and materials to the development and maintenance of the trail. The committee could also be active in encouraging trail development and helping to write grants, do surveys, trail inventories and event programming.

The RCTG should become part of the **Canalway Trails Association of New York** (CTANY). CTANY is a voluntary organization dedicated to making the Canalway Trail a world class multi-use recreational trail. CTANY assists state agencies, local municipalities, counties, and organizations in developing and maintaining the Canalway Trail System.

CTANY functions in partnership with the New York State Canal Corporation, the agency leading Canalway Trail development statewide. CTANY operates under the non-profit status of New York Parks and Conservation Association, a state-wide non-profit conservation organization.