

# Bicyclists Bring Business

A Guide for Attracting Bicyclists to New York's Canal Communities



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Development of this guide was a collaborative effort by Parks & Trails New York, the New York State Canal Corporation and the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor.

Since 1999, Parks & Trails New York, in partnership with the New York State Canal Corporation and the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, has organized and led an annual, eight-day, end-to-end Cycling the Erie Canal bicycle tour on the Erie Canalway Trail from Buffalo to Albany. In the process, we have learned much about what makes a bike trip successful for the participants. This tour now draws more than 500 riders each year from throughout the U.S. and from other countries.

Since 2005, using the knowledge acquired from these bicycle tours and other sources, Parks & Trails New York and the New York State Canal Corporation also have been presenting “Bicyclists Bring Business” roundtables in communities across the state to help local businesspeople seize the economic opportunity presented by rising interest in bicycle tourism. In turn, we have learned even more from the many business owners and community leaders attending these workshops. We are pleased now to share our knowledge with interested businesspeople and other community leaders through this guide.

## About Parks & Trails New York

Parks & Trails New York is the only nonprofit organization working to expand, protect and promote a network of parks, trails and open space throughout New York State through advocacy, outreach, technical assistance to communities, and promotion of bicycle tourism. In addition to its role in Cycling the Erie Canal and Bicyclists Bring Business roundtables, Parks & Trails New York publishes a guide to the Erie Canalway Trail and

maintains an interactive, online version of this guide. Recently, Parks & Trails New York unveiled Trail Finder, an online guide to 115 multi-use trails in the state that includes several segments of the Canalway Trail. The organization has partnered with the Empire State Bed & Breakfast Association to develop a B&B “Welcome Bicyclists!” program. For more information, visit [www.ptny.org](http://www.ptny.org) or call 518-434-1583.

## About the New York State Canal Corporation

The New York State Canal Corporation is responsible for the operation, maintenance and promotion of the 524-mile New York State Canal System. The Canal System features numerous parks and recreation areas and more than 270 miles of Canalway Trail for biking, hiking and other trail activities. For more information about the Canal Corporation and the Canal System, call 518-436-3055 or visit [www.nyscanals.gov](http://www.nyscanals.gov).

## About the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor

The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, established in 2000 by an Act of Congress, spans 524 miles across the full expanse of upstate New York. It encompasses the Erie, Cayuga-Seneca, Oswego, and Champlain canals and their historic alignments, as well as more than 230 canal communities. The Corridor’s commission and staff, in partnership with the National Park Service, work through public and private partnerships to promote historic preservation, recreation, education, tourism, and economic revitalization throughout the Corridor. [www.eriecanalway.org](http://www.eriecanalway.org)

Many other organizations and individuals have contributed to the guide by sharing information and resources. We extend our appreciation to all.

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# Bicyclists Bring Business

## A Guide for Attracting Bicycle Tourists To New York's Canal Communities

*The great treat while cycling across New York was that I got a firsthand glimpse of many towns and villages which were, prior to the trip, simply a name on a Thruway exit sign. What I discovered was that there are many, many small communities along or near the Canal which are rich in historical significance and beauty.*

— Erie Canalway Trail end-to-end rider, 2009

*Bicyclists represent potential customers who can bring revenue into your community.*

**Imagine ...** dozens of weary but happy bicyclists arriving at the edge of your community on a summer afternoon, all of them hungry and thirsty, some intending to stay the night, and most eager to explore your canal community, to experience its history and uniqueness. Imagine, too, that these self-propelled tourists later go home and tell family members, friends, co-workers, and other bicyclists about their wonderful visit.

Do you see economic opportunity here? Of course! To some degree this opportunity already has become reality along New York's historic Canal System and especially the Erie Canalway Trail. But the potential economic benefit to your community or business from touring bicyclists can be much greater if you actively welcome this relatively new kind of visitor.

### Yes, Bicyclists Bring Business!

As with other tourists, bicyclists represent potential customers who can bring revenue into your community by patronizing businesses that meet their needs and contribute to their overall desired experience. And when a particular bicycling destination is so appealing to bicyclists that they will come from some distance away to enjoy it, the dollars they bring with them can be significant.

New York State's canal communities provide such a destination – the Canalway Trail – and therefore have great potential to benefit from bicycle tourism. But, although “if you build it, they will come” has some truth in this case, the full potential will not be realized automatically; it has to be earned.



### Purpose of this Guide

Bicycle tourism is a leisure activity that involves traveling by bicycle, often on multi-day trips, for the enjoyment of the journey, or visiting a location for the primary purpose of enjoying bicycling.

How do you, as a canal community leader and business owner, maximize your ability to tap into, and even augment, this bicycle tourism market? How can you:

- Attract bicyclists to your community
- Understand and meet their travel needs and desires
- Help them find the kind of vacation experience they are seeking

This guide will set forth strategies for building on what you already offer to enhance the appeal of your community and your business to bicycle tourists and strengthening the local economy.

### Why Focus on Bicyclists?

#### ■ Bicycling is popular.

- Bicycling is the second most common form of outdoor recreation in the U.S., according to a study by the Outdoor Foundation, with 60 million Americans enjoying the activity.
- More Americans bicycle than golf, ski and play tennis combined.
- In 2008, all of these cyclists took more than 2.6 billion bike outings, averaging 62 outings per bicyclist.
- American consumers purchase 19 million bicycles each year, 20% more than cars and trucks combined and 25 times more than boats.

- User counts have shown that bicycling is the predominant form of activity on today's multi-use trails, including the Erie Canalway Trail.

## ■ **Bicycle tourism is hot and growing.**

- Between 2002 and 2008, based on data collected by the Outdoor Foundation, the number of bicycle trips of all kinds made by Americans grew by approximately 100 million.
- According to the U.S. Travel Association (USTA; formerly Travel Industry Association of America), half of all adults in the U.S., some 98 million people, participate in adventure vacations each year, and 27 million Americans have taken a bicycling vacation in the past five years.
- Bicycling is now the third most common vacation activity (USTA).
- A 2009 report by the League of American Bicyclists reveals that bicycling brings in one billion dollars a year to Colorado's state economy, while bicycle-related activity in Portland, Oregon, contributes \$90 million to its local economy and provides 850 to 1,150 jobs.

## ■ **Bicycle tourists spend money. They:**

- Eat – a lot and often; bicycling burns up to 450 calories per hour. It has been said that food is a bicycle's "fuel."
- Drink – again, a lot in order to stay hydrated, but also for pleasure, patronizing everything from lemonade stands to wineries.
- Like to explore – take in the sights, visit museums, art galleries and historic places, and learn about the places they visit.
- Stay in B&B's, inns, hotels/motels, and campgrounds.
- Participate in other kinds of recreation along the way – visiting parks, exploring side trails and bike loops, and enjoying natural features from beaches to unusual habitats for birds and wildlife.

- Drive to and from starting/ending points and thus need fuel for their vehicles; or they may arrive by public transportation and need local transportation and perhaps bike rentals.
- Shop – for gear, souvenirs to remember their journey and gifts for others.

## **Why Focus on Canal Communities?**

New York State's canal communities are communities along the historic canal corridor that once benefitted economically from their water connection to the rest of the world. Indeed, many came into being specifically to serve canal traffic and provide transfer points for local and regional commerce. More recently, many have faced challenging economic transitions.

We believe that canal communities, particularly those in the historic Erie Canalway Corridor, are ideally located to take advantage of the booming interest in bicycle tourism for several reasons:



*The trail boosts the overall tourism appeal of communities along it, thereby diversifying and further strengthening local economies.*

- **The Erie Canalway Trail is 75% complete** as an off-road bicycling path. Additional construction is underway or planned.
- **Long-distance trails like the Erie Canalway Trail can attract new customers to adjacent communities.** In a survey of businesses near the Great Allegheny Passage, a 150-mile rail trail in Pennsylvania, conducted before the trail was complete, 64% of respondents indicated that business had increased as a direct result of the trail's presence. On average, those surveyed estimated that more than a quarter of their business was attributable to trail use.
- **The Erie Canal has great name recognition** in this country because of its iconic standing in American history and legend.
- **Many canal communities offer easy access to their downtown business districts** for trail users because they are on or close to the canal and the adjacent trail.
- **Bicycle tourists are part of the new "cargo" on the Erie Canal.** The Erie Canalway Trail has the ingredients needed to become a truly world-class bicycle tourism destination, once again connecting canal communities to each other and the world. It already is delivering significant numbers of bicycle tourists (and some walkers, inline skaters and others) to your community's doorstep, and its presence alone will boost local businesses.

## Beyond Bicycle Tourism

While the focus here is on bicycle tourism, the presence of the Erie Canalway Trail also enhances your community's appeal as a destination for people considering visiting for other reasons. By increasing the activity options available, the trail boosts the overall tourism appeal of communities along it, thereby diversifying and further strengthening local economies.

- A study of the economic impact of bicycling on the Outer Banks of North Carolina, a major U.S. tourism destination, found that 17% of **all visitors** surveyed engaged in bicycling during their stay and that 1%, in this instance more than 40,000 people, were drawn to a significant degree by the bicycling opportunities.
- Half of all summer visitors at Colorado ski resorts spend time bicycling and 40% said they would have altered their vacation destination if bicycling were not available.

- In Portland, Oregon, a city noted for its biking facilities, a 2008 survey of people who had requested information on bicycling found that 78% of visitors said that bicycle-friendliness was a factor in their decision to visit.

Today the Canal System also is promoted as a "water trail" for kayakers and canoeists, drawing a growing number of recreational boaters. In addition, people walk the Erie Canalway Trail for enjoyment. These groups of tourists can benefit from many of the same services provided for bicycle tourists and will thus contribute to the economies of canal communities in similar ways.

Finally, evidence shows that the presence of trails in or near communities furthers community development in general by making them more attractive to entrepreneurs starting new businesses and employers considering relocating. That is, trails are seen as important contributors to the quality of life.

# Section 1 About Bicycle Tourists

## Why Attract Bicycle Tourists?

Bicyclists are potential customers who, like other tourists, can bring new revenue into your community and support your business. But there are some additional characteristics of bicycle tourists that make them an attractive audience for your marketing efforts:

- **They are, on average, well-educated older adults from upper-income households.** In a survey of bicyclists on North Carolina's Outer Banks, 81% reported having a college degree and 78% gave household incomes of \$75,000 or more. In the Adirondacks, the mean annual income of bicyclist survey respondents was between \$60,000 and \$69,000. In a 2008 survey of users on the Great Allegheny Passage, a 150-mile rail trail in Pennsylvania, 83% of respondents were 35 or older.
- **They typically travel in groups of friends or family members.** In the Adirondack survey of people who had visited or were considering visiting for bike tours, for example, the average group size was five people.

- **They are interested in learning about your community and what makes it unique, and in participating in what it has to offer.**

Having already chosen a slower-paced mode of travel, they will take time to enjoy what they encounter. They like to visit historic sites and museums, to find unusual shops, to tour wineries and farms, visit art galleries and theaters, explore natural features, and engage in other forms of recreation. When the website bicycletouring101.com conducted an online poll recently, 64% of respondents said that when they come to a new town, they prefer to “look around for nice restaurants, historical attractions and interesting things to do while (they) stay and visit.”

- **They spend money.** Many bicyclists who tour independently carry a minimum of equipment and pay for lodging in facilities ranging from hostels to hotels and meals in restaurants as they go. Sometimes known as “credit card cyclists” because of their willingness to buy what they need along the way, these cyclists have not been drawn to bicycle tourism because it is inexpensive.

Other cyclists carry much of what they need with them, perhaps including camping and cooking gear and food. These tend to be more frugal visitors, but still are likely to purchase food near the starting points of their trips and, at least on longer tours, need to resupply themselves periodically.

Finally, many cyclists engage in supported touring (guided tours) in which they join a group tour that is supported by an organization or business that makes all or most arrangements for lodging and food. For an end-to-end trip on the Erie Canalway Trail, for example, cyclists can spend up to \$1,500 each, depending on the type of lodging and meals included.

- **They are relatively low impact visitors.** If they arrive in your community on a trail, they do not contribute to traffic on your streets, occupy limited parking spaces, add significant wear and tear on infrastructure, or bring the noise and air pollution associated with motor vehicles.
- **They provide an incentive for preserving your canal community’s unique character, historic heritage and natural features.** Because of their interest in exploring and

learning about the places they visit, they are likely to spend more money in communities that have preserved and interpreted elements of their past and their natural setting. Indeed, in a recent (2009) survey of heritage travelers, of which bicycle tourists are widely considered a sub-group, conducted for the U.S. Cultural & Heritage Tourism Marketing Council, 65% said that they seek travel experiences where the “destination, its buildings and surroundings have retained their historic character.”

## What Bicycle Tourists Seek

Bicycle tourists choose possible destinations based on three broad characteristics:

- **The actual ride**, including length, difficulty and type of route.
- **Support and services** along the way, such as the availability of good maps, the ease of finding their way, and lodging and dining options.
- **Nearby attractions** (i.e., what there is to do and see).

### The Ride:

- A tour between four and seven days long
- Riding between 30 and 50 miles per day (family groups tend toward the lower end, solo riders/small groups favor greater distances)
- Off-road trails and/or bicycle-friendly roads with low traffic volume and speed and paved, well-marked shoulders
- Physical challenge varying from easy to moderate (although some do prefer more challenging routes)

### Support and Services:

- Clear, detailed maps and route descriptions
- Well marked/signed routes
- Convenient places to stay (preferences can range from campgrounds to higher end hotels)
- Readily-available options for food, from restaurants to snack bars to farm stands
- Services with a “bicycle-friendly” orientation

## Bicycle Tourist Characteristics

They are, on average, well-educated older adults from upper-income households.

They typically travel in groups of friends or family members.

They are interested in learning about your community.

They spend money.

They are relatively low impact visitors.

They provide an incentive for preserving your community’s unique character, historic heritage and natural features.

## Desirable Destination Attributes for Bicyclists

Scenery

Rural Areas

Historic Sites and Parks

Culture and Uniqueness

### Nearby Attractions/Destination Characteristics:

In the context of bicycle tourism, “destination” has a different meaning. For these tourists, it is all about the journey. So here, the word refers to the route to be followed, whether on a trail or roads. These attributes emerge as particularly important:

- **Scenery.** In the Adirondacks scenery was mentioned most frequently (59% of respondents) by cyclists as what attracted them to the region; it also topped the list of priorities in choosing a destination among Maine cyclists. Also, in an online poll at [bicycletouring101.com](http://bicycletouring101.com), when asked about their favorite kind of landscape, the largest number of respondents preferred “flat lands with occasional rivers, lakes and rolling hills.”
- **Rural areas.** This emerged as the number two attribute of a destination in the Adirondack study, which may be related in part to the preference for low traffic volumes.
- **Historic sites and parks.** Among the Adirondack cyclists, the most sought-after activity during a bicycling trip was visiting historic sites and museums.
- **Culture and uniqueness.** In Maine, this was the second most often desired characteristic in choosing a destination for bicycling. Also, in the online poll cited above, 64% of respondents said that when they come to a new town, they prefer to “look around for nice restaurants, historical attractions and interesting things to do while (they) stay and visit.” This seems to reinforce both the interest in historic sites and the desire for unique experiences.

### How Much Will Bicycle Tourists Spend?

In the 2008 survey of trail users on Pennsylvania’s Great Allegheny Passage, 41% said that they stayed overnight in the vicinity of the trail for at least one night during their visit. These individuals reported spending approximately \$100 per day, including lodging, while using the trail compared to \$13 per day for those who did not stay overnight. Furthermore, 73% of the overnights stayed two or more nights (unfortunately, the spending by this group was not separately tabulated).

An informal Vermont survey of more than 30,000 bicycle tourists in 1991 supports this finding and suggests that the figure may be higher: visiting (non-local) cyclists spent an average of \$115 per person per day. About 30% of this total was spent on lodging, while the rest was roughly equally divided among food, bicycle supplies and outfitters, and personal expenses.

Furthermore, the longer the bicycle trip, the more bicycle tourists tend to spend per day and the farther they are willing to travel to get to the location. For example, a study of the economic impact of bicycling in Maine found that the 2% of cyclists who went on cycling trips of two or more days accounted for 17% of all bicyclists’ spending. In addition, 80% of cyclists reported that they would travel no more than 100 miles to reach a location for a one-day trip, while 90% said they would travel more than 100 miles for a four to seven day tour and over 80% were willing to travel 300 miles or more for a trip longer than a week.

Maine survey respondents also said they would travel farther to bike on a multi-use trail than to use roads.

In the case of the Great Allegheny Passage, people who traveled 50 miles or more to get to the trail spent about twice as much per day as those who traveled less than 50 miles. Our general rule of thumb regarding spending is that day trippers from outside the immediate area spend four times as much as local cyclists, and multi-day cyclists spend twice as much per day as day trippers.

### Bicycle Tourism can Generate Big Money.

Based on these studies, we estimate that those who take long-distance, multi-day bicycling vacations spend between \$100 and \$300 per day on food, lodging, and other items, with “credit card cyclists” typically near the upper end of this range. A group of six cyclists, therefore, each spending \$250 per day on, say, a seven-day trip would leave behind \$10,500 along their path. *If the Canalway Trail could attract 1,000 such bicycle tourist groups in a season, those visitors would contribute \$10.5 million to canal community economies.*

### Is this a Reasonable Expectation?

Here is some evidence:

- Missouri’s Katy Trail, a 225-mile rail trail under development since 1982, draws 350,000 bicyclists per year, about a third of whom (100,000+) are tourists from outside the local area.

- A 2007 economic impact study of the Great Allegheny Passage, not yet complete at the time, determined that it was generating \$12.5 million in revenue annually.
- And the New York State Canal Corporation's 2008 report, "Economic Impact Study of New York State Canal Tourism," estimated that 2.4 million "day-use visitors" of all kinds use the Canalway Trail system each year.

It seems likely, therefore, that the economic impact of the Erie Canalway Trail will reach, and perhaps exceed, the above figure.

### How Will Bicycle Tourists Discover You?

Before they can even decide whether the Erie Canalway Trail is an attractive destination, bicycle tourists must become aware of the opportunities the trail offers. How they typically do that may surprise you.

#### Word-of-mouth – the most powerful influence.

A survey of previous and potential bicycle tourists in the Adirondack region of New York found that word of mouth via friends, family, co-workers, and a growing number of online journaling sites and blogs, is the most influential information source for making decisions on where to go, with nearly 60% of respondents relying significantly on it.

In a 2006 user survey of the Pine Creek Rail Trail in Pennsylvania, 48% of the respondents said they learned of the trail through word-of-mouth. Another 18% identified the Internet as a source of information. The latter includes several blogs and interactive sites where people can post their own experiences, which can be seen as a form of word-of-mouth communication.

This means that, by welcoming and serving bicycle tourists today, you are also creating a cadre of promoters who will be a major source of publicity for the trail, your community and your

business that will bring even more customers in the future. Further, it also means that the future of your business and your community is intimately linked to the success of other businesses and canal communities and to the appeal of the Erie Canalway Trail.

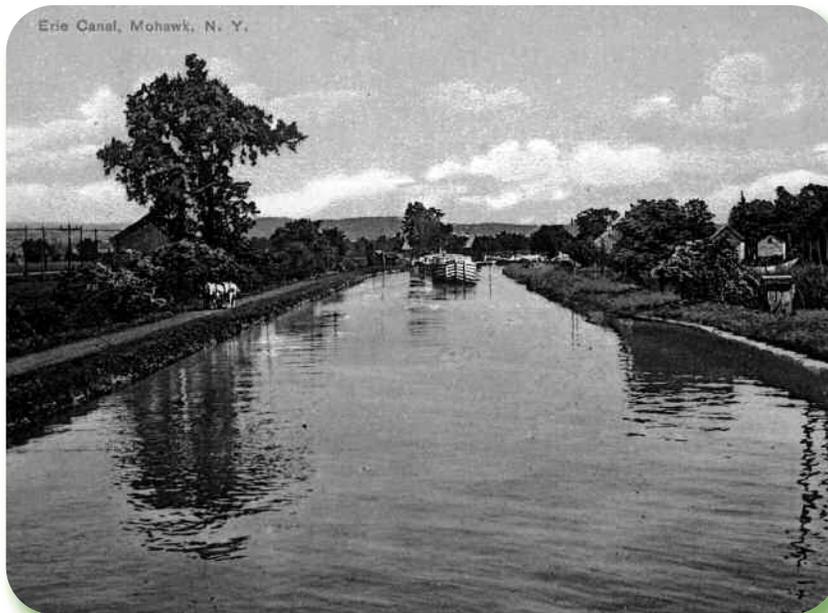
Your task, then, is to help give these visitors the experience they are seeking, thereby generating positive word-of-mouth "buzz."

## Section 2 About the Erie Canalway Trail

### History

Most New Yorkers know the basic history of the Erie Canal: almost 200 years ago (1825) its opening fulfilled a vision of a waterway connecting America's seaboard with the growing interior of the young country, spurring the growth of canal communities along its route. Adjacent to the canal, of course, was the towpath, trod by mules pulling the canal boats an astounding four miles per hour. That towpath was the precursor of much of today's Erie Canalway Trail.

*Adjacent to the canal, of course, was the towpath, the precursor of much of today's Erie Canalway Trail.*



*The Erie Canalway Trail today is about 75% complete, with 270 miles of off-road pathway in place.*

In addition to the Erie Canal, New York also built canals connecting the Erie to Lake Champlain (the Champlain Canal), Lake Ontario (the Oswego Canal) and Lakes Cayuga and Seneca (the Cayuga-Seneca Canal). Today these canals form the state's 524-mile Canal System.

As the canal waned as a commercial transportation route, canal communities began seeking new ways to benefit from the canal's presence.

In 1995, the Canal Corporation, which operates and maintains the canal system, issued the *NYS Canal Recreationway Plan*, which called for repositioning the canal corridor as "a linear park ... for recreational use ... to enhance the economic development potential of the canal regions." Among its recommendations was the creation of an end-to-end trail "providing significant recreational opportunities, ... enhanced access, and linkages to other trails." The idea of the Canalway Trail was born.

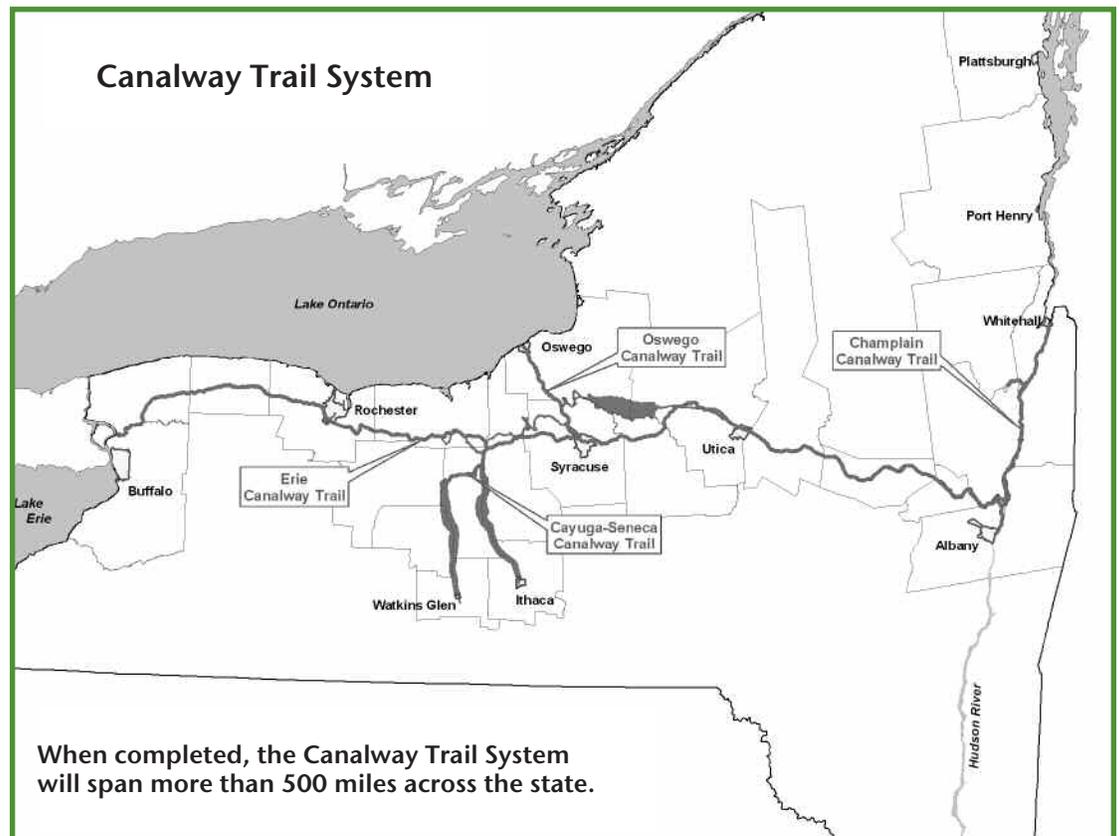
The vision for the Canalway Trail system includes eventual trails along all components of the Canal System. This guide focuses on the Erie Canalway Trail for several reasons: it is the longest, most nearly complete, and best

known, and therefore is the one that is ready now to serve as a magnet for bicycle tourists. Those who come to cycle the Erie Canal will form a ready-made customer pool for the other trails as they are further developed, and the information in this guide will apply equally well to canal communities along them. In 2000 Congress designated the entire canal system, its 234 communities and the Canalway Trail as part of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor.

## The Trail Today

The Erie Canalway Trail today is about 75% complete, with 270 miles (out of 360) of off-road pathway in place. Additional construction is planned as funding becomes available.

The Erie Canalway Trail is a multi-use trail, designed to accommodate pedestrians, bicyclists, and, where paved, in-line skaters, as well as cross-country skiers and, in some places, snowmobilers during the winter. Much of the trail has a stone dust (crushed and compacted limestone) surface, but there also are significant paved (asphalt) sections. A few sections have a natural surface (dirt and vegetation).



## An Emerging Bicycle Tourist Magnet

User counts conducted annually (2005-2009) by Parks & Trails New York along the trail have shown that bicyclists account for more than half – more than 60% in some places – of all trail users. From other studies, it is clear

that bicyclists make up an even greater share of longer-distance trail users. In turn, it is the long-distance riders who have the greatest need for services, generally come from farther away, and spend the most money.

The Erie Canalway Trail meets many of the top preferences of bicycle tourists.

### Erie Canalway Trail Characteristics Compared To Bicycle Tourist Trip Preferences

Bicycle Tourist Preference	Erie Canalway Trail
A tour of 4 to 7 seven days, riding 30 to 50 miles per day	Full length: 7 days at approx. 50 miles per day; many options for fewer days, fewer miles/day
Bicycle-friendly roads with low traffic volume or off-road trails	75% is a premiere off-road trail now; eventually all will be. Many quiet, country roads for exploring surrounding countryside and communities
Physical challenge varying from easy to moderate	Relatively easy cycling with occasional more moderate sections
Clear, detailed maps and route descriptions	Detailed maps available for all sections *
Convenient lodging and food options	Many lodging and food options available: charming B&B's, quaint inns, hotels/motels, campgrounds; varied restaurants, farmers' markets, farm stands, ice cream and snack bars, specialty food shops
Services with a "bicycle-friendly" orientation	Growing awareness among community leaders of the importance of being "bicycle-friendly" and an eagerness to meet cyclists' needs
Opportunities to enjoy scenery, rural areas, historic sites, culture and unique communities	Traverses the state's most beautiful rural scenery, leads into many picturesque, culturally unique and historic canal communities with an abundance of museums, historic sites, art galleries, and places to shop
Travel up to 300 miles (sometimes more) for a 4- to 7-day trip	More than 30 million people live within 300 miles of the trail, which is readily accessible at multiple points by car, train and air service

\* Parks & Trails New York has published a guide book to the entire Erie Canalway Trail with detailed maps and has posted similar information on its website. The Canal Corporation also has a printed map of the full Canalway Trail system. Other maps and guides to specific trail segments are available.

*The Erie Canalway Trail meets many of the top destination preferences of bicycle tourists.*

*The key to success lies in the combined efforts of local community leaders and businesspeople like you. Collectively, you can create the memorable trail experiences that will spread far-and-wide through word-of-mouth communication and then bring more visitors – and more business – to your door.*

In addition, the experience offered today by the Canalway Trail already invites both return visits and word-of-mouth promotion. Among participants in Parks & Trails New York's Cycling the Erie Canal bike tour, 80% say they would consider returning to the trail on their own, and 95% would recommend the trip to friends or family members.

### **A Vision for the Future**

The Erie Canalway Trail already is attracting a significant number of bicyclists who are supporting local businesses. But so much more is possible. Imagine an Erie Canalway Trail of the future that:

- Consists of a clearly marked, well-maintained, safe, and completely off-road pathway extending for 360 miles between Buffalo and Albany.
- Passes through or near scores of communities offering unique experiences by connecting trail users with their current cultures and historical roots.
- Provides easy access to these communities via trailside “gateways” that guide bicyclists to the services, facilities and attractions they seek and bicycle-friendly design features.
- Brings trail users into contact with welcoming local residents who appreciate their value to the community.
- Is renowned across the country and overseas because of its association with the famous Erie Canal as well as coordinated marketing efforts and the word-of-mouth communication by enthusiastic bicycle tourists.

In achieving this vision, there will be important roles for elected officials at all levels, as well as regional and statewide tourism and advocacy groups, particularly in finishing the trail and coordinating marketing efforts. The key to success lies in the combined efforts of local community leaders and businesspeople like you. Collectively, you can create the memorable trail experiences that will spread far-and-wide through word-of-mouth communication and then bring more visitors – and more business – to your door.

## **Section 3** **Building a Bicycle-friendly Business**

Okay, you've begun to think about and address the needs of your bicycling customers. As a business owner or operator, the steps you choose to take will vary with the nature of your business and other factors. And you can proceed incrementally. Bicyclist friendliness is a matter of degree rather than a “yes or no” quality.

### **Becoming Bicycle-friendly**

#### **All Businesses**

- Have and conspicuously display maps – of the downtown area, community or region, as appropriate.
- Know the answers to likely bicyclists' questions:
  - Where is the nearest bike shop? When is it open? Is there someone who can help with bicycle repair after hours?
  - Where is the nearest ATM?
  - Where can I check my email?
  - What restaurants, snack bars and grocery stores are nearby?



- What are the lodging/camping options in your community?
- Are there laundry or shower facilities nearby?
- Where is the closest hospital or walk-in medical clinic?
- How do I get back to the trail?
- Have information on side trips, bike loops, and other points of interest in the area.
- Have key equipment on hand to lend: extra locks for the bike rack, a tire pump, some basic repair tools.
- Provide places to recharge cell phones.
- Be a “bicycle ambassador”: keep an eye out for bicyclists who seem unsure of where to go or are having mechanical problems.
- Offer lockers for temporary storage of helmets, packs, and purchases.
- Collaborate with neighboring businesses on shared facilities such as bike racks, lockers, or restrooms if needed.
- Be an advocate for making your entire community more bicycle-friendly (see Section 4).

## Restaurants

- Publicize that patrons in bicycling attire are welcome.
- Offer vegetarian and heart-healthy menu options. Bicycle tourists tend to be more health conscious than the average person.
- Include hearty meals such as a “bicyclist breakfast;” bicyclists burn lots of calories.
- Post your menu outside where cyclists can easily see it.
- Offer easily carried snacks such as energy bars and dried fruit.
- Provide order delivery to nearby bicyclist campgrounds and other lodging facilities.

## Retailers

- Offer shipping. Because bicyclists cannot take much with them, their buying options are limited unless you will ship their purchases for them. Make it obvious to potential customers that this service is available.
- Sell postage stamps and accept outgoing mail.
- Carry small, place-specific mementoes of your community, such as patches or decals. We envision a time when every canal community has a patch, say, with “Erie Canalway Trail” at the top or bottom along with the name of the community and the image of a local landmark.
- Consider providing a computer station for Internet access.

## Lodging Establishments

- Permit one-night stays, at least for cyclists.
- Show interest in the day’s journey during the registration process.
- Provide indoor parking space on the first floor or allow guests to take their bikes into their rooms.
- Have laundry facilities on site or nearby.
- Have menus for and directions to restaurants.
- Have computers for access to email/Internet.
- Offer cold beverages/snacks on arrival.
- Provide an outdoor space for working on bikes, including water source for washing.
- Accept resupply packages mailed ahead by cyclists.
- Offer shuttle service for bicyclists *and their bikes* from/to the trail, including drop off-bike back service. As an extra service, offer a shuttle to local restaurants.
- Have secure storage for luggage and multi-day parking for those who arrive by car and plan overnight bike trips.
- Offer bike rentals yourself or through another business.
- If you run a B&B, participate in the Empire State Bed and Breakfast Association’s “Welcome Bicyclists!” program.

*Bicycle-friendliness is a matter of degree rather than a ‘yes or no’ quality.*

# Section 4

## Creating a Bicycle-friendly Community

*Bicycle tourists crave information! Especially about where they are or soon will be and where they can find what they need.*

While individual businesses that understand and cater to the needs of bicyclists are essential building blocks of a bicycle-friendly community, a broader, community-wide effort to appeal to trail users – to get their attention and attract them into your community – is key.

### The Basics of Being a Bicycle-friendly Community

For about a century, we have designed or redesigned our communities and transportation systems around the automobile. This orientation is so ingrained that it can be challenging to recognize the obstacles it presents to people who travel by other means.

Bicyclists do have different needs than motorists. What if a significant number of your guests or shoppers were to start arriving by bicycle instead? Would they feel like valued customers? Would they leave eager to tell others about their experience?

Services that have a “bicycle-friendly” orientation are important to bicycle tourists.

**Fundamental elements of becoming bicycle-friendly.** Whether you run a B&B or a hardware store, staff a welcome center or a museum, or serve on a city council or a planning board, consider these steps:

- **Shift your perspective.** To grasp the needs of traveling bicyclists, there is no substitute for being a bicyclist. Bike from the trail into your community; go where visiting bicyclists are likely to go – restaurants, lodging, shops, historic sites, etc. Can you find them readily? Do you feel safe? What barriers do you encounter?
- **Welcome bicyclists.** Offer the services and facilities they need. Start with some simple signs: “Welcome to YourCanalCommunity” on the trail itself; “Bicyclists Welcome” at businesses, attractions, parks, etc. If your community has a “bicyclists welcome” program,

participate in it and display the logo; if not, start one to encourage others to consider bicyclists’ needs (see Section 5).

- **Give them information.** Bicycle tourists crave information! Especially about where they are or soon will be and where they can find what they need. When we ask participants in Cycling the Erie Canal what improvements they would like to see, “more signs telling us where we are and how far it is to the next town” is always at or near the top of the list.
  - On the welcome sign, include “Information ¼ mile,” as appropriate.
  - Make sure there are street name signs at all road crossings and overpasses.
  - Post “you are here” maps in key locations around your community.
- **Help them find you.** Trial-and-error doesn’t work well for bicyclists who have just ridden 30 or 40 miles. Use a map and/or signs to show the way from the trail into your community. If you are not close to the trail, work with other businesses and community leaders to develop a “gateway” on the trail with a directory of businesses and their locations.
- **Provide safe access.** Be sure that the roads bicyclists will use to get from the trail into your community or to your business are bicycle-friendly with:
  - Paved, clearly marked bike lanes or road shoulders that are kept free of broken glass and other debris.
  - Signs and pavement markings to alert motorists to the likely presence of bicyclists.
  - Where feasible, off-road bike paths to major destinations.
- **Bicyclists need parking, too!** Once bicyclists find you, then what? Bicycles need protection from theft and, if possible, weather. Provide convenient and secure bicycle parking facilities (bike racks). Keep them in good condition and the area around them clean. They should be in a lighted area if they will be used after dark and, ideally, covered for shelter from rain.
- **Don’t hide the amenities.** Make water and public restrooms easy to find. If not clearly visible from the trail, provide directions. If public facilities aren’t available, will businesses open theirs? Rest and shelter are important to bicyclists, too; chairs, benches

and covered porches or pavilions in parks are great. Compile a list of places where showers are available (e.g., health clubs, the YMCA/YWCA, a welcome or visitor center, nearby state parks).

## Going Beyond the Basics

At the community level, being bicycle-friendly refers to:

- The ease with which cyclists on the Canalway Trail can learn about and find their way to services they need.
- The degree to which they can readily explore and experience the uniqueness of a particular community.

In seeking to enhance these two qualities, the task can be seen as consisting of three stages:

- **Drawing bicyclists in;** getting them to pause long enough to discover what you offer and then, by appealing to their interests, enticing them to leave the trail and explore your community.
- **Facilitating travel** into and throughout your community.
- **Delighting them** with what they find.

Although the specific steps you take in each of these phases will depend on your community's particular situation and attributes, there are some elements to consider that can be adapted to most circumstances. As with individual businesses, canal communities can adopt an incremental approach to becoming more bicycle-friendly, undertaking simpler and no- or low-cost steps first and more complex or expensive ones later.

Keep in mind, also, that becoming more bicycle-friendly will directly benefit all residents of your community as much as it does bicycling visitors. By broadening options for transportation, recreation and physical activity, it will contribute to improved health, a cleaner environment and an enhanced quality of life.

## Getting Started

**Who is going to make it happen?** Making changes to attract more bicycle tourists cannot be done by one or a few business owners. It will require broader community participation and decision-making.

Once your community has decided, through municipal legislative debate, public forums or

other means, that it wants to better serve bicycle tourists using the Canalway Trail, a group must be designated to provide the leadership needed to move forward. This might be an existing group, such as a downtown revitalization committee, chamber of commerce or industrial development agency, or a new one formed to focus on this effort. Regardless, inclusion of all stakeholders and ongoing opportunities for public engagement are important for long-term success.

**Preparatory Steps.** Here are some initial steps you can take at minimal cost to lay the foundation for becoming more bicycle-friendly and attracting more bicycle tourists:

- **Establish a Bicycle (or Bicycle and Pedestrian) Advisory Committee** that could either lead the effort or provide citizen input to the group that is leading it. Such committees are municipally-appointed and can be good vehicles for involving a range of stakeholders.
- **Formally set a goal of encouraging and facilitating bicycling** in your community and becoming a center for bicycling.
- **Start a “Bicyclists Welcome” program** if your community doesn't have one. Create for display a distinctive logo for businesses that pledge to offer some bicycle-friendly amenities, such as covered and locked bicycle storage, tools for minor bike repairs, no-smoking rooms, and healthy and filling breakfasts. Use the Canalway Trail logo on promotional materials, your website and welcoming signs.
- **Adopt a “complete streets” transportation planning policy** that requires consideration of bicycle use in road projects.
- **Commit to including bicycle facilities** in other community plans and projects.

In taking these steps, and in developing a community tourism initiative in general, it is important to offer all residents opportunities to be involved and provide input and feedback throughout the process.

Once your community has decided to become more bicycle-friendly and identified leadership, it's time to consider actions to take at each of the three stages of welcoming bicycle tourists.

*Becoming more bicycle-friendly will directly benefit residents as much as it does bicycling visitors.*

## Drawing Bicyclists In

If the Canalway Trail runs through or immediately adjacent to the heart of your community, getting the attention of trail users will be relatively easy. You are hard to miss. If, on the other hand, the trail is only on the outskirts of your community, getting noticed may require more effort. In either case, once you have their attention, you must answer the bicycle traveler's question, "What is here that's of interest to me?" Consider the following actions:

- **Create a community gateway.** Clearly identify the main access point into your community with a trailside "gateway" conveying the message that "You have arrived!" A gateway could include:
  - An attention-getter. Something that makes people want to learn more. Art such as a mural or sculpture works well, perhaps related to your community's history. Other options: landscaping and plantings, benches, a banner above the trail or the adjacent street.
  - A wide spot making it easy for cyclists to pull over to the side and a bike rack to encourage more than a brief pause. The bike rack itself can be an attention-getter with creative design.
  - Another welcoming sign with a "you are here" map showing the location of important services (bike shops, restaurants, lodging, laundry facilities, etc.), attractions and amenities.
  - An introduction to your community, its history and current identity.

- A rack for cards or brochures of local businesses, and a bulletin board for announcing community events. These work best if you have someone dedicated to keeping them current and neat.
- Menus from local restaurants.
- **Develop a welcome center** within easy reach of the gateway where visitors can learn more about your community and seek respite from sun or rain. Some gateway components listed above can be provided there, as can important amenities identified in Section 3.

## Facilitating Access and Travel

Once you have successfully captured cyclists' attention, the next stage is to make it as easy and comfortable as possible for them to leave the trail, find needed services, explore your community, and, later, return to the trail. The emphasis given to this stage will depend, in part, on the size of your community and its proximity to the trail. Here are some steps to consider:

- **Establish a clear, safe connection to your community.** In most cases this will be a road or series of roads, but if an off-road option exists, or could in the future, that is ideal. This connection should:
  - Begin at the gateway with a map and/or signage showing which way to go.
  - Use additional signs along the route as needed to guide and reassure cyclists.
  - Use pavement markings as appropriate to supplement signs.

*You must answer the bicycle traveler's question, "What is here that's of interest to me?"*



◀ **Brockport's welcome center has free bikes for loan so that visitors arriving by other means can explore the trail – and perhaps become future bicycle tourists.**

- Guide cyclists back to the trail when they are ready to move on; use signs and/or pavement markings for this purpose as needed. The Canalway Trail logo with arrows could work well.
- **Make your roads bicycle-friendly.**
    - Repair/repaint bike lanes and shoulders when needed; small cracks and holes cause greater problems for cyclists than for motorists.
    - Avoid dangerous slotted storm water drainage grates that can grab bike tires; replace them with mesh-style or curb face ones.
    - Mark bicycle stop lines that are closer to intersections than auto stop lines to increase visibility of and by cyclists, thus enhancing safety.
    - Install cautionary signage wherever the trail or other off-road path intersects roads.
  - **Integrate bicycle use into your community.**
    - Provide bike racks on buses and other public transit.
    - Encourage taxi companies to be ready to handle bicycles.
    - Cultivate a “share the road” outlook in your community through signage and other educational activities.

## Delighting Cyclists during their Visit

Once you have convinced Canalway Trail bicyclists to spend time in your community and facilitated their travel from the trail into and through it, your next task is to send them on their way with positive feelings about their visit. In doing so, you will be helping to generate future visits to the trail and your community through the word-of-mouth information that bicycle tourists rely on so significantly. Try these steps:

- **Provide convenient bicyclist facilities and amenities.** Sound familiar? In particular, have secure bike racks at convenient locations in your shopping district(s) and at parks, bus stops, public rest rooms, and other popular places.
- **Look good!** Bicyclists are not likely to linger in a community without evident pride in its presentation. Keep streets and public areas clean; beautify the downtown; plant flowers and landscape parks; keep

the grass mowed where appropriate; maintain signs, benches, restrooms, and sidewalks; have trash receptacles in the main business area and parks.

- **Fashion an identity or theme for your community** or region and reinforce it throughout town on signs, banners, and promotional materials. Such a theme need not limit your offerings or image, but it will help people remember their visit. For example, the Village of Brockport capitalizes on its stature as the “Victorian Village on the Erie Canal.” Rochester is known as “Flower City;” Lyons was the peppermint oil capital of the U.S., and Lockport is renowned for its “Flight of Five” locks. Assess your community’s unique canal-related assets and use them in marketing and promotion. Showcasing a genuine, authentic theme or asset, rather than adopting gimmicks or overlaying inauthentic styles (e.g., Bavarian architectural overlays), also promotes the local and national significance of the Erie Canalway. Collaborate with adjacent communities as appropriate.
- **Develop additional opportunities for bicycle tourists to explore** and learn about your town or the surrounding countryside. Possibilities include walking tours of historic buildings/sites, museums, antique or craft shops, or other community features, side trips to nearby parks, connections to other existing trails, and themed bike loops that lead from your community to historic sites, natural areas, farms, wineries, or artisans. Be sure to have brochures or simple print-outs describing these options readily available throughout your community and that any bike routes are well-marked and on bicycle-friendly roads or trails.
- **Set up a “trail ambassadors” program** in which volunteers knowledgeable about your community are on the trail whenever possible to answer questions, give directions, assist with mechanical problems, and serve as a friendly face of your community.
- **Make everyone in your community a “bicycle ambassador.”** Educate residents about the potential value of bicycle tourists to the local economy and ways in which they can contribute to positive word-of-mouth marketing by offering assistance when needed, keeping the community clean, reporting missing signs

*By sending cyclists on their way with positive feelings about their visit, you help generate future visits through the word-of-mouth information bicycle tourists rely on.*

*Promotion of the Erie Canalway Trail and the success of individual businesses and canal communities are linked. Benefits both trickle down and bubble up.*

or road hazards, and generally being courteous drivers when encountering bicyclists. Organize local bike rides for residents to acquaint them with the trail.

- **Create a sense of security.** Post a local emergency phone number at the gateway (dialing “911” from a cell phone connects to the state police). Meet with local police to consider the feasibility of patrolling the trail, access routes, and public facilities and parks used by cyclists.

## Section 5 Expanding the Pie — Reaching Out to Bicyclists

So bicycle tourists are coming and they are spending money – perhaps more than you realized – in pursuit of their chosen vacation mode. And you can take steps locally to increase your slice of this bicycle-tourism business pie by enticing more of these pedaling tourists to explore your community and patronize your business. As a result, awareness of all that the Erie Canalway Trail has to offer will spread through word-of-mouth buzz. As it does, more bicyclists will arrive to ride the trail, further increasing the economic benefit of the trail.

**But you don’t have to wait for this process to unfold!** You can, instead, contribute to it by reaching out to bicyclists. Doing so involves two key elements:

- Getting the word out
- Making it easy

### Promoting Your Business, Your Community, and the Trail

**Creating brand recognition** is about using both publicity and direct rider experience to make a connection between certain words or symbols (e.g., logos) and positive images or expectations in the minds of potential customers. The concept is useful here for two reasons:

- The Erie Canal has it! People have heard of it. Its name invokes certain pictures or associations in their minds: engineering marvel, westward expansion, nation building and patriotism, a simpler and slower-paced era, even a song (“Low bridge, everybody down”). This makes your task easier: associate your community and business with the canal and let the bicycle touring community know that the canal is still there and accessible to them via the Erie Canalway Trail.
- It reinforces the idea that promotion of the Erie Canalway Trail and the success of individual businesses and canal communities are linked. Benefits both trickle down and bubble up. What’s good for you is good for the trail and vice versa.

**Getting the word out.** This includes many forms of publicity, from the word-of-mouth marketing discussed earlier to special events and paid advertising. Here are some suggestions to generate interest in your business and community among prospective bicycle tourists while supporting and benefitting from the “brand” of the Erie Canal and Canalway Trail:

- **Assess your business/community** from the perspective of bicycling tourists. What do you offer that will be appealing to them? Are you within 50 yards of the trail, or “a short bike ride away?” Are you a gateway to other biking opportunities? Consider both attractions/activities and services.
- **Create your own promotional identity or theme.** Make the trail part of who/what you are. Brand yourself as a bicycle-friendly canal community. Incorporate this into advertising and publicity.
- **Organize an event** that will capitalize on your proximity to the trail and that will appeal to bicycle tourists, or build on an existing event to include these elements. A 2008 nationwide survey of bike event promoters conducted by Bikes Belong found that more than a million Americans participated in such events (mostly organized rides) and the average participant generated \$535 in direct economic impact. Events also introduce your community to people who are not yet bicycle tourists but may return or stay longer because of your bicycling

opportunities. For examples, check the calendar of events on the Canal Corporation's website ([www.nyscanals.gov](http://www.nyscanals.gov)).

- **Collaborate with others** – other businesses in your community or other communities with which you share a theme or opportunities such as a side destination or a bike loop connected to the trail. Cooperate in regional promotion efforts with Tourism Promotion Agencies, chambers of commerce and business groups (e.g., Empire State Bed & Breakfast Association and regional B&B associations).
- **Welcome competition.** Remember that what improves the trail and your community benefits your business. Particularly in smaller communities, it is important to develop a critical mass of services in order to entice more bicyclists off the trail. For example, more people will come into your town if there is a choice of restaurants rather than just one. This critical mass concept also applies to the trail as a whole. Along significant stretches of the trail, for instance, lodging options currently are limited. Increasing them will appeal to more bicyclists.
- **Advertise where the cyclists are**, such as in *Adventure Cyclist*, the magazine of the Adventure Cycling Association, or *American Bicyclist*, published by the League of American Bicyclists. Pool resources with other businesses or canal communities to increase advertising.
- **Mention bicycling in your other, general tourism advertising** and promotion.
- **Talk to bicyclists.** How did they learn about the trail? How did they find your business? What drew them to it and to your community? What could you do to enhance your image or improve their experience?
- **Use the Canalway Trail logo** in your advertising to reinforce your connection to the trail while also building the trail's brand.
- **Support – and take advantage of – statewide efforts to promote the trail.** For example:
  - Help publicize Parks & Trails New York's Cycling the Erie Canal bike tour, and plan special welcoming activities when it is in your area. In recent years

about half of the 500-plus participants have been first-time bicycle tourists, and 80% have said they would like to return on their own. These people represent future customers/visitors. Make an impression on them.

- If you have an annual festival or similar event, make sure it is included in Parks & Trails New York's *Cycling the Erie Canal* guide book and website ([www.ptny.org/bikecanal](http://www.ptny.org/bikecanal)) as well as the events calendar on the website of the Canal Corporation ([www.nyscanals.gov/exvac/calendar](http://www.nyscanals.gov/exvac/calendar)). The former also includes listings of bike shops, places to stay and things to do along the trail. The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor also includes information on the history of the Canalway and "must see" cultural heritage sites throughout the Corridor on its website ([www.eriecanalway.org](http://www.eriecanalway.org)).
- Participate in the Erie Canalway Passport program of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor ([www.eriecanalway.org](http://www.eriecanalway.org)).

## Making it Simple

The less work people have to do to visit you, the more likely they are to come. Whether you represent an individual business, a business group, a canal community, or a region, make it as easy as possible for potential customers/visitors to find the information they want and make arrangements.

- **Start with the basics.** Whether you run a business, a chamber of commerce, a tourism office, or a development agency, have knowledgeable people ready to answer bicycle tourists' questions while conveying a welcoming feeling. Have lists of lodging establishments that welcome bicyclists, restaurants, bike shops, and other services available for immediate reference; be able to give directions to your location or to other services by bicycle; know the hours of museums and other attractions.
- **Prepare and keep up-to-date a printed bicyclist's guide** to your community and its services and attractions. Include a map.

*Remember that what improves the trail and your community benefits your business.*

*What is important is a willingness to make some initial investments of time or money in the belief that a payoff will come, that you are headed in the right direction.*

- **Develop a website** with similar information, including links to local businesses and attractions.
- **Create regional one-stop information sources** focused on the needs and interests of bicycle tourists, whether online or reachable by telephone, where prospective visitors can obtain information on activities and services in multiple communities along the trail. County and regional tourism agencies, business associations and partnerships between two or more communities or businesses are possible vehicles for such a service.

## Section 6

# Looking Down the Road ... or Trail

There is a “chicken or egg” element to the process of making the Canalway Trail a world-class bicycle tourism destination. Which comes first – customers or trail-related services and amenities? The answer is that the two probably will grow together as one feeds the other: modest improvements in bicycle-friendliness and promotion will draw more people to the trail, which, in turn, enables businesses to start up or expand and communities to add further enhancements. What is important is a willingness to make some initial investments of time or money in the belief that a payoff will come, that you are headed in the right direction.

## What will success look like?

In moving forward, it can be helpful to have a mental picture of the goal. With that in mind, here are some possibilities:

- A statewide Canalway Trail chamber of commerce promotes the trail as a whole and manages a standardized “bicycle-friendly business” designation/recognition program.
- A single telephone number enables people interested in cycling the trail to obtain information and make logistical arrangements based on their starting point, how far they want to ride in a day, how many days they have available, their preferences for lodging, and their interests.
- A single website offers similar convenience and provides more detailed information about specific communities, attractions, and services.
- Bicyclists can ride in one direction on the trail and return to their starting points via Amtrak or other rail service, canal boat, or shuttle.
- People can reach major communities near the trail by public transportation, use local transit or shuttles to reach the trail and readily rent bikes if needed.
- Necessary services (e.g., water, rest rooms, camping) are available at frequent intervals.
- A service gap analysis of the trail corridor encourages new businesses to meet cyclists’ needs (e.g., lodging, restaurants, shuttles, bike rentals).
- Consistent signage along the corridor allows cyclists to track their progress and reinforces a sense of trail identity.
- Detailed section-by-section maps along the trail show locations of water and restrooms, distances between communities, and types of services found in communities.
- GPS-equipped cyclists can access coordinates that guide them to businesses and attractions.
- Mileposts along the trail allow emergency crews to quickly reach cyclists in need of help.
- A user fee or voluntary donation system supports trail maintenance, and cyclists can report maintenance needs by phone (voice or text).

By keeping this vision in mind while working on your own contributions to it, you can create an Erie Canalway Trail travel corridor for the twenty-first century, bringing new economic vitality to canal communities and supporting diverse businesses serving increasing numbers of bicycle tourists.

## How Bicycle-Friendly is Your Canal Community? An Assessment Checklist

This checklist offers an easy-to-use tool for assessing how bicycle-friendly your community is today and for identifying steps you can take to make your community more bikeable – for visitors and residents alike – in the future. A good way to begin is to take a bike ride from the trail into your community, visiting the places trail users are likely to want to go, and then returning to the trail, making notes on points covered by the checklist as you go. This will give you the best understanding of any challenges bicyclists face when seeking services on or exploring your community. Depending on your specific location, some checklist items may not apply, and you may discover additional elements you want to add to your checklist. Use what is here as a guide and adapt it as appropriate.

Preliminary	Yes	No	Notes
1. Do you have a Bicycle Advisory Committee or similar group?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2. Do you have a “bicyclists welcome” program?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
3. Do you have a “complete streets” policy or other commitment to bicycle-friendly roads?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
4. Have you cultivated a courteous, “share the road” outlook among residents to enhance the safety of both bicyclists and motorists?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

On the Trail	Yes	No	Notes
1. As cyclists approach your community, do they know where they are?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Is there a “Welcome to ....” sign?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Is there an “information ahead” sign?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are street names given at crossings, bridges?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2. Do “trail ambassadors” patrol the trail near your town to assist bicyclists as needed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

At the Gateway	Yes	No	Notes
1. Is it obvious to trail users that this is the entrance to your community?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2. Is there something that grabs attention and encourages cyclists to learn more?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
3. Is the gateway area clean and well maintained?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

*Checklist continued on page 22*

## How Bicycle-Friendly is Your Canal Community? An Assessment Checklist (*Continued*)

At the Gateway	Yes	No	Notes
4. Are the following available?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Bike parking (bike rack)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Benches/picnic table	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Information on the community (history, attractions, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
A “you are here” map of the town	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Water & restrooms (or directions to them)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Locations of key services (lodging, restaurants, showers, bike shops, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
A bulletin board for events and other announcements	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Emergency contact information	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
5. Is there a welcome center nearby and directions to it?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
6. If appropriate, is there signage showing how to get to the downtown?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Entering the Community	Yes	No	Notes
1. Is the connection from the gateway into community clearly marked?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2. If the connection is on-road:			
Are there clearly delineated and marked (on pavement or with signs) bike lanes or paved shoulders?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are bike lanes/shoulders well maintained and free of gravel and debris?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are drainage grates bicycle-friendly?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Is there cautionary signage for motorists along the route?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
3. If the connection is off-road (bike path):			
Is the surface paved or firm, well maintained and free of debris?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Is there cautionary signage for cyclists and motorists where it connects with roads?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

# How Bicycle-Friendly is Your Canal Community? An Assessment Checklist (Continued)

In the Community	Yes	No	Notes
<p>1. Are the streets most likely to be used by cyclists bicycle-friendly, including:</p> <p>Clearly delineated and marked bike lanes or shoulders, if appropriate?</p> <p>Bike-friendly drainage grates (mesh or curb-face rather than slotted)?</p> <p>Bicycle stop lines that are closer to intersections than auto stop lines for improved visibility?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>   <input type="checkbox"/>  <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>   <input type="checkbox"/>  <input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>2. Is secure (ideally, covered) bicycle parking available at convenient locations (parks/town squares, welcome center, shopping areas, etc.)?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>3. Are public restrooms available? If not, do businesses make theirs available?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>4. Are there shuttle services or taxis/buses equipped to handle bikes?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>5. Have local businesses been encouraged to welcome bicyclists, and are those that do readily identifiable?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>6. Is information about opportunities to explore the community and nearby attractions (walking tours, museums, historic sites, themed bike loops, other bike paths, natural areas, etc.) readily available?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>7. Are the downtown, parks and other public areas clean and well maintained?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>8. Have you developed/identified a community "theme" or asset and reinforced it with signs, banners and promotional materials?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>9. Is overnight parking available for cyclists who have chosen your town as a starting/ending point for a multi-day trip?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<p>10. Do police patrol parks and public facilities used by bicyclists?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Returning to the Trail	Yes	No	Notes
<p>1. Do signs and pavement markings clearly guide cyclists from your community to the Canalway Trail?</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

## Are You a Bicycle-Friendly Business? An Assessment Checklist

This checklist offers an easy-to-use tool for assessing how bicycle-friendly your business is today and for identifying steps you can take make bicyclists feel most welcome in the future. A good way to begin is to walk yourself through the process of arriving in your community by bicycle (or by car with bicycles on board), making notes on points covered by the checklist as you go. Depending on your location and type of business, some checklist items may not apply. Use what is here as a guide and adapt it as appropriate.

All businesses	Yes	No	Notes
1. Do you participate in your town's "bicyclists welcome" program?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2. Do you have conspicuous "bicyclists welcome" signs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
3. Do you have secure, ideally covered, bike parking facilities (bike racks) nearby?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
4. Do you have maps of the downtown, the community and/or the region displayed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
5. Can you and your staff answer the most common bicyclists' questions (e.g., where they can check email or take a shower)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
6. Do you have information on side trips, bike loops, and other points of interest in the area?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
7. Do you have basic equipment available for bicyclists' use: extra locks for the bike rack, a tire pump, some basic repair tools?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
8. Can a bicyclist recharge a cell phone at your business?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
9. Do you offer lockers for temporary storage of helmets, packs, and purchases?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
10. Do you collaborate with nearby businesses on shared facilities such as bike racks, lockers, or restrooms if needed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
11. Are you an advocate for making your entire community more bicycle-friendly?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Restaurants	Yes	No	Notes
1. Is secure, ideally covered, bike parking available nearby?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2. Do you conspicuously welcome cyclists in their riding attire?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
3. Does your menu include vegetarian and heart-healthy options?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
4. Do you offer hearty meals (e.g., a "bicyclist breakfast")?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
5. Is your menu posted outside where bicyclists can readily see it?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
6. Do you offer easily-carried snacks such as energy bars and dried fruit?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
7. Will you deliver orders to nearby bicyclist campgrounds and other lodging?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
8. Can bicyclists refill their water bottles at or near your business?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

## Are You a Bicycle-Friendly Business? An Assessment Checklist (*Continued*)

Retailers	Yes	No	Notes
1. Is secure, ideally covered, bike parking available nearby?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2. Do you offer shipping of purchases and publicize that this service is available?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
3. Do you sell stamps and accept outgoing mail?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
4. Do you carry small, place-specific mementoes of your community (e.g., patches, decals)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
5. Do you have a computer station for Internet access?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

B&B's, Motels, Hotels	Yes	No	Notes
1. Do you allow one-night stays, at least for bicyclists?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2. Are your staff members instructed to welcome bicyclists by showing interest in their trip?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
3. Do you have:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
a. Indoor bike parking on the first floor or allow bikes in your rooms? OR	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
b. Secure and covered outdoor parking facilities?			
4. Do you have laundry facilities on site or nearby?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
5. Do you have menus for and directions to restaurants?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
6. Do you have computers available for access to email and the Internet?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
7. Do you have cold beverages and/or snacks available on arrival?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
8. Is an outdoor, ideally covered, space available for working on bikes, with water for cleaning?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
9. Will you accept and hold resupply packages mailed ahead by bicyclists?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
10. Do you offer shuttle service for bicyclists and their bikes from/to the trail?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
11. Do you offer a "drop off-bike back" shuttle for cyclists staying with you?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
12. Do you offer a shuttle to/from restaurants that are not within walking distance?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
13. Are secure storage for luggage and multi-day parking available for those who arrive by car and plan overnight bike trips.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
14. Is bike rental available nearby?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
15. If you run a B&B, do you participate in the Empire State Bed and Breakfast Association's "Welcome Bicyclists!" program?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

## Resources

### Reports and Research on Bicycling and Bicycle Tourism

1. *Outdoor Recreation Participation Report*. The Outdoor Foundation, Boulder, CO. [www.outdoorfoundation.org/research](http://www.outdoorfoundation.org/research)
2. *Trends in US Domestic Travel and Activities*. U.S. Travel Association (formerly Travel Industry Association of America), Washington, DC. [www.tia.org/researchpubs](http://www.tia.org/researchpubs)
3. *The Economic Benefits of Bicycle Infrastructure Investments*. League of American Bicyclists, Policy Research Reports. [www.bikeleague.org/resources/reports/report\\_economics.php](http://www.bikeleague.org/resources/reports/report_economics.php)
4. *The Great Allegheny Passage Economic Impact Study, Phases I, II, & III*. Allegheny Trail Alliance, Latrobe, PA. [www.atatrail.org/about/reports](http://www.atatrail.org/about/reports)
5. New Study Reveals Popularity of U.S. Cultural and Heritage Travel. U.S. Cultural & Heritage Tourism Marketing Council in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Commerce. Available at [www.gozaic.com/gozaic/footer/left/press-room/media-landing-page.html](http://www.gozaic.com/gozaic/footer/left/press-room/media-landing-page.html)
6. *Pathways to Prosperity: Economic Impact of Investments in Bicycle Facilities, A Case Study of the North Carolina Northern Outer Banks*. North Carolina Department of Transportation. Available at [www.americantrails.org/resources/economics/NCouterbanks](http://www.americantrails.org/resources/economics/NCouterbanks)
7. *The Economic Impact of Bicycling in Colorado*. Colorado Department of Transportation. Available at [www.americantrails.org/resources/economics/biketourismcolo](http://www.americantrails.org/resources/economics/biketourismcolo)
8. *Customer Satisfaction Survey: Portland Bicycling Information*. City of Portland Bureau of Transportation. [www.portlandonline.com/transportation/index.cfm?c=34772](http://www.portlandonline.com/transportation/index.cfm?c=34772)
9. "The Economic Potential of Bicycling in the North Country," in *Bicycle Master Plan for the Adirondack North Country Region of New York State*. Adirondack North Country Association, Saranac Lake, NY. <http://adirondackresearch.com/projects/bicycle/hpotential.html>
10. *Bicycle Tourism in Maine: Economic Impacts and Marketing Recommendations*. Maine Department of Transportation. [www.maine.gov/mdot/opt/pdf/biketourismexecsumm.pdf](http://www.maine.gov/mdot/opt/pdf/biketourismexecsumm.pdf)
11. *Lake Champlain Bikeways: Making it Happen*. Lake Champlain Bikeways Clearinghouse, Burlington, VT. Ordering information at [www.champlainbikeways.org/makeithappen1.htm](http://www.champlainbikeways.org/makeithappen1.htm)
12. *Economic Impact Study of New York State Canal Tourism*. Eric Mower and Associates for the NYS Canal Corporation, 2008.
13. *Pine Creek Rail Trail 2006 User Survey and Economic Impact Analysis*. Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, Washington, DC. [www.railstotrails.org/resources/documents/resource\\_docs/RTC\\_PineCreekGuide\\_web.pdf](http://www.railstotrails.org/resources/documents/resource_docs/RTC_PineCreekGuide_web.pdf)
14. *Bikes Belong Survey: Size & Impact of Road-Riding Events*. Bikes Belong Coalition, Boulder, CO. <http://bikesbelong.org/roadevents>

## Information about the Erie Canalway Trail

Parks & Trails New York ([www.ptny.org](http://www.ptny.org)). Canalway Trail section includes:

- Trail user count results (2005-2009)
- Ordering information for the *Cycling the Erie Canal* guidebook
- Themed itineraries
- Lists of festivals, point-to-point distances, and more
- Interactive map with lodging services and attractions

NYS Canal Corporation ([www.nyscanals.gov](http://www.nyscanals.gov)). Site includes:

- Calendar of events
- How to obtain a Canalway Trail map
- Locations of Biker-Hiker-Boater Campsites

Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor ([www.eriecanalway.org](http://www.eriecanalway.org)). Here you can find:

- Overview of the Passport to Your National Parks program
- Maps of the corridor
- Information on heritage tourism projects

## Other Resources

- Adventure Cycling Association ([www.adventurecycling.org](http://www.adventurecycling.org)), publisher of *Adventure Cycling* magazine
- Bicycle Touring 101 ([www.bicycletouring101.com](http://www.bicycletouring101.com)), website with editorials, interviews, book reviews, and more
- Heritage Travel, Inc. ([www.heritagetravelinc.com](http://www.heritagetravelinc.com)), provider of website [www.gozaic.com/gozaic](http://www.gozaic.com/gozaic), an online community for people interested in heritage tourism
- League of American Bicyclists ([www.bikeleague.org](http://www.bikeleague.org)), publisher of *American Bicyclist* magazine

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## Bring Business



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