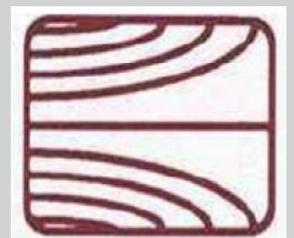


JANUARY 2007



# *Tech Valley Trails*

*A Greenways Concept Plan for the Capital Region*



Capital District  
Transportation Committee



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This plan was prepared by Alta Planning + Design with funding and support from the Capital District Transportation Committee (CDTC). For additional information on Alta, please visit [www.altaplanning.com](http://www.altaplanning.com). For information about this plan, contact CDTC at the following address: One Park Place, Albany, NY 12205, 518-458-2161, [www.cdctcmppo.org](http://www.cdctcmppo.org).



# 1. Overview

This concept plan provides a vision for the Tech Valley Trails system in the Capital Region of New York State. The plan shows a potential regional network of greenways and trails that will provide residents, visitors, businesses, and communities with transportation, recreation, health, and quality of life benefits. For the purposes of this plan, the terms ‘greenway’ and ‘trail’ are used to broadly describe linear corridors that include facilities for non-motorized travel. The Tech Valley Trails system will be a new ‘green infrastructure’ that can help shape the future of the Capital Region. The proposed system will provide an opportunity for our region’s diverse communities to cooperate on an achievable common vision that improves the environment and supports economic development.

The proposed trail system will help make it possible for more people to travel in the Capital Region by walking, bicycling, and other sustainable forms of transportation. New trails will provide improved public health and physical activity. Greenways will connect our region’s communities and open spaces. The system will help conserve energy, preserve our regional heritage, and protect the environment. The Tech Valley Trails system will provide an economic development asset, encourage tourism, and enhance our region’s identity.

This plan is framed around the work of the Capital District Transportation Committee’s (CDTC) Working Group C, and the “Big Idea Initiatives,” concepts that have been developed as part of the region’s long range transportation plan, New Visions 2030. The plan is intended to generate interest and develop concepts that will help make a greenways system feasible if our region’s growth and economic and political climates change. With the region’s

potential growth pattern, there are concerns for increasing traffic congestion and a loss of our quality of life. Greenways and trails are a positive response to these concerns. This plan focuses on a balance of bicycle/pedestrian travel from a transportation point of view, with an understanding that recreational bicycle/pedestrian travel is important for our region. An illustrative map and a concept plan for the proposed system are provided.

*“...CDTC’s review of big projects and big programs in other regions reveals that these initiatives are not exclusively – perhaps not even primarily – related to cost-effectiveness. Rather they have a lot to do with the desire of elected officials, community leaders and the public to do something important with the transportation system” ...*

“Big Idea” Transportation Initiatives for the Capital Region, CDTC, July 2006

Our region faces a future full of challenges that cannot be solved with the methods of the past. Transportation planning has come to understand that we cannot build our way out of traffic congestion. The interstate highway era has now become the “peak oil” era. Regional planning must evolve to include innovative solutions if we are to remain competitive in the global economy. A regional trails system will not solve all of our future problems, but it is a potential solution that works and can be implemented with current technologies and within the scale of resources available for other “Big Idea Initiatives.” Other regions we compete with are creating similar systems, and are proving that regional trail systems can be accomplished as long as there is the vision, leadership, and commitment to make it happen.

## 2. Background / Existing Conditions

The Capital Region of New York State includes Albany, Rensselaer, Saratoga, and Schenectady Counties. The region is located at the confluence of the Mohawk and Hudson Rivers and is surrounded by the Catskill, Berkshire, and Adirondack Mountains. It is a region of traditional urban centers, extensive open space, and growing suburbs. The region has been shaped by historic transportation initiatives, from the Erie and Champlain Canals to the railroads and the interstate highway system. While there are significant opportunities for the region to create innovative transportation, land use, and quality of life initiatives, it has been determined that conditions are not yet present for the Capital Region to implement a regional Greenways system. While the region has a number of high quality existing shared-use paths and single-track trail facilities (e.g., the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail, the Taconic Crest Trail, and the Saratoga County Heritage Trail), there is no current vision for connecting these facilities into a regional system.

A regional greenway system can have significant benefits for the Capital Region. Our nation faces rising fuel costs, air and noise pollution, traffic congestion, an obesity epidemic, and other effects of automobile dependency. At the same time, more people are using technology to work from home, the population is aging, and there are increasing choices of where people can choose to live. The Capital Region has significant assets for addressing these future trends, but if suburban sprawl continues to erode the open spaces between our traditional urban centers, the “Tech Valley” will not be able to continue to be attractive in the global economy.

Other regions have already implemented regional trail systems that provide for significant

transportation mode shares for walking, bicycling, and transit. Examples include Madison, Wisconsin; Vancouver, British Columbia; Seattle, Washington; Denver, Colorado; Minneapolis, Minnesota; Rochester, New York; and Portland, Oregon. All of these places are in northern climate, cold weather regions. They have invested strategically in networks of shared-use paths, sidewalks, on-street bikeways, and transit connections. They are using less fuel, creating less pollution, improving public health, enjoying a high quality of life, and attracting ‘knowledge-based’ high-tech businesses. The Capital region has physical assets that match any of these places: the Hudson and Mohawk River valleys, and the beautiful regional landscape surrounding our existing communities. A regional greenway and trail system can help solve the paradox of how to preserve these assets while we continue to grow into the future.

*“The MPO planning perspective must be not only broadened (in scope) but also lengthened (in planning horizon). The range of nontraditional subjects that strategies and objectives must cover includes CO2 emissions; environmental justice and social equity; pricing; public health; environmental sustainability; intercity freight and passenger movement; new transportation technologies and other issues.”*

Colloquy on the Coming Transformation of Travel, June 2006

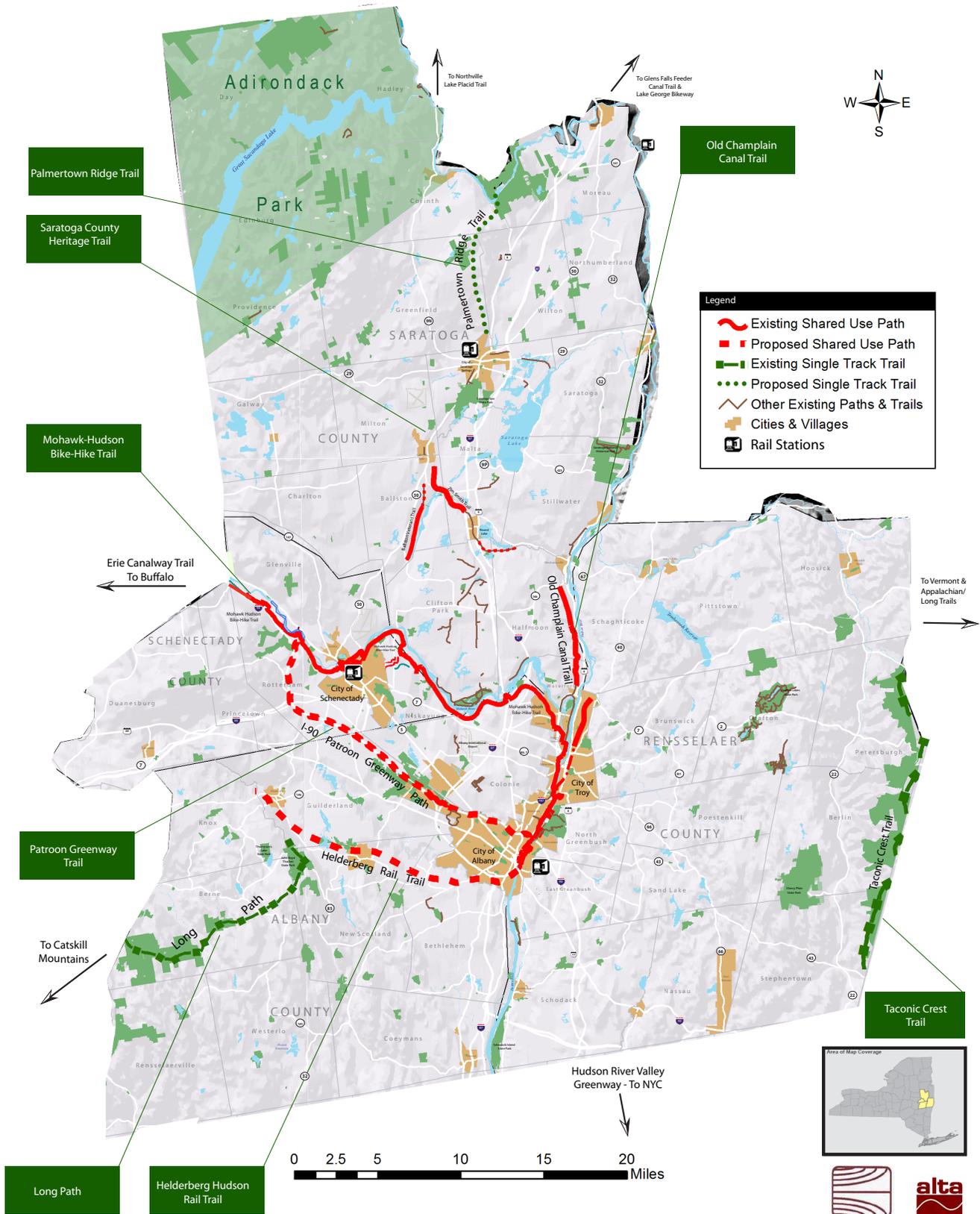
It is important to note that this Concept Plan builds on initiatives that have been in progress for many years, and the efforts of a wide range of citizens, organizations, agencies, and partners. The Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail was one of the first federally funded shared-use path projects built in the U.S. It was created as a 42-mile linear system in the 1970's, during our nation's last energy crisis. In the past several years, CDTC has funded a series of Community Transportation Linkage Studies that have helped identify potential

regional trail corridors, including the I-90 Patroon Creek Greenway and the Albany-Rensselaer waterfront trail. In the past year, Saratoga County has completed a Green Infrastructure Plan that includes a proposed county-wide trail system. These and many other efforts are happening at the local level. The potential exists for capitalizing on these efforts to create an interconnected regional system. The existing trails in the Capital Region are shown on the map on the following page.



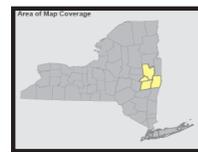
*The Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail is the Capital Region's premier shared-use path, and can become a cornerstone of the Tech Valley Trails system.*

# Tech Valley Trails - Existing and Proposed Trails



DATA PROVIDED BY: CAPITAL DISTRICT TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE, ESRI, NEW YORK STATE, & USGS

January 2007



### 3. Planning Workshop Summary

As part of this Plan, a Capital Region Greenways Vision Workshop was held on June 20th, 2006 at the Crossings in Colonie. Approximately 50 people attended, representing a cross-section of CDTC's committees and participants in the regional planning process. The workshop was oriented to identify both a vision for the regional trail system and an understanding of the challenges to implementation. Following an overview presentation, breakout groups worked to identify visions and challenges for a potential Tech Valley Trails system. Common themes that emerged from these discussions included:

- 1 **We need political support and “champions.”** Successful trail programs require leadership in the public, private, and non-profit sectors. “Champions” are the individuals who commit their time, energy, and resources to move projects forward.
- 2 **Home Rule limits regional solutions.** The counties, cities, villages, and towns of the Capital Region function within New York State's home rule system of government and planning. The Greenways system can inspire a new perspective that creates a regional asset that benefits all of the municipalities in the region.
- 3 **Bike/Ped/Trail projects need to be integrated into infrastructure projects.** Utility corridors, roads, development, and other infrastructure projects can provide opportunities to build sections of the Greenways system. Each municipality can adopt appropriate sections of the Greenways vision into local plans to facilitate this process.
- 4 **The Constituency for greenways is not powerful at the regional level.** While there are a variety of successful local trail projects, there is currently no organization advocating for Greenways throughout the Capital Region. An alliance of regional advocates is an important factor in generating support for the proposed system.
- 5 **Limited river crossings create a challenge.** The Hudson and Mohawk River bridges provide limited access for non-motorized travel. Providing new or improved crossings will be an important part of creating a connected regional system.
- 6 **Maintenance and liability will be seen as issues.** There is no existing regional organization for maintaining a Greenways system, and existing facilities are maintained by individual municipalities. Concerns about liability can be addressed, but this will require ongoing efforts to inform municipalities and develop risk management solutions.
- 7 **Greenways and trails need ‘branding’ and marketing linked to regional themes.** The naming of Greenways and trails can have a significant impact on the success of the system. Calling the proposed system “Tech Valley Trails” is a first step towards linking the proposed system with a regional identity for the Capital Region.
- 8 **Current sprawl development patterns are limiting future Greenways potential.** The Capital Region is becoming more suburban, and is moving away from its

historic pattern of central cities surrounded by open lands. It is important to identify regional greenway corridors so they can be integrated into the region's development pattern.

- 9 **Greenways and trails are part of the region's attraction for high-tech employers.** Greenways are a significant part of the landscape in Austin, Portland, Tucson, and other high-tech centers. In order for the Capital Region to attract high-tech companies and employees, it is essential to provide the quality-of-life amenities that exist in other competing regions.
- 10 **Funding is limited, and trails are not a high priority.** There will always be competing needs for infrastructure funding. There are a wide range of 'big ticket' highway and transit projects proposed for the Capital Region. Greenways are a cost-effective, sustainable solution, but they will have to be viewed by decision makers as a high priority in order to implement a regional system.



Participants in the 2006 Tech Valley Trails workshop helped define a vision for a connected greenway system throughout the Capital Region.

Clearly, there are challenges to the Capital Region's current ability to implement this system. Funding, maintenance, operations, and liability issues will always be brought up as obstacles, but there are models from other regions that have overcome these issues. In metropolitan Detroit, the Southeast Michigan Greenways initiative is being led by the Community Foundation of Southeast Michigan. The Foundation has raised \$25 million dollars of private funding from local corporations and institutions, and has leveraged this amount with federal transportation funding to develop a regional greenways system.

*“Without planning, we will lose options for the future. The trails plan is an idea which is way overdue for the Capital Region...”*

Greenways Workshop participant

In Denver, a 400-mile regional trail system has been implemented, with significant sections built by private developers within a regional planning framework. The Denver regional council of government has established a Safety Forum to share expertise on operations and maintenance issues for community trail managers throughout the system.

Closer to home, New York City is building a 350-mile greenway system, based on a 1993 plan that is very similar to this document. The NYC Greenways effort is coordinated through an interagency task force that brings together key agencies and partners with a common vision for the system.

## 4. Concept Plan

Based on comments and ideas from the planning process and a review of existing and proposed facilities, a concept plan for the Tech Valley Trails system has been identified.

Potential projects were focused on trails that connected two or more municipalities together, with an emphasis on projects that could serve as elements of a connected regional system. Connections were also identified to the New York State Empire Greenways network, including the Hudson Valley Greenway and the Erie and Champlain canal trails. The proposed corridors are not meant to be a comprehensive listing of projects or a final version of the proposed system, but rather are illustrative of the potential for connecting existing projects and opportunity corridors to create a continuous system. Potential trails are identified as preliminary, planning-level corridors. Additional feasibility studies will be required to advance future projects. The proposed projects are complimentary to current efforts throughout the region, and can be implemented both as ‘stand alone’ efforts and as part of a coordinated regional strategy. Highlighted projects include:

- **I-90 / Patroon Greenway Trail:** A proposed trail along the Patroon Creek from the Hudson River to Rensselaer Lake in Albany.
- **Helderberg Hudson Rail Trail:** A rail-trail conversion project currently in progress from the Port of Albany to Vorheesville along the Normanskill.
- **Downtown Waterfront Loop:** A trail connecting both sides of the Hudson River in Albany and Rensselaer, including a restored bicycle/ pedestrian facility on the Livingston Avenue railroad bridge.
- **Albany-Hudson Electric Trail:** A regional connector trail linking the Hudson River Greenway and NYC with the Capital Region along a utility and former trolley line corridor between Hudson and Rensselaer.
- **Saratoga County Heritage Trail:** The main north-south trail through central Saratoga County, along the corridor of the former D&H Railroad.
- **I-87 Northway Connector:** A proposed trail connecting the Erie Canalway Trail at the twin bridges to Clifton Park along the interstate highway corridor.
- **Old Champlain Canal Trail:** A trail along the Hudson River between Waterford and northern Saratoga County, along the historic Champlain Canal.
- **Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail:** The Capital Region’s premier existing shared-use path, along the Mohawk and Hudson Rivers between Albany and Schenectady. New sections and upgrades are envisioned for missing links in Schenectady, Watervliet, Troy, and Cohoes.
- **Capital Greenbelt Trail:** A new concept for a regional perimeter hiking / mountain bike trail connecting sections of existing trails along the Taconic Ridge, the Palmertown Range, and the Helderbergs with the Southern Section of the Adirondack Park.
- **Ballston Veterans - Zim Smith Loop Trail:** Extensions of the Existing Ballston Veterans Trail and the Zim Smith Trail to create a loop in Southern Saratoga County.

These concepts are represented in the vision map on the following page and in a more detailed map of the trails in the region’s core urban area, as well as in the project summary pages provided in the Appendix of this document.







The facilities shown in this concept plan offer the potential to form the core of a regional system. This system will function at multiple levels: to provide arterial bicycle/pedestrian facilities, to highlight the region’s natural features, to connect communities, and to help define the region’s identity. These primary corridors would be linked by a secondary network of connector trails, on-street bikeways, and pedestrian facilities. Connections to transit would be provided at “park and glide” lots with bike stations (facilities with rentals, repairs, bike parking, lockers, and other amenities) located at Amtrak Stations, urban centers, and other key destinations. CDTA’s regional bike-on-bus service would be complemented by the trail system, extending the reach of both bus and trail transportation.

The Tech Valley Trails vision encompasses over 490 miles of proposed trail corridors. Of these facilities, approximately 155 miles would be paved, shared-use paths in the core urbanized area, with another 141 miles of crushed stone shared-use paths in rural areas, and the remaining 195 miles would be ‘soft’ surface trails with natural soil surfaces. The CDTC “Big Idea Transportation Initiatives” working group identified a regional system of 280 miles of paved shared-use paths, with a potential cost of approximately \$150 million and a goal of developing 10 miles per year over the next 20 years. By comparison, Seattle’s urban trail system includes more than 800 miles of shared-use paths. The proposed system is summarized in the following table:

Tech Valley Trails System Summary				
Trail Name and Surface Type	Mileage	Phasing	Cost	Significance
I-90 Patroon Greenway (P)	22	Short Term	High	State
Albany - Hudson Electric Trail (P)	16	Short Term	Average	State
Helderberg - Hudson Trail (P)	18	Short Term	Average	Regional
Downtown Waterfront Loop (P)	18	Short Term	Average	Regional
Northway Connector (P)	21	Phase 2	High	Regional
Troy Bennington Revolution Trail (C)	30	Phase 2	Average	Regional
Hoosic Valley Rail Trail (C)	25	Phase 2	Average	County
Saratoga County Heritage Trail (P)	18	Phase 2	Average	County
Saratoga-Lake George Trail (P)	18	Phase 2	Average	Regional
Old Champlain Canal Trail (C)	18	Phase 2	Average	Regional
Southern Saratoga Loop (C)	23	Phase 2	Average	County
Rensselaer Taconic Connector (N)	14	Future	Low	County
Mahican Trail (N)	20	Future	Low	Regional
Capital Greenbelt Trail (Single track) - Existing	27	n.a.	n.a.	Regional
Capital Greenbelt Trail (Single Track) - Proposed	168	Future	Low	Regional
Single Track Trail Mileage	195			
Shared Use Path Mileage	296			
<b>Proposed Regional System Mileage</b>	<b>491</b>			

Key: P = Paved C = Crushed Stone N = Natural Surface

#### Notes:

1. Phasing was based on higher priority assigned to projects with existing proposals and available funding.
2. Cost was based on relative average cost for facilities of similar type.
3. Significance was assigned to projects having connections to local, regional, and state trail systems.

## Tech Valley Trails

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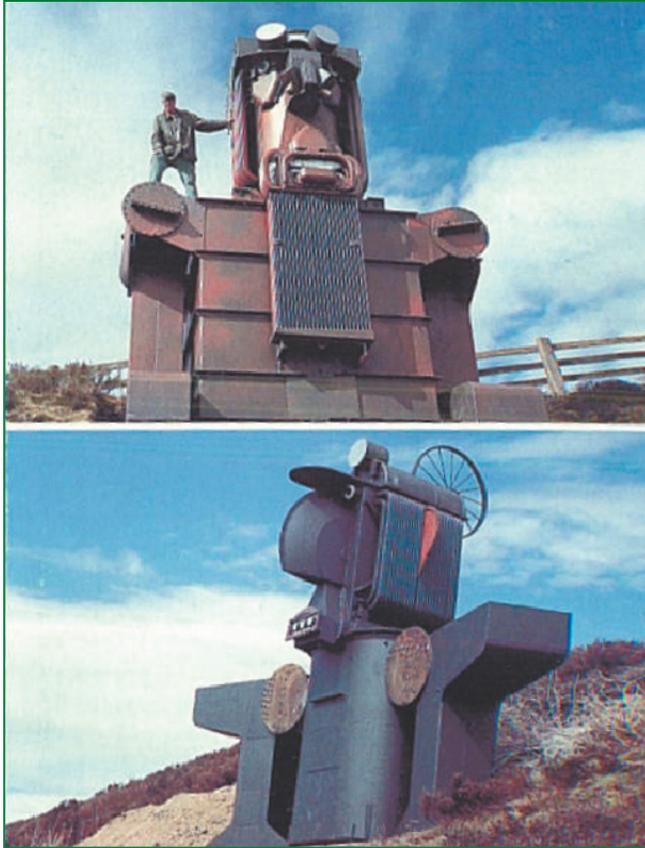
Allowing for some costly sections that would be required (such as the Northway Connector, the I-90 Patroon Greenway, and the Livingston Avenue Bridge trail), the core of the proposed regional system would be within the \$150 million, 20-year cost range identified by the Big Idea Initiatives group. Annual operating and maintenance costs would be approximately \$6,500 / mile for paved trails and \$2,500/ mile for natural surface trails. An operations and management structure would have to be developed. In the long term, these costs must be weighed with the potential health, transportation, recreation, environmental, economic, and quality of life benefits for the Capital Region. The costs should also be evaluated in comparison to the expense and impacts of other transportation and infrastructure projects in which our region chooses to invest.

It is also important to recognize that, as Lance Armstrong says, “it’s not about the bike.” The Tech Valley Trail system will need to connect with our region’s leaders, communities, and the public in ways that reach beyond their value for alternative transportation. The system can be ‘branded’ in connection with the region’s significant historical and cultural assets. Trail names, mile points, and interpretive sites can be themed to connect with the history of the American Revolution, the railroads, Native American trails, the Underground Railroad, the paintings of the Hudson River School, and the region’s leadership in high technology. Trailheads and rest areas can be designed to showcase local businesses and institutions, with wireless access points, solar and wind powered lighting, and ‘adopt a trail’ kiosks along the way. Health and physical fitness stations can be part of the trail system, with ‘frequent rider’ programs that track miles, calories, and other data. The trails will serve tourists with connections to local lodgings, restaurants, and shopping. The system

will become an outdoor classroom connecting the built and natural environments, a linear sculpture park showcasing regional artists, and a legacy for future generations to understand our region’s past, present, and future.



*“Bike Stations” have been developed in several cities as intermodal facilities connecting walking, bicycling, and transit. CDTA and Amtrak services can be connected with the Tech Valley Trails.*



***In the U.K. the new 10,000 mile Sustrans national bike path system includes works of art as mile points that describe the past, present and future. The system is becoming the world's longest outdoor museum. These sculptures, called the 'transformers,' were designed to highlight the industrial history of a steel producing region.***



***An existing trail in the I-787 interstate highway corridor, Albany, NY.***

The Tech Valley Trails system provides a vision of our region as a place where you can walk, bike, take transit, or drive on a transportation system that is fully multi-modal, safe, healthy, fun, efficient, and good for the economy and the environment.

*“Greenways and community trails...tie destinations together, and they are destinations in their own right. They're a key part of what we need to develop in New York, to ensure the vitality of our communities and our economy.”*

Daniel B. Walsh, President

The Business Council of New York State

Parks and Trails New York - Greenways & Trails:

Bringing economic benefits to New

York

## 5. Next Steps

Imagine a future where residents and visitors of the Capital Region can walk or bike along the Hudson and Mohawk Rivers; hike or bike the perimeter of our region in the foothills of the Catskills, Berkshires, and Adirondacks; enjoy a healthy commute to work without consuming fossil fuels; and enjoy both economic growth and environmental sustainability. Imagine this system as part of a series of innovative regional projects including Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) technologies, a Riverfront re-development initiative, and a “Complete Streets” approach to integrating all modes of transportation. The proposed Tech Valley Trails will help make this future possible. The Capital Region can become a new model for regional planning. This plan includes a wide range of projects, including relatively simple efforts that are being implemented by local communities to highly complex projects that will require a new vision for the region. Keys to moving this initiative forward include the following:

- ① **Vision:** The core concept of a regional greenway and trail system needs to be adopted as a core element of the New Visions regional transportation plan. This will require connecting the Tech Valley Trails to basic issues that link sustainable development with regional economic development, maintaining and attracting high-tech companies, and broader infrastructure issues.
- ② **Champions:** Successful regional greenway systems are driven both by community leaders who take on the initiative as champions, and by organizations that ‘adopt’ the project as part of their mission. A coordinated effort by public, private, and non-profit partners is an essential key to success.
- ③ **Organization:** A regionally organized

management structure will need to be developed to plan, design, operate and maintain the system. From a planning perspective, CDTC is a potential candidate for a leadership role, and already provides a coordinating function with its existing Bicycle and Pedestrian Issues Task Force. However, there is no current agency in place to operate and maintain a regional trail system, and this entity would need to be created either through a cooperative agreement with existing agencies or via a new organizational structure. A non-profit “Friends of Tech Valley Trails” advocacy organization would be an important asset to compliment the work of the public sector.

- ④ **Integration:** Since New York is a ‘home rule’ state, it will be essential to develop this system through local projects at the municipal level. Potential trail corridors must be adopted into local plans, and integrated into ongoing highway, bridge, transit and utility corridor projects.
- ⑤ **Benchmarks:** It is important to have the vision of a complete regional system linked to realistic performance measures. These can include the number of miles built per year, the percentage of the system completed, and the number of people who use the system.
- ⑥ **Operations and Maintenance:** Long term maintenance and operations are as important to a trail system as the capital funding. A regional operations and maintenance program can take a variety of forms from a privately funded endowment to a regional agency or a coordinated series of cooperative agreements.
- ⑦ **Early Wins:** It is important to initiate achievable projects that can be implemented in the short term. Key elements of the proposed system already exist and others are in development. Each new section that moves

forward will be another step towards the completion of the system in the long term.

The Tech Valley Trails concept plan will serve as a reference document for CDTC's articulation of other "big idea" concepts. The regional greenways system complements these other initiatives and is part of a vision of an innovative transportation system for the Capital Region. The region's land use pattern of multiple urban centers, growing suburbs, and surrounding open spaces is well suited to a trail system that helps define and connect local communities. For the Capital Region, walking and bicycling should be seen as 'indicator species' of our quality of life. More people walking and bicycling means reduced use of fossil fuels, reduced household transportation costs, improved physical activity and health, safer streets, and a higher quality of life – all achieved by modes of transportation that symbolize the goals of CDTC's New Visions planning process.

This document will assist CDTC in ensuring informed public discussion regarding the desirability and form of similar initiatives pursued in the region. The vision of the Tech Valley Trails can be integrated into a wide range of projects, and these can, in turn, be linked to programs such as Safe Routes to Schools, Context Sensitive Design, Transportation Enhancements, and other efforts that create sustainable solutions. Funding will ultimately come from a variety of public, private, and non-profit sources, both through integration in other infrastructure projects and as 'stand alone' trail projects. All of these efforts must be grounded in our communities, and created by and for local residents, visitors, and businesses in cooperation with a range of public and private sector partners. With a common vision and teamwork, the Tech Valley Trails system will become an integral part of the future of the Capital Region.



*Greenways can provide a healthy, safe, and sustainable infrastructure for future generations in the Capital Region.*

## Appendix: Resource Documents and Links

### **CDTC New Visions**

“Big Idea” Transportation Initiatives for the Capital Region: A discussion document for the New Vision 2030 Plan, CDTC, 2006.

<http://www.cdtcmppo.org/rtp2030/2030.htm>

### **Colloquy on the Coming Transformation of Travel**

Federal Highway Administration, New York State Metropolitan Planning Organization, USDOT Volpe National Transportation Systems Center, June, 2006.

<http://www.nysmpos.org/sci/colloquy/Colloquy%20Brochure.pdf>

### **Green Infrastructure Plan for Saratoga County**

Saratoga County, NY; Behan Planning, LLC. August, 2006.

<http://www.behanplanning.com/bpafiles/SCGIP.html>

### **Patroon Greenway CDTC Linkage Study**

Capital District Transportation Committee, Trailblazer, & Taconic Green Planning Group. October 2004.

<http://www.cdtcmppo.org/linkfinalrep.htm>

### **Rensselaer County Trail: Livingston Avenue Bridge to Troy-Menands Bridge CDTC Linkage Study**

Hudson River Valley Greenway, Capital District Transportation Committee, & Elan Consulting. October, 2004.

<http://www.ny5.org/linkage/retrail.pdf>

### **Champlain Canal Trail Concept Plan**

Parks and Trails New York and Trailblazer. October, 2002.

[http://www.ptny.org/pdfs/scp\\_exec.pdf](http://www.ptny.org/pdfs/scp_exec.pdf)

### **Greenways & Trails: Bringing Economic Benefits to New York**

Parks and Trails New York, 2002, Albany.

[http://www.ptny.org/pdfs/5\\_Greenways\\_Trails.pdf](http://www.ptny.org/pdfs/5_Greenways_Trails.pdf)

### **Open Space for Tomorrow: A Capital District Sprawl & Open Space Action Strategy**

Open Space Institute of New York State, 2006.

[http://www.osiny.org/AnnualReports\\_List.asp](http://www.osiny.org/AnnualReports_List.asp)

Project description sheets are provided on the following pages for selected trail concepts identified during the development of the Tech Valley Trails Vision Plan.

# I-90 Patroon Greenway Trail

**Project Description:** Proposed shared-use path along the I-90 corridor to create a direct connection between the Erie Canalway Trail in Schenectady and the Albany waterfront. A feasibility study for the section between Fuller Road and the Corning Preserve was conducted as a CDTC Linkage Study in 2004, and identified connections to high-tech growth centers at UAlbany, the NanoTech Campus, and the Harriman Campus redevelopment project. The section west of Fuller road was recommended for inclusion in future reconstruction of I-90 during the recent NYS Thruway project public involvement process. A section of this path was built during the reconstruction of the I-87 / I-90 interchange, and is visible north and west of the highway adjacent to Rensselaer Lake. A similar project is the Mountains to Sound Greenway / Gateway to the Pacific along I-90 in Seattle.

**Existing Conditions:** County Sewer Right of Way, Adjacent Interstate 90 ROW

**Recommended Concepts:** Shared Use

**Distance:** 21.5 Miles

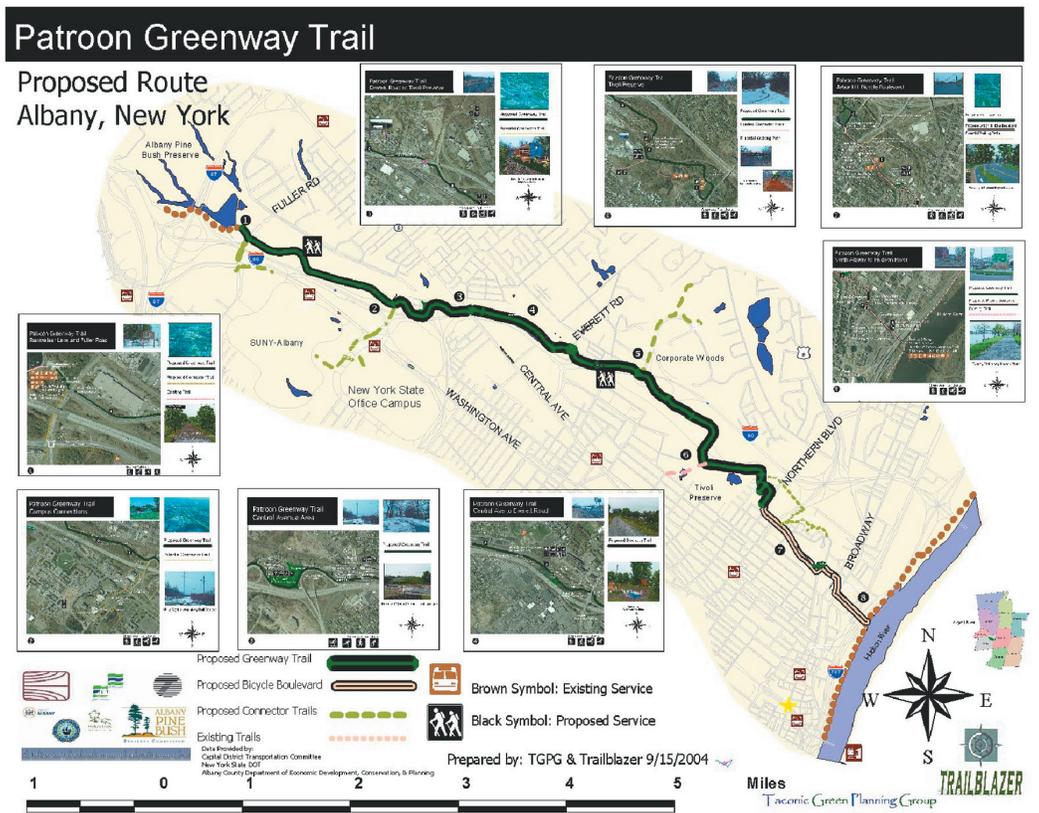
**Potential Funding Source(s):**

Transportation Enhancements, CMAQ

**Timeframe:** 1-5 years

**Lead Agency:**

NYS DOT, Albany County, City of Albany



# Helderburg-Hudson Rail Trail

**Project Description:** Conversion of the former freight railroad line along the Normanskill from the Port of Albany to Vorheesville, with a potential future extension to Altamont. This project was awarded \$2.96 million in funding through the regional TIP process, and the right-of-way acquisition process is in progress.

**Existing Conditions:** Inactive Rail Right of Way

**Recommended Concepts:** Rail to Trail Conversion

**Distance:** 18 Miles

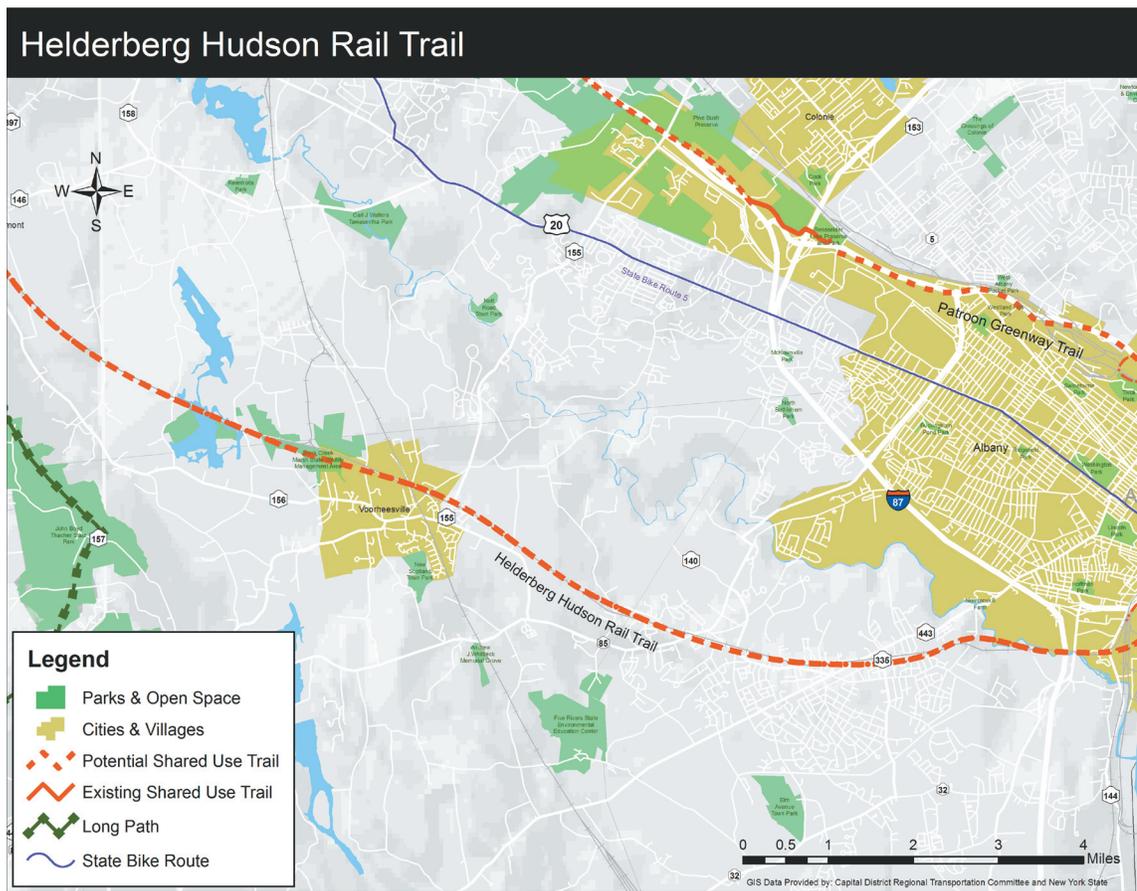
**Potential Funding Source(s):** Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

**Timeframe:** 1-5 years

**Lead Agency:** Albany County, local communities



*Rendering: Cyclist on Rail Trail Conversion, Alta Planning+Design*



## Downtown Waterfront Loop / Rensselaer County Trail

Livingston Avenue Bridge to Troy-Menands Bridge

**Project Description:** This project will provide an urban core ‘loop’ on both sides of the Hudson River in the cities of Albany and Rensselaer. The existing Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike trail in Albany’s Corning preserve would be connected to a proposed trail in Rensselaer via the existing Dunn Memorial Bridge path and a restored path on the Livingston Avenue railroad bridge. This project can be integrated into the proposed waterfront redevelopment initiative in Rensselaer, and was the subject of a recent CDTC Community Linkage Study.

**Existing Conditions:** Some Sections Completed

**Recommended Concepts:** Shared Use Loop Connecting Urban Cores

**Distance:** 18 Miles

**Potential Funding Source(s):** Transportation Enhancements, CMAQ

**Timeframe:** 1-5 years

**Lead Agency:** Albany County, Rensselaer County, Cities of Albany and Rensselaer

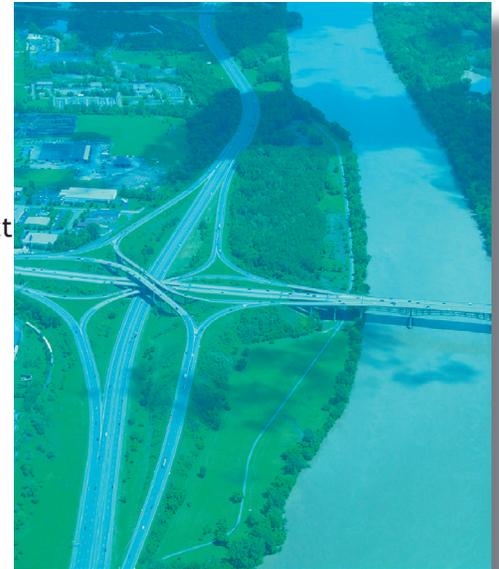


Photo: Aerial View of Mohawk- Hudson Bike-Hike Trail and the Hudson River



# Capital Greenbelt Trail

**Project Description:** Single-track hiking and mountain biking trail and greenbelt around the perimeter of the ridgelines surrounding the Capital region, connecting the existing Taconic Crest Trail, Palmertown Ridge Trail, Thatcher Park / Long Path, and the Champlain Canal Trails. This project has not been previously proposed. It would have both practical and symbolic benefits, helping to connect our region to the surrounding landscape, linking all four counties together and defining an edge between city and country. The Greenbelt Trail additions would be comprised of the Adirondack Ridge Trail, The Glenville & Rensselaer-Taconic Connectors, Mahican Trail, & Upper Hudson Valley Greenway.

**Existing Conditions:** Some Existing Trails, Patchwork of Public Lands, Snowmobile Trails, Utility ROW

## Recommended

**Concepts:** Use Existing Utility ROW's Rail Lines, and Snowmobile Trails to Complete Loop - Identification Standards

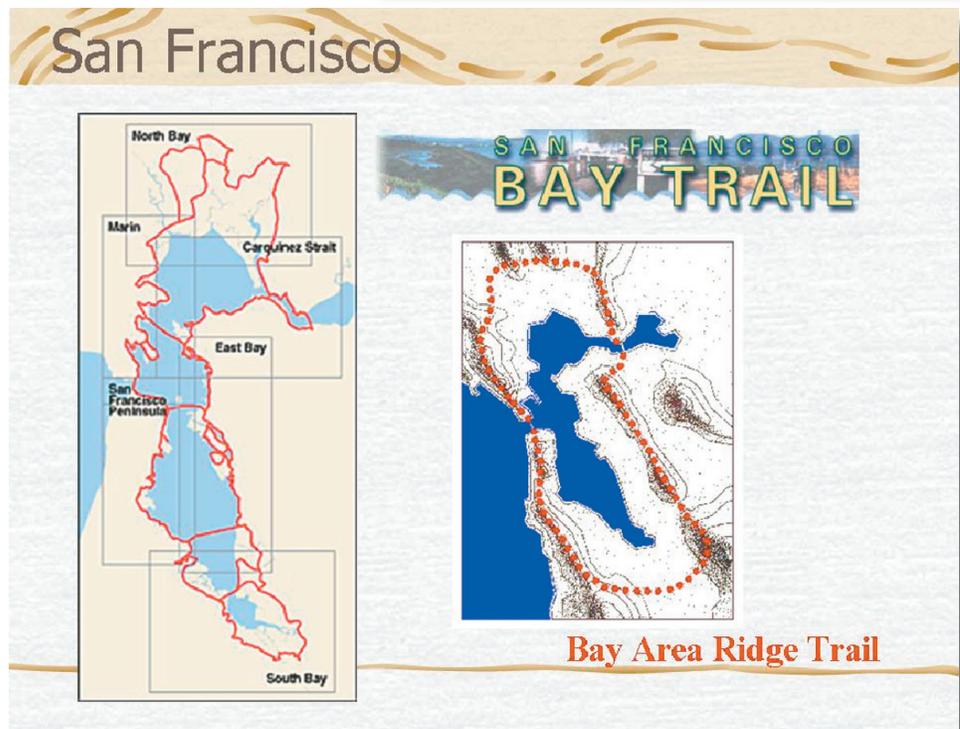
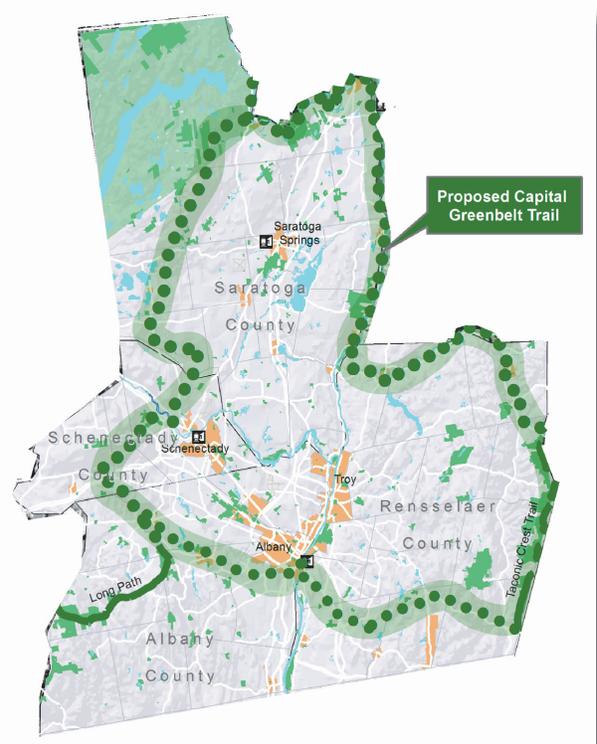
**Distance:** 195 Miles

**Potential Funding Source(s):**

Transportation Enhancements, Recreational Trails Program, land conservation programs

**Timeframe:** 5-20 years

**Lead Agency:** Multi-Community and Interagency Partnership



*San Francisco, California is creating both a regional trail around the bay, and the Bay Area Ridge Trail along the region's perimeter ridgeline.*

# I-87 Northway Connector / Saratoga County Heritage Trail

**Project Description:** Shared use path connecting the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail in Albany County with the Saratoga County Heritage Trail via a shared use path constructed in or parallel to the I-87 highway corridor. This concept requires a new crossing of the Mohawk River at Vischer’s Ferry, potentially as part of reconstruction of the I-87 Twin Bridges. Recent reconstruction of overpass bridges on the Northway has created single span structures that could accommodate shared use paths parallel to the highway shoulder. This project would also connect to the proposed Luther Forest Technology Park and the Zim Smith Trail in Round Lake. A similar project is the I-66 Custis Trail in Arlington, Virginia.



*The Custis Trail in Northern Virginia Parallel to Interstate 66*

**Existing Conditions:** Concept - Zim Smith Trail segment is complete

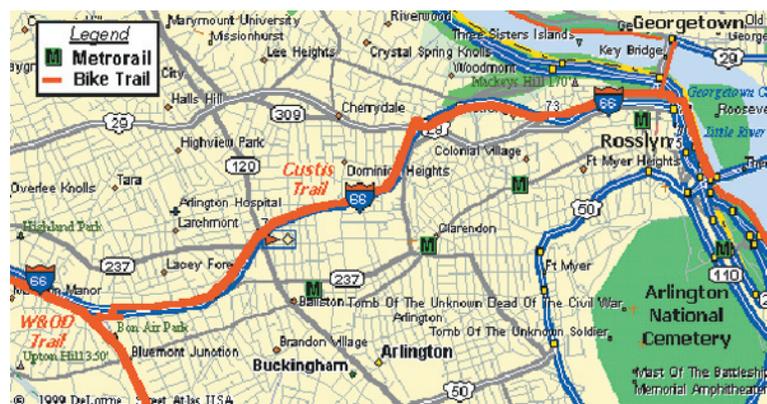
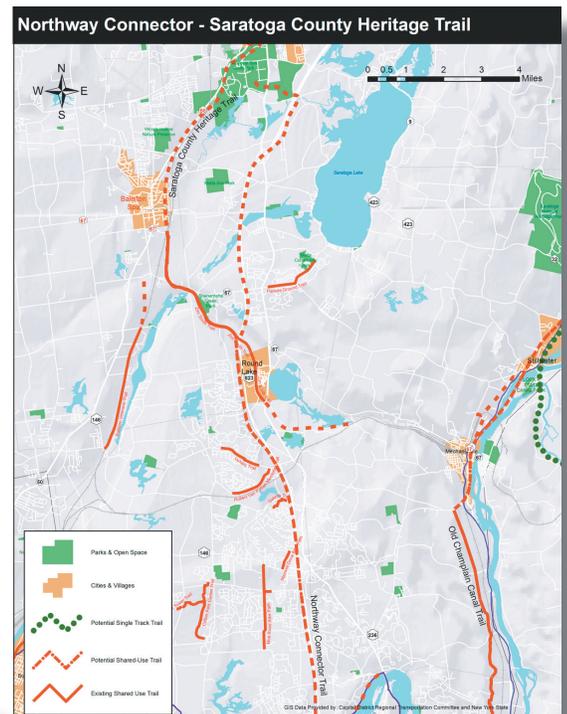
**Recommended Concepts:** Use Interstate Highway Corridor when other alternatives are not feasible

**Distance:** 20.5 Miles

**Potential Funding Source(s):** Transportation Enhancements, CMAQ

**Timeframe:** 5-10 years

**Lead Agency:** NYSDOT, Saratoga County



# Albany Hudson Electric Trail

**Project Description:** The Albany Hudson Electric Trail (AHET) proposes the development a crucial link to New York State’s trail and greenway systems. The location of the trail would further the possibility of linking the Erie Canalway Trail System (524 Miles once complete) & Tech Valley Trails to the Harlem Valley Rail Trail and the New York City Greenway Trails of the Lower Hudson Valley. The proposed route would follow a 37 mile utility right of way/former trolley line entirely owned by the National Grid (formerly Niagara Mohawk) corporation upon approval and compliance with all landowner requirements. The AHET should become a model for similar “electric trail” projects nationwide.



Photo: National Grid Right of Way, Nassau, New York

**Existing Conditions:** Concept Only - 1 Landowner, Cleared Right of way, Grass - Gravel

**Recommended Concepts:** Shared Use Path in Power Line ROW

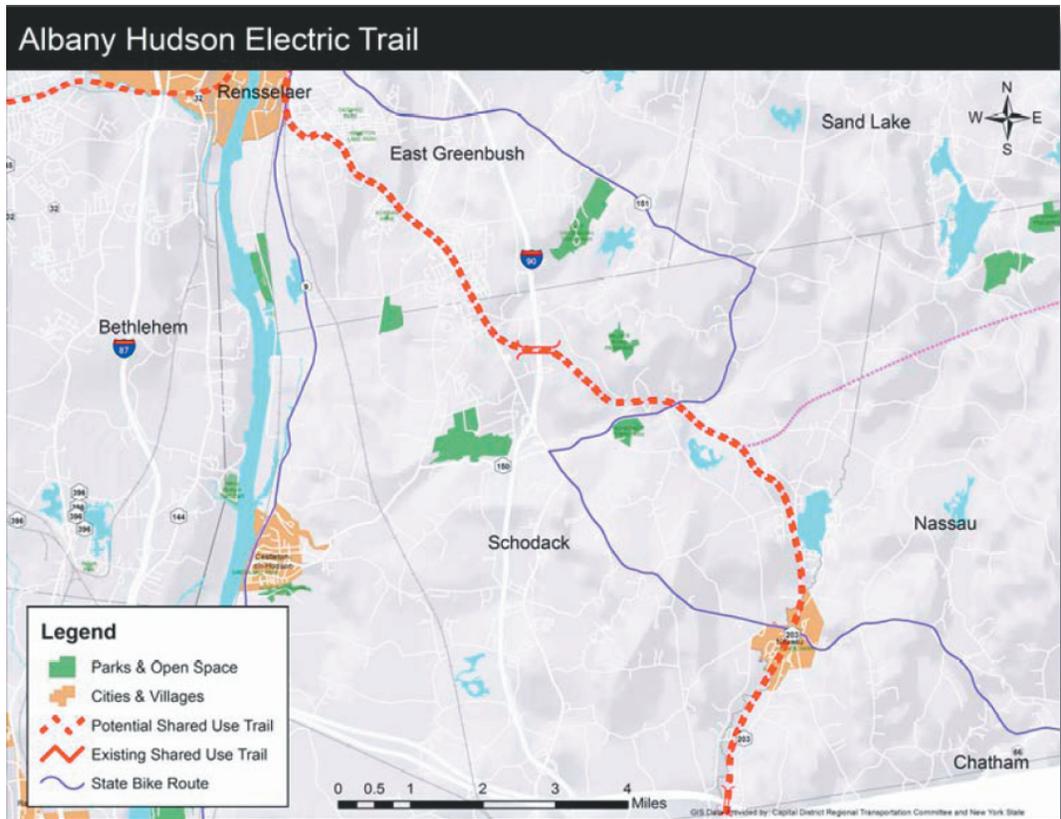
**Distance:** 15.5 Miles (Rensselaer County Section)

**Potential Funding Source(s):**

Transportation Enhancements, CMAQ, Hudson River Greenway grant program

**Timeframe:** 3-7 years

**Lead Agency:** Rensselaer County



## Saratoga - Lake George Trail

**Project Description:** Shared-use path along the right-of-way of the former Delaware & Hudson Railroad, potentially utilizing the proposed new County water line or existing gas line in the corridor and existing snowmobile trails. This project would connect from Saratoga Springs to Moreau State Park and the Glens Falls Feeder Canal Trail. Requires a new bridge connection across the Hudson River, potentially as a cantilevered section of the existing I-87 highway bridge. The original concept for a trail along the former D&H railroad corridor goes back to the 1979 Saratoga County Bikeways Plan.



*Trail in Utility Corridor - Crossings Park, Colonie, NY. Source: John B. Thomas*

**Existing Conditions:** Concept Only

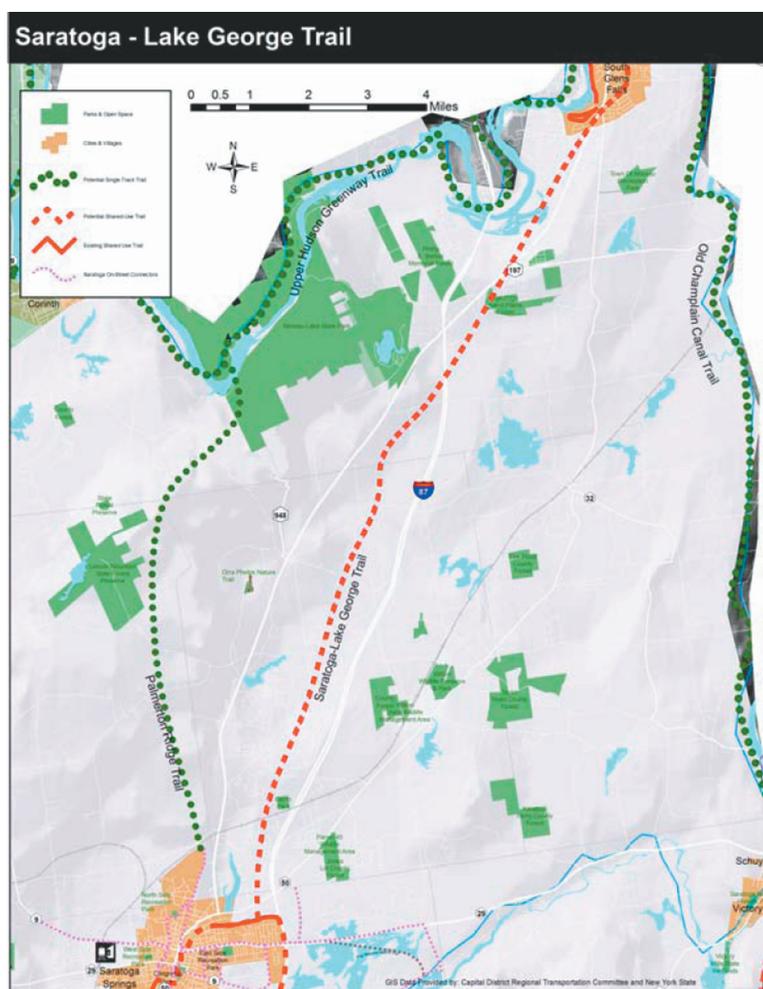
**Recommended Concepts:** Trail in Utility Right of Way

**Distance:** 18 Miles (to Saratoga/Warren County Line)

**Potential Funding Source(s):** Transportation Enhancements, CMAQ

**Timeframe:** 10-15 years

**Lead Agency:** Saratoga County



# Old Champlain Canal Trail

**Project Description:** Shared use path from Waterford to Fort Edward along the Hudson River. The southern section of this trail is an existing crushed stone path from Waterford to Schuylerville. A concept plan for the corridor was developed by the New York State Canal Trail Partnership in 2001. There are opportunities to connect this trail with the pending Hudson River PCB cleanup effort. There have been some issues with private landowners along some sections of the old Canal, particularly in the Town of Stillwater. Significant historic resources exist in the section of trail at Saratoga National Historical Park and in Schuylerville.

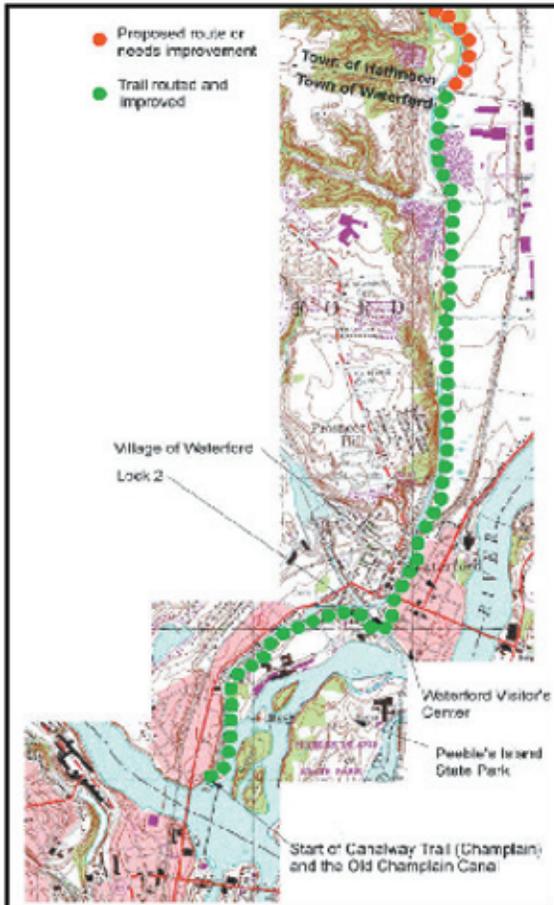


*Old Champlain Canal Trail during the Annual Tug Fest. Photo: John B. Thomas*

**Existing Conditions:** Paritally Complete

**Recommended Concepts:** Complete Shared Use Path

North to Fort Edward



**Distance:** 27 Miles

(Potential to continue north to Whitehall, NY)

**Potential Funding Source(s):** Transportation Enhancements, NYS Canal Corporation

**Timeframe:** 5-10 years

**Lead Agency:** NYS Canal Corporation, National Park Service, local partners

*Southern Portion of Old Champlain Canal Trail Source: Jeff Olson*