

EMPIRE STATE TRAIL

FINAL REPORT - AUGUST 2021



NEW YORK
STATE OF
OPPORTUNITY.





EMPIRE STATE TRAIL FINAL 2021 REPORT

In January 2017, Governor Andrew Cuomo announced creation of the Empire State Trail, a 750-mile bicycle and walking trail spanning New York State, from Buffalo to Albany, and from New York City through the Hudson and Champlain Valleys to Canada.

Over the past four years, New York State agencies and local government partners completed 58 trail construction projects across the state to develop new off-road “rail-trail” and “canalway trail” segments, as well as make improvements to on-road route connections.

On December 30, 2020, Governor Cuomo announced the statewide Empire State Trail route is complete and open for the public to enjoy – creating the longest state bicycling and walking trail in the nation.

This report details the work completed to create the Empire State Trail, including construction of more than 180 miles of new off-road trails to eliminate gaps and link previously existing but disconnected trails. In addition, the New York State Department of Transportation improved 170 miles of on-road bicycle routes to enhance safety on rural roadways and city streets along the Empire State Trail route, and more than 45 gateways and trailheads were created to welcome visitors from across the state, the country, and the world.

Organizations and individuals seeking additional information can address questions to:

Empire State Trail Program

c/o Hudson River Valley Greenway
625 Broadway, 4th Floor
Albany, NY 12233-2995
hrvg@hudsongreenway.ny.gov
(518) 473-3835

**Additional information is available on New York State’s
Empire State Trail website:**

www.empiretrail.ny.gov

Thank you for your interest in the Empire State Trail.

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Gateway at Buffalo Harbor State Park on Lake Erie celebrates the Empire State Trail's western endpoint.

THE EMPIRE STATE TRAIL

New York State celebrates boldness and diversity – cultural, physical, social, geographic – and provides experiences that weave these qualities together.

The 750-mile Empire State Trail is the longest state multi-use trail in the nation. But it's more than that – on a human level, the Trail connects visitors to New York's natural beauty, rich cultural heritage, and unparalleled outdoor recreation opportunities.

The Empire State Trail provides New Yorkers and visitors freedom and opportunity to explore and embrace New York's special places, diverse history, and iconic landscapes. The Trail promotes healthy lifestyles and provides a place for friends and families to experience everything the Empire

State has to offer by connecting urban centers, village main streets, and rural communities.

In 2017, Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature appropriated \$200 million of state capital funds to create the Trail. The state commitment leveraged almost \$97 million of additional funds from various federal, state, local, and private sources – providing a total program budget of \$297 million.

In December 2020, Governor Cuomo announced completion of the continuous 750-mile Empire State Trail route. The trail welcomes bicyclists, walkers, runners, and hikers of all ages and abilities to get outdoors, exercise, and rejuvenate their spirits in safe, welcoming settings.



Ribbon cutting at Wallkill Bridge in New Paltz, along the Wallkill Valley Rail Trail.



CREATING THE 750-MILE TRAIL ROUTE

Existing Trails: When the Empire State Trail was launched in 2017, approximately 400 miles of the Empire State Trail already existed in discrete, disconnected segments.

Connectivity: The Empire State Trail constructed 180 miles of new off-road trails and made bicycling improvements to the remaining on-road connections, “closing the gaps” to create a continuous 750-mile statewide route.

Off-Road: Wherever possible, the Trail is “off-road,” utilizing historic railway routes (e.g. rail-trails) and canal tow paths along sections of the Erie and Champlain canals. Of the 550 miles from Manhattan to Buffalo, 85% of the Empire State Trail is an off-road, non-motorized route.

Multiple User Types: Typical trail construction features a 10- to 12-foot wide asphalt or stonedust surface with moderate grades, welcoming walkers, runners, hikers, people pushing strollers, and bicyclists of all abilities, from experienced long-distance cyclists to family groups with children just learning to ride.

Accessibility: The trail surface and associated improvements are compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act, accessible to seniors and visitors with mobility challenges.

The Trail is open dawn to dusk, 365 days each year. Most of the trail is not plowed – winter activities include hiking, snowshoeing, and cross-country skiing as weather conditions allow. Snowmobiling is allowed on several trail segments in central New York and Washington County.

In areas where it’s not currently feasible to create an off-road route, the Empire State Trail route follows public roadways. On-road sections are intended for experienced bicyclists comfortable riding adjacent to vehicle traffic. Spot improvements, such as marked crosswalks, “Share the Road” signage and wider shoulders, have been made at selected on-road locations.

Wayfinding: Wayfinding signage utilizing a distinctive Empire State Trail logo and directional arrows has been installed along the entire 750-mile route, making it easy to follow the trail.

Online Trail Map: The Empire State Trail website launched in October 2020. The “responsive” website, which works seamlessly on desktop and mobile devices, includes detailed descriptions of each trail segment and an on-line map allowing visitors to zoom in to see the precise trail route, designated parking areas, and nearby parks, historic sites, and tourism attractions. www.empiretrail.ny.gov

The Empire State Trail is a multi-use path designed to accommodate shared use by pedestrians and bicyclists.

NEW TRAIL CONSTRUCTION

Table 1: Hudson Valley Projects (listed south to north)

Project Name	Mileage	County(ies)	Project Lead	EST Funding (\$M)	Matching Funds (\$M)	Match Source	Project Type
Van Cortlandt Park Path	1.7	Bronx	NYC Parks	-	\$2.76	NYC Parks	New Trail
North/South County Trail Resurfacing	28.0	Westchester	Westchester County	-	\$13.30	County Funds	Rehabilitation
North/South County Trail - Elmsford	1.0	Westchester	Westchester County	-	\$2.70	County Funds	New Trail
North County Trail Route 100 Trail	1.0	Westchester	NYSDOT Region 8	\$1.22	\$5.00	NYS Capital Funds	New Trail
Putnam-Maybrook Trailway Connection	1.0	Putnam	Putnam County	-	\$3.00	NYS-CMAQ Funds	New Trail
Maybrook Trailway	23.0	Putnam & Dutchess	MTA-MetroNorth Railroad	\$42.06	-	-	New Trail
Hudson Valley Rail Trail - Resurfacing	1.0	Ulster	Town of Lloyd	-	\$0.20	NYS - RTP	Rehabilitation
Hudson Valley Rail Trail - East Section	1.0	Ulster	Town of Lloyd	-	\$2.00	TAP/Local Funds	New Trail
Hudson Valley Rail Trail - Middle Section	0.9	Ulster	Ulster County	-	\$2.05	TAP/Local Funds	New Trail
Hudson Valley Rail Trail - West Section	2.8	Ulster	NYSDOT Region 8	\$6.81	\$0.40	TEP/TAP	New Trail/On-Road
Wallkill Valley Rail Trail - Bridge Repair	0.1	Ulster	Town of New Paltz	\$0.20	\$0.10	NYS	Rehabilitation
Wallkill Valley Rail Trail Improvements	6.0	Ulster	Open Space Institute	-	\$0.79	NYS EPF & RTP	Rehabilitation
Kingston Point Rail Trail	1.5	Ulster	City of Kingston	-	\$2.00	City Funds & NYS EPF	New Trail
Hudson River Brickyard Trail	1.5	Ulster	City of Kingston	\$0.02	\$1.38	City Funds & NYS EPF	New Trail
Kingston - Rhinecliff Bridge	2.8	Ulster & Dutchess	NYS Bridge Authority	\$1.50	\$0.80	NYS Bridge Authority	New Sidewalk & On-Road Section
Ulster & Dutchess On-Road Improvements	10.0	Ulster & Dutchess	NYSDOT Region 8	\$4.22	-	-	On-Road Sections
Tivoli Bays WMA Trail	1.2	Dutchess	NYSDEC	\$0.35	-	-	New Trail
Columbia County On-Road Improvements	5.0	Columbia	Columbia County	\$0.28	-	-	On-Road Sections
Columbia County On-Road Sections	20.5	Columbia	NYSDOT Region 8	\$7.19	-	-	On-Road Sections
Schodack Island Wetland Project	0.0	Columbia	NYS Parks	\$0.62	-	-	Trail Mitigation
Albany-Hudson Electric Trail	36.2	Columbia & Rensselaer	Hudson River Valley Greenway	\$46.40	\$1.20	NYS Thruway Authority	New Trail
Watervliet - Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail	1.7	Albany	City of Watervliet	-	\$2.18	NYS Local Projects	New Trail
Green Island Cannon St Connection	0.4	Albany	Village of Green Island	-	\$0.51	State/Federal Grants	New Trail



Table 2: Erie Canalway Projects (listed west to east)

Project Name	Mileage	County(ies)	Project Lead	EST Funding (\$M)	Matching Funds (\$M)	Match Source	Project Type
Erie and Niagara Improvements	5.7	Erie & Niagara	NYS DOT Region 5	\$1.37	\$0.96	Ralph Wilson Foundation	New Trail & On-Road
Amherst to Lockport Canalway Trail	2.2	Erie & Niagara	NYS Canal Corporation	\$5.00	-	-	New Trail
Macedon O'Neil Rd Bridge	0.1	Wayne	NYS DOT Region 4	\$0.39	\$3.87	NYS RTP	New Trail
Newark Canalway Trail	1.6	Wayne	Village of Newark	-	\$0.15	NYSCC Grant	Rehabilitation
Lyons Trail Connection	1.0	Wayne	Town of Lyons	-	\$0.20	NYSCC Grant	New Trail
Clyde Trail Connection	1.0	Wayne	Village of Clyde	-	\$0.27	TEP	New Trail
Galen Railroad Bridge	0.1	Wayne	Wayne County	-	\$0.24	NYS Grants	New Trail
Wayne County Canalway Trail	4.8	Wayne	NYS DOT Region 4	\$1.76	-	-	New Trail
Wayne County On-Road Improvements	5.3	Wayne	NYS DOT Region 4	\$1.57	-	-	On-Road Sections
Camillus to NYS Fairgrounds Trail	3.5	Onondaga	Honeywell Corporation	-	\$4.00	Private	New Trail
Onondaga Loop the Lake Trail	3.3	Onondaga	Onondaga County	-	\$8.00	TEP/ Onondaga Co	New Trail
Syracuse On-Road Improvements	3.1	Onondaga	NYS DOT Region 3	\$3.68	-	-	On-Road Sections
Erie Boulevard Trail	3.0	Onondaga	NYS DOT Region 3	\$23.88	-	-	New Trail
Old Erie Canal State Park (Dewitt to Canastota)	12.0	Onondaga & Madison	NYS Parks	\$2.00	-	-	Rehabilitation
Old Erie Canal State Park (Canastota to Rome)	6.0	Madison & Oneida	NYS Parks	\$0.12	\$0.48	NYS RTP	Rehabilitation
Rome Connection	2.4	Oneida	City of Rome	-	\$0.05	Canals/ Grants	New Trail/On-Road Sections
Utica to Dyke Road Canalway Trail	3.8	Oneida & Herkimer	NYS Canal Corporation	\$4.50	\$6.59	NYSCC Capital Funds	New Trail
Dyke Rd to Frankfort On-Road Improvements	7.8	Herkimer	NYS DOT Region 2	\$0.87	-	-	On-Road Section
Frankfort to Ilion Canalway Trail	1.3	Herkimer	NYS Canal Corporation	\$2.94	\$3.66	NYSCC Capital Funds	New Trail
Ilion to Mohawk Canalway Trail	2.0	Herkimer	NYS Canal Corporation	\$2.65	\$4.12	NYSCC Capital Funds	New Trail
Ft. Herkimer Church to Lock E-18 Canalway Trail	2.0	Herkimer	NYS Canal Corporation	-	\$6.00	NYSCC Capital Funds	New Trail
Lock E-18 to Route 167 Canalway Trail	2.4	Herkimer	NYS Canal Corporation	\$2.72	\$1.09	NYSCC Capital Funds	New Trail
Amsterdam to Pattersonville Trail	5.6	Montgomery	NYS Parks	\$0.50	\$1.23	TEP/NY State Parks	New Trail
Pattersonville and Rotterdam Railroad Tunnels and Trail	2.0	Schenectady	NYS DOT Region 1	\$9.28	-	-	New Trail

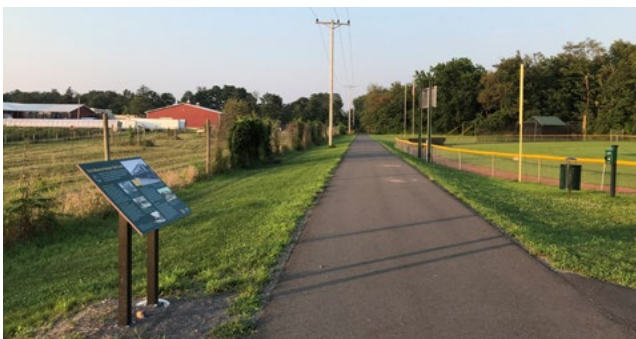
Table 3: Champlain Valley Projects (listed south to north)

Project Name	Mileage	County(ies)	Project Lead	EST Funding (\$M)	Matching Funds (\$M)	Match Source	Project Type
Waterford - Champlain Canalway Trail	1.4	Saratoga	Saratoga County	\$0.36	-	-	New Trail
Halfmoon Trail Route	1.4	Saratoga	Town of Halfmoon	\$0.33	-	-	On-Road Section
Schuylerville Trail Connection	1.5	Washington	Town of Saratoga	\$0.21	-	-	New Trail
Washington County - River Rd Improvements	3.9	Washington	Washington County	\$0.49	-	-	On-Road Section
Fort Edward to New Swamp Rd Canalway Trail	3.8	Washington	NYS Canal Corporation	\$2.70	\$1.80	NYSCC Capital Funds	New Trail
New Swamp Rd to Fort Ann Canalway Trail	6.3	Washington	NYS Canal Corporation	\$0.58	\$9.71	NYSCC Capital Funds	New Trail
Fort Ann to Comstock Route	7.3	Washington	NYSDOT Region 1	\$2.04	-	-	New Trail & On-Road
CCT Route On-Road Improvements	9.7	Saratoga & Washington	NYSDOT Region 1	\$0.39	-	-	On-Road Sections
Champlain Valley On-Road Improvements	110.6	Washington & Essex	NYSDOT Region 1	\$0.31	-	-	On-Road Sections
Champlain Valley On-Road Improvements	9.7	Clinton	NYSDOT Region 7	\$0.01	-	-	On-Road Sections
Champlain Valley - Plattsburgh Route	0.1	Clinton	NYSDOT Region 7	\$0.88	-	-	On-Road Sections

Table 4: Statewide Projects

Project Name	Mileage	County(ies)	Project Lead	EST Funding (\$M)	Matching Funds (\$M)	Match Source	Project Type
EST Gateways & Trailheads	-	Statewide	Hudson River Valley Greenway	\$2.35	\$3.70	Wilson Foundation	Visitor Amenities
Install EST Signage - Existing Trail Sections	400.0	Statewide	Hudson River Valley Greenway	\$0.40	-	-	Wayfinding Signage
Empire State Trail Project Management	-	Statewide	Hudson River Valley Greenway	\$6.60	-	-	Project Management
Municipal Small Trail Projects	-	Statewide	Multiple Entities	\$0.11	-	-	Trail Improvements
Various Small Projects	-	Statewide	Multiple Entities	\$2.00	-	-	Trail Improvements
2021 Trail Resurfacing Projects	-	Statewide	Multiple Entities	\$6.15	-	-	Rehabilitation
Statewide Totals*	385.8	-	-	\$200.00	\$96.49	-	-

*Mileage excludes signage of existing trails



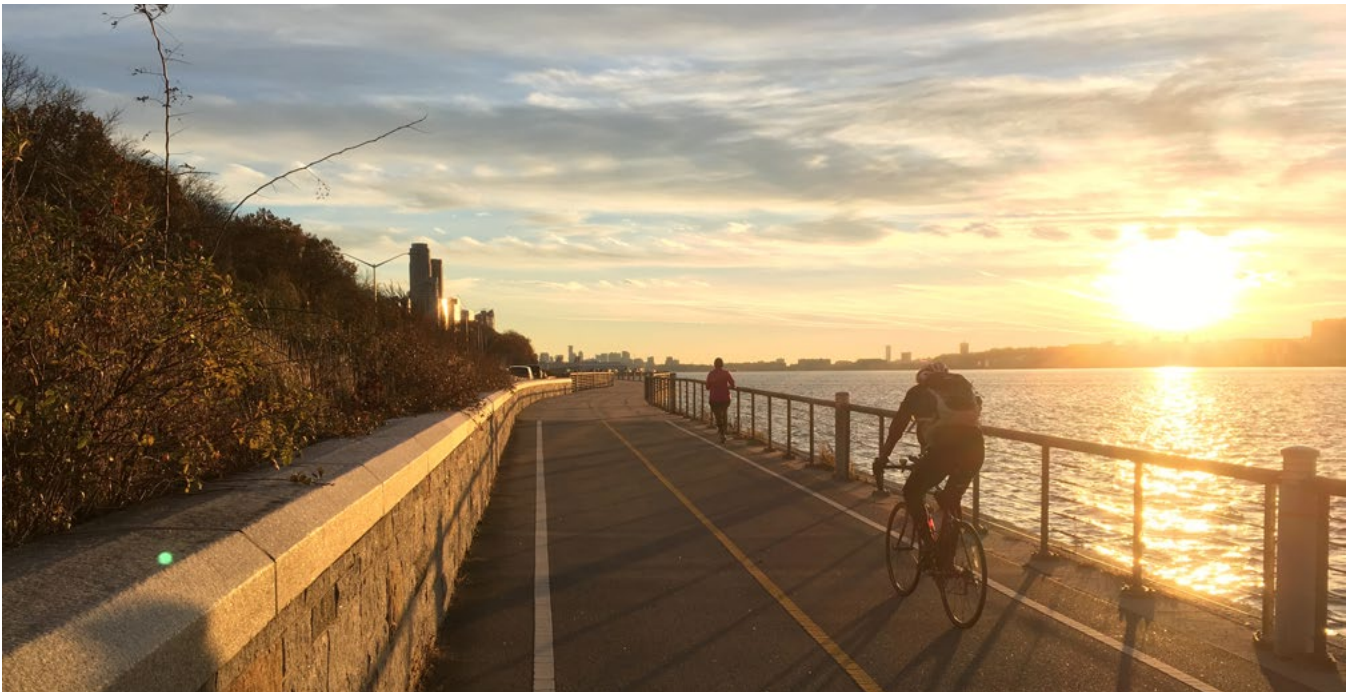
Construction started in May 2019 to create the Albany-Hudson Electric Trail (AHET Trail). The AHET Trail was completed in November 2020, running 36 miles from the City of Hudson in Columbia County to the City of Rensselaer, connecting to the Corning Preserve trail across the Hudson River in the City of Albany.



Winter trail scene in Rensselaer County (AHET Trail).



Repurposed railway bridge – now part of the Black Bridge Trail along the Hudson River in Albany County.



Biking the Empire State Trail on the west side of Manhattan.



WAYFINDING SIGNAGE

To assist long-distance trail users, Empire State Trail wayfinding signage and directional arrows have been installed along the entire 750-mile Empire State Trail route.



New Onondaga Loop the Lake Trail.

EMPIRE STATE TRAIL GATEWAYS AND TRAILHEADS

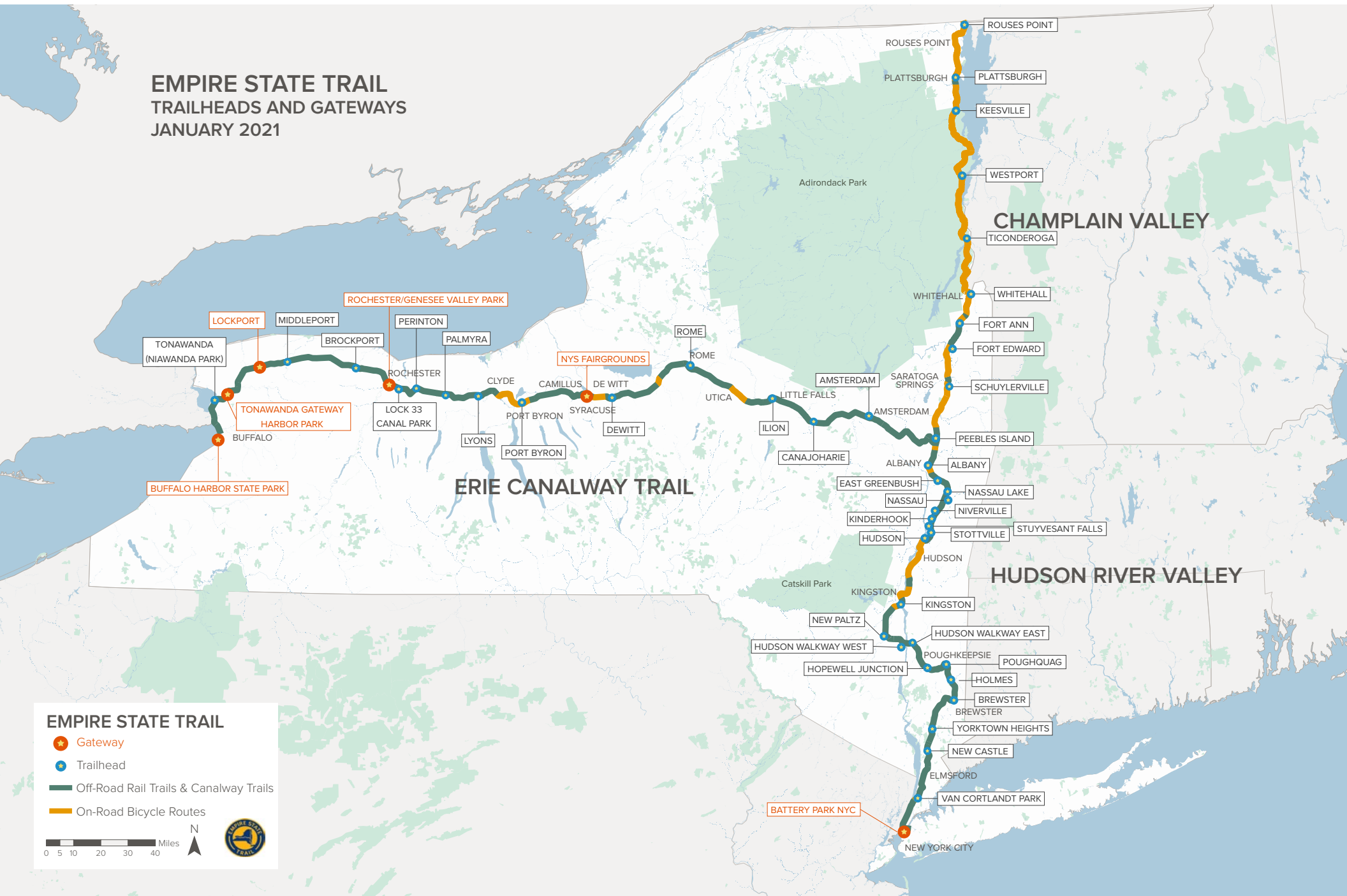
To promote public awareness and orient visitors, New York State has constructed more than 45 Trailheads and Gateways at designated parking areas along the trail. Most are located in state and local parks near existing visitor amenities. The Gateways and Trailheads include welcome and orientation signage, maps of the trail route, benches, bicycle racks, and self-service “fix-it” stations.

More than 45 Empire State Trail Gateways and Trailheads have been created along the 750-mile route.



Bicyclists at Corning Preserve EST Trailhead in Albany.
Photo Credit: Erie Canal National Heritage Corridor.

EMPIRE STATE TRAIL TRAILHEADS AND GATEWAYS JANUARY 2021




EMPIRE STATE TRAIL

- + Gateway
- Trailhead
- Off-Road Rail Trails & Canalway Trails
- On-Road Bicycle Routes

0 5 10 20 30 40 Miles

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TONAWANDA (NIAWANDA PARK)
 LOCKPORT
 MIDDLEPORT
 BROCKPORT
 PERINTON
 PALMYRA
 ROCHESTER/GENESEE VALLEY PARK
 ROCHESTER
 LOCK 33 CANAL PARK
 LYONS
 PORT BYRON
 SYRACUSE
 DEWITT
 NYS FAIRGROUNDS
 CAMILLUS
 DE WITT
 ROME
 UTICA
 LITTLE FALLS
 AMSTERDAM
 SARATOGA SPRINGS
 AMSTERDAM
 PEEBLES ISLAND
 ALBANY
 EAST GREENBUSH
 NASSAU
 KINDERHOOK
 HUDSON
 HUDSON
 KINGSTON
 NEW PALTZ
 HUDSON WALKWAY WEST
 HOPEWELL JUNCTION
 POUGHKEEPSIE
 POUGHQUAG
 HOLMES
 BREWSTER
 BREWSTER
 YORKTOWN HEIGHTS
 NEW CASTLE
 ELMSFORD
 VAN CORTLANDT PARK
 NEW YORK CITY

ROUSES POINT
 PLATTSBURGH
 KEESVILLE
 WESTPORT
 TICONDEROGA
 WHITEHALL
 FORT ANN
 FORT EDWARD
 SCHUYLVILLE
 ALBANY
 NASSAU LAKE
 NIVERVILLE
 STOTTVILLE
 STUYVESANT FALLS
 KINGSTON
 HUDSON WALKWAY EAST
 POUGHQUAG
 NEW CASTLE
 VAN CORTLANDT PARK
 NEW YORK CITY

ERIE CANALWAY TRAIL

CHAMPLAIN VALLEY

HUDSON RIVER VALLEY

BATTERY PARK NYC

TRAIL USER ESTIMATES

The Trail User Projection, released in July 2018, analyzed the question “How many people will use the Empire State Trail annually?” The report utilized a statistical analysis to generate a projection of the number of walkers, runners, and bicyclists that will utilize sample points along the trail, to extrapolate a statewide visitor projection.

The 2018 study projected 8.6 million bicyclists, walkers, and runners will visit the 750-mile Empire State Trail annually. Trail usage is highest where the trail passes through cities and suburban population centers, but every segment of the trail attracts significant visitation. Two-thirds of trail users are walkers, runners, and hikers; with bicyclists making up the remaining third. The full User Projection Report is available on the Empire State Trail website.

During the pandemic in 2020 and 2021, trail visitation surged across New York State by 20 to 50 percent, as people flocked to trails to exercise, enjoy nature, and rejuvenate their spirits. Although precise numbers are not available, visitation to the Empire State Trail certainly is exceeding 10 million people annually.

Table 5: Statewide Trail Use Estimates

STATEWIDE TRAIL USE ESTIMATES	
TOTAL BIKES	3,060,093
TOTAL PEDESTRIANS	5,589,607
TOTAL TRAIL USE	8,649,700



New trail constructed west of Little Falls in the Mohawk Valley.



More than 10 million bicyclists, hikers, and runners are visiting the Empire State Trail each year.



New trail section connecting Camillus to the NYS Fairgrounds, west of Syracuse.



Walkers enjoying the Empire State Trail in Albany.

FUTURE EMPIRE STATE TRAIL ENHANCEMENTS

The statewide Empire State Trail was completed and opened to the public in December 2020. During 2021, New York State is advancing a variety of efforts to further enhance and promote the trail.

1. TRAIL IMPROVEMENTS

Trail Resurfacing: The Empire State Trail initiative built 180 miles of new trails, and improved 170 miles of on-road sections, to expand and link 400 miles of rail trails and canalway trails that already existed prior to 2017. While most of the 400 miles of existing trails are in good condition, some sections are showing their age and require resurfacing. During 2021, NYS agencies and local government partners are advancing 11 projects that will rehabilitate a total of 50 miles of outdated, deteriorating trail sections to ensure the entire 750-mile route provides a world-class visitor experience.

Connectivity: While 85% percent of the 550-mile route from New York City to Albany to Buffalo is off-road trail, opportunities will arise to build additional off-road connections to chip away at the remaining trail gaps, as well as to develop additional off-road Champlain Canalway Trail sections from Waterford to Whitehall. New York State administers a number of competitive grant programs to assist local governments and non-profits plan and construct additional off-road trails.

2. TRAIL MARKETING AND PROMOTION ACTIVITIES

Tourism: New York State Parks, the NYS Canal Corporation, the I Love New York program, and other state agencies are collaborating to promote public visitation to the trail. Marketing efforts will evolve during 2021 and future years in response to pandemic guidelines.

For example, State Parks partnered with the non-profit Boilermaker Race organization to create a virtual “Empire State Trail Challenge” from April through July 2021, allowing participants to log walking, running, and bicycling miles and track their progress in completing Empire State Trail sections. During the four-month Challenge, participants cumulatively logged more than 150,000 total miles bicycling, running, and hiking.

Online Maps: Enhancements are being designed to the Empire State Trail website to allow mobile users to see their location on the trail, generate driving directions to trailhead parking areas, and provide access to lodging information along the trail route.

Maps and Guidebooks: In response to public requests, a foldable large-format map of the statewide trail route will be printed in 2021, and the Hudson River Valley Greenway is partnering with a non-profit partner to create a detailed guidebook for the Hudson and Champlain Valley trail sections.



New trail along the Erie Canal / Mohawk River in Herkimer County.



New bike-ped bridge over railroad tracks in Syracuse.



West Town Street Art
July - October
of Highland



360°
OF DISCOVERY

360° OF DISCOVERY



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