

Ulster County, NY State of the Trails update

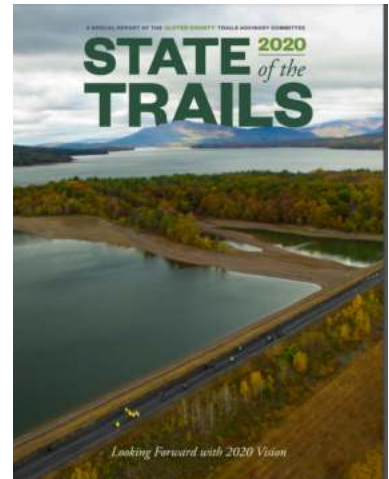
2021- 2023

A compendium of trails projects and progress
Ulster County Trails Advisory Committee - July 2024

MILES OF PROGRESS

Since the release of the Ulster County *State of the Trails 2020* report in early 2021, some 29.4 miles of shared-use rail trails have been advanced *in some way*, in 13 separate projects:

- 18 miles of rail-trails have been rehabilitated, including trail resurfacing, drainage and 6 trail bridges
- 4.3 miles of new rail-trail have been completed, plus 3 community connectors totaling 1.4 miles
- 7.1 miles of new rail-trail are in currently in design and construction in 3 projects
- 2.4 miles of corridor have been acquired for future sections of new rail-trail that will help close remaining gaps
- 9 locations on community rail-trails have received spot improvements such as access points, parking, road crossings, bridge upgrades or visitor orientation signage
- In addition to rail-trails, over 20 miles of multi-use recreation trails on state lands are currently in construction
- Some 57 miles of potential new trail are in active study in Ulster and adjoining counties.



[LINK to the 2020 State of the Trails Report](#)

WHO'S ON THE TRAILS

Taken together, Ulster County's shared-use trails receive about 1.4 million visits each year and provide over \$17 million in direct economic benefits each year.

Most visitation to Ulster County's rail-trails is local. According to data compiled by Ulster County Tourism, some 70% of rail-trail users travel less than 25 miles to get there. 90% come from within New York State, with the remaining 10% coming from other states and other countries.

This report was compiled by the Ulster County Trails Advisory Committee (UCTAC).

The outstanding advancements made on trails have been achieved through the combined efforts of Ulster County, along with our many municipalities, plus nonprofit partners including Open Space Institute, Scenic Hudson, and local land trusts, as well as through partnerships with NYS-DEC, NYS-DOT, NYS-OPRHP and NYC-DEP.

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Trail Benefits: More Than Miles

Trails – and progress in creating them – cannot be evaluated by numbers alone. What is far more important is what trails actually DO for us – as residents, communities, businesses... We invest in parks and trails because they are critical to our quality of life, our health and our economy.

Physical activity & public health - Every \$1 investment in trails for physical activity produces \$2.94 in direct medical benefits. Those living near a trail are far more likely to meet nationally-recommended levels of physical activity compared to those not living near a trail.

Quality of life - Close-to-home trails and Complete Streets make communities more attractive places to live, work and play. They provide opportunities to see neighbors, meet friends and colleagues – and develop community connections and community pride.

Active transportation - Trails provide access to shopping, jobs, schools, nature, culture and essential services, by foot or bicycle. This is especially important for the 5,200 Ulster County households who do not have a car.

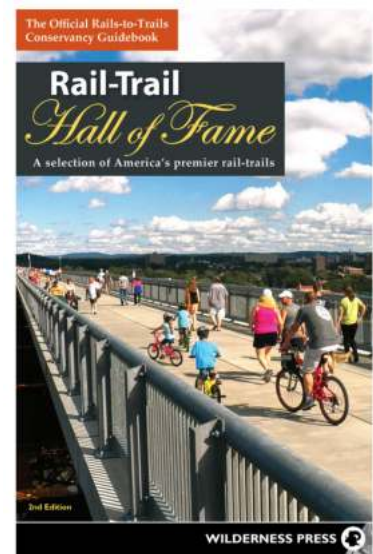
Carbon-free transportation - Walking and cycling are zero-carbon forms of transportation. Every trip that's taken by active transportation instead of a private motor vehicle eliminates a corresponding quantity of carbon emissions.

Safety - Shared-use trails create safe places for people to walk and bicycle with limited exposure to traffic, whether for recreation or for simply going from place to place. Trails accommodate people of all ages and abilities.

Boost local economy - Local trail users spend \$3 - \$15 per day in snack shops, restaurants and other businesses. Non-local day users spend more, on the order of \$15 - \$35 per day (for lunch, gas, etc.) Overnight visitors spend \$100 - \$300 per day (the cost of dinner and overnight stay). Many local businesses have expressed support for our trails, and even work with trail organizations.

Tourism - Destination-quality trails and trail networks like ours attract visitors from other places, generating additional spending at businesses such as hotels and outdoor providers, and bringing “new dollars” into the County. **Three of the top 10 “points of interest” visited in Ulster County are rail-trails** (Ashokan Rail-Trail, Walkway Over the Hudson and the Empire State Trail)

Walkway Over the Hudson was inducted into the Rail Trail Hall of Fame in 2016, and was the cover of the Rails to Trails Conservancy's published guide to the nation's top 33 rail-trails in 2020. Today, it is also a highlight of the 750-mile Empire State Trail spanning the state.



Trails for All People, Reasons & Seasons

Ulster County is home to different KINDS of trails, thanks to our varied landscape of mountains, valleys, forests and farmlands, and our mix of rural, small town and urbanized communities – as well as our history. Different kinds of landscapes and settings enable different KINDS of trails, and each KIND of trail provides distinctive KINDS of benefits. Trails are developed to different established standards, according to a trail's desired uses and the type of setting.

Types of trail uses and trail settings in Ulster County

Shared-use trails - biking trails (also known as Class 1 bikeways; greenway trails, bicycle-pedestrian or multi-use trails). These trails:

- Serve the greatest segment of our population, since they enable a variety of non-motorized means of both transportation and recreation. For that reason, these trails are the main focus of the Ulster County Tourism Advisory Committee, and the main focus of this report.
- Are often converted from historic railroad or canal corridors, which generally passed right through communities and business areas, connecting people with places they want to go
- Are relatively flat, with a surface that is constructed and graded to established standards that promote accessibility (the Americans with Disabilities Act, or ADA; the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, or AASHTO; the National Association of City Transportation Officials, or NACTO; and others)
- Are separated from roads and motor vehicle traffic (although they may be connected by short sections of on-road bike lanes)
- In the best cases, these trails connect with community streets, sidewalks and transit systems in ways that are well integrated in terms of safety, wayfinding and convenience of users.

Hiking - Primitive, backcountry trails - Ulster County has a rich heritage of hiking trails, especially in the mountainous areas of the Catskills and Shawangunks. These trails highlight many of the wildest and most scenic natural areas of our region, providing enormous recreation-related benefits.

Hiking - Developed recreation & interpretive trails - These include the historic carriage roads and certain other trails within major destination open space areas such as Minnewaska State Park and Mohonk Preserve in the Shawangunks. They also include trails within smaller local parks & preserves.

Mountain biking - "Single track" - Trails designed for mountain biking can be used by hikers and others, but their length, width and sinuous layout or "flow" are tailored to wheeled users. Destination mountain bike areas in Ulster County include Lippman Park, Belleayre Mountain and Bluestone State Forest (with mountain biking trails also under construction in the Shandaken Wild Forest). Many people also use mountain bikes on rail trails, notably those with crushed stone surfacing.

XC skiing - Because of their width and smooth surfaces, rail trails, along with the carriage road systems in the Shawangunks, provide exceptional opportunities for winter use as cross-country ski trails, and some are groomed for that purpose. The Ashokan Rail Trail was featured in a 2021 article by the Rails to Trails Conservancy, reporting on the surge in winter use of shared-use trails nationwide during the pandemic. [LINK to the Rails to Trails article on increased winter trail use.](#)

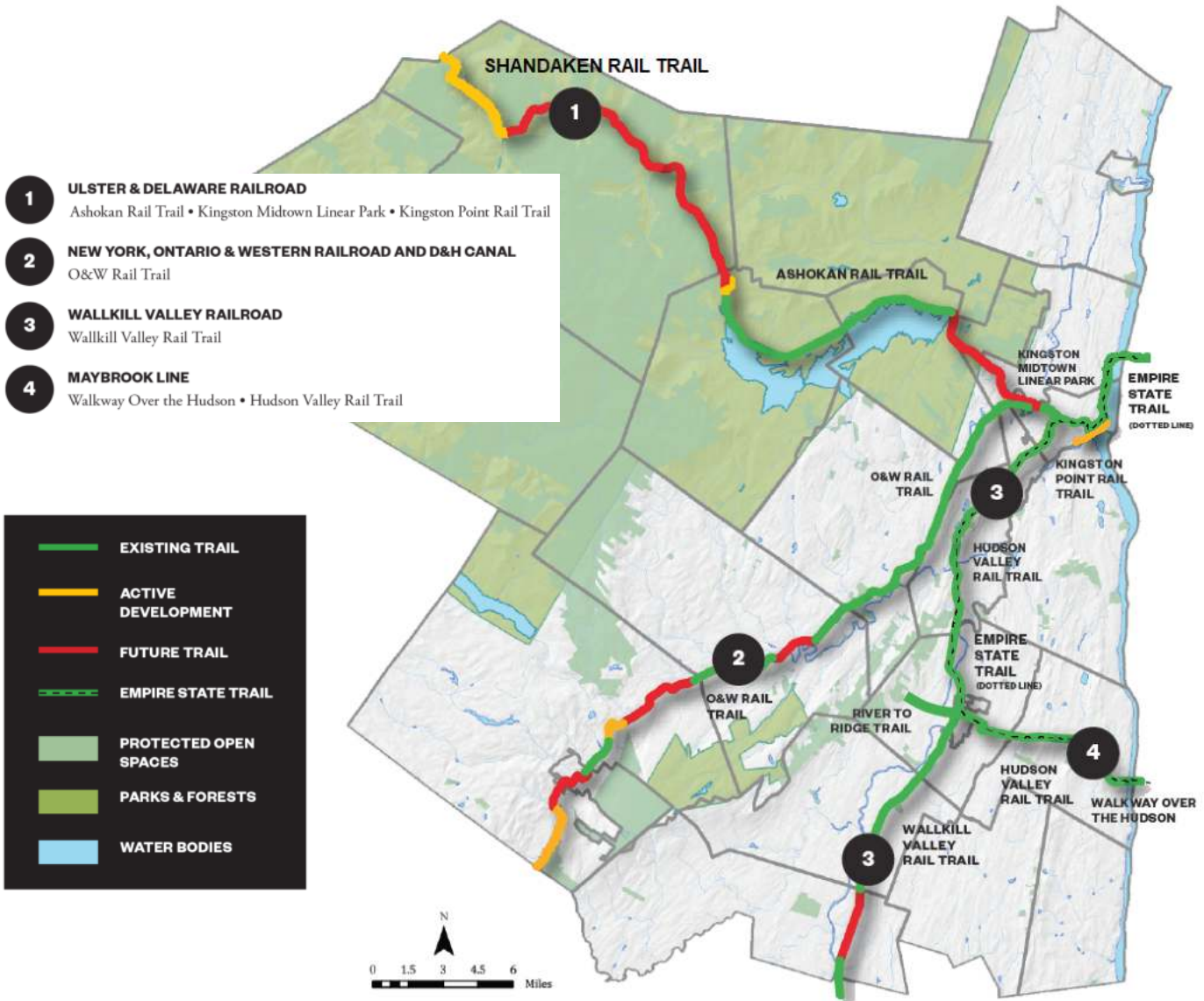
Horse trails - The wide, natural- and crushed-stone surfaces of the Wallkill Valley and O&W Rail Trails, along with the historic carriage road systems of Mohonk and Minnewaska, provide many miles of riding opportunities.

Water Trails - Sometimes called “blueways,” paddling routes, or canoe- and kayak trails, water trails establish formal point-to-point paddling opportunities on bodies of water. Ulster County hosts 40 miles and 16 access sites of the 256-mile Hudson River Water Trail, which is designated as a National Water Trail. Smaller-scale water trails are becoming established on the Wallkill River and Lower Esopus Creek.

NY State Parks (OPRHP) provides a helpful guideline for classification of different types of trails, including basic standards for design, construction and maintenance.

[LINK to Guidelines and Standards for Trails in NY State Parks](#)

The Vision: Four Historic Rail Corridors Form The Spine of our County-wide network of shared-use trails



Ulster County's transportation history provides a vision for the future.

Historic railroad and canal corridors provide a basic framework for accessible, close-to-home recreation for County residents, as well as non-motorized travel routes between communities. Our mix of mountains, rivers, forests, orchards and farmlands provide unparalleled scenery along the way.

Completing these connections, integrating them with safe routes within our communities, and finding ways to reach those communities that are not yet served, will provide multiple benefits to Ulster County residents for generations to come.

Building On An Historic Transportation Network

“The benefit of greenway trails to the public is significantly increased when greenway trails are connected to other public infrastructure and services. Providing safer bicycle and pedestrian connections between greenway trailheads and schools, local parks, urban centers and residential areas further increases the percentage of the population who have easy access to greenway trails; encourages more use of nonmotorized transportation corridors; and further reduces the need for vehicular use in communities.”

- **From the NY Statewide Greenway Trails Plan**

Four historic transportation corridors provide the basic framework of our County-wide network of shared-use trails:

1) The Ulster & Delaware Railroad

Ashokan Rail Trail
Kingston Midtown Linear Park
Kingston Point Rail Trail
and the Shandaken Rail Trail, currently in development

2) New York, Ontario & Western Railroad, and Delaware & Hudson Canal

O&W Rail Trail
D&H Canal Five Locks Walk

3) Walkkill Valley Railroad

Walkkill Valley Rail Trail
Walden-Walkkill Rail Trail

4) Maybrook Line

Walkway Over the Hudson
Hudson Valley Rail Trail

...and new since 2020

5) Empire State Trail

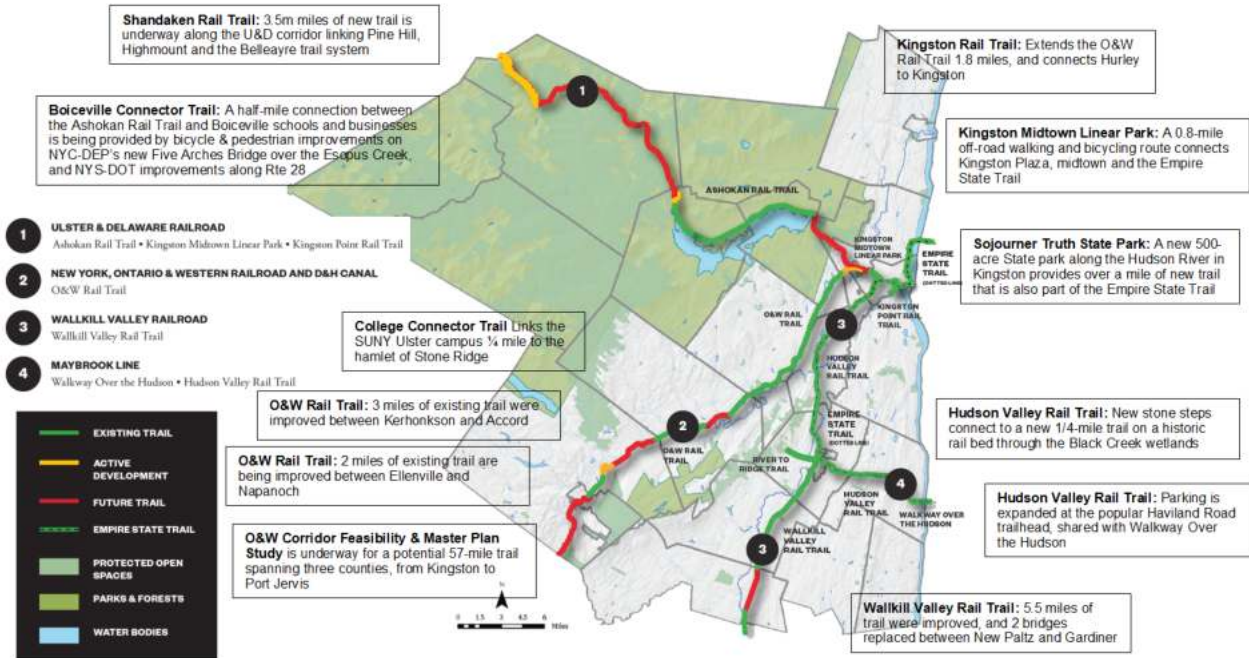
Since its completion in 2020, the 750-mile **Empire State Trail (EST)** has helped to connect some of our historic transportation corridors, and it has become a significant recreation & transportation route/corridor in its own right, connecting from New York City to Canada, and from Albany to Buffalo along the Erie Canalway Trail. It is currently the longest multi-use trail in any state in the country. The EST winds through Ulster County, where it is co-aligned with sections of the Maybrook, Walkkill Valley and U&D corridors, as well as public roadways and public parklands.

The Empire State Trail was named the #1 Top Rail Trail in the US by Outside Magazine in 2022, out of their list of 25 great rail trails.

[LINK to Outside Magazine 25 Best Rail Trails in the U.S. in 2022](#)

The Projects: Where Our Trails Have Grown In Ulster County's Historic Transportation Corridors

Since 2020, significant progress has been made of ALL of our shared-use trails.



The Ulster County Legislature has been a major catalyst in expanding and enhancing our trail network for the benefit of County residents.

The explosion of trail use during the COVID epidemic demonstrated the importance and popularity of trails for public health. In response, the County Legislature in March 2022 allocated \$2.1 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to enhance 3 trails, working in partnership with the Open Space Institute and local partners: the Walkkill Valley Rail Trail between New Paltz and Gardiner, and the O&W Rail Trail between Accord and Kerhonkson, as well as between Ellenville and Napanoch. The projects furthered the completion of the 29-mile rail trail between the City of Kingston and the Village of Ellenville, as well as a major feeder trail connecting the Village of New Paltz and Gardiner to the 750-mile Empire State Trail. Open Space Institute contributed \$95,000 in in-kind services, through leveraged private funding.



At the same time, Ulster County’s Planning Department, Transportation Council, and other branches have been instrumental in advancing projects in the County-wide trail network.

These advancements are detailed in the following sections, along with descriptions of other advancements made by Ulster County, municipalities and partners in each of our trail corridors.

1) ULSTER & DELAWARE CORRIDOR (U&D)

CORRIDOR SUMMARY:

- **BACKGROUND:** Construction began in 1868 on what was then the Rondout & Oswego Railroad, and the section through Ulster County was completed by 1872. The company was reorganized as the U&D in 1875. In 1913, part of the route was relocated for the construction of the Ashokan Reservoir. Passenger service ended in 1954. The line was formally abandoned in 1977, and was acquired by Ulster County.
- **OWNERSHIP:** The majority of the 36.8-mile U&D Corridor in Ulster County is owned by Ulster County. The 11.6 mile section along the Ashokan Reservoir is owned by NYCDEP.
- The 0.8-mile Kingston Midtown Linear Park section is owned by Ulster County and managed by the City of Kingston. The U&D section from Jansen Street to the Rondout is owned by the City of Kingston, with a portion leased to the Trolley Museum.
- Rail trails, urban trails and complete streets projects within the City of Kingston are collectively envisioned as components of the Kingston Greenline system.
- In 2015, the County Legislature unanimously adopted Resolution # 488, which, as agreed by all interested parties, allocated portions of the trail for “segmented rail with trail” use, and posited that continuity of trail use from Kingston to the Catskills shall be maintained. (See map)
- **ASHOKAN RAIL TRAIL WEBSITE**
 - <https://ashokanrailtrail.com/>
- **RAIL USE:** Two permits, renewed in 2023 and running for 5 years, enable tourist excursion rail activities on sections of the corridor:
 - 6.2 miles between Boiceville and Phoenicia to Rail Explorers, for rail-biking; and
 - 4.5 miles from Kingston Plaza to Rte 23A to Catskill Mountain Railroad, for a tourist rail ride.
- **MILEAGE SUMMARY OF TRAIL STATUS:**
 - **36.8 total miles.** Of this, approximately:
 - 14.2 mi trail completed (including some non-U&D)
 - 5.6 mi in trail design / construction (including some non-U&D)
 - 2.4 mi trail feasibility study completed (Highmount to Belleayre Beach)
 - 1.6 mi undesignated section to be studied
 - 8 mi (approx) owned by Ulster County and designated for future trail
 - 10.7 mi tourist excursion rail activity permits





After extensive discussion and debate, the County Legislature unanimously adopted a “segmented rail with trail” policy for future uses of the County-owned U&D Corridor (R_488, 2015). The policy called for further investigations in a constrained segment from MP8.33 (Rte 28A) to MP10.0 (Basin Rd). The policy provided both for a tourist excursion rail segment in the Kingston section while identifying the necessity for future trail access and connectivity between Kingston and the Ashokan Rail Trail.

NEW TRAIL IN THE U&D CORRIDOR:

Kingston Midtown Linear Park - 0.8 mi - 2022

Ulster County completed the trail section from Cornell St to Westbrook Lane in the City of Kingston. The trail provides a direct, off-street connection between Kingston’s midtown neighborhoods and the only shopping center within the city limits.



Boiceville Connector Trail - 0.5 mi - 2023

NYS-DOT completed a key part of a future 0.5-mile connection between the Ashokan Rail Trail and Boiceville schools and businesses, provided by new sidewalk and bikeway improvements along Route 28. This will connect to bicycle and pedestrian facilities on a soon-to-be replaced Five Arches Bridge over the Esopus Creek, slated for completion by NYC-DEP in 2025.

TRAIL PLANNING & CONSTRUCTION IN THE U&D CORRIDOR

Shandaken Rail Trail project

- 2.65 mi - 2023

Ulster County has convened a community advisory group and begun the formal design and construction process for a 2.65-mile trail section between Highmount, on the Delaware County line, and Belleayre Beach park in the hamlet of Pine Hill. Construction is planned to be completed in 2025 or 2026.

[LINK to the "Participate Ulster County" project page for Shandaken RT](#)

Shandaken Rail Trail Feasibility Study

- 5 mi - 2021. The construction project above was preceded by the *Ulster & Delaware Corridor Revitalization Study – Shandaken Section*, produced by the Ulster County County Planning Dept. The study examined the 5-mile section of the County-owned U&D corridor from Highmount to the Route 28 crossing in Big Indian.

[LINK to the Feasibility Study](#)

MAP: A feasibility study for the Shandaken section of the U&D was completed by UCTC in 2021. In 2022, Ulster County received nearly \$4 million in Transportation Alternatives funding to implement the project's first phase.



Kingston RAISE Weaving the Waterfront Transportation Project - 3 mi - 2023

(RAISE = Rebuilding American Infrastructure With Sustainability and Equity Program). Funding was awarded to the City of Kingston to complete five projects that affect trails and transportation in the Rondout section of the City, for a total of about 3 miles. The projects are components of the City of Kingston's Greenline system and the Empire State Trail.

[LINK to the "Participate Ulster County" project page for Kingston RAISE](#)

- 1. Kingston Point Rail Trail Phase 2:** Construct a 0.3-mile bicycle-pedestrian trail from Garraghan Drive/ Rondout Gardens trailhead to East Strand, via the Trolley Museum.
- 2. East Strand and North Street Complete Streets:** Design and construct ADA-compliant sidewalks, a multi-use path or bike lanes, Complete Streets amenities, and flood resilience measures for 1.2 miles along the roads parallel to the Rondout Creek, including Rondout Landing, East Strand and North Street.

3. **Kingston Point Rail Trail Phase 3** – Construct a 0.72-mile trail and elevated boardwalk from East Strand to Rotary Park, to replace the current Trolley Path along the Trolley causeway.
4. **Rotary Park & Kingston Point Park Pedestrian Connections/ Raising of Delaware Avenue** - Design and construct 0.3 miles of bicycle-pedestrian pathways, sidewalks, crossings and improved roadways between Delaware Ave, the entrances to Rotary Park and Kingston Point Park, and the existing connector path at the Kingston Point Park/ Hutton Brickyard boundary.
5. **North Street Complete Streets** - Design and construct a 0.6-mile Complete Streets system along the (City's) North Street, adjacent to the Hutton Brickyards. A 10-to-12-foot paved pathway will serve Brickyard events, and connect to the North Street (southern) entrance to Sojourner Truth State Park.

MAP: Kingston's "Weaving the Waterfront" project will complete bicycle and pedestrian connections between lower-income neighborhoods, the Midtown and Rondout business districts, and some of the city's most important parks – Kingston Point, Rotary Park and Sojourner Truth State Park. The overall goal of the project is to increase the resiliency and sustainability of the shoreline, and promote economic development in that part of the city.



U&D Corridor study, Kingston to Basin Rd - 2023

As part of OSI's "Growing Greenways West of Hudson Trails Vision, OSI conducted an independent feasibility study of potential / alternative configurations of trail and rail access along the County-owned 6.5-mile section of the U&D corridor between Kingston Plaza (MP 3.7) and Basin Rd (MP 10.1), including the topographically and environmentally challenging "Undesignated Section" between Route 28A (MP 8.33) and Basin Rd (MP 10.01).

[LINK to the "Catskill Mountain Rail Trail" section of OSI's Growing Greenways vision report](#)

ROOM TO GROW IN THE U&D CORRIDOR

- **Work with local communities to extend the Shandaken Trail** by 2.4 miles from Pine Hill to Big Indian
- **Complete a feasibility study of the 8-mile section of the U&D along the Upper Esopus Creek between Big Indian and Phoenicia.** This section is attractive in its own right, and is a desirable connection between communities, that is in places badly deteriorated.
- **Undertake a process to consider alternatives and the highest/best use of the “undesigned section”** (MP 8.33 to 10.1), ensuring a safe, off-road trail connection through this steep and tightly-constricted area
- **Complete off-road trail connectivity between Kingston and the Ashokan Rail Trail (ART),** providing a safe, off-road link.
- **Seek community trail connections between the ART, nearby neighborhoods in Woodstock and West Shokan, and the commercial strip on Route 28**



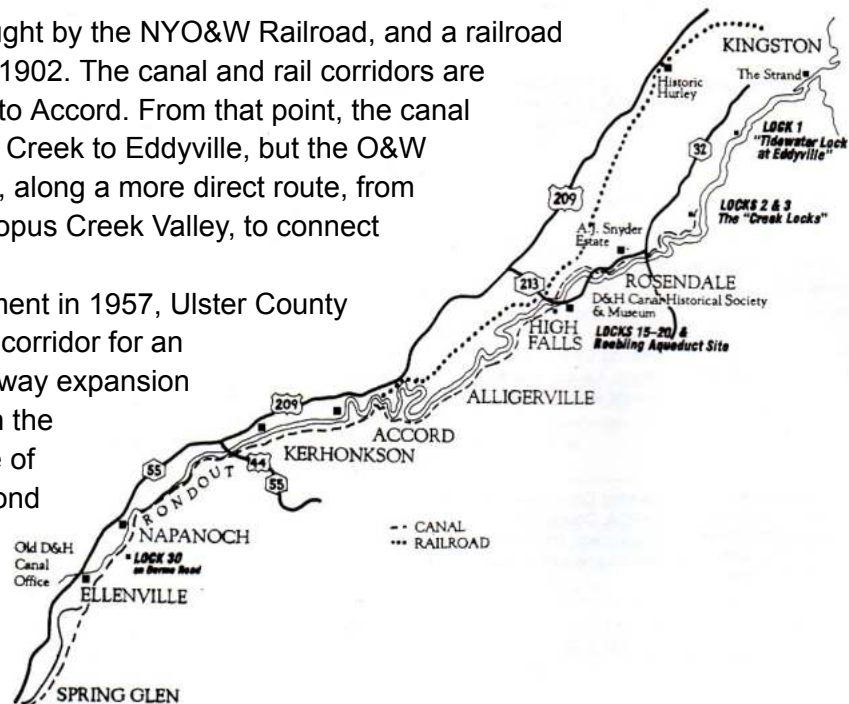
Ribbon cutting on the Kingston Midtown Linear Park on the U&D corridor, August 2022

2) NEW YORK, ONTARIO & WESTERN RAILROAD (O&W) AND D&H CANAL CORRIDOR



CORRIDOR SUMMARY:

- **BACKGROUND:** The D&H Canal was built between 1825 and 1828, to transport Pennsylvania coal to the Hudson River at Rondout (now Kingston). Most of the canal ceased active use around 1898, with some sections persisting until 1916. Many canal features and sections of towpath remain.
- Much of the corridor was bought by the NYO&W Railroad, and a railroad spur was built to Kingston in 1902. The canal and rail corridors are co-aligned from Spring Glen to Accord. From that point, the canal continues along the Rondout Creek to Eddyville, but the O&W company built a new corridor, along a more direct route, from the Rondout Valley to the Esopus Creek Valley, to connect with Kingston's uptown.
- After the railroad's abandonment in 1957, Ulster County purchased most of the O&W corridor for an anticipated divided-lane highway expansion of Route 209, to connect with the then-new Thruway. That type of highway was never built beyond Kingston.
- In 1990, Ulster County donated sections of the O&W in Hurley, Marbletown, Rochester and Wawarsing to the towns, as a local match for NYS park development grants to create rail trails.
- **O&W RAIL TRAIL WEBSITE**
 - <https://theoandwtrail.org/>
- **OWNERSHIP:** Most of the O&W corridor is owned by the municipalities through which it passes, and where it is used as a trail. Some sections, where no trail has been built, are in private ownership.
- The O&W Coalition of Municipalities has operated since 2016 to enhance coordination between municipal trail owners. Its members are the towns of Ulster, Hurley, Marbletown, Rochester and Wawarsing; the Village of Ellenville; and the City of Kingston.
- **MILEAGE SUMMARY OF TRAIL STATUS:**
 - **29.5 total miles (approx).** Of this, approximately:
 - 19.5 mi trail completed (including some non-O&W)
 - 2.4 mi acquired for trail use
 - 7.6 mi incomplete "gaps"



NEW TRAIL IN THE O&W CORRIDOR

Kingston - Hurley O&W Connector completed - 1.8 mi - 2023

Ulster County worked with Central Hudson, owners of this section of the O&W corridor, to secure trail access and complete a 1.8-mile paved rail trail connecting the Hurley O&W Rail Trail to Washington Ave in Kingston, the site of a new trailhead parking area. The historic route of the O&W is also a Central Hudson powerline corridor that was upgraded in 2023.

Hurley Avenue / O&W Building Connection - 2023

Developers of the old Kingston Freeman building, now renamed the O&W Building, constructed a paved access from their parking lot to the Kingston-Hurley O&W Rail Trail, providing access to their building from the trail, as well as a convenient off-road link between the rail trail and bike lanes on Hurley Avenue.

College Connector Trail - Stone Ridge downtown to SUNY Ulster - 0.25 mi - 2022

The Town of Marbletown Highway Department & Rail Trail Committee completed a gravel pedestrian pathway linking the SUNY Ulster campus to the hamlet of Stone Ridge at Route 209. Access across private land was provided by easement, and the trail was built by the Marbletown Highway Dept. and SUNY Ulster. A longer-term goal is to connect the SUNY Ulster campus to the O&W corridor, further enabling non-motorized access.

TRAIL RESTORATION IN THE O&W CORRIDOR

O&W Rail Trail restoration, Accord to Kerhonkson - 3.2 mi - 2023

The Open Space Institute completed restoration of the Ontario & Western (O&W) Rail Trail between the hamlets of Accord and Kerhonkson (Towns of Rochester and Wawarsing, respectively), and improved the trailhead and parking at Accord. Ulster County provided American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding that OSI supplemented with private support.

O&W Rail Trail, Ellenville to Napanoch - 2.1 mi - 2023

OSI restored the O&W Rail Trail section between Ellenville (the water treatment plant on Sewer Plant Rd) and Napanoch (the boundary of the Correctional Facility, which is not yet open to the public). This section of the O&W Rail Trail is owned and managed by the Town of Wawarsing. The Project was supported by County ARPA funding supplemented by OSI private funding.

O&W Rail Trail, Port Benjamin - 0.2 mi - 2023

OSI restored a short section of the O&W Rail Trail at Port Ben, and replaced a key missing trail bridge. The Project was the third element of the ARPA funding partnership with Ulster County.

SPOT TRAIL IMPROVEMENTS

Bicycle fix-it station at the Cottekill O&W trailhead - 2022

Eagle Scout Chase Kiszkiel installed a fix-it station that includes a tire pump, Allen keys, wrenches and other tools needed for on-site bike repairs.

Having bike repair stations at popular routes and destinations improves the reliability of cycling as a means of transportation.



Ulster County's rail trails provide our youth with opportunities for healthy recreation as well as ways of getting constructively involved in their communities.



Trailside art in the Town of Rochester - 2022

A community art event, the Ash Tree Arts Festival, drew local artists to transform dead ash trees along the O&W Rail Trail into trailside art. Some of the installations were temporary, while others remain in place as trail features, and a testament to local creativity.

TRAIL CORRIDOR ACQUISITION IN THE O&W CORRIDOR

Spring Glen O&W protected - 2.4 mi - 2023

OSI acquired a section of O&W railroad corridor between the Sullivan County line at Spring Glen and a point approximately one mile south of Ellenville (the southern boundary of the previous Nevele Hotel property).

TRAIL STUDY AND PLANNING IN THE O&W CORRIDOR

O&W and D&H Comprehensive Feasibility Study - 57 miles - 2023

Open Space Institute began working with consultants (GPI) to study the 57-mile canal and railroad corridor between Kingston and Port Jervis. The study will include inventory and assessment of resources & alternative trail routes, community engagement, engineering and construction analysis, cost estimation, and prioritization of segments. About 30 miles of the O&W corridor are within Ulster County. The project is supported by a NYS Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) grant leveraged with additional private funding.

ROOM TO GROW IN THE O&W CORRIDOR

- **Improve the Hurley & Marletown sections of unpaved trail**, where trail surfacing and drainage have become problematic
- **Complete the trail connection between the O&W Rail-Trail and High Falls**, with its D&H Canal-related trails
- **Connect the UCCC and Stone Ridge College Connector Trail to the O&W Rail-Trail**
- Close the trail gap between Accord and Lucas Turnpike.
- **Enhance Kerhonkson Main Street as a trail community gateway** and extend the trail to Port Benjamin
- **Close the trail gap through the Napanoch Correctional Facility**
- **Connect the trail in Ellenville through the Village, extending to Spring Glen** and the Sullivan County D&H Canal park
- **Coordinate with O&W and D&H trail efforts in Sullivan and Orange Counties** in ways that are mutually beneficial

3) WALLKILL VALLEY RAILROAD CORRIDOR



CORRIDOR SUMMARY:

- **BACKGROUND:** The Wallkill Valley Railroad was founded in 1866, and extended north to Kingston around 1872. It ceased operating in 1977. The Wallkill Valley Land Trust (WVLT) purchased the New Paltz and Gardiner sections in 1991, and conveyed sections to the Town and Village of New Paltz.
- The first 12 miles of the Wallkill Valley Rail Trail were opened in 1993, including the destination Wallkill River (Springtown) trestle. The Gardiner section was transferred to the Town in 2007. The WVLT purchased the Rosendale and Ulster sections in 2009, including the Rosendale trestle, and reaching the City of Kingston. The Rosendale Trestle was opened for trail use in 2013.
- To the south, the Towns of Montgomery (Orange County) and Shawangunk purchased sections in 1985, and the first Shawangunk section of trail opened in 1993. The trail was paved and formally opened as the Walden-Wallkill Rail Trail in 2009, now 3.2 miles in length.
- The section owned by the prison facilities has been studied for potential trail access, but the trail gap has so far not been resolved.
- **OWNERSHIP:** The corridor is owned by the Towns of Shawangunk, Gardiner, and the Town & Village of New Paltz, within their respective municipalities, with remaining sections owned by the Wallkill Valley Land Trust and NYS Department of Corrections.
- **WALLKILL VALLEY RAIL TRAIL WEBSITE**
 - <https://wallkillvalleylt.org/wvrt/>
- **WALDEN-WALLKILL RAIL TRAIL WEBSITE**
 - <https://www.shawangunk.org/walden-wallkill-rail-trail/>
- **MILEAGE SUMMARY OF TRAIL STATUS:**
 - **28.5 mi total corridor length.** Of this:
 - 25.8 mi trail completed
 - 1.4 mi owned by Shawangunk Correctional
 - 1.3 mi privately owned in City of Kingston

TRAIL RESTORATION IN THE WALLKILL VALLEY RAILROAD CORRIDOR

Wallkill Valley Rail Trail restored, New Paltz to Gardiner - 5.5 mi - 2023

In 2023, Open Space Institute and Wallkill Valley Land Trust completed restoration of a 5.5-mile section of the Wallkill Valley Rail Trail between Sojourner Truth Village Park in New Paltz and Main Street in Gardiner, including replacement of two bridges – notably including the Plattekill Creek bridge that is a popular destination viewpoint. The Project was another element of the ARPA funding partnership with Ulster County

SPOT TRAIL IMPROVEMENTS

Small trail bridge replaced near Wallkill River bridge - 2021

A 3.5 mile section of the Wallkill Valley Rail Trail was closed for 4 weeks, and trail use temporarily rerouted through New Paltz and along Springtown Road, during replacement of a small bridge immediately east of the Wallkill River trestle. Funding was provided by the Hudson River Valley Greenway, in partnership with the Open Space Institute and the Town and Village of New Paltz.

ROOM TO GROW IN THE WVRR CORRIDOR

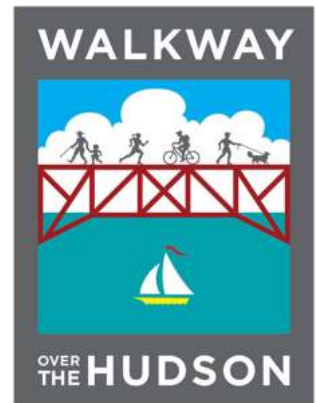
- **Repair and/or replace decking of the Walkkill River trestle** (AKA Springtown Truss Bridge), a key attraction of the WVRT and EST. The 413-foot, 1880-era Warren Truss bridge was decked for trail use in 1993 through a volunteer effort with the Bruderhof community. The wooden decking is wearing out, risking eventual closure of this section of the EST.
- **Improve the 2.4 miles of trail between Gardiner Main Street and Denniston Road**, bringing it to a standard consistent with the rest of the trail.
- **Connect the Shawangunk Correctional Facility gap** between the current terminus of the WVRT at Denniston Road and the Walden-Walkkill Rail Trail (1.4+ miles, depending upon the selected route). Previous studies have not yielded results; an action plan is merited.
- **Connect the WVRT to the O&W Rail Trail** between Binnewater and Cottekill
- **Study the feasibility of connecting the WVRT with the Ulster County Fairgrounds.** This is a concept that has been discussed for many years, but never formally examined.



4) MAYBROOK LINE / RTE 299 CORRIDOR

CORRIDOR SUMMARY:

- **BACKGROUND:** The Poughkeepsie railroad bridge opened the Maybrook Line west of the Hudson in 1889. At the time, the bridge was the longest in the world. A fire in 1974 closed the bridge, and the corridor was sold off in pieces, including the bridge.
- The first section of rail-trail, renamed the Hudson Valley Rail Trail, opened in 1997.
- The Poughkeepsie bridge was redeveloped and re-opened as Walkway Over the Hudson in 2009.
- The HVRT extension along Rte 299 and the route through New Paltz were built by Ulster County and the Towns of Lloyd and New Paltz, and completed in 2019.
- **OWNERSHIP:** Walkway Over the Hudson State Park is owned by NYS Bridge Authority and operated by NYS OPRHP. Support for capital improvements, programming, promotion and other support is provided by a nonprofit partner, Walkway Over the Hudson, Inc. A section of the Maybrook Line is owned by the Town of Lloyd as WVRT, with the rest of the route to and through New Paltz owned by NYS DOT and the Town of New Paltz.
- The Maybrook Line corridor from Route 299 south to the Orange County line is fragmented and in private ownership, and is not included in our corridor calculations.
- **WALKWAY OVER THE HUDSON WEBSITE**
<https://walkway.org/visit/>
- **HUDSON VALLEY RAIL TRAIL WEBSITE**
<https://www.hudsonvalleyrailtrails.org/>
- **MILEAGE SUMMARY OF TRAIL STATUS:**
 - **8.6 mi total corridor length.** Of this:
 - 8.6 mi trail completed, including:
 - 7.1 mi off-road
 - 1.5 mi on-road, with 1.3 mi in design/ construction for conversion to a separated bike-ped lane



NEW TRAIL IN THE MAYBROOK/ ROUTE 299 CORRIDOR:

Hudson Valley Rail Trail - 1889 spur trail/ Woods Walk - 0.25 mi - 2022

HVRTA built new stone steps providing access from the HVRT to a new 1/4-mile footpath trail on a section of the original 1889 railroad bed through the Black Creek wetlands. The branch trail was constructed by the Jolly Rovers trail crew, funded by a Hudson River Valley Greenway grant.

SPOT TRAIL IMPROVEMENTS

Hudson Valley Rail Trail Interpretive panels - 2023

HVRTA installed 4 interpretive wayside panels along the Hudson Valley Rail Trail, telling the trail and the community's railroad history. The panels were developed by local railroad historian Matt Kierstead, and funded by a HRV Greenway grant.

Town of Lloyd police bicycles - 2023

GPA's Bike Shop in Highland repaired older mountain bikes and returned them to service for the Town of Lloyd Police Department, and then later also donated two newer, updated Trek Mountain bikes. The bicycles enable Lloyd Police to better patrol the Hudson Valley Rail Trail and Walkway Over the Hudson. [LINK TO STORY](#)

HVRT & Walkway Over the Hudson parking expansion - 2022

Town of Lloyd expanded parking at two popular Haviland Road parking areas that are shared with Walkway Over the Hudson, and moved to paid parking. Parking revenues support the trail.

TRAIL PLANNING & CONSTRUCTION IN THE MAYBROOK / RTE 299 CORRIDOR

Friends of Walkway Over the Hudson Strategic Plan - 2023-2024

Although not trail planning in the strict sense, Walkway's nonprofit partner organization received a state grant to undertake a strategic plan that will guide its growth, and help determine how the Walkway can be an even greater resource for the community.

Farmer's Bridge - 2023-2024

Coordinated by a local artist, temporary art installations created by community members were installed along the trail in 2023, including on the steel Farmer's Bridge that crosses overhead near the Commercial Ave trailhead. Plans are underway to stabilize and restore the historic steel bridge as a more sustainable feature for use in future community events, and create a short loop trail extending from the main trail to provide access across it.



ROOM TO GROW IN THE MAYBROOK / RTE 299 CORRIDOR

- **John Burroughs Black Creek Trail** - A 2017 vision plan presented by Scenic Hudson envisions land- and water-based trail connections from the HVRT to nearby Illinois Mountain, as well as along the Black Creek corridor to Chodikee Lake, John Burroughs' Slabsides and the Black Creek Preserve.

5) EMPIRE STATE TRAIL (EST)



CORRIDOR SUMMARY

- **BACKGROUND:** The Empire State Trail (EST) project was launched by New York State in 2017. The EST is a continuous bicycle-pedestrian trail route that extends from New York City through the Hudson River Valley to Albany, west to Buffalo along the Erie Canal, and north to the Champlain Valley and Adirondacks, for a total distance of 750 miles – the longest state multi-use trail in the United States.
- Basic connectivity across the state was completed in 2020. A 2017 Design Guide for the EST recommends trail standards and best practices.
- Continuing coordination at the State level is provided by NYS OPRHP. Advocacy for increased resources to help sustain and further enhance and extend the EST to connect to additional communities and regions continues at the state level, primarily through PTNY.
- **OWNERSHIP:** Running through 22 counties and dozens of cities and towns, the Empire State Trail connects and co-brands existing trails and on-road connections that are owned and managed by a variety of entities, including state agencies, local governments, and non-profit organizations. In Ulster County, these include Walkway Over the Hudson State Park (OPRHP); Hudson Valley Rail Trail (Town of Lloyd); Route 299 (NYS DOT); New Paltz roads and Wallkill Valley Rail Trail (Town & Village of New Paltz, Wallkill Valley Land Trust); Route 32, Kingston city streets and Kingston Point Rail Trail (City of Kingston), Sojourner Truth State Park (OPRHP, Scenic Hudson); Route 32 and local roads (Town of Ulster); Route 199 and Kingston-Rhinecliff Bridge (NYS DOT, NYSBA).
- **EMPIRE STATE TRAIL WEBSITE**
<https://empiretrail.ny.gov/>
- **MILEAGE SUMMARY OF TRAIL STATUS:**
 - 33.0 miles of total corridor length within Ulster County.** Of this:
 - 25.5 miles off road
 - 7.5 miles on-road connections

TRAIL CORRIDOR ACQUISITION AND NEW TRAIL ON THE EMPIRE STATE TRAIL ROUTE

Sojourner Truth State Park and new Empire State Trail section dedicated - 2022

New York State Parks and Scenic Hudson dedicated a new 520-acre state park on the Hudson River shoreline in the City of Kingston and Town of Ulster. It includes the 1.9 mile Brickyard Trail, a link in the Empire State Trail. An accessible trail to the shoreline and a waterfront pavilion were added in 2023.

Scenic Hudson acquired 180 acres adjacent to Sojourner Truth State Park - 2023

Scenic Hudson acquired additional land immediately north of the new state park, including nearly a mile of Hudson River waterfront. While currently closed to the public, it promises to offer increased river access for residents of the Town of Ulster and the City of Kingston, as well as for visitors. Combined with the state park, the property will create one of the longest stretches of publicly accessible riverfront in the Hudson Valley.

TRAIL PLANNING & CONSTRUCTION IN THE EST CORRIDOR

Henry DuBois Drive Improvement Project, New Paltz - 2023

A separated bicycle and pedestrian lane will be built to replace the on-road section of Empire State Trail through the Town of New Paltz between North Chestnut Street and North Putt Corners Road, a distance of about 1.3 miles.

ROOM TO GROW IN THE EMPIRE STATE TRAIL CORRIDOR:

- **Reduce or eliminate exposure to motor vehicle traffic** - Between NYC and New Paltz, only 2 miles of the EST are on road. In Ulster County, 7.5 miles are on roads. Sites particularly in need of improvements include sections such as the Route 32 connection from the WVRT to Kingston, and from Sojourner Truth State Park to the Kingston-Rhinecliff Bridge as well as on the bridge proper.
- **Enhance connections to other trails, streets and sidewalks (i.e. Complete Streets) throughout EST communities** - Create critical “last mile” bike-ped connections, including:
 - Through uptown City of Kingston to the O&W Rail Trail
 - Along the U&D corridor between the Kingston Midtown Linear Park and the Ashokan Rail Trail Catskill Park / Route 28 communities
 - Through the Town and Village of New Paltz to better serve SUNY New Paltz and other parts of the community.
- **Improve trail & community wayfinding** - EST travelers are still getting lost in communities, despite the fact that a trail guidebook is available, the EST website includes GPS maps and resources for things like lodging and camping, and organized bike tours tend to keep cyclists together. Signage and other locally-specific wayfinding tools can help direct EST users as well as local residents to nearby trails, destinations and services.

Wayfinding signage on the Wallkill Valley Rail Trail, as well as on nearby streets, directs trail users to nearby sites and services, and helps to integrate the trail within the community.



TRAILS ON STATE LANDS



NEW TRAILS IN STATE PARKS AND MAJOR PRESERVES

High Point Carriage Road, Minnewaska State Park - 2023

OSI in partnership with PIPC (OPRHP) reconstructed an old fire road and constructed a new carriageway trail to complete a 2.8-mile shared-use trail from the Sam's Point Visitor Center to Old Smiley Road in Minnewaska State Park.



Lenape Steps, Sam's Point/ Minnewaska State Park - 2022

The Jolly Rovers trail crew completed the restoration of the Lenape Steps. Local Shawangunk conglomerate was used to build 89 steps, taking three seasons and more than 7000 person-hours of work. The original rustic steps were built in 1858, to connect the Sam's Point Mountain House to the cliff-top viewing point.

TRAIL PLANNING AND CONSTRUCTION ON STATE LAND

Vernooy Kill and Sundown Wild Forest trail construction - 10 miles - 2023

NYS DEC is constructing about 10 miles of new trail suitable for hiking, mountain biking, snowshoeing and XC skiing on State lands that connect between the Catskill Forest Preserve and major open space areas of the Shawangunk Mountains. These are recreational multi-use trails, constructed to standards that are different from those of shared-use rail trails. The project will relocate a section of New York's Long Path hiking trail from a 10-mile roadwalk to woodland trails.

Shandaken Wild Forest mountain bike trail construction - 10 miles - 2023

NYS DEC is building over 10 miles of new and improved multi-use trails, suitable for mountain biking, on State lands adjacent to Belleayre Mountain. The trails will connect to the Belleayre Ski Center multi-use trail system, as well as to the Shandaken Rail Trail, Belleayre Beach Day Use Area, Pine Hill and Highmount.

Other Trail Planning & Study



WATER TRAILS

Hudson River Water Trail

Ulster County includes nearly 40 miles of Hudson River shoreline, including 16 access sites of the 256-mile Hudson River Greenway Water Trail, which was designated as a National Water Trail by the National Park Service in 2009. The Water Trail is an ongoing project of the Hudson River Valley Greenway.

The National Water Trails program of the National Park Service outlines best practices for creating and managing water trails.

[LINK to the Hudson River Greenway Water Trail](#)

[LINK to National Water Trails program](#)



Milton Landing Park accessible kayak launch

In 2021, Town of Marlborough received a NYS-DEC Hudson River Estuary Pgm grant to construct an accessible kayak launch at Milton Landing, a designated access site on the Hudson River Water Trail. In 2022, an additional grant from the Local Waterfront Revitalization program will provide further improvements: a welcome center and public restroom, tree plantings, and trails. NYS DOT has also received funding to improve the at-grade CSX railroad crossing for access to the site. Construction is expected to advance once the public access railroad crossing is improved. Milton Landing is one of 16 designated Hudson River Greenway Water Trail access sites in Ulster County.

Lower Esopus Stream Management Plan - 2023

The Ulster County Planning Department and Ulster County Department of the Environment released a Draft Stream Management Plan at the end of 2023. UCTAC members submitted feedback supporting water trail access along the Lower Esopus, as well as promoting the inclusion of land-based public access both to and along the stream corridor, in the form of a recreation/transportation trail, notably from midtown Kingston to the iPark87 / Miller School area. This area was identified as a high priority for conservation in the City of Kingston's 2019 Open Space Plan.

[LINK to Lower Esopus Stream Management Plan](#)

Wallkill River Water Trail

Members of the Wallkill River Watershed Alliance have held public paddling events to monitor the river since 2015. Assisted by the Orange County Planning Department, the group has mapped 26 public access points for a Wallkill River Water Trail between the NY/ NJ border and Sturgeon Pool in Esopus; 13 of these sites are in Ulster County.

[LINK to Map of Wallkill River Water Trail Access Sites](#)

WEST OF HUDSON REGIONAL TRAIL VISION:

OSI “Growing Greenways” - West of Hudson trail network vision report - 2023

The report presents a vision for connecting seven of the region’s historic railroad, canal and carriageway corridors to create a 250-mile system of connected public trails spanning Ulster, Orange and Sullivan Counties. In Ulster County, the vision plan includes the WVRT, O&W/D&H and U&D. Starting in late 2023, OSI has undertaken a trail feasibility study of the longest single corridor included in this vision: the 57-mile O&W Railroad and D&H Canal corridor between Kingston and Port Jervis. (SEE MAP)

[LINK to OSI Growing Greenways Vision Report](#)



STATEWIDE TRAILS VISION:

NYS Statewide Greenway Trails Plan - OPRHP - 2021

Building upon earlier statewide trails plans, the Statewide Greenway Trails Plan focuses envisions a network of shared use paths that provide “all New Yorkers and visitors opportunities for healthy and active recreation, routes for alternative transportation, and the ability to connect to and enrich our communities and natural landscapes in urban, suburban, and rural settings.”

[LINK to NYS Statewide Greenway Trails Plan](#)

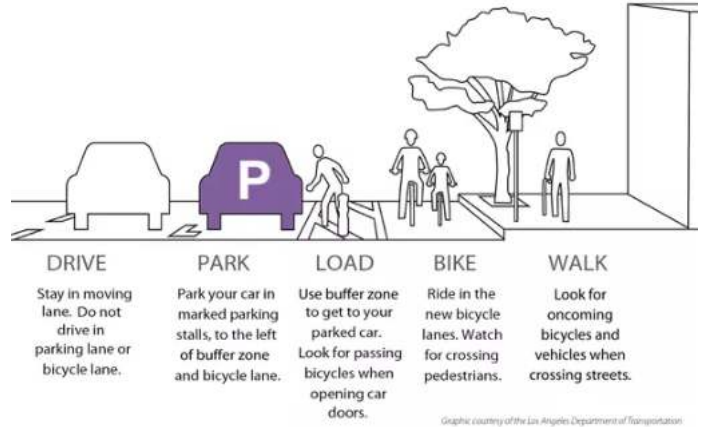
Other Kinds of Trails & Connections

Not all trails can be defined as specific travel routes on the ground or through a landscape. Some may relate to conventional trails, or they may involve similar kinds of connections, such as Complete Streets within communities, or other facilities or travel routes intended for specific purposes. Other types of trails are defined by interpretive themes, social movements, or people or events in history. The following are some examples in Ulster County.

City of Kingston Broadway Bike Lane - 2022

Among other enhancements, the 2/3-mile “Broadway Streetscape Project” included accessible sidewalks and crossings, reconfigured traffic lanes, and a two-way bicycle lane separated from traffic. The project also enhanced connections between Kingston’s midtown and the Empire State Trail.

[LINK to Kingston Broadway Streetscape Project](#)



Town of Woodstock Complete Streets and trail connections

In addition to conducting walk audits and addressing issues of congestion, bicycle and pedestrian safety, accessibility and parking shortages, the Town of Woodstock’s Complete Streets committee has identified strong community interest in establishing bike-ped connectivity between hamlets and parks, as well as to the Ashokan Rail Trail and its potential extension into the City of Kingston.



SUNY New Paltz recognized as Bike Friendly University - 2023

In 2023, the League of American Bicyclists selected SUNY New Paltz as one of 220 colleges and universities recognized for their efforts to “build stronger communities, safer streets, and better bicycling for everyone.” A student-led Sustainability Ambassadors team works with campus partners to expand bicycle infrastructure such as bike racks on campus, and is working with the New Paltz Bicycle-Pedestrian Committee to host a Bicycle Repair Cafe, and pursue additional ways of fostering bicycle culture. SUNY-NP was also noted for its proximity to NYS biking routes that are used for transportation and recreation: the Walkkill Valley Rail Trail, the Empire State Trail, and the River-to-Ridge Trail.

[LINK to SUNY Bike Friendly University Announcement](#)

Sojourner Truth pop-up trail - 2023

This is a mobile installation of six panels designed for temporary installation in parks, pathways and other public spaces. It was created by Scenic Hudson in collaboration with Black History Month Kingston, Harambee, and other community partners. The panels relate the life and legacy of

abolitionist and women’s civil rights advocate Sojourner Truth, in both English and Spanish, and together they create a temporary educational/ interpretive trail. It is available for use at sites or events, by contacting Scenic Hudson at info@scenichudson.org. (Photo from Kingston Freeman/ Tania Barricklo. On the EST between East Kingston and Kingston Point Beach)



Sojourner Truth Life Walk

A commemorative 4.3-mile walk from Port Ewen to the Ulster County Courthouse takes place annually during Black History Month, in remembrance of the remarkable life of abolitionist Sojourner Truth, and in acknowledgement of the injustices manifested in Ulster County’s history. The event is organized by Harambee Kingston in partnership with other organizations.

Sojourner Truth Escape Route

Historians have mapped the likely escape route that Isabella Baumfree (later Sojourner Truth) took in 1826, when she walked away from her enslavers in Esopus. The 11.5-mile route is published in a map/ guide brochure produced by the Town of Esopus, and her story – along with a part of her route – is interpreted on a trail named for her in Scenic Hudson’s Shaupeneak Ridge preserve.

[LINK to Town of Esopus Sojourner Truth Freedom Trail brochure](#)

Hudson River School Art Trail

This is not a trail route in the usual sense, but is instead a theme trail that’s composed of individual sites that share a part of American history: the fact that they were depicted in paintings by pioneering artists of the Hudson River School. The Art Trail leads you to the sites that inspired America’s first great landscape painters, enabling people to walk in their footsteps. It is a project of the Thomas Cole National Historic Site in Catskill. Sites in Ulster County include Mohonk Lake, Eagle Cliff, Skytop, and the Hudson River view from Hasbrouck Park in Kingston. Art continues to thrive in Ulster County, with access provided by our rail-trails, as well as trails in our parks and preserves.



Challenges In Trail Stewardship And Repair

Wallkill Valley Rail Trail - Binnewater washout & repair - April-Sept 2022

- A 4-inch April rainstorm and an impaired, undersized culvert flooded the Wallkill Valley Rail Trail in Rosendale, washing away the trail surfacing at Binnewater and Breezy Hill Roads, and carving a gully 5-6 feet wide, up to 3 feet deep and some 250 yards long. The trail was closed, and a 1.4-mile detour was made on public roads through Rosendale.
- The WVRT between New Paltz and Kingston is part of the Empire State Trail, and improvements had been made to this section in 2020. Emergency funding was raised, and the trail and drainage were repaired in September 2022.



Ice storm tree removal - Feb 2022

- A major ice storm in Feb 2022 caused power outages to some 65,000 Central Hudson customers – nearly half of Ulster County – with a reported 81 broken utility poles, and thousands of fallen trees.
- On the Wallkill Valley Rail Trail alone, some 125 trees fell onto the trail. The initial effort by volunteers focused on “punching a hole” through tangles of downed trees so that trail users could pass through. The more complete cleanup of those downed trees, plus others that have fallen since, continued for many months, and is still ongoing.

Heavy winds, plus a tornado in Hurley - July 2022

- Only months after the Feb ice storm, a supercell thunderstorm caused heavy tree damage and power outages for some 6,000 residents, especially in mountainous areas and the northern part of Ulster County. An EF1 tornado passed through Hurley, and macroburst winds added to the number of fallen trees on trails in that part of the County.

Backups on a busy trail: an Empire State Trail cycling group arrived DURING chainsaw cleanup on the Wallkill Valley Rail Trail



O&W Rail Trail parking closure at Williams Lumber, Kyserike - 2023

- Failure of trail users to respect Williams Lumber’s long-standing generosity in allowing trail users to park inside the lumber yard’s gates during regular business hours resulted in termination of the parking agreement. A small parking area remains available across Kyserike Road.

Emerging Issues on Ulster County Trails

The Ulster County Trails Advisory Committee (UCTAC) provides a monthly forum for discussing issues raised by trail managers and their communities – locally, regionally and statewide.

Automobile/ bicycle & pedestrian crashes

In recent years, Ulster County has experienced an intolerable epidemic of fatal and nonfatal vehicular crashes involving pedestrians and bicyclists. Ulster County is not alone; national trends show consistent increases in pedestrian and cyclist fatalities since 2011, rising to the current, historically high levels. Conventional safety approaches have not reduced traffic deaths. To reverse this trend, we must push ourselves, our communities and our government institutions to make meaningful changes using evidence-based strategies for increasing traffic safety.

The greatest vulnerability often falls upon communities that have long been underserved and marginalized. For people who don't have cars, trails and Complete Streets in communities provide everyday access to shopping, jobs, schools, culture and essential services. In Kingston alone, over 1,600 households (17%) have no car. County-wide over 5,200 households have no car, often forcing reliance upon alternatives.

At the same time, our residents and our communities are increasingly focusing on active transportation, potentially increasing overall risk. The Ulster County Traffic Safety Board has stepped up its efforts to address traffic safety concerns.

The City of Kingston's 2023 Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan is a model that attempts to address mobility safety in a tangible way.

[LINK to the City of Kingston Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan](#)

The city's plan recommends evidenced-based approaches that include the following concepts:

- **Vision Zero** is a strategy to eliminate all traffic fatalities and severe injuries, while increasing safe, healthy, equitable mobility for all. It is based on the premise that all deaths and injuries are preventable, and that even one fatality is unacceptable. Vision Zero has proven effective in Europe, and is being adopted by major cities in the US, notably New York City. A study there found that Vision Zero policies "*bent an otherwise upward trend in injuries...*" and that "*comprehensive traffic reform can make a meaningful dent in injury incidence, despite cultural and technological differences with European Vision Zero cities,*" and some appearances that Vision Zero was less effective during the pandemic. *Finally, it provides support for traffic reform as a strategy for enhancing health equity by reducing injuries among groups who are particularly vulnerable to the consequences and are at risk for being overlooked in citywide, non-targeted interventions.*

[LINK to NYC Vision Zero study in American Journal of Public Health](#)

[The Vision Zero Network](#) provides resources and forums for Vision Zero efforts.

- **The Safe Systems approach** offers a comprehensive framework for implementing Vision Zero goals, using the 5 elements of:
 - Safer roads (e.g. separating users traveling at different speeds)
 - Safer speeds (e.g. providing room for reaction time; reducing speeds also reduces impact forces & injury)



- Safer vehicles (e.g. using latest technology)
- Safer road users (e.g. considering those most at risk for severe injury)
- Post-crash care (e.g. rapid response, forensic analysis)

[LINK to FHWA Safe Systems Information](#)

[LINK to City of Kingston 2023 Safe Systems Executive Order](#)

Safe Systems in Trail and Transportation Planning - Ulster County’s bicycle & pedestrian crashes have occurred not only on roads with narrow shoulders, but also at interfaces of roadways with trails, bike lanes and sidewalks. Safety is a holistic issue. Individual trail plans, as well as updates to [Ulster County’s 2008 Non-motorized Transportation Plan](#), should increase focus on ways to make crossings, bike lanes and community access routes safer, in accordance with Vision Zero goals.

The US DOT “Safe Streets for All” (SS4A) grants program offers funding for Planning and Demonstration projects that support the US DOT’s [National Roadway Safety Strategy](#) and the goal of zero roadway deaths using a Safe Systems approach.

[LINK to US DOT Safe Streets and Roads for All \(SS4A\) grants program](#)

Trails, Complete Streets and Public Health

The Community Health Assessment and Community Health Improvement Plan (CHA/ CHIP) for 2020-2021, produced by the UC Department of Health and Mental Health, emphasizes the role of trails and “pedestrian and bike friendly complete street initiatives” as important factors in promoting community health (as well as environmental benefits).

[LINK to Ulster County Community Health Assessment and Community Health Improvement Plan](#)

The CHIP identifies its Focus Area #2 as Physical Activity, with its primary goal to:

“Improve community environments that support active transportation and recreational physical activity for people of all ages and abilities” (See CHIP p.3)

The CHIP further notes that:

“Ulster County continues to make significant improvements in the built environment through a combination of Federal, State, and local funds. These include developing a world-class rail trail system throughout the County; pedestrian and bike friendly complete street initiatives; safe routes to schools; and others. All are designed to encourage physical activity; improve access to fresh and healthier foods; and increased social engagement to help prevent chronic diseases. This will also reduce our carbon footprint, while reducing air pollution.” (See CHIP p. 318, Effort/ Program 2)

Proposed NYS “Idaho Stop” or “Stop as Yield” law for cyclists

This proposed law allows bicyclists to treat stop signs as yield signs and/or treat red light signals as stop signs, while continuing to require bike riders to yield to traffic. Idaho first adopted “Idaho Stop” legislation in 1982, and for more than 30 years was the only state to allow bicyclists to treat stop signs as yield signs. Although counterintuitive, a growing body of studies has shown it to be effective in reducing crashes, and the approach has now been adopted by 12 states. The concept has been endorsed by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). The bill has been introduced in the NYS Legislature, but has not passed to date.



Graphic from Get There Oregon’s successful “Stop as Yield” campaign.

In September 2023, the Ulster County Traffic Safety Board unanimously approved a resolution calling on the “*New York State Assembly, Senate and the Governor to pass and sign into law A3986/S2643 (aka “Idaho Stop”) to make cycling safer and easier across New York and to grow cycling as means of transportation, recreation and tourism.*” This issue is important for shared-use trail systems, since roads and trails must interface, and safety of ALL users is integral to both.

[LINK to NHTSA Fact Sheet on Bicyclist Stop as Yield](#)

[LINK to Ulster County Traffic Safety Board Resolution In Support of NYS “Idaho Stop” Bills](#)

Electric assist bicycles (e-bikes) and other electric mobility devices

Several issues relating to e-bikes have been brought to UCTAC or raised by its members. We are witnessing an explosion of innovation in different types of vehicles combining wheels and electric motors. Sales of different kinds of e-bikes (and other vehicles) are out of step with state and local laws, and the regulations of park and trail managers. The primary issues of allowing e-bikes on shared-use trails are safety and user conflicts, both of which tend to be related to speed.

Our trails are used for transportation in addition to recreation. We recognize that e-bikes (and our trails) can be a cheaper alternative to car travel, and can provide users with sufficient physical activity to provide meaningful health benefits. They can be freeing for people with limited ability and mobility, and may even become the main form of transportation for households without cars.

BACKGROUND: New York State law classifies e-bikes into three categories, based upon their motor power and whether they offer throttle assist or pedal assist:

- **Class 1 e-bikes** - The motor provides *pedal assist* up to a maximum speed of 20 mph. The electric motor works only when the cyclist is pedaling, and that assistance stops above 20 mph.
- **Class 2 e-bikes** - In addition to *pedal assist*, these have *throttle assist*. The motor can power the bike without pedaling, up to a maximum assisted speed of 20 mph.
- **Class 3 e-bikes** - NYS law limits speed to 25 mph, and Class 3 e-bikes can have *pedal assist and throttle assist* up to 25 mph. (Note: NY’s 25 mph top speed limit is inconsistent with the industry-defined standard maximum assisted speed of 28 mph for Class 3).
- We note that some models available online and elsewhere may lack pedals, or may have other features that basically render them electric motorcycles. User modifications to boost speed and power are also common.

NY STATE LAWS:

- **Class 1 and 2 e-bikes are allowed to operate throughout the state**, according to the law passed in 2020. Class 3 e-bikes are allowed only in [New York City](#).
- **Class 3 e-bikes and electric scooters are not allowed on trails** by State law, and are allowed only when approved by the state or local government entity that owns the trail. Municipalities may further regulate the time, place and manner of e-bike operation.
- Class 3 e-bikes are legal in NYC; their basic design is for transportation & commuting use on roadways, and they are heavily used by the bicycle delivery industry there.
- Bicycles or scooters with electric assist are allowed on New York State roadways and highways with a posted speed limit of [30 mph or less](#). Local municipalities have the

authority to pass a local law authorizing e-bike use on all or a selected set of public roads where bicycles are permitted. (See Town of New Paltz, below)

- E-bikes (and bicycles) are not allowed on sidewalks.
- E-bike riders must be at least 16 years of age. No licensing exam is needed.
- A good summary of NYS e-bike laws, plus riding safety considerations, has been compiled by the [NY Bicycling Coalition](#)
- [LINK to Cornell Law School Guide for NY Communities for Regulating E-Bicycles and E-Scooters](#)

POLICIES IN OUR REGION:

- **NY State Parks / Minnewaska State Park:** Class 1 (pedal-assist, no throttle) electric bikes are the only type of e-bike allowed, and only on carriage roads. There is a 15 mph speed limit.
[LINK to Minnewaska State Park E-bike Policy](#)
[LINK to NYS-OPRHP Policy Authorizing and Regulating the Operation of Class 1 and 2 Bicycles with Electric Assist in State Parks, Trails and Historic Sites](#)
- **Mohonk Preserve:** Class 1 (pedal-assist, no throttle) electric bikes are the only type of e-bike allowed in the Preserve, and only on carriage roads.
<https://www.mohonkpreserve.org/visit/activities/#bike>
- **Wallkill Valley Rail Trail:** WVRT's policy was crafted to be consistent with the neighboring Mohonk and Minnewaska policies.
- **Empire State Trail:** The types of e-bikes allowed are determined by the EST's individual, local trail managing entities. The lack of consistency of e-bike regs between jurisdictions particularly affects long-distance touring cyclists who use e-bikes other than Class 1.
- **Town of New Paltz:** A local ordinance passed in 2022 allows the use of NYS-law-compliant e-bikes on public roads and trails where bicycles are permitted (including roads with posted speed limits greater than 30mph). At the time of passage, this was one of only two small NY municipalities with such ordinances, and it is offered as a model for others.
[LINK to New Paltz Electric Assist Bicycle Code](#)
- **City of Kingston:** The City of Kingston passed a local ordinance in early 2024 allowing the use of NYS law compliant e-bikes and scooters (Classes 1 and 2) on the city's public shared-use trails, in city parks and in municipal parking lots. E-bikes may still be restricted in certain areas, as determined by the city's Parks and Recreation Department, and signage will alert e-bike riders in areas where restrictions are in place.
[LINK to City of Kingston Shared Mobility Device Systems regulations \(including e-bikes\)](#)
- **NYS DEC lands:** E-bike regulations depend upon the land classification.
 - **State Forests, Multiple Use Areas and Unique Areas:** Like mountain bikes, Class 1 e-bikes are allowed on any existing road or trail on State Forests unless posted as closed for this use (for example, Bluestone and Shandaken Wild Forests).
 - **Forest Preserve:** E-bikes are allowed on public roads managed by DEC but are prohibited on all Catskill and Adirondack Forest Preserve trails.
 - [LINK to NYS DEC e-bike regs](#)

E-bike battery regulations & fire prevention

In 2023, New York City reported a record 268 fires caused by e-bike battery- and charging systems. There were estimated to be about 65,000 e-bikes in the City, and sales and usage of e-bikes have been increasing by about 10% per year.

UL Certification

In 2023, New York City passed a law to prevent e-bike related fires by requiring UL certification for lithium-ion batteries and charging systems involved in all sales, leases or rentals of e-bikes and other electric mobility devices. NYC’s e-bike & charging policies are still evolving. Meanwhile, manufacturers of e-bike batteries are developing safer technologies, and bringing them to market.

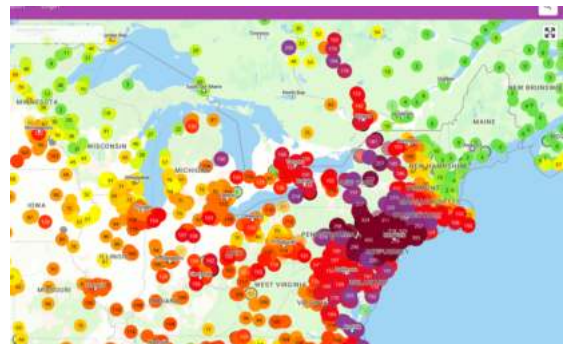
From UL:

“e-mobility devices owned, rented, or leased in New York City will be required to meet safety standards published by UL Standards & Engagement that help to reduce the risk of fire. Specifically, the law requires e-mobility devices to be tested and certified to UL 2849, the Standard for Electrical Systems for e-Bikes; UL 2272, the Standard for Electrical Systems for Personal E-Mobility Devices; and UL 2271, the Standard for Batteries for Use In Light Electric Vehicle Applications.”

[LINK to NYC Local Law 2023-39 on the sale, lease, and rental of powered bicycles, powered mobility devices and storage batteries](#)

Air quality

Air Quality Index (AQI) maps from June 7, 2023 illustrate extreme air quality events in our region, and the impact of air quality on health. On that day, NYC had the worst air quality (AQI) of any city in the world, considered “hazardous for all residents”. The Governor, the NYS Department of Health and NYS-DEC issued an Air Quality Health Advisory, encouraging people to stay indoors, and making a million N95 masks available to impacted New Yorkers.



What does the color of these air quality alerts signify?

Air Quality Index Levels of Health Concern	Numerical Value	Meaning
Good	0 to 50	Air quality is considered satisfactory, and air pollution poses little to no risk.
Moderate	51 to 100	Air quality is acceptable; however, for some pollutants there may be a moderate health concern for a very small number of people who are unusually sensitive to air pollution.
Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups	101 to 150	Members of sensitive groups may experience health effects. The general public is not likely to be affected.
Unhealthy	151 to 200	Everyone may begin to experience health effects; members of sensitive groups may experience more serious health effects.
Very Unhealthy	201 to 300	Health alert: everyone may experience more serious health effects.
Hazardous	301 to 500	Health warnings of emergency conditions. The entire population is more likely to be affected.

The wildfire season of 2023 raised people’s awareness of air quality, notably the importance of small particulate matter (such as PM 2.5), as a health hazard, and it raised concerns about ALL sources of this type of pollutant. Local AQI readings neared 200. Trail users and trail stewards were advised against outdoor activities because of potential health consequences. This highlighted several issues for us:

- 1) The impact of climate change on our region; we must expect and prepare for such events to occur more frequently
- 2) The public health impact of such pollution on trail users, stewards and neighbors, as well as pedestrians in our communities
- 3) The point sources of pollution along trails also contribute, and make a difference – including diesel railroad engines that run parallel to trails, and through residential areas
- 4) The importance of change from fossil fuels for transportation, including shifts toward active / sustainable transportation

The trails community raised the issue of potentially problematic sources of PM 2.5 and other pollutants in a 2021 letter from UCTAC to the County Legislature. The letter included the potential impact of diesel railroad engine exhaust upon trail users and local residents near the Kingston Plaza, as well as upon rail ride staff and passengers. As a result, for the first time, in 2023 the County included new requirements for monitoring air quality both inside passenger coaches and in the ambient environment adjacent to the County ROW in sections designated for tourist rail rides.

Active / Sustainable transportation

Transportation accounts for 47 percent of New York State’s CO2 emissions, according to the US Department of Energy (DOE). Many governmental policy initiatives focus on electric vehicles such as automobiles and buses. But the Bureau of Transportation Statistics found that half of ALL trips, including all modes of transportation, were less than three miles, with 28% of trips less than one mile. These facts suggest that we focus on bicycle, pedestrian and micromobility transportation as increasingly viable alternatives that are low-to-zero emission, as well as affordable for users.

- **Active transportation infrastructure** - Investing in Ulster County’s active transportation infrastructure, including shared-use trails and Complete Streets, can help lower greenhouse gas emissions as well as improve quality of life in our communities. **Active transportation** refers to travel that is powered by human energy, mainly walking and bicycling. The term “active transportation” expresses the key connection between healthy, active living and our transportation choices.
[LINK to Transport Policy article: More than walking and cycling: What is ‘active travel’?](#)
- **Shifting modes of transportation** - Choosing public transportation or other modes of transportation other than individual automobiles for even a portion of trips can have a significant impact on greenhouse gas emissions and quality of life. **Micromobility** refers to a growing range of small, lightweight vehicles that are driven by individual people. Micromobility devices include bicycles, e-bikes, electric scooters, electric skateboards, and shared bicycle fleets, all of which are tailored to local travel without automobiles. New York City’s Electric Micromobility Action Plan provides an interesting model for addressing these trends.
[LINK to NYC Electric Micromobility Action Plan](#)
- **Ulster County Executive Order on Implementing the NYS Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (Executive Order 01-2023)** - The Executive Order sets a goal of reducing community-wide GHG emissions by 40% by 2030 and 85% by 2050. Shifting to active transportation and micromobility are entirely consistent with these climate goals.
[LINK to Ulster County Executive Order on Climate Leadership](#)
- **The City of Kingston Climate Action Plan - 2021.** The city’s action plan identifies increasing walkability and bikeability through Complete Streets and the city-wide Greenline system, as well as adopting a dockless bike and/or scooter program, as key strategies toward reducing carbon emissions and reliance upon fossil fuels for transportation, in addition to providing other benefits.
- **The City of Kingston Pedestrian / Bicycle Master Plan** also aligns with these goals, and recommends specific projects and programs.
[LINK to City of Kingston Climate Action Plan 2030 \(CAP\)](#)
[LINK to City of Kingston Pedestrian / Bicycle Master Plan](#)



Substance abuse and loitering in parks

This issue became especially notable in the Kingston Midtown Linear Park in 2023.

Parks and other public spaces are often the front lines of issues such as homelessness and substance abuse. This is a complex public health challenge that is by no means limited to parks and trails, but it is an issue that is widely recognized among park and trail managers.

- Representatives of the Ulster County Opioid Response as County Law Enforcement (ORACLE) team met with UCTAC in Sept 2023 to discuss the potential for placing Naloxone outdoor boxes at selected trailheads, as well as training for trail managers. ORACLE is a crisis-intervention and recovery response program based out of the Ulster County Sheriff's Office.
- The Naloxone Outside Box Project initiative can provide boxes that contain Naloxone (Narcan) and informational brochures with additional resources to help those struggling with addiction. The boxes are built by the Bruderhof, and the concept is modeled after Free Little Libraries.
- ORACLE's Naloxone Outside Box Project began in Kingston, at the Midtown Linear Park, and boxes are now deployed on additional trails.
- Ulster County also assembled a multi-partner task force to address the issues of substance abuse and loitering in Midtown and other public areas.
- In 2022, the Ulster County Sheriff's Office ORACLE team received national recognition from the Rural Justice Collaborative and the National Center for State Courts for its "creative strategies and efforts to bridge the gap between law enforcement and the community with the common goal of treating substance abuse".
- [NOTE THIS 2020 ARTICLE and linked report by the National Park and Recreation Association on Confronting the Issue of Substance Abuse Disorder](#)

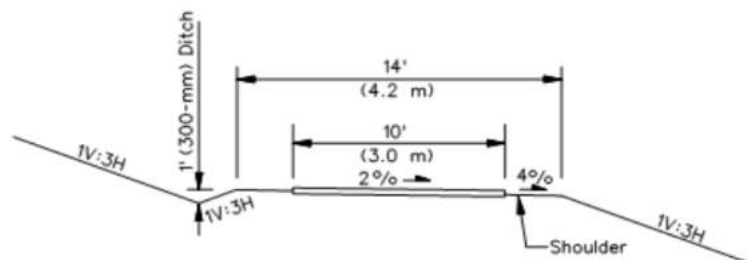


Trail erosion

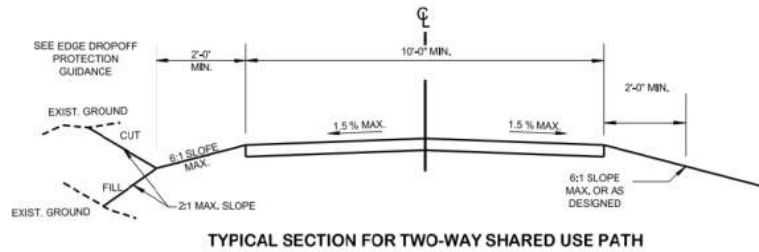
Trail surface erosion on unpaved trails has increased in recent years. This is partly due to the increased frequency of high-precipitation events, and partly due to obstruction of drainage ditches and culverts along the trails. It is also the case that older ditches and culverts tend to be undersized for changing climatic conditions. Increased attention must be paid to annual maintenance of trail drainage, seasonal removal of leaves and other accumulated organic material from trail surfaces, maintaining cross-slopes or re-crowning of trail treadways, and upscaling of drainage systems during new trail construction and major repairs.

Cross-slope, or the side-to-side slope of a trail surface, is necessary to provide drainage and to keep water from puddling and damaging the trail surface.

Trail engineering and design standards call for the trail surface to have a cross-slope of 2% across the entire width of the trail (first cross-section diagram).



Where a trail is not situated on a side-slope, the trail surface may be crowned in the center with 1.5% slopes to both sides (second diagram). In both cases, the trail cross-slope must lead to effective drainage ditches.



Social Trails

Social trails are informal trails created by traffic from people and animals that stray off official trails. GPS-based social media such as Strava record people’s activity routes even when not on sanctioned trails. This can encourage others to follow routes that are posted online, but not officially marked, monitored or maintained by land managers. With repeated use, these routes can begin to look like official trails. This can lead to trespassing, erosion and other negative impacts upon property or natural resources. Because social trails are not marked, monitored or maintained, there may be an increased risk of accidents, and added difficulty finding visitors in case of emergency.

Three traditional categories of trail management actions include: (1) information and education, (2) site management/ design/ engineering, and (3) regulation/ enforcement. These are sometimes referred to as the “three E’s”, of Education, Engineering, and Enforcement, and they are often employed in some mix. (A 4th E, Emergency Services, may be invoked to address cases where things go seriously wrong.) There is no way to control social media and the spread of “bad” information, but it can be countered with strategies such as visitor education, and especially through trail steward programs and other informed “eyes and ears on the trail.”

Dog Waste

Dog waste is a public health concern. On NYC-DEP lands, the ART deploys dog waste bags and receptacles at trailheads, with maintenance paid for by DEP. The Hurley paved section of O&W Rail Trail has a similar program coordinated by a volunteer. Town of Rochester has ordered dog waste collection stations for its two refurbished trailheads on the O&W Rail Trail.



Graffiti on Trails

The incidence of graffiti on trails has grown in recent years. For example, the Kingston-Hurley O&W section, opened in late 2023, exhibited a continuous stream of new graffiti that started even before the trail was completed. Defacement of public property is a serious offense. In some cases, graffiti is an issue of public safety, since it may be associated with gang activity and other criminal acts; in other cases, some consider it to be underground art. Rapid removal is generally considered an important deterrent. Officially-sanctioned murals and public art can also play a role in graffiti prevention, by providing a sense of benefit to the community. Comprehensive strategies to address graffiti are an increasingly necessary part of trail monitoring and maintenance programs.

[LINK to Graffiti On Trails FAQ - American Trails](#) (note: this article contains some dead links)

Trail user conflicts and trail YIELD signs

In response to incidents of conflicts between equestrians and other users on rail trails, the Ulster County Horse Council in 2023 produced 50 trail YIELD signs to be distributed at no cost to trail managers through UCTAC, and to the general public. The signs convey basic safety etiquette for trails that are shared by horses, bikes and pedestrians: that everyone must yield to horses, and bicycles must yield to everyone.



Next steps toward a safe, healthy and vital trail system in Ulster County

- **Every Home a Trailhead – Complete the unified trail network and provide meaningful connections within communities**

All Ulster County residents deserve to benefit from close-to-home access to trails, and to the County-wide network, no matter where they live. We must close the remaining gaps, and provide our communities with equitable access to trails for outdoor physical activity, commuting and recreation – both within communities as well as between communities.

A full study of the U&D corridor’s undesignated section would help toward providing offroad transportation access between Kingston and Woodstock, and a regional connection with the Empire State Trail.

New strategies will be needed to extend the trail network to communities such as Saugerties, Marlborough, Shawangunk and Shandaken.

- **Adopt a Vision Zero / Safe Systems approach to trails and transportation safety**

Safe mobility for all – Vision Zero – should be the central goal. Trails are an integral part of our nonmotorized transportation system. Adopting a Safe Systems approach at the State, County and municipal levels can help focus transportation planning and project design by prioritizing the safety for all users, including the most vulnerable -- those outside of motor vehicles.

- **Promote and coordinate trail use & management county-wide**

Some trails are highly popular, and even overcrowded, while others could benefit from support and stimulus. As our trail system grows in its extent and usage, so must our approach to management. We must work toward more coordinated approaches to signage, mapping, information, promotion and stewardship.

- **Capture trail economic benefits**

Trail-related spending is an important return on investment. A “Trail Town” approach can help build stronger economic bonds between trails and their host communities. Collaboration on things like ‘gateway community’ connections, signage, advertising, parking and/or shuttle buses, landscaping and physical connections can all help energize the trail-related economy, whether as an individual business or County-wide.

- **Count trail usage on more trails, year-round**

“You can’t manage what you don’t measure.” Trail counts show that the intensity of trail usage has dipped since the peak COVID years. At the same time, counts on additional trails show higher numbers of trail usage county-wide than we had been able to measure before. Tourism-, trails- and transportation-related data are providing new insights, such as where trail users are coming from, and where they are spending their money. Further expanding trail counts can help document trail use and travel patterns, and inform trail management strategies and transportation planning. The City of Kingston has deployed several counters, and both Scenic Hudson and OSI have begun counts on new trails. We look forward to having counters on ALL Ulster County trails.

- **Develop more volunteer programs**

The Walkway Ambassadors, Ashokan Rail Trail Stewards and volunteers for other trails all demonstrate that visitor management and some aspects of stewardship can be delivered economically through public-private partnerships and volunteer corps. Volunteers serve as

invaluable eyes and ears on the trail. Through personalized contact, they enhance the visitor experience and visitor safety while also promoting appropriate trail etiquette and helping to minimize resource impacts. As our trail system and trail usership grow, these types of approaches should be considered for broader application County-wide.

Ulster County Trail Advisory Committee Members 2021-2023

Kevin Smith, UCTAC Chair
Hank Alicandri
Karl Beard
Roger Ennis
Cara Gentry
Tenny Gravatt
Mary McNamara
Steven Rice
David Toman
Mike Baden, Town of Rochester
Peter DiSclafani, Town of Shandaken
Kevin Van Blarkum, Town of Shandaken
John Valk, Town of Shawangunk
Jim DeLaune, Legislator
Gina Hansut, Legislator
Chris Hewitt, Legislator
Craig Lopez, Legislator
Kathy Nolan, Legislator
Eric Stewart, Legislator
Lou Klepner, UC Traffic Safety Board
Paul Lenz, NYC-DEP
Tom Davidock, NYC-DEP
David Corriigan, NYS-DOT
Arthur Rose, NYS-DOT

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