



ULSTER COUNTY LEGISLATIVE NEWS

ULSTER COUNTY NEWS INFORMATION
OFFICE OF THE COUNTY LEGISLAUTRE
244 FAIR STREET, 6TH FLOOR
KINGSTON, NY 12401

MEDIA CONTACT INFORMATION
• PHONE 845-340-3900
* EMAIL LegislativeNews@co.ulster.ny.us
• FAX 845-340-3651

Legislature.UlsterCountyNY.gov

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Ulster County Releases State of the Trails Report: 80+ Miles of Shared-Use Trails Generate \$17 Million in Annual Spending from 1.4 Million Visits

(Kingston, NY) — The Ulster County Trails Advisory Committee has released its latest "State of the Trails" report, highlighting the substantial growth and economic impact of the County's shared-use trail system. The report, titled "Miles of Progress," documents the expansion of the trail network from 75 miles in 2020 to over 80 miles in 2023, with an additional 7 miles expected by 2025. Enhanced data collection since the 2021 report shows a 133% increase in trail visitation and a 70% boost in economic activity, resulting in \$17 million in annual spending.

"The latest report showcases the remarkable progress made by our dedicated volunteers and nonprofit organizations in building a world-class trail system," **said Legislator Peter Criswell, Chair of the Ulster County Legislature.** "Their efforts not only enhance our economy but also provide safe, accessible trails that promote affordable transportation options, health and community connection."

"We're committed to enhancing the County's world-class trail network in all corners of the County, providing recreational and non-motorized transportation opportunities for residents of all abilities, and bringing more visitors to our Main Streets," **said Ulster County Executive Jen Metzger.** "We are thrilled to collaborate with many stakeholders in this effort, including the Legislature, partners like the Ulster County Trails Advisory Committee, and local communities, as we strengthen these vital community assets that connect our rural and business communities and enhance opportunities to explore scenic, natural, cultural, and artistic resources."

First established by the Ulster County Legislature in 2008 and most recently reappointed pursuant to Resolution 189 of 2024, the Ulster County Trails Advisory Committee brings together organizations, municipalities, and individuals to advocate for trail development and maintenance. The Committee, consisting of 24 appointed members, has been instrumental in advancing trail projects across the region. The three Legislators serving on the Committee are Chris Hewitt, Jason Kovacs, and Kathy Nolan.

"The Legislature's support has been vital, including a \$2.1 million investment in 2022 for trail expansion in partnership with the Open Space Institute," **said Kevin Smith, Chair of the Committee.** "I extend special thanks to Karl Beard, who authored both the 2020 report and this year's updates."

In recognition of the collaborative efforts in trail development, Chair Criswell has requested that the Committee organize a Countywide Trails Roundtable later this year. This event will allow

trail groups to coordinate their efforts for 2025 and beyond, engaging new partners such as Climate Action and Complete Streets Committees.

Ulster County's trail system includes four historic transportation corridors now serving as key routes for non-motorized transportation and recreation. These corridors, along with the County's portion of the Empire State Trail—named the top rail trail in the nation by *Outside Magazine* in 2022—comprise the backbone of the network.

The new report identifies significant progress since 2020, including:

- **18 miles of rehabilitated rail trails** (resurfacing, drainage improvements, and 6 bridge upgrades)
- **4.3 miles of new rail trails** and **1.4 miles of community connectors** completed
- **7.1 miles** of new rail trails in design and construction
- **2.4 miles of new corridor acquisitions** for future trail development
- **Spot improvements** at 9 locations, including access points, parking, road crossings, and signage
- **20 miles of multi-use recreation trails** on state lands currently under construction
- **57 miles of potential new trails** under active study

The report notes that 1.4 million visits are made annually to Ulster County's trails, generating over \$17 million in direct economic benefits. Approximately 70% of visitors travel less than 25 miles, with 90% coming from within New York State.

The full report is available online on the Legislative website [here](#) and on the Planning Department website [here](#).

For more information, contact: Karl Beard, Ulster County Trails Advisory Committee karl.kd2fx@gmail.com / (914) 388-0057

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