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December 22, 2014

Ms. Sandy Misiewicz, AICP
Capital District Transportation Committee
One Park Place
Albany, NY 12205-1606

Re: City of Albany's 2015-2016 Linkage Application

Dear Ms. Misiewicz:

Parks & Trails New York is pleased to support the City of Albany's 2015-2016 application to the Community and Transportation Linkage Planning Program for funding for a Waterfront Bikeway Connection Feasibility Study.

The study will be an important addition to the City of Albany's ongoing efforts to encourage more active transportation, as indicated by two major planning initiatives recently undertaken: the Albany Bicycle Master Plan and the comprehensive plan, Albany 2030. Completing this linkage, moreover, will connect the Albany County Helderberg Hudson Rail Trail with the state's 360-mile Erie Canalway Trail, thereby attracting more visitors to and creating an attractive, safe, off-road commuter route between the City of Albany and Rail Trail villages and towns.

The potential economic benefits of this project for the City of Albany and the Capital Region can be significant as the popularity of bicycling continues to grow. According to the 2014 study, *The Economic Impact of the Erie Canalway Trail*, commissioned by Parks & Trails New York, 1.6 million people visit the Erie Canalway Trail each year. Those visits generate an economic impact of \$253 million and support 3,440 jobs. Linking these two important trails will add to the cycling opportunities and number of overnight stays that visitors spend, pumping more tourism dollars into the region.

The potential health benefits stemming from this project are also significant. More than 60% of New York adults and 32% of New York children ages 10 to 17 are overweight or obese. In 2011, New Yorkers spent an estimated \$9.9 billion to combat effects of adult obesity-related health problems, much of which are preventable with increased physical activity. Eighty percent of this cost was paid for by publicly-funded health care programs, thus costing each family in the state an additional \$771 per year. Close to home multi-use trails can provide free or low cost opportunities for area residents, irrespective of age or fitness level, to walk or bike, increase their daily physical activity, and improve their physical and mental health.

We urge you to give this important project your full support. A Waterfront Bikeway Connection Feasibility Study is exactly what is needed to build upon the existing interest and momentum directed to construction of the Helderberg Hudson Rail Trail and the City of Albany's waterfront revitalization. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Robin Dropkin".

Robin Dropkin
Executive Director