



Canal Corporation

2023

Empire State Trail Town Action Agenda



City of Rome

Published
December 2023



Table of Contents

Background	3
Program Overview	4
Existing Conditions	6
About Rome	6
Bike Friendly NY Certified Businesses	7
Trail Use Data	8
Visitor Promotional Resources	11
Overall Assessment	12
Recommendations	13
Short term recommendations	13
Long term recommendations	15
Implementation	17



Background

Parks & Trails New York (PTNY) and the New York State Canal Corporation developed the Empire State Trail Town program to help upstate communities recognize and capture the economic value of the Empire State Trail, the nation's longest single-state multi-use trail. With the 750-mile trail's completion in 2020, the Erie Canalway Trail—the east-west leg of the statewide system— has continued to be one of the state's premier outdoor recreation destinations. The Empire State Trail Town program was designed to build capacity and guide communities through the process of identifying ways they can transform into trail-friendly destinations where visitors want to stay, explore, and spend.

The **Empire State Trail Town program** began in 2022 with the Village of Brockport as a pilot community, and continued in 2023 with three additional communities: City of Lockport, Village of

Newark and City of Rome. Having been selected for their already high quality trail-based services and amenities and demonstrated commitment to policies geared towards trail users, the selected communities worked with PTNY throughout the year to identify opportunities and develop the tools to more effectively harness visitation to the renowned long-distance trail in their backyard.

Over the course of nine months, Rome worked with PTNY to develop a network of local partners committed to the Trail Town initiative, conduct research and assessment, and develop promotional resources and strategies. In this document, the work completed through the course of the program is summarized to guide Rome's advancement as a Trail Town. Upon adoption of this Action Agenda, Rome will be recognized as an officially certified Empire State Trail Town.

Empire State Trail Town Goals

Make communities more trail-user friendly.



- Increase the frequency with which residents and visitors walk or bike both on and off the trail

Help communities realize economic benefits of the Canalway Trail.



- Increase the number of Canalway Trail users who spend money either at retail businesses or at a bar or restaurant as part of their trip
- Increase the number of Canalway Trail users who choose the community for an overnight stay

Empire State Trail Town Objectives

NETWORK: Form a network of individuals (including representatives of the municipality, engaged residents, volunteers, and members of the business community) dedicated to the Trail Town vision

RESEARCH: Conduct research and assessment to identify each Trail Town's strengths and areas for improvement, as well as understand current use of the trail

PROMOTION: Increase the visibility of the Trail Towns as destinations

ADVANCEMENT: Establish a plan and process to guide continued work toward Trail Town goals beyond the direct assistance provided by PTNY

Program Overview

After the three selected communities for 2023 were finalized, the technical assistance provided through the program began with a virtual Trail Town Orientation. This first virtual convening provided an introduction to the program and space to network with the other trail towns in the program.

Following the orientation, Rome's first task was to form a Trail Town steering committee that incorporated representatives from the city as well as committed partners, local businesses and bicycling advocates.

Rome Trail Town Committee Representatives

- City of Rome Department of Community and Economic Development
- City of Rome Common Council
- NYS Assembly via Assemblymember Buttenschon
- Rome Rotary
- Mohawk Valley Economic Development District
- Oneida County Tourism
- Fort Stanwix National Monument
- Rome Area Chamber of Commerce
- Mohawk Valley EDGE
- Jervis Public Library
- Rome Historical Society
- Roman Runners
- Positively Rome
- Local business owners
- Community advocates

With the steering committee in place, Rome was able to begin the first task - a **Trail Town Self-Assessment**. The assessment encouraged Rome to take initial stock of its recreation and hospitality assets, and to start thinking about the strengths and weaknesses of the city in terms of attracting bicycle tourists and encouraging residents to walk or bike.

In May, a trail count effort was launched to collect information on trail use throughout the summer. With input from the Trail Town steering committee, PTNY installed an EcoVisio electronic trail counter on the Erie Canalway Trail/Empire State Trail on the west side of the city, just to the west of the Old Erie Canal Village. The City of Rome also purchased an electronic trail counter of their own, which was installed at Martin Street in July. PTNY also provided a webinar that trained trail town committee members on how to conduct manual trail counts to capture an enhanced level of data, including



a breakdown by mode use. Manual counts were conducted by volunteers at three locations: the Old Erie Canal Village, on W. Dominick St, and on the trail along Martin Street. An analysis of trail count data can be found on pages 8-10.

In early June, PTNY held a two-part participatory workshop in Rome, with an evening Placemaking Workshop on June 7 and a morning Bike Around Workshop the following day. The Placemaking Workshop provided a hands-on opportunity for about sixteen Trail Town steering committee members and other interested community members to learn more about outdoor recreation tourism and continue the conversations that the Trail Town Self-Assessment started. Through an interactive mapping exercise, workshop participants identified Rome's top assets (including places, businesses, events, and experiences), as well as gaps or areas for improved connectivity, services, or amenities. The following morning, PTNY led a group bike ride around Rome to highlight some of the assets and gaps identified during the previous evening's workshop. Many different challenges and opportunities were brought up during this conversation, but some of the major takeaways are summarized on page 12.

In order to capitalize on the momentum and ideas generated during the workshop, PTNY compiled a **Short-Term Recommendations** document for Rome, outlining actions that the city could take immediately to improve the trail user experience and start better capitalizing on trail tourism that same summer.

One of the recommendations that came out of the workshop was to continue to educate local businesses on the value of trail tourism. To that end, Rome continued outreach to encourage more businesses to apply to be certified as “Bike Friendly New York” businesses. As a result of these efforts, Rome now has a total of twelve Bike Friendly New York certified businesses. More information about the certification program and the participating businesses can be found on page 7.

During the second week of July, the City of Rome hosted PTNY’s Cycle the Erie Canal bike tour in town. On July 13, 2023, over seven hundred cyclists spent the night at Fort Stanwix and enjoyed everything Rome had to offer, from its local

businesses to its history. The Trail Town committee coordinated a welcome committee to greet riders as they arrived in Rome at the Sports Hall of Fame, complete with snacks and a bike rack. The Rome Area Chamber of Commerce provided seamless coordination and information on-site, and local and state elected officials attended to greet the riders.

In August, Rome turned its attention to the next phase of the program, which involved taking a look at its assets with the eye of compiling them into an informational resource that trail users could use to plan their visits. PTNY used this information to inform the development of the **Rome Trail Town landing page**, hosted on the promotional website for the trail, www.cycletheeriecanal.com.

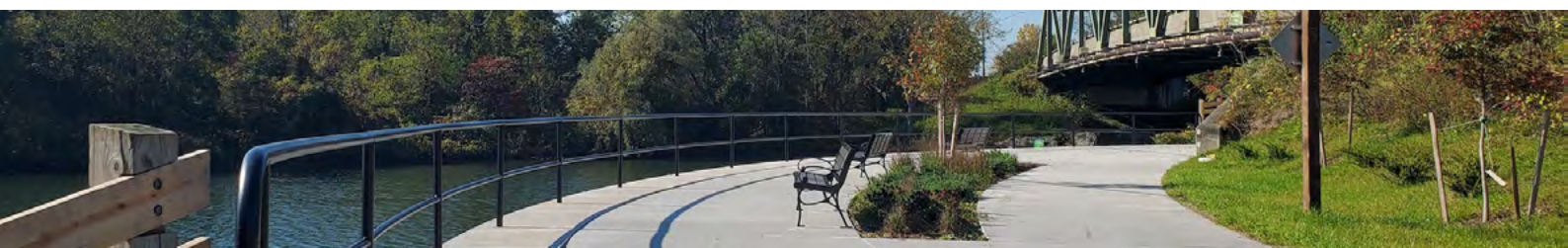
2023 Trail Town Wins

In response to the short-term recommendations identified by PTNY after the Placemaking and Bike Around workshops, Rome advanced several Trail Town priorities over the summer and fall of 2023:

- Purchasing and installing an electronic trail use counter for the city’s trail system
- Updating the city’s website with the most up-to-date maps of Rome’s trail system
- Designating a primary visitor center for the city (Marinus Willett Visitor Center) and working toward making it a hub for trail users
- Installing a fix-it station and working toward the installation of a map of Rome’s trail system adjacent to the Visitor Center
- Certifying ten additional Rome businesses as Bike Friendly New York certified businesses
- Conducting an inventory of existing signage on the Erie Canalway Trail/Empire State Trail and initiating conversations to replace faded signage
- Investigating styles of modern bike racks to be installed at Jervis Library

In addition to the work undertaken in partnership with PTNY, Rome and other local partners have been working steadily to advance several projects and programs closely related to the Trail Town mission, including:

- Installing two community maps for wayfinding on the Erie Canalway Trail/Empire State Trail
- Selecting a contractor to rehabilitate the existing off-road section of the Erie Canalway Trail/Empire State Trail located between the Erie Canal Village Museum and South Charles Street.
- Collaborating with the North Country Trail Association to reroute the North Country Trail on the Mohawk River Trail through town.
- Opening a new one-mile section of the Mohawk River Trail and installing new maps to represent the new sections of trail.
- Completing work on the pedestrian underpass under S James Street on the Erie Canalway/Empire State Trail
- Offering regular bike tours from Fort Stanwix National Monument



Existing Conditions

About Rome

The City of Rome, NY is centrally located in New York State in Oneida County on the ancestral homelands of the Oneida Nation, part of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. The city is positioned at an important early land bridge between main waterways. Due to its strategic location, it was considered one of the most important transportation points for people and goods moving west. Commemorated as the city where the first shovel of dirt was turned for the construction of the Erie Canal, Rome is a city full of cultural, natural, and historic gems. The city is home to many small businesses and public art installations in the Arts District on W. Dominick Street, the historic Fort Stanwix National Monument, and a growing network of open space and greenways. Rome is home to two major trails in addition to the Erie Canalway Trail/Empire State Trail - the Mohawk River Trail, a 3.5-mile trail that runs north-south through the city, as well as the North Country National Scenic Trail, stretching 4,800 miles across eight states from North Dakota to Vermont.

Destination Highlights

Fort Stanwix National Monument: Known as “the fort that never surrendered”, Fort Stanwix is a colonial fort that was first built in the 1750s to guard the Oneida Carrying Place, a key trading route. Now part of the National Park Service as a National Monument, the Fort serves as a place to learn about the history and culture surrounding the Fort during its time of use and its relevance to American history.

Capitol Theatre: The Capitol Theatre remains the only building in Rome constructed for the specific purpose of exhibiting motion pictures. Although the theatre received an Art Deco face-lift in 1939, the auditorium is configured exactly as it was in 1928, and much of the original decor remains. In addition to motion pictures, the theatre hosts musical performances and other performing arts productions year round.

Mohawk River Trail: The Mohawk River Trail (MRT) connects Rome’s waterfront with historical sites, commercial districts, public services, local schools, city parks, the Griffiss Business and Technology Park, and residential neighborhoods, all while offering a unique multi-use trail recreational

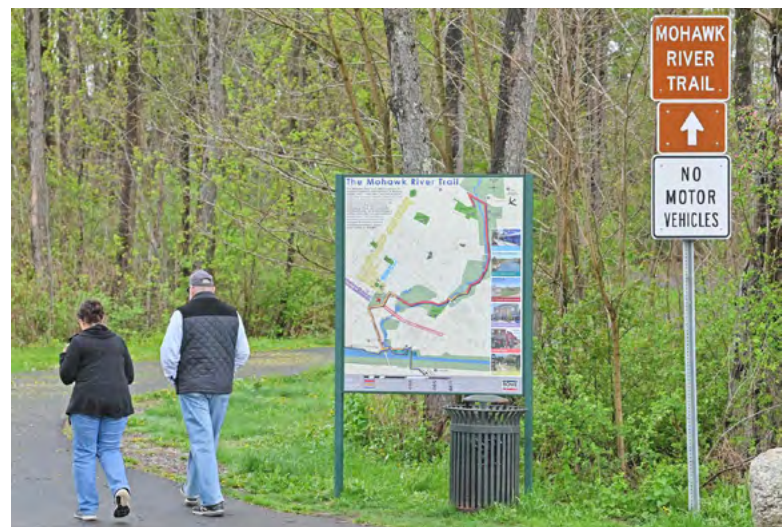
experience. The trail offers excellent scenic vistas of the Mohawk River and connects multiple greenways.

Griffiss International Sculpture Garden and Nature Trail: Art at Griffiss opens the door to nature, sculpture, and biodiversity, all in your own backyard. Take advantage of Central New York’s premier art park by using the Sculpture Garden App to learn about world-renown artists, plant and animal life, and other amenities.

Trail Inventory

Rome has approximately 12.2 miles of the Erie Canalway Trail/Empire State Trail running through the city, 78% of which is off-road (a combination of paved and stonedust).

Map of Rome



Mohawk River Trail. Photo credit John Clifford, courtesy of Rome Sentinel.

Bike Friendly New York Certified Businesses

Launched in 2017, Bike Friendly New York (BFNY) is a bicycle friendly business certification program administered by Parks & Trails New York (PTNY) and the New York State Canal Corporation. BFNY aims to recognize and promote businesses that provide special accommodations for bicyclists. A wide range of businesses are eligible for bike-friendly certification, including restaurants and bars, lodging, shops, and museums.

Bike friendliness is not a “yes or no” quality, and the steps that businesses take to cater to cyclists vary. Above all, bike friendly businesses value cyclists as customers. Therefore, they strive to meet the unique needs of cyclists.

At the most basic level, businesses must meet the following requirements:

1. Have a physical location, which is open to the general public and has hours of operation clearly posted at the location and/or online.
2. Be located near, and easily accessible from, a greenway trail.
3. Have an identified parking area for bicycles (this can be a public bike rack, a bike parking area in front of the business, covered and secure bike parking indoors, or another solution)



BIKE FRIENDLY
NEW YORK

In addition, businesses must meet a few category-specific criteria. For example, Food and Drink Service establishments must have a menu posted outside and/or online and overnight accommodations must offer one night stays and provide covered and secured bike storage. All criteria can be found at ptny.org/bikefriendly.

Before the Trail Town program started, Rome was home to just two pioneering Bike Friendly NY businesses– Superofficial and the Copper Easel. This was not to say that more of Rome’s businesses were not bike friendly. With a little outreach, ten more businesses were certified across the city that qualified to be recognized and promoted as Bike Friendly.

Bike Friendly NY Certified Businesses in Rome

Business Name	Category
Copper City Brewing Company	Food & Drink
Rail and Canal	Food & Drink
Spessos Coffee House	Food & Drink
Franklin Hotel	Food & Drink
Franca Wine Room	Food & Drink
JoJo’s Market	Food & Drink
Superofficial	Food & Drink
Fort Stanwix National Monument	Attraction/Welcome and Information Service
Rome Sports Hall of Fame and Museum	Attractions
Jervis Public Library	Welcome and Information Service
Hampton Inn & Suites Rome	Accommodation
The Copper Easel	Retail

As of November 2023

Trail Use Counts & Analysis

Collecting trail user count data is important for understanding the potential market for trail user-oriented services and amenities, as well as for understanding how and when people are using the trail so that the community can best serve their needs. PTNY estimates that the off-road portions of the Erie Canalway Trail/Empire State Trail (determined by counts at Old Erie Canal and Martin St) see between 13,000 and 23,500 visits per year. Visits to the trail may be as high as 77,000 on the on-road/sidewalk stretch of trail through Rome’s downtown on West Dominick St.

Electronic Counters

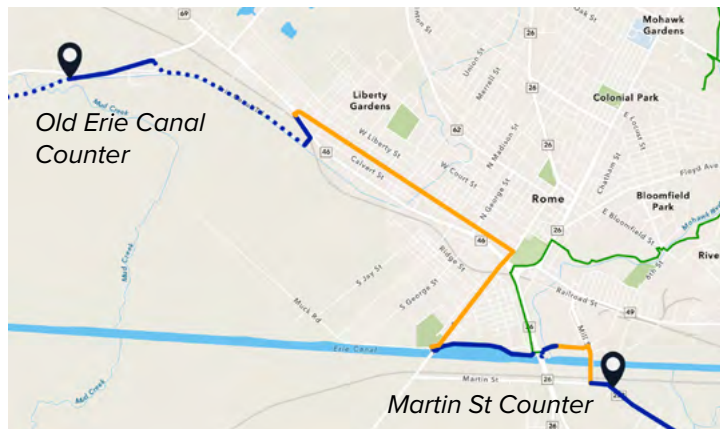
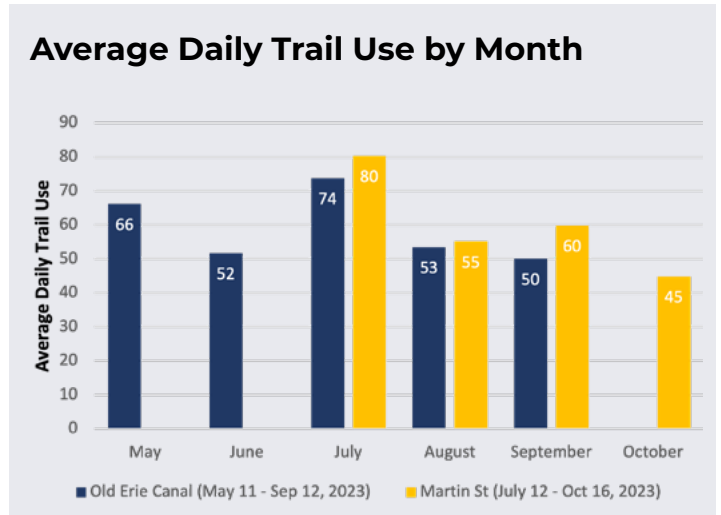
Trail count data was collected using electronic counters at two locations (eastern end of Old Erie Canal State Historic Park and Martin St) and through manual spot counts at three locations (Old Erie Canal, W. Dominick St, and Martin St). The electronic trail counters used infrared pyroelectric technology to count the people passing within range of the sensor by detecting body temperature, and collected data 24 hours a day at one hour intervals for the period it was installed. The Martin Street counter was purchased by the City of Rome after the start of the program and was installed in July.

Annual Trail Use Estimate

By applying **extrapolation methodology** to the available electronic trail use data, PTNY estimates that the trail sees approximately 14,600 annual visits at the Old Erie Canal site and 16,000 at the Martin St site.

Trail Use by Month

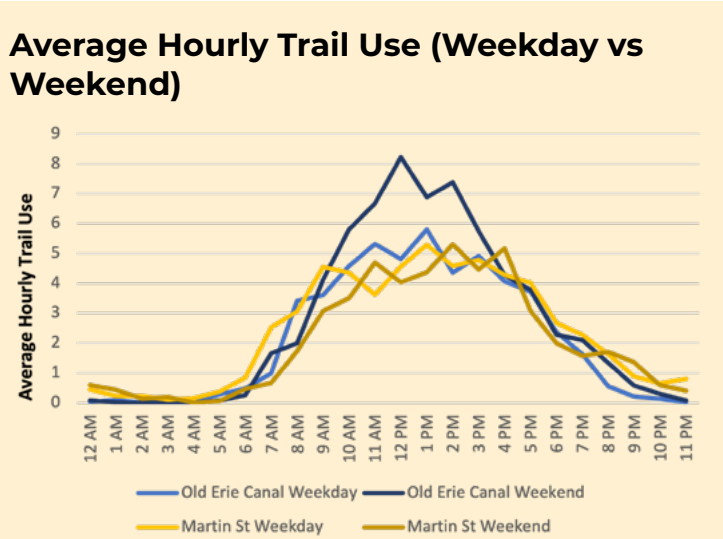
Analysis was conducted on the trail use data to determine trends across different time scales. Trail use was consistent throughout the summer and into the fall, with a bump in July, likely reflecting when Cycle the Erie Canal came through Rome with hundreds of cyclists.



Month	Old Erie Canal (May 11 - Sep 12, 2023)		Martin St (July 12 - Oct 16, 2023)	
	Monthly Use	Daily Average	Monthly Use	Daily Average
May (part)	1,390	66	-	-
June	1,550	52	-	-
July (part for Martin St)	2,286	74	1,607	80
August	1,657	53	1,708	65
September (part for Old Erie Canal)	601	50	1,794	50
October (part)	-	-	718	45
Recorded Total	7484	60	5,827	60
Estimated Annual Use	14,686	40	16,080	54

Trail Use by Day of Week & Time of Day

At the Old Erie Canal counting site, the trail was used more on weekends than on weekdays. At the Martin Street counting site, trail use was similar on weekdays and weekends. Across all days, use peaked in the middle of the day. These trends indicate that the trail is most likely used for recreational purposes rather than commuting. It should be noted that the days that Cycle the Erie Canal passed through Rome (7/13/23 at Old Erie Canal and 7/14/23 at Martin St) were removed from the data set for the average hourly analysis.



Manual Counts

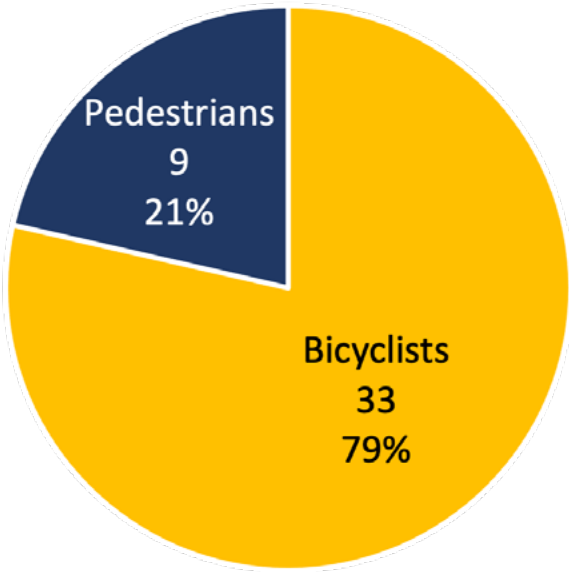
Manual counts were conducted by volunteers who made ticks on a clipboard for each passing trail user for two-hour periods according to the guidelines established for **observational counts**. This data was then used to inform breakdown by mode use and estimate longer periods of trail use using the National Bicycle and Pedestrian Documentation Project (NBPD) **extrapolation methodology**.

Manual volunteer trail counts were used to provide an additional level of detail to this analysis— namely the breakdown of trail use by mode at different locations along the trail. It is clear that the off-road sections of trail at either end of the city (Old Erie Canal and Martin St) see higher percentages of cyclists. Dominick St, as the principal thoroughfare of Rome’s downtown, saw a higher percentage of pedestrians. It should be noted that this data is limited to four, two-hour counting windows and the counts at the various locations were not necessarily completed on the same day, making direct comparison difficult.

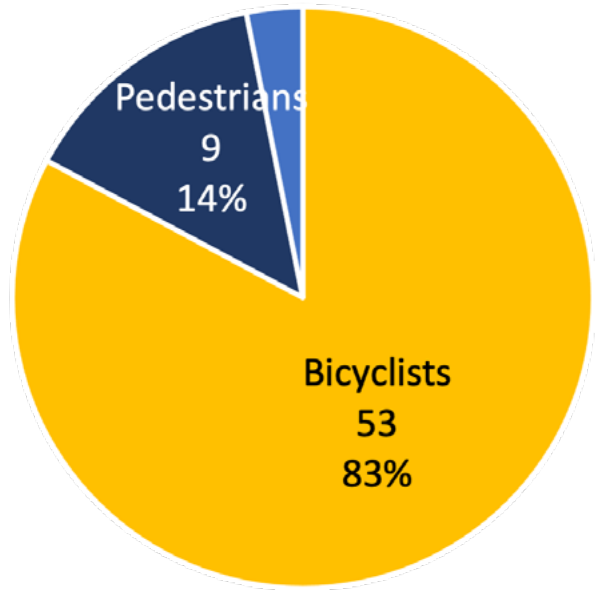
The manual counts were also used to inform an annual use estimate, calculated using the NBPD extrapolation methodology. The annual use estimate at the Old Erie Canal location is relatively consistent with the estimated annual use extrapolated from the electronic counter at this site, putting trail usage between 13,000 and 14,600. Manual counting was the only methodology applied to West Dominick St, but as a major pedestrian and cycling thoroughfare, it is reasonable to estimate that W. Dominick may see as many as 77,000 pedestrians and cyclists per year. At the Martin St location, the estimate calculated from the manual count data predicts a higher annual trail usage than the electronic trail counter by about 7,000. It is likely that the Martin St stretch of trail sees closer to 16,000 than 23,000 visits per year, since the electronic counter estimate is based on more data.

Location	Dates	Bicyclists		Pedestrians		Other		Total Counted	Estimated Annual Use
		Count	Pct.	Count	Pct.	Count	Pct.		
Old Erie Canal	8/2/2023; 8/5/2023; 8/9/2023; 8/12/2023	33	79%	9	21%	0	0%	42	13,320
W. Dominick St	8/1/2023; 8/5/2023; 8/8/2023; 8/12/2023	71	31%	161	69%	0	0%	232	77,547
Martin St	8/3/2023; 8/6/2023; 8/10/2023; 8/13/2023	53	83%	9	14%	2	3%	64	23,501

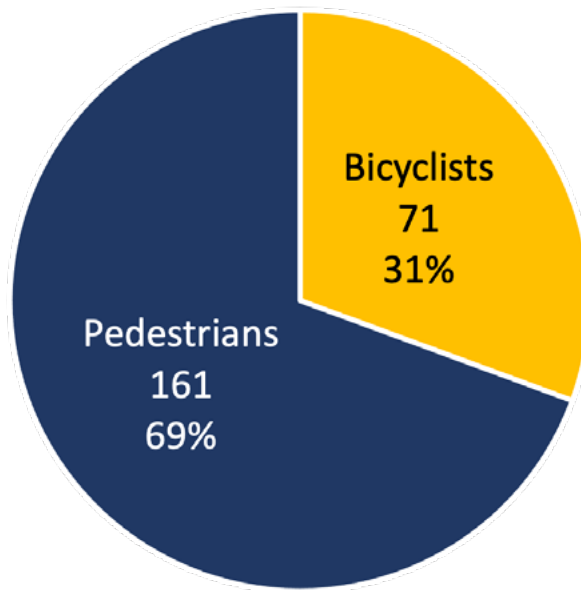
**Old Erie Canal
Breakdown by Mode**



**Martin St
Breakdown by Mode**



**W Dominick St
Breakdown by Mode**



Conducting a manual count at the Martin St counting site. Photo courtesy of Kevin Wyrick



Visitor Promotional Resources

Promotion of available services and amenities is crucial for connecting visiting cyclists to the information they need in order to enjoy their stay. In recent years, Rome has invested significant resources in promoting itself as a great place to live, work and play and has some strong marketing materials. That said, there are currently no resources specifically targeted at reaching visiting trail users.

The City of Rome has a page on its website for **Visitors** with a letter from the Mayor, however it does not mention the Erie Canalway Trail/Empire State Trail or other trail systems in the city. Under Visitors, there is a page dedicated to **Leisure and Attractions**, with lists of places to explore or things to do while in Rome. On this list, there is a link that directs to a dedicated **Trailway Systems** page, which is also linked to under Parks and Recreation. This page has some information about the trails available in the area, like the Mohawk River Trail and the NY Canals Map. It currently does not link to

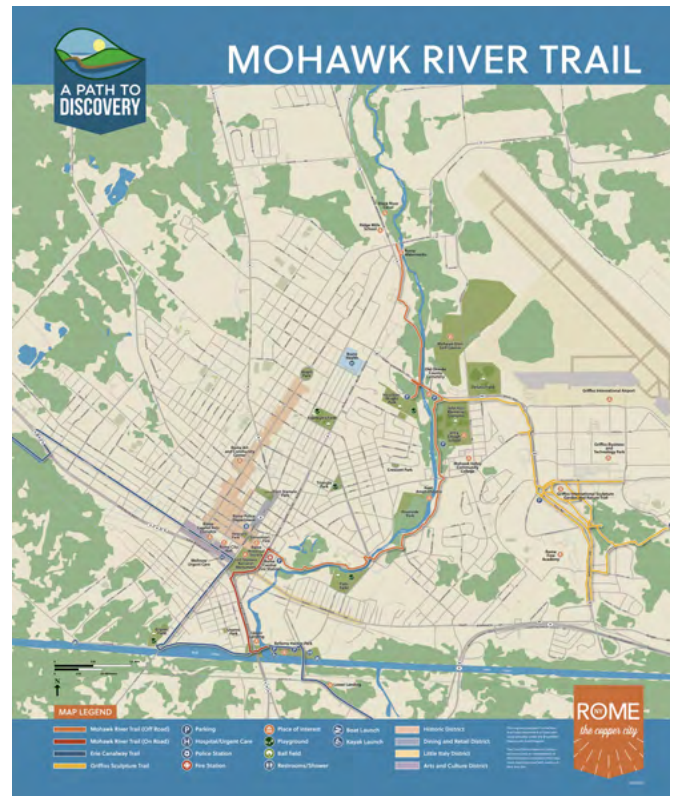
larger statewide trail systems like the **Cycle the Erie Canal trail map**, the **Empire State Trail map**, nor the **North Country Trail map**, nor does it provide any information about the Gifford Sculpture Trail. While not comprehensive, this page is well-positioned to be a clearinghouse of information for trail users in Rome.

The Rome Area Chamber of Commerce invests significant resources into developing materials for visiting cyclists when Cycle the Erie Canal riders stay the night at Fort Stanwix. There is the potential for more collaboration and use of these resources throughout the year.

As part of the Empire State Trail Town program, a promotional webpage highlighting Rome as a Trail Town was developed on cycletheeriecanal.com. The **page** highlights what makes Rome unique, trail access and visitor information, and provides an interactive map of the city.



Map of restaurants within walking distance of downtown Rome/Fort Stanwix presented at Cycle the Erie Canal.



Freshly updated map depicting the full extent of the Mohawk River Trail, available on the City of Rome's "Trailway Systems" webpage.

Overall Assessment

Through the Trail Town Self-Assessment, the public Placemaking Workshop, and the PTNY-led Bike Around ride and assessment, strengths and areas for improvement were identified. The results of these conversations and assessments are summarized below, and helped inform this plan's recommendations.

Strengths

- Rome is home to many significant periods of history, from the indigenous history to the Revolutionary War, to the Erie Canal and beyond
- The city has significant momentum going toward revitalizing the downtown and making the city more walkable/bikeable (See **Rome Rises** project page for ongoing initiatives)
- Rome benefits from strong partnerships, especially with Fort Stanwix National Monument (National Park Service), which hosts bike tours and is installing a new fix-it station and trail kiosks
- The current route of the Erie Canalway Trail/Empire State Trail passes right through downtown and past many businesses
- Rome is home to several trail systems, including the local Mohawk River Trail which expanded this year and is planned to expand again in 2024, and the North Country Trail, which is in the process of being re-routed to align with the Mohawk River Trail
- There are many enthusiastic businesses that are interested in building community around the trail
- Many local events and festivals exist that celebrate Rome's heritage and building community
- Rome has a strong social media presence on Facebook and Instagram
- There is an Amtrak train station right next to the trail
- There are many opportunities for trail users to find information and use the restroom in Rome, especially during the tourism season (modern Navigation Center at Bellamy Harbor Park, Fort Stanwix National Monument, Rome Sports Hall of Fame)

Areas for Improvement

- Wayfinding on the trail is confusing, particularly in regards to faded and sometimes unclear signage. Significant areas for improvement include:
 - Through the gravel work area near the Erie Canal Village
 - Along Erie Blvd between S Charles St and W Dominick St, including crossing of Erie Blvd
 - Crossing of Erie Blvd on N. James St
- The Mohawk River Trail does not have a consistent trail user experience, with a concrete/sidewalk surface and some overgrown vegetation. It is also marked as "on-road" between Bellamy Harbor Park and Brooks Rd on trail wayfinding maps, even though it is off-road.
- A significant portion of the Erie Canalway Trail/Empire State Trail is currently on-road, increasing the potential conflict with vehicles especially at the two locations where the route crosses Erie Blvd
- There is a lack of bike parking, especially in the downtown business corridor
- It is not clear that the Navigation Center is open to trail users. No signage directing trail users to it or identifying what it is.
- There is no signage at the Rome Sports Hall of Fame to let trail users know they are welcome to come in.
- There are no thru-trail user camping amenities
- Some overnight lodging accommodations have been reported to be less than desirable
- Construction on trail, while positive in the long term as Rome improves the trail user experience, presented challenges.
- Rome does not have a comprehensive on- and off-road active transportation network around the city.

Recommendations

Short Term Recommendations

Strategies that can be implemented with minimal lead time before or during the next tourism season.

1. Replace and augment existing Erie Canalway Trail/Empire State Trail wayfinding signage to provide clear routing through the city.

- ◆ Coordinate with NYS Canal Corporation’s Trail Manager, NYS OPRHP’s Statewide Trails Program Planner, and the NYS DOT Region 2 Bike/Pedestrian Coordinator to identify a path forward to replace faded Erie Canalway Trail signs and add additional Empire State Trail signs and arrows where necessary.
- ◆ Until this signage is updated, use temporary wayfinding guidance such as sandwich boards, lawn signs, or temporary paint at critical junctions that have historically caused confusion for trail users.
- ◆ Consider creating a Trail Ambassador program to welcome visitors to the area and help direct them. This program would be organized and led by the Volunteer Trail Town Advocacy Committee.

2. Seek to expand low-cost or free overnight options for visiting trail users.

- ◆ Continue to coordinate with the **Rome Erie Canal Marina** to permit single-night biker/hiker camping and promote the availability of this option through the Marina’s website, local platforms and statewide methods. Submit the site to PTNY to be included on their online maps using **this form**.
- ◆ Explore additional opportunities for camping on both public and private land. Consider reaching out to towns like Newark and Brockport to learn about their experience allowing camping on municipal property. If land to be considered is owned by Canal Corporation, include them in conversations to see if a permit is needed.
- ◆ Encourage local members of the community to join **Warmshowers**, a reciprocal hospitality website and app for touring cyclists by promoting it on the City’s social media and website and partner platforms.

3. Continue to educate Rome’s visitor-oriented business about the benefits of bike-friendliness and encourage them to implement bike-friendly infrastructure and policies.

- ◆ Use the Rome Area Chamber of Commerce’s platform and individual site visits, potentially by designated ambassadors, to communicate the benefits of **Bike Friendly NY certification** (attracting more trail users, listing on PTNY’s Rome Trail Town landing page and map, visual identification through window decal) and help businesses apply.
- ◆ Encourage businesses to signal that they value trail users by “putting a bike on it.” This can look like anything from bicycle-related storefront displays, a beer, ice cream, or sandwich named

Faded and damaged signage where the trail turns onto Mill Street. Photo credit David Hinman.



to commemorate the trail, bike or trail-themed souvenirs, or other little details. These visual cues will help trail users know that they are welcome.

4. Expand the bike parking network downtown.

- ◆ Pursue creative sources of funding for additional bike parking in the city including investigating potential partners and sponsors in health-related industries such as hospitals or insurance providers (ex. Excellus Health and Wellness Awards).
- ◆ Look for ways to find discounts on bike racks for business owners.
- ◆ Seek artists or welders who might be willing to craft the racks themselves.
- ◆ Incorporate the annual purchase of at least one multi-space bike rack into the City budget.

5. Enhance and promote Rome’s visitor information centers.

- ◆ Continue to advertise Fort Stanwix’s Visitor Center as the primary Welcome and Information Center for cyclists and hikers
 - ◆ Make sure Fort Stanwix staff is educated about what cyclists need to know, including keeping them up to date on trail closures/detours, where to stay, other things to do in the area.
 - ◆ Continue to advertise the bike pump and repair station, and have patch kits on hand.
- ◆ Advertise the Navigation Center as a location for public bathrooms and showers. Include wayfinding signage around the Navigation Center to increase awareness and use.
- ◆ Continue to work with the Rome Sports Hall of Fame and Museum to welcome trail users on the west side of the city by formalizing trail user use of the parking lot, promoting availability of restrooms, and creating signage that encourages trail users to visit the museum.

6. Create dedicated content for visiting trail users for use in online and print materials.

- ◆ Expand the “Trails” page on Rome’s website to feature additional information for local or visiting trail users, including information about and links to Rome’s Trail Town landing page, www.CycletheErieCanal.com, the [Empire State Trail website](#), the [North Country Trail](#), and the Mohawk River Trail, and the Griffis Sculpture Trail. This page may also include information for where to stay in Rome (featuring Bike Friendly NY certified accommodations, camping, air bnb, warm showers etc.), transportation (if there are any long-term parking options for trail users who want to use Rome as a home base for exploring, long-distance transportation options like Amtrak), and sources of visitor information. Some of this content can be pulled directly from the Trail Town landing page.
- ◆ Develop a printed “trail guide” to Rome, with information about Rome’s three main trails– the Erie Canalway Trail/Empire State Trail, Mohawk River Trail, and North Country Trail and visitor information. Determine physical locations where these printed trail guides should be placed and who is responsible for checking on them/ printing/restocking them.
- ◆ Consider how Erie Canalway boaters fit into the promotion of these resources and amenities, and if they have any specific needs that should be considered.

6. Promote community involvement and investment in the ECT/EST.

- ◆ Adopt all of the available stretches of the Erie Canalway Trail/Empire State Trail through Rome. These stretches include Erie Canal Village to S. Charles Street, Rome, South James Street to Canal Street, Rome, and Edge of NYS Routes 49/365 right of way to Erie Boulevard/Route 69, Oriskany. These sections can be adopted together or in segments. Refer to [PTNY’s Adopt-a-Trail website](#) for program guidelines.
- ◆ Encourage residents to engage with the trail by taking and posting pictures and interacting with visiting trail users.

Long Term Recommendations

Strategies that require increased investment may just require a longer time to be accomplished (2-5 years)

1. Implement pedestrian-scale wayfinding signage along the ECT/EST and along the MRT to better connect trail users with Rome’s amenities and businesses in the downtown main street areas.

The NYS Canal Corporation is developing a set of design guidelines. Any signage to be installed on Canal Corporation-owned land should be coordinated with Canal Corporation and be in accordance with these design guidelines, expected to be released in 2024.

- ◆ Continue to implement the pedestrian aspects of the **Erie Boulevard BOA Downtown and Waterfront Wayfinding Strategy and Design Plan** (2018) to connect trail users at Bellamy Harbor Park with amenities and Rome’s downtown main street areas.
 - ◆ Review the existing plan and recommendations, and consider additional wayfinding destinations, like the Navigation Center, that may not have been included in the Wayfinding Plan.
- ◆ Encourage discussions with Fort Stanwix to install signage on the Fort grounds that would better connect the Erie Canalway Trail/Empire State Trail with the Mohawk River Trail.

2. Design and install educational wayside exhibits/interpretive signage on the ECT/EST throughout Rome.

- ◆ Work with local relevant stakeholder groups to determine content, quantity, and location of educational signage to interpret the many layers of Rome’s history. See page 2-16 of the Empire State Trail Design Guide for design and placement recommendations.

3. Continue to develop gateways on the ECT/EST at the west and east entrances to the city to invite trail users to visit.

Gateway elements can include public art, landscaping, community wayfinding signage, kiosks with bulletin boards, and improved amenities and infrastructure to make it clear that trail visitors are welcome.

Approaching from the west:

Erie Canal Village and/or South Charles Street

- ◆ Create trailhead parking lots at Erie Canal Village and S Charles St. Designate one of these trailheads as the western “gateway” to the city, with additional gateway elements to welcome trail users.

Approaching from the east

Bellamy Harbor Park

- ◆ Let trail users know they have arrived in Rome when they reach Bellamy Harbor Park. Seek to include the Navigation Center as part of this gateway and create signage or other elements that make it clear that it is available for trail users.

Martin Street

- ◆ Take advantage of the directly trail-adjacent Amtrak station with signage and other gateway elements.
- ◆ Promote local businesses at the gateways on city-owned property.
- ◆ Consider creating a system that allows businesses to pay to advertise at the trailheads via brochures, kiosks, or another way, and designate an agency/group to manage the system. A bulletin board or kiosk may be a good option.

4. Establish an off-road route for the Erie Canalway Trail/Empire State Trail utilizing Muck Rd. and the abandoned rail corridor.

- ◆ Pursue funding to develop an off-road greenway trail from S. Charles St to Muck Road.
- ◆ If this is pursued and achieved, begin thinking about ways to continue to encourage trail users to get off the trail and visit Rome's downtown business districts.

5. Standardize the trail user experience on the Mohawk River Trail between Bellamy Harbor Park and Brook Street to meet current greenway trail design guidelines and match the rest of the Mohawk River Trail experience.

- ◆ Replace the narrow sidewalk from Jasper St to Brook St with AASHTO compliant trail consistent with the Empire State Trail Design Guidelines.
- ◆ Ensure that encroaching vegetation along the trail is trimmed and prevented from blocking the trail.
- ◆ Encourage discussions between the City and Fort Stanwix to improve and enlarge the walkway along the Fort
- ◆ Promote the Mohawk River Trail as an alternative route for accessing the businesses and amenities in Rome's downtown and main streets areas from the ECT/EST in Bellamy Harbor Park through wayfinding signage and other promotional methods.

6. Pursue an Active Transportation plan for Rome.

- ◆ Develop a plan to connect Rome's many trail corridors to its neighborhoods and business districts with on- and off-road bicycle infrastructure.



The Mohawk River Trail does not provide a standardized "multi-use trail" experience and is subject to overgrown vegetation.

Implementation

It doesn't do any good for a plan to just sit on a shelf, so Rome has identified a series of next steps to keep the Empire State Trail Town momentum moving forward.

» **Rome will commit to this Empire State Trail Town action agenda**

The City will pass a resolution to formally recognize the Action Agenda. The City will also have a staff liaison on the advocacy group to help advance items on the Action Agenda.

» **The structure of the Trail Town Steering Committee will shift to an advocacy group**

Once Rome becomes a certified Trail Town, the Trail Town Committee will shift to a volunteer advocacy group that is recognized by the City (via a resolution) and run by volunteers. Members of the existing Trail Town Committee will be invited to transfer to the new advocacy group and other community members/cyclists/bike friendly business owners will be invited to join. The advocacy group will meet frequently at first while it establishes itself and the structure, and will then determine a regular interval at which to meet. There will be one or two advocacy group chairs who will organize the meetings who will also be the primary contacts with PTNY.

The advocacy group will likely include the following representatives:

- Dave Hinman- Co-chair (resident)
- Bobbie O'Brien- Co-chair (Rome Rotary)
- Danielle Salisbury (City of Rome)
- Amanda (Kaier) Whalen (MVEDD)
- Aaron Wade (Engaged Resident and Software Guru)
- Sarah Foster Calero (Oneida County Tourism)
- Shondel Beverly (Oneida County Tourism)
- Jen Martin (C&D Advertising)
- Assemblymember Marianne Buttenschon (NYS Assembly District 119)
- Kevin Wyrick (Fort Stanwix National Park)
- Lisa Matt (Jervis Public Library)
- Ian Greasley (Engaged Resident/ Strong Towns)
- Adam Prescott Chrisman (local business owner)
- Jon Matwegic-Walda (local business owner)

Once formed, the advocacy group will begin to decide how to implement the recommendations. Some of the short-term recommendations are already in progress. Wayfinding signage and bike parking seem to be the most commonly discussed themes and are viewed as a higher priority among the short-term goals and would likely be the first to be implemented. Likely, the advocacy group will need sub-committees who will be in charge of moving specific recommendations forward, both long-term and short-term. Additionally, the advocacy group will reach out to other towns along the canal (Trail Towns and others) for ideas and advice.

» **Rome will secure funding to advance Trail Town projects**

Potential funding sources could include:

- **Community Foundation of Herkimer and Oneida Counties**
- **Federal Land Access Program (FLAP)**
- **NYS Canal System Tourism Infrastructure and Events Grants**
- **2023 TAP/CMAQ/CRP**
- **New York State Consolidated Funding Application**
- **Department of State**
- **Bloomberg Philanthropies**
- **Rails-to-Trails Conservancy**
- **Project for Public Spaces Community Placemaking Grants**
- **League of American Bicyclists Community Spark Grants**
- **People for Bikes**
- Local funds

» **The City and Advocacy Group will communicate Empire State Trail Town successes and progress**

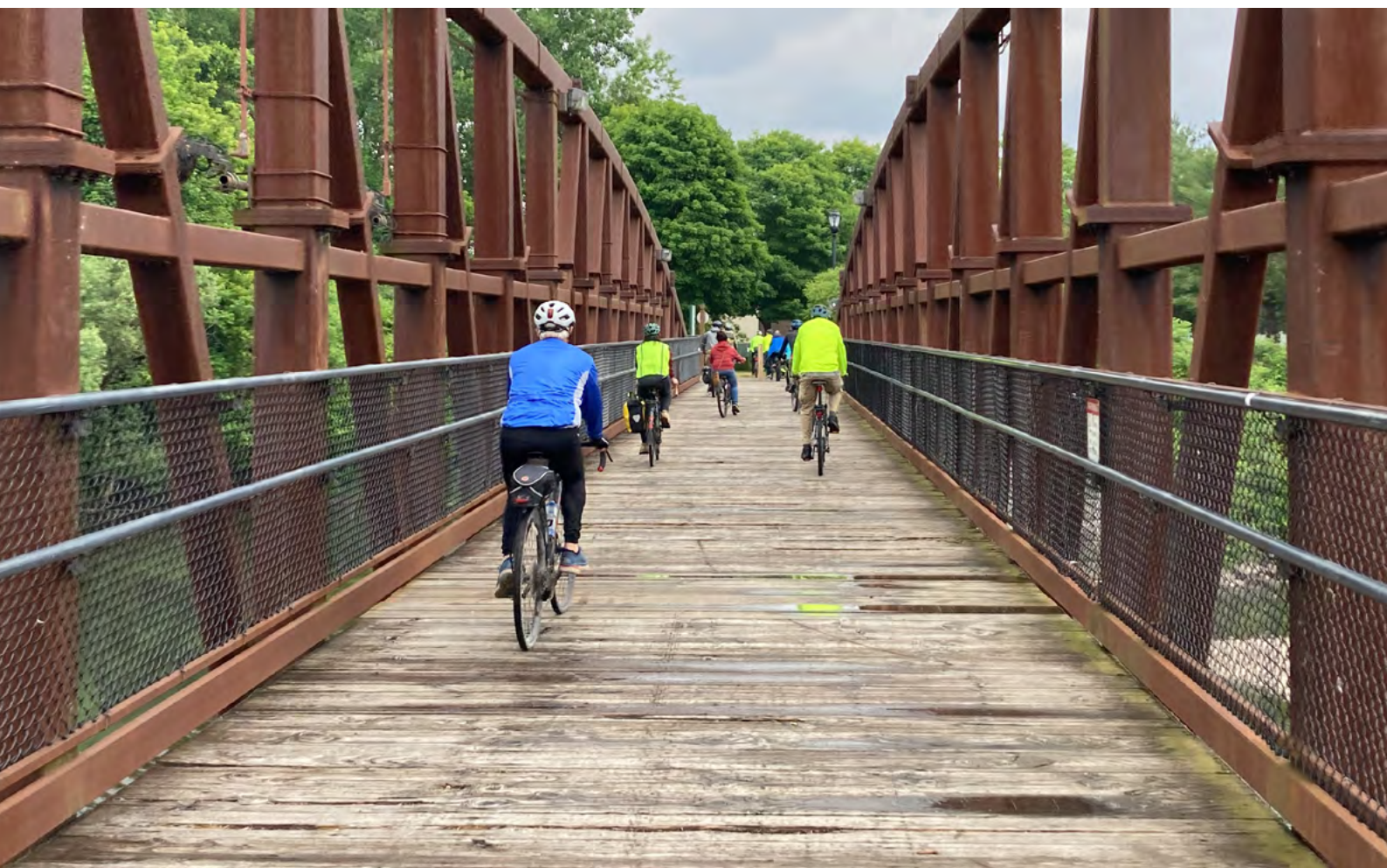
The City's social media (and encourage partners to share as well), City's website, and a press release will be utilized to communicate Rome's certification and progress on the Action Agenda to the public.

» **Rome will ensure that it maintains Empire State Trail Town designation through subsequent years**

Rome will make sure to continue to meet the Trail Town criteria as set forth in the [Empire State Trail Town handbook](#).

Prior to each tourism season (April of each year), the Trail Town steering committee will verify with PTNY that the information on the Trail Town landing page is accurate.

Each year, PTNY will host a virtual meeting for all Trail Towns to provide updates about the Empire State Trail and Trail Town initiative and allow Trail Towns to share progress on their action agendas. Rome will submit a brief written update prior to the meeting and send at least one representative.



Parks & Trails New York

33 Elk Street
Albany, NY 12207
(518) 434-1583
ptny@ptny.org

Published December 2023



About Parks & Trails New York

Parks & Trails New York (PTNY) is New York's leading statewide advocate for parks and trails, dedicated since 1985 to improving our health, economy, and quality of life through the use and enjoyment of green space. PTNY works to expand, protect, and promote a network of parks, trails, and open spaces throughout our state for use and enjoyment by all. For more information, visit www.ptny.org.



About the New York State Canal Corporation

The New York State Canal Corporation runs the New York State Canal System, which includes the Erie, Champlain, Oswego and Cayuga-Seneca canals. Spanning 524 miles, the waterway links the Hudson River with the Great Lakes, the Finger Lakes and Lake Champlain. In 2017, the Canal Corporation celebrated the 200th anniversary of the groundbreaking for the Erie Canal, which occurred in the city of Rome on July 4, 1817. The Canal System includes the Canalway Trails, a network of approximately 420 miles of multiple-use trails across upstate New York. The Canalway Trails follows the towpaths of both active and historic sections of the New York State Canal System as well as adjacent abandoned rail corridors. Together, the canals and trails create a world-class recreationway that is a vibrant, scenic, and unique New York resource. To learn more about the New York State Canal and Canalway Trail System or to obtain a free map, please call 1-800-4CANAL4 or visit the Canal Corporation's website at www.canals.ny.gov.