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Escape the Urban: Rails to Trails on Sunday, September 19th, 2010

[Buffalo News](#)

With a heavy industrial and transportation hub past, a shrinking population, and a newfound green spirit, Western New York should be a poster child for the conversion of old railway corridors into multi-use trails. Unfortunately, while there are some notable success stories, our potential has not been reached, and there is still much we could do to connect people and places by these trails.

[Buffalo Rising](#)

The focus of much pro-biking energy in the area recently has been on promoting [complete streets in the City of Buffalo](#), and expanding the number of bike racks in front of city businesses. This is understandable, and not only is there [great city biking](#), but there is much to be said for bicyclists effectively utilizing existing city streets. But Buffalo and the rest of Western New York is famously crisscrossed by railways, and dedicated rail trails offer incomparable safety, scenery, and recreation and health living opportunities to riders.

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My bible for all types of bike trails in Western New York are the maps from the [Greater Buffalo-Niagara Regional Transportation Council](#). For a more interactive trail finder, go to [Parks and Trails New York](#), where you can do searches for the entire state. I prefer the [older GBNRTC maps](#), though, because they are more complete, and include the roadways that connect the dedicated trails.

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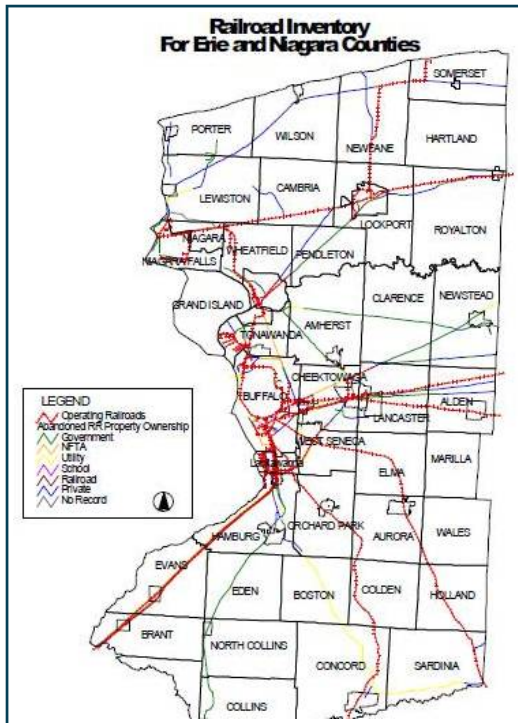
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We are currently looking for bloggers, news reporters, photographers who would like to help update this site. Please [contact us](#) for more information.



[Rail corridors make excellent bike paths](#). They are usually relatively level (not an issue in much of Western New York, but much appreciated out west), isolated, and unbroken. They don't need to take up a lot of room or be intrusive, as they are already part of the neighborhood. By preserving the right-of-way, rail trails create bike highways, safely unmolested by cars or traffic lights. They are quiet, healthy people movers. High Speed Rail and cargo rail traffic has its place and role in our future green economy. But Western New York has enough abandoned railways that will never see a train again that could be put to good use as rail trails.

There have been some notable successes. The Clarence-Akron Trail, and its companion spur Peanut Line Trail, are each 8.5 miles of beautiful asphalt and connect Akron to parts of Clarence and East Amherst. The Pendleton Rail runs through Niagara County, southwest to northeast, from North Tonawanda to Lockport. The [Chautauqua Rail Trail](#) runs nearly 30 miles, passing Chautauqua Lake. And, of course, the [Genesee Valley Greenway](#), a portion of which was [profiled by me earlier this summer](#), connects Rochester to Cuba, via Letchworth State Park.

The work continues for others, however. The abandoned North Buffalo Line, running behind Shoshone Park, [is in limbo as a proposed infill housing development has not yet been completed](#). In the meantime, it is used as a de facto bike path, much to the enjoyment of the neighborhood residents. The most ambitious project on the drawing board is the [28 mile long Erie-Cattaraugus Trail](#), on the old Buffalo & Pittsburgh Railroad Line, which would connect Orchard Park to Ashford, via farms, ski areas, and a trestle bridge. The E-Catt is the best kind of

rail-trail – it's long, scenic, already existing as a right-of-way, and connects people to places they want to go. If you want to help get the E-Catt built, [you can do so here](#).

There is still time this year to get outside and get some quality biking in, before the chill starts to add some nippy misery to your trip. What are your favorite rail trails in the region? Let me know, and I'll bike and highlight them in future articles.

Source: [WNYMedia.net](#)

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[Edgeron ready for Wall of Fame honor](#) on 9.29 at 7:00 am

In recent years the Bills Wall of Fame has been adding names from Buffalo's storied AFC title teams of the early 1990's. Names like Smith, Tasker, Reed, Thomas, Ritcher, Talley, Hull and Kelly. But...

[Mogadishu West](#) on 9.29 at 6:37 am

Thanks to the New York Times, the people of the world have learned that Buffalo is a terrible and strange place, devoid of regular people or normal life. It is squalor and despair. It is a civic existential crisis. Empty of shops, it is instead full of empty people leading rudderless, meaningless lives where the [...]

[Shonen Knife to Play Mohawk](#) on 9.29 at 5:36 am

By: Hugh O'Donnell This Saturday, October 2nd, Japanese rock supergroup Shonen Knife will perform at Mohawk Place. The group originally formed in Osaka, Japan in 1981. Thanks to their mix of punk-inspired hard rocking guitar sounds and up...