

## **“Closing the Gaps” in the Erie Canalway Trail” Roundtable**

**Syracuse, March 29, 2011**

presented by  
The Office of

**Senator Kirsten E. Gillibrand**

in partnership with

**New York State Canal Corporation and Parks & Trails New York**

Please see the accompanying agenda for the full content of the roundtable. The presentations of the Canal Corporation and Parks & Trails New York will be available online at [www.ptny.org](http://www.ptny.org). The following notes capture the questions, concerns and ideas expressed during the open discussion portion of the roundtable (“What’s next?”) and are organized by general topic.

### **Route Suggestions**

#### **General**

- The Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council (Syracuse area MPO) now has \$30,000 for a Canalway Trail route planning project that begins April 1. Scope of work needs to be developed.
- How can we pull together federal/state/local representatives to address this issue? SMTC has funding for plan, but it doesn’t own any pieces of the puzzle.
- What about state and federal funding? Sen. Gillibrand’s office will watch for grant possibilities. Most funding for Canalway Trail in past has come through the Transportations Enhancements Program, the future of which is uncertain.
- A concern is that there has been no government entity to carry the ball in the past. Need a cooperative view that the trail is a priority so can apply for future TE or other funding.
- Completing trail through city is a great way to bring people into it.
- Make effort to link Canalway Trail to other trails; consider this when choosing CT route.
- In choosing route, consider advantages for commuting by bicycle, also. Should encourage such commuting for its economic and other benefits.
- Experience has shown that where bike lanes were added they reduced traffic speeds from 45 to 35 mph.
- But bike lanes often are not kept in good repair, forcing bikers outside the lanes, which is dangerous.
- Bicyclists and pedestrians can be separated from each other by using colors as in the Netherlands.
- Honeywell wants to make its land useable by public.
- Bicycle parking is needed in the city; Portland gradually removed some vehicle parking to free up space and encourage biking.
- Sam Clemons, engineering professor at Syracuse University, sees opportunity for students to assist with bridge or tunnel design. There are other resources that can be tapped.
- Look at trail system in Ottawa for ideas.

## **Erie Boulevard**

- Want Canalway Trail to be used by local people every day as well as bringing tourists in; Erie Blvd route would serve that purpose.
- Trail should use median on Erie Blvd., with landscaping to make it more pleasant. No one uses the sidewalks along this street now.
- Use Erie Blvd reduced to two lanes of traffic with rest for cyclists/pedestrians. Water Street also. Should use this route for CTEC.
- DeWitt has thought about placing trail in median of Erie Blvd, but it disappears in DeWitt. How do we get trail users safely across to the side at that point? How do we connect them to businesses? What about vehicles making left turns across trail?
- DeWitt supervisor feels it is feasible to remove two lanes of traffic on Erie Blvd to use it as main link in his area; add bike lanes and look at traffic control as needed; educate motorists with regard to right turns across bike lane into stores. Adding bike lanes made traffic lanes narrower in Lake Placid but they have been accepted. Also can use retail store locations to educate about canal history locally.

## **Other route options**

- In 1972, MDC developed visions for the community. One was to “recreate” the old canal at Clinton Square with reflecting pools. Need to draw up ideas and pull them together. A not-for profit urban design center could work to make connection. (Not clear whether there is such a center now or one is needed.) Would like to see local people work together rather than give this project to someone outside to do.
- In 1990s there was a bus tour that took people through the city looking a possible trail routes. Question: Will National Grid allow use of 2-mile right-of-way to Bridge Street from Teall/Columbus as proposed in 2000? Can see remaining elements of old canal along it.
- PTNY has been advocating for consideration of rail-with-trail as part of any high-speed rail development in the Syracuse area. Can send comments to anyone interested. NYSDOT 3 has had little communication with Albany regarding high-speed rail.

## **Need for links**

- Most points of access to the canal and trail are where roads already exist; need access by foot/bike from neighborhoods where people live. Anchorage is a good example.
- DeWitt wants to help people in community reach canal without driving. Looking for a N-S route for a trail linking businesses and neighborhoods to canal. Trail along east side of I-481 along Butternut Creek from Jamesville Rd north to canal will (or does?) connect seven neighborhoods and town businesses (including Wegman’s).

## **Other opportunities for the corridor**

- Could use landfill near the trail in DeWitt to generate solar power and sell it for funds, perhaps for trail. Possibly wind generators on light poles, too. Could use part of the trail to educate people about these projects.
- Artists are developing an Erie Canal Corridor Initiative for “art trails” with open studios along the canal. Could work along the trail.

- Sunrise Rotary has adopted a section of the canal/trail in Camillus area and will clean up for Earth Day. Thinking of taking idea to other Rotaries. Members are business people; this would serve to connect businesses along canal/trail. Over 10,000 members. Also have a magazine to communicate about canal throughout the world.
- Abandoned rail corridors have much potential for trails. There is a meeting with NYSDOT at City Hall on April 6 on this topic.
- County is launching development of a sustainability plan. People should get involved.

### **Next steps**

- Notes will be distributed to those who signed in with an email address.