

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

Clyde, October 4, 2011

presented by
The Office of

Senator Kirsten E. Gillibrand

in partnership with

New York State Canal Corporation and Parks & Trails New York

The following notes capture the questions, concerns and ideas expressed during the open discussion portion of the roundtable.

Meeting Highlights:

- Western Erie Canal Alliance volunteered to continue organizing the group for further planning and explore whether, through an MOU, they may also act on behalf of Cayuga and western Onondaga county
- NYS Canal Corporation is applying for a \$50 million TIGER 3 Grant to complete all remaining Erie Canalway Trail gaps. **Letters of support from related organizations are needed by October 13.** John Dimura will send a sample support letter.
- Other funding sources for smaller trail projects are the Canal Greenway grants from the NYS Canal Corporation. \$150k (50/50 match). Grant applications are due **October 31, 2011**
- Utilize grassroots help for smaller projects to encourage vested interests in the trail. There may be other ways to complete the trail without grant funding
- Emphasize the use of the historic trails as a base to preserve the history/ambiance and showcase the historical importance and highlight the cultural infrastructure/amenities of towns along the canal
- Write letters to the Governor’s regional economic development councils expressing your concerns and the importance of the Canalway Trail. Trails are not exactly on the radar of the Economic Development Councils and their work groups. Email the Finger Lakes Regional Council at: nys-fingerlakes@empire.state.ny.us
 - Next meeting of the Finger Lakes Regional Council is **October 26** in Geneva at the NYS Agriculture Experimental Station on Preemption Road
- Highlight the health benefits of the trail as a way to get private and public funding as funding is available directed to fight obesity(childhood obesity) and improving health

Discussion:

Route from Lyons to Port Byron

1. Need better signage through the trail gaps

2. The importance of history needs to be emphasized. Highlighting the cultural infrastructure & amenities of towns along the canal can influence tourists to stop
 - a. A list of historic sites on a map should be compiled
 - b. Lock 56, Richmond Aqueduct need directional signage
3. Connecting the canal trail will also help draw people to the water and the interconnected waterways (Canal, Seneca and Clyde River) and increase boaters' accessibility to the communities
4. Lyons to Clyde
 - a. Old towpath
 - b. Early 70's County bought ROW linking parks to Macedon, Lyons, Clyde, and Galen
 - c. Canal Corp as funding recipient needs control of the ROW to use the federal money
 - d. Canal Corp needs an easement from Wayne County as county is owner of the property
 - e. There are some ownership issues along the corridor including private owners & prison possibly
 - f. Property needs to be surveyed
5. Village of Clyde built and maintains trail from E to W village limits
6. Ideas for route from Clyde to Port Byron
 - a. Use National Grid ROW
 - i. No cultural infrastructure on National Grid ROW
 - b. Use the road - From Clyde to Savannah the best shoulder is on Rte. 31
 - i. Route 31 may not be a good trail to follow because there is nothing to look at while you are riding except road. (No ambiance.)
 - ii. A route through Savannah could connect to Montezuma Audubon Center/Montezuma Wildlife Refuge
 - c. Town of Savannah is determining use of a ROW on the old West Shore line, a mile north of Montezuma. If the trail is to connect to the Montezuma wetlands – the West Shore is the logical connector, but it is up to the Town to make that determination
 - i. Town owns ROW
 - ii. Montezuma Visitor Center in Savannah.
 - d. Kids now use trailbed to Pt. Byron following old canal. Large stones now, old RR bed.
 - e. Emphasis on keeping the historic trails as a base to preserve the history/ambiance of them and showcase the historical importance of the area

Concern with ways to address slow pace of progress

1. Utilize principle of "Lighter, Quicker, Faster"
2. Frustration that Newark to Lyons section still not complete – John Dimura stated it will be complete Fall 2011
7. Joe Eicheldinger, Western Erie Canal Alliance: "Anything we can do is better than what we got" "The Canal Corporation is setting the bar too high and may also be a part of the problem."
8. Hard for communities to come up with the 50% match needed for some grants

- a. Would like to use local in-kind services instead of local budget for the 50-50 grant match. This is possible with Greenway grants, Main Street Program grants are an example of this as well
9. The Thruway Authority is committing major funds to the Port Byron Erie Canal Heritage Park. Port Byron could become hot spot for canal enthusiasts, but there is no trail to the west

Suggestions for other ways to get the trail finished

1. Get the public engaged
2. Use donated labor, equipment, and materials
 - a. Develop the idea of grassroots help for smaller projects to encourage vested interests in the trails, like Cayuga-Seneca Trail, Ontario Pathways, and Camillus
3. Trails must be built by the ADA and State regulations - standard widths (at least eight feet wide), ADA-compliant surface, and must present a uniform identity across the state
4. State or Federal monies have specific regulations but look at possibilities for locally controlled sections
5. Cultivate stewardship for long term. Get youth involved, opportunities for adopting trail sections
 - a. Lyons Program Manager has good relationship with schools
 - b. Rotary and Rotary Interact youth groups
6. Americorps may also be able to assist
7. Pitch health benefits to foundations and companies along corridor

Importance of Regional Economic Development Councils

1. Trails not on the radar of Governor Cuomo's Economic Development Councils
2. Next meeting of the Finger Lakes Regional Economic Development Council is Wednesday October 26th at 7:00 P.M. at the NYS Agriculture Experimental Station on Preemption Road in Geneva
3. Write letters expressing concerns to the Finger Lakes Regional Council and email to: nys-fingerlakes@empire.state.ny.us
4. Trails need to be included in the Regional Councils' tourism cluster. The FL Regional Council Tourism group has met once already. It is meeting again on October 6.
5. The Councils' Consolidated Funding Application process is in flux. Until the councils submit their plans, the public won't know what is included
6. The councils need to establish a project review committee. 20% of points for funding applications will come from them. The council is focused on full-time equivalents and agriculture, the #1 industry in the region. Points will be awarded for projects that link the region together.

7. PTNY suggested writing letters to Bob McNarry – Regional Director for Economic Development Council for the Finger Lakes Region – go to www.ptny.org for talking points that can be used in informing the councils of the importance of parks and trails
8. PTNY is working to get funds to complete an economic impact study of the trail

Establishment of a convener, advocate for the effort

10. Western Erie Canal Alliance (WECA) volunteered to act as convener
 - a. As a Not-for-Profit (501c3), it can receive grants
 - b. It has Main St. Program funds from NYSDOS to spend across five counties as well as funding matches from each municipality
11. Cayuga and Western Onondaga County has no one advocating for them like WECA
 - a. In 12 Miles there are three state reps
 - b. There may be a way to allow WECA to act as lead agency for this section too through an MOU
 - c. Cayuga Economic Development Agency could help with that

Next Steps

1. Look at what has happened with other subcommittees in other gap areas for best practices guidance
2. Senator Gillibrand's office can help with
 - a. working to involve private funders interested in childhood obesity. Excellus did some trails in Seneca County
 - b. use of National Grid ROW – provide framework for the discussion to the Senator
 - c. bikes on trains – provide framework for the discussion to the Senator
3. Senator Gillibrand's office will send out an email with notes without anyone's email addresses shown
 - a. Attendees may reply back to Joan Delaro of WECA if interested in continuing to work on closing the gaps
4. Joan Delaro will put together a meeting regarding Lyons to Port Byron gap to
 - a. examine issues and sub sections and prioritize
 - b. look at ideas already proposed
 - c. look at maps to break down the gap area further