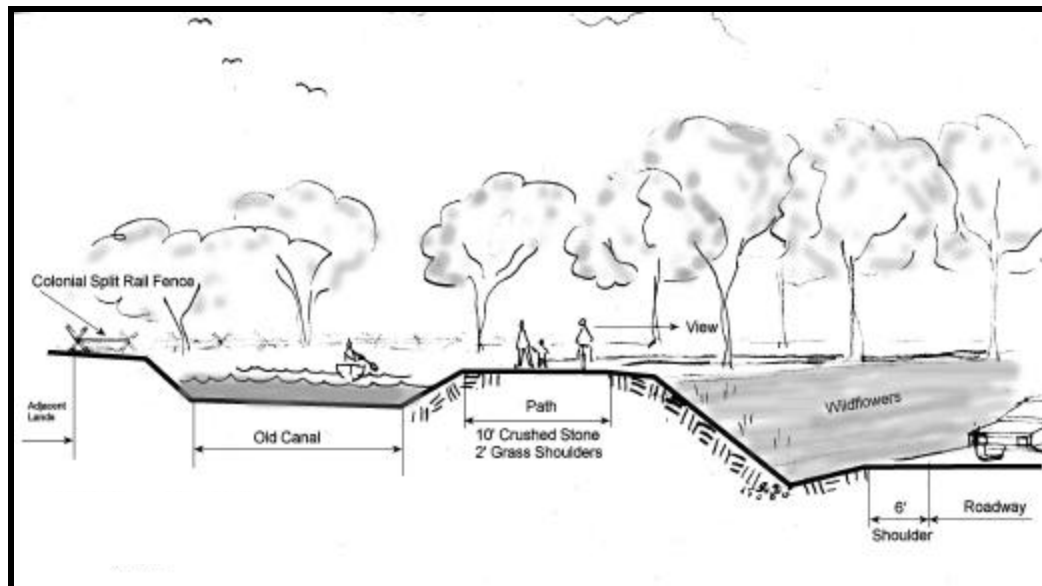


6 Concept Plans

- Concept # 1 - Shared Use Path.** A shared use path, separated from the road and traveling along the preserved Old Champlain Canal right-of-way would be an ideal solution for this corridor. Currently, approximately half of the corridor includes public ownership of the right-of-way. The remaining sections include urban sections of Mechanicville, Stillwater and Schuylerville, and sections in other communities where right-of-way has not been preserved. A separate right-of-way is well suited to families, seniors, pedestrians and others who do not want to travel along the roadway with its noise, fumes, large trucks, speeding vehicles, exposure to the sun and distance from the historic canal resources.



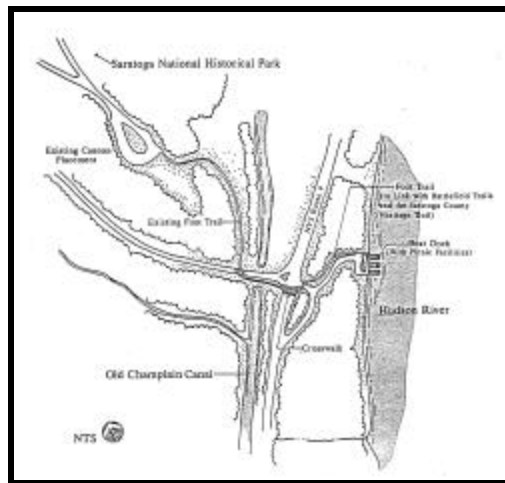
Cross-section showing multi-use path along the Old Champlain Canal towpath.

This type of design is similar to the recently completed section of the Erie Canalway Trail near the Oriskany Battlefield National Historic Site, which was developed with federal transportation funding. Segments where it is possible to implement shared-use path segments along existing Old Canal rights-of-way in Saratoga County include:

- Waterford to Mechanicville:** The City of Mechanicville, in partnership with the Town of Halfmoon and the Town and Village of Waterford has submitted a TEA-21 Transportation Enhancements grant application to NYSDOT for the 6-mile section from the Waterford landfill north to Route 146 in Halfmoon. The proposed project cost is \$1.355 million dollars, including a value of \$271,000 for municipally-owned right-of-way and an estimated \$1.084 million dollar construction cost. This amounts to approximately \$225,000 per mile. The proposed trail surface in this section is asphalt, and one small bridge is included in the project. This section will connect to the existing section of trail from the beginning of the Old Champlain Canal through the Village of Waterford, creating a total of 9.5 miles of trail between Mechanicville and the junction of the Erie and Champlain Canals.

2. **Schuylerville to Bi-County Park:** The Village of Schuylerville has been working with the National Park Service and several community organizations to develop the Old Champlain Canal trail through the village from the Schuyler House National Historic site north to Champlain Canal lock 5 and the old Dix Bridge to Washington County. Saratoga and Washington counties have been cooperating to create a bi-county park which would include re-opening the Dix bridge to trail use. The existing trail through Schuylerville is an unimproved grass and soil surface suitable to walking and cross country skiing, and to a limited extent, bicycling. The Dix Bridge is closed to all traffic due to needed repairs to its footings in the Hudson River. This section of the trail includes some of the most significant historical sites in Saratoga County, including the field where the British surrendered in the Battle of Saratoga. Current cost estimates for this section of trail include approximately \$1.5 - \$2 million for the Dix Bridge restoration, and another \$500,000 for the trail through the village, including two small bridges over the canal to allow boat traffic into the center of town. This section is approximately 1.5 miles long.

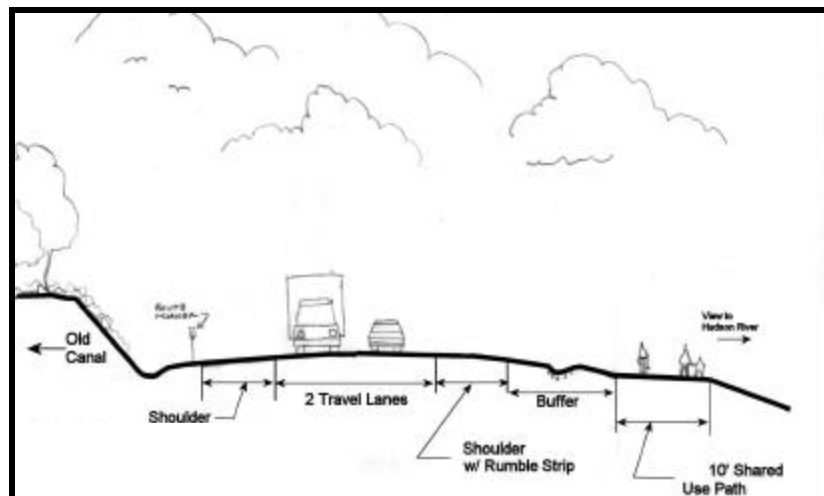
3. **a) Saratoga Battlefield / Old Canal Trail:** Saratoga County, the National Park Service and the Land Trust of Saratoga County currently own most of the Old Champlain Canal right-of-way between Stratton Road in Stillwater and the junction of River Road and Route 4 in the town of Saratoga. The 3 miles section between Bemis Heights and Lohnes Road offers the potential for both the Canalway trail through the county and for completing the loop trail system within the Saratoga Battlefield. In 1998, The New York State Canal Corporation submitted an unsuccessful application for \$787,000 in federal Public Lands Highways funding to build this section of trail. Completing this section will require detailed agreements with adjacent landowners, the National Park Service and other partners. Key issues are maintenance of the canal drainage system, and resolution of liability concerns for adjacent landowners. The National Park Service has already improved .5 miles of this section with a grass surface and excellent interpretive displays. The 1994 Eastern Canal Gateway Plan called for improved access to the Hudson River at this location, which would also serve as an important trailhead for residents and visitors, as shown below:



Graphic from the 1994 Eastern Canal Gateway Plan by the LA Group.

b) Stillwater to Bemis Heights Trail: The 1-mile section between Bemis Heights and Stratton Road in Stillwater will require careful negotiation and partnership. This section should be considered as a subsequent phase once solutions have been identified for the northern section in the Town of Stillwater. There are significant concerns by some adjacent property owners in the vicinity of Stratton Road in Stillwater. The land owned by the Land Trust of Saratoga County is landlocked at its northern end by private properties. In addition, NYSDOT is considering a reconstruction of the intersection of Routes 4 and 32. Field observations of archeological investigations at this location revealed evidence of the Old Champlain Canal within the project area. It is possible that the intersection project will create an opportunity to create a safe trail crossing and resolve the issues raised by residents in this area.

4. **Missing Links:** A detailed, property-by-property analysis will need to be completed in order to determine the potential for completing missing links along the trail. A 'willing donor' system could be established for landowners who wish to donate, sell or establish public access to the Old Champlain Canal right-of-way or parallel pathways which will connect existing trail segments. The potential exists in Mechanicville for a 'rail-with-trail' corridor along the existing freight tracks west of downtown. State Department of Transportation, utility and other rights-of-way may provide alternatives to following the literal route of the Old Canal in some locations. Providing a trail on a new alignment parallel to the State highway requires filling and drainage of adjacent lands, will not provide the same quality of experience as being adjacent to the canal and will require new land acquisitions. This alternative is preferable only when it is not possible to provide the trail along the old canal.



Where other right-of-way options do not exist, or to bypass specific constraints for a short distance, a shared-use path could be developed adjacent to the highway.

2. **Concept # 2 – On Road Route.** One alternative for the Champlain Canal Trail in Saratoga County is to develop an on-road route for bicycling. New York State DOT has already included Route 4 and 32 along the Hudson River as part of State Bike Route 9, which runs from New York City to Montreal. The State Bike Route System was developed in the mid-1990's as an alternative to off-road trails for experienced cyclists who are capable of sharing the road with motor vehicles. Most of Route 4 has

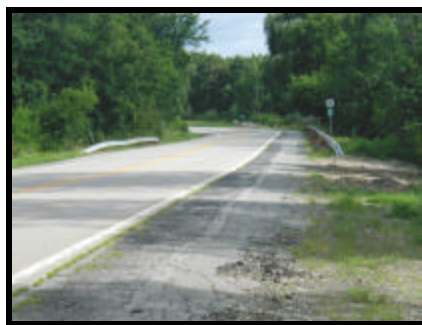
paved shoulders which meet NYSDOT criteria for on-road cycling, although pavement conditions in several sections are deteriorated and in need of repair. Signage, pavement markings, interpretation, rest stops and lane striping could also be upgraded to enhance the cycling experience.



New York State Bike Route 9 signs along NYS Route 4 (L). Heavy truck traffic exists along the route, along with vehicle speeds in excess of 50mph. (R)



Bicycle pavement markings only exist in a few locations along Bike Route 9. Bike route symbols (L) and tour markings for special events (R) provide information for cyclists and motorists.



Pavement conditions and shoulder widths vary along Bike Route 9 in Saratoga County.

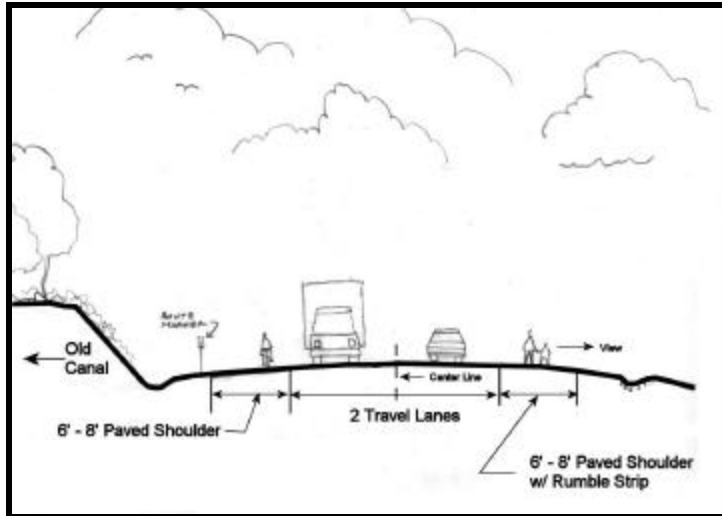
The on-road route will not provide the quiet, tree-lined, traffic-free experience of a separate trail. The road surface will probably not serve as a pedestrian facility, since cross-slope grades of the paved shoulders may exceed the minimum grades required for ADA accessible routes. An on road route will also not provide a safe facility for

inexperienced cyclists and families. Ideally, the on-road route will serve as an interim system until a separate path can be constructed which serves the needs of the majority of pedestrians and cyclists. Once a system of separated paths is developed, the on-road route will continue to serve experienced road bicyclists who travel at higher speeds than most trail users. The on-road route would be significantly enhanced by integrating it with Lakes to Locks Passage. Every opportunity should be made to preserve and enhance the heritage tourism potential of the cycling experience, since many scenic byway trips will include combinations of travel by car, bus, boat and bicycle. The following description from Lakes to Locks emphasizes this point:

“Most of the byway route for Lakes to Locks Passage is designated as NYS Biker Route 9, and can accommodate bicycle and pedestrian travel. In addition, within the Lakes to Locks Passage corridor, planners have identified and developed interpretive Bikeway and Walkway routes that utilize rural backroads or public right-of-ways to minimize conflicts between automobiles and bike/ped travel. The terrain and outstanding landscape features of Lakes to Locks Passage makes it an outstanding destination for biking and walking as recreation, as well as modes of transportation along the byway. The byway also allows for water-based travel - the inter-connected lake and rivers allow access by water from anywhere in the world....Begin your travels on US Route 4 in Waterford at the Canal Visitor Center, the junction of the Champlain and Erie Canals where the Mohawk and Hudson Rivers come together. Continue your drive north on US Route 4 through Mechanicville and Stillwater. While driving along US Route 4, note that the Champlain Canal is running parallel to the roadway, often just a "stone's throw" away. Most of the Canal locks have parks and interpretation about the Canal system - keep an eye out for the signs. Be sure to note the junction of US Route 32, and the signs to Saratoga National Historical Park and Saratoga National Cemetery. Continue north through Fort Edward, and on to Whitehall...”

Specific recommendations to enhance the on-road bicycling facility (and as an interim pedestrian path) include:

1. **Pavement Markings:** Provide consistent pavement markings showing both a bicycle and a directional arrow. These markings are included in the NYS Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD).
2. **Shoulder Width:** Provide a continuous six-foot (2m) minimum shoulder along all of Bike Route 9 in Saratoga County, with 8 foot widths included where possible. Consider adding bicycle-compatible rumble strips and wide edge striping to improve safety.
3. **Signage:** Integrate Bike Route 9 and Scenic Byway signage to provide a consistent level of historic interpretation, destination and services information.
4. **Linkages:** Develop clearly marked connections between on and off-road trail segments, with high-visibility crosswalks and appropriate signage. Provide small scale ‘rest areas’ with benches and drinking fountains at key locations.
5. **Mechanicville Route:** Currently, Bike Route 9 is signed on Routes 4 and 32 through the City of Mechanicville. It is recommended that this route be relocated to follow Main Street, which is closer to the Hudson River and the Champlain Canal, has lower traffic volumes, and avoids complex intersections at both Route 67 and Route 4.



Sketch of improvements to the on-road bicycling route along the Old Champlain Canal.

Concept # 3 – Combined On and Off-Road Trail

It is possible to envision developing the Champlain Canal corridor with a combined on and off-road trail, providing solutions which capitalize on available resources and opportunities. The project can be developed in phases, with reasonable targets and timeframes. These phases are described as follows:

1. **Phase 1 – “The Legacy of 225”** Since 2002 is the 225th anniversary of the historic battles of Saratoga, it is important to begin the trail in this year and achieve some ‘early wins’ to generate momentum. In this way, the celebration of Saratoga County in 2002 can become a step towards the future. Short term actions include:
 - a. **Adopt this Plan.** County Board of Supervisors should pass a resolution formally adopting the concept of the trail .
 - b. **Conserve the Canal.** All publicly accessible land, easements and rights-of-way along the trail corridor should be maintained in public ownership.
 - c. **Make Basic Road Repairs.** Saratoga County, NYSDOT and local communities should work cooperatively to enhance Bike Route 9 as an on-road route and interim alignment for the Champlain Canal Trail.
 - d. **Advocacy:** A county-wide ‘friends of the trail’ organization should be established with the resources to support a project of this scale.

2. **Phase 2 – “50 % in 5 Years.”** With a focused effort and the cooperation of public, private and non-profit partners, it is possible to complete half of the off-road trail in Saratoga County in the next five years. This will provide a great opportunity to showcase the long-term potential of the trail. This phase of the project can be described as follows:

- a. **Mechanicville – Waterford Trail.** Pending the outcome of the current funding application, this 6-mile section is ready to be advanced to construction. Completion of this section will create a continuous 9-mile shared use path from Waterford to Mechanicville.
- b. **Schuylerville Trail.** The existing path should be upgraded to a stone dust surface from Lock 5 through the Village of Schuylerville to the Schuyler House. This will provide a year-round facility for bicycling, walking, running, skiing and other uses and will provide an starting point for the trail in the northern half of the county.
- c. **Stillwater / Saratoga Battlefield Trail.** The existing Saratoga County-owned right-of-way should be developed into a trail, but only if key issues raised by adjacent landowners are addressed. The northern 3 miles of this section should be the first priority, and it will serve as a model for other trail segments. Specifically, trespassing by trail users across agricultural lands, liability for adjacent landowners, privacy screening and management of the canal waterway must be resolved. A potential solution to these issues is for the County to enter into agreements with a public or private non-profit agency to develop the trail and manage associated drainage issues. Clearly defined rights-of-way across the trail for adjacent landowners at selected locations would provide the landowners with a minimal liability exposure. Fencing, signage, trail management and landscape design could further mitigate privacy concerns.

Once the northern part of this section is resolved, the trail from Bemis Heights to Stratton Road could be advanced. The trail in Stillwater will serve as a critical milestone: completion of a total of 13.5 miles of trail, more than half of the 26 miles of Old Champlain Canal trail in Saratoga County.

- d. **On-Road Enhancements.** Provide bike lanes, pavement markings and signage within the villages, and continuous 6'-8' paved shoulders along the entire route. Ensure that connections between 'off'road' and 'on-road' sections are clearly defined. Provide bike parking, benches and interpretive elements.

3. **Phase 3 – “Plan 250: Complete the Trail.”** By the time of the 250th anniversary of the Battles of Saratoga, the entire corridor should be developed and operating as a major feature of the New York State Canalway Trail system. This date should serve as a patriotic rallying point for public,

private and non-profit support – but the majority of the actions needed to complete the trail should be accomplished in much less than 25 years.

Within 10 years (by 2012) the following tasks should be accomplished:

- a) Create a continuous public right-of-way along the approximately 10 miles of 'missing' trail.
- b) Develop a comprehensive interpretive design of wayside exhibits, signage and other visitor amenities along the route.
- c) Establish a 'milepoint' sculpture program with local artists.
- d) Integrate lodgings and historical sites with the Lakes to Locks Passage scenic byway program.
- e) Work with local landowners to establish a 'willing donor' program for easements and contributions of wildlife habitat and historic sites along the trail.
- f) Create an economic development program to support trail-oriented businesses including camping, restaurants and retail shops.

With these actions accomplished, the trail will have the opportunity to mature over time into the world-class facility for Saratoga County. By the year 2027, targets of 200,000 trail visitors per year could be reached, along with economic benefits of more than \$2 million dollars per year, based on 80% day use visitors at an average spending rate of \$12 per day and 20% overnight visitors at an average of \$70 per day. When the United States celebrates the 250th anniversary of the Battles of Saratoga, the Old Champlain Canal will be one of Saratoga County's most important landmarks.



The Champlain Canal Trail will bring together Saratoga's past, present and future.