

8 Next Steps

Turning this plan into action will require a coordinated effort of public, private and non-profit partners. With the 225th Anniversary of the Battles of Saratoga this year, now is the time to organize, develop and implement the Champlain Canal Trail in Saratoga County.

Phased Implementation

Phase 1 – “The Legacy of 225”: These actions represent short-term goals which can be achieved within the next year to develop a foundation for the future.

- b. **Organize.** Establish a non-profit “Friends of the Saratoga Champlain Canal Trail” group to advocate for the trail.
- c. **Adopt this Plan.** County Board of Supervisors should pass a resolution formally adopting the concept of a trail along the Old Champlain Canal.
- d. **Conserve the Canal.** All publicly accessible land, easements and rights-of-way along the trail corridor should be maintained in public ownership.
- e. **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.

Phase 2 – “50 % in 5 Years”: Within the next 5 years, a series of strategically focused projects can result in building more than half of the Old Champlain Canal Trail in Saratoga County:

- f. **Mechanicville – Waterford Trail.** Completion of this section will create a continuous 9mile shared-use path from Waterford to Mechanicville.
- g. **Schuylerville Trail.** The existing path should be upgraded to a crushed stone surface from Lock 5 through the Village of Schuylerville to the Schuyler House. Funding for the Dix Bridge should be secured.
- h. **Stillwater / Saratoga Battlefield Trail.** The existing county-owned right-of-way should be developed into a trail and serve as a model for addressing issues raised by adjacent landowners. First priority should be given to the section between Bemis Heights and Lohnes Road adjacent to the Saratoga National Historical Park.

Phase 3 – “Plan 250: Complete the Trail.” Within the next 10 years, an off-road Old Champlain Canal Trail should be completed in Saratoga County, and the corridor should continue to be enhanced over the next 25 years. This trail will serve as a symbol of the County’s patriotism and community spirit. Recommended actions include:

- i. **Right-of-way:** Conduct a comprehensive inventory of all potential rights-of way along the 10 miles of existing segments, including potential utility, abandoned rail, state highway and other lands.
- j. **Work with Willing Donors:** Establish easements, tax benefits and other opportunities for creating public access along the entire corridor, in cooperation with adjacent landowners.
- k. **Establish a “Made in Saratoga” Trail:** Incorporate local materials such as crushed stone, sod, dairy products and sculpture as an integrated element of design.
- l. **Implement Major Projects:** The Dix Bridge, the 10 miles of ‘missing links,’ connections to Lakes to Locks Passage, new trailheads and a comprehensive interpretation and marketing program will be integrated in this phase.

By the time of the 250th anniversary of the Battles of Saratoga, the entire trail should be completed in Saratoga County. By that time, similar projects will develop along the entire New York State Canalway Trail System, creating a more than 500 mile network across the state. Saratoga County will be in the unique position of being the only county in the state which has trails along both the Erie and Champlain Canals. The Lake George Bikeway, Glens Falls Feeder Canal, Saratoga Heritage Trail and the Mohawk-Hudson Bikeway will create an interconnected system of alternative transportation, recreation and heritage tourism. This will be the legacy that Saratoga County - and the entire nation - celebrates in 2027.



A sign of the future for Saratoga County...