



October 17, 2008

Mr. Pete Rea  
Rail Coordinator  
NYS Department of Transportation, Region 1  
328 State Street  
Schenectady, NY 12305

Dear Mr. Rea:

For two decades Parks & Trails New York has advocated for development of a statewide network of multi-use trails connecting communities, parks and other destinations, with the Canalway Trail System, including the Champlain Canal Trail, as its backbone. As New York State grapples with the high price of gasoline and other fuels, chronic health issues associated with physical inactivity (including heart disease, diabetes and obesity), the impact of global climate change, and a sagging upstate economy, the need for alternative transportation and local recreational opportunities is greater than ever.

Therefore, we have a strong interest in the potential for making a key regional trail linkage part of the proposed redevelopment of the Mechanicville Rail Yard in and around the Town of Halfmoon.

As you undoubtedly know, the Zim Smith Trail currently extends from the Village of Ballston Spa across four towns and the Village of Round Lake to its eastern terminus at Coons Crossing in Halfmoon and is widely viewed as the trunk trail for a developing trail system in Saratoga County. Since that trail's construction, there has been great interest within the county in extending it eastward to Mechanicville to connect the county's western population centers (Saratoga Springs, Clifton Park, Ballston Spa, etc.) with the Champlain Canal Trail corridor and the eastern communities of Mechanicville, Stillwater and Waterford. Such a connection is part of the Town of Halfmoon's trail plan as well as the Saratoga County Green Infrastructure Plan.

The ideal location for this link is along the edge of the Mechanicville Rail Yard because of its directness, the absence of topographic and environmental barriers, and the need to deal with only one landowner.

The proposed \$40 million redevelopment of the rail yard, which would be undertaken in part with public funds, thus presents an extraordinary opportunity to make this trail connection. It can

be done in conjunction with the full extent of the proposed redevelopment. At its closest point to active track, following the county sewer line ROW near the western end of the rail yard, the trail route would still meet guidelines for rail/trail separation distance.

We urge NYSDOT to request inclusion of a trail ROW from the Zim Smith Trail at Coons Crossing along the southern edge of the rail yard to the Elizabeth Street Extension ROW as part of the mitigation measures for this project, thus establishing a true intermodal facility that serves multiple needs and goals of communities in Saratoga County. We also believe that consideration should be given to a possible connection northward across the rail corridor to link with the Stillwater Trail.

Thank you for considering this request. If you require additional information, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Robin Dropkin".

Robin Dropkin  
Executive Director

cc: Mike Wyatt  
Julie Stokes