

2024

Empire State Trail Town Action Agenda



City of Amsterdam

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Table of Contents

Trail Town Program	3
Goals & Objectives	3
Trail Town Framework	4
Program Process	5
2024 Trail Town Highlights	6
Existing Conditions	7
About Amsterdam	7
Empire State Trail Inventory	8
Trail User Counts	9
Plans & Upcoming Projects	11
Assessment	13
Trail-oriented services and amenities	13
Bicycle and pedestrian experience	17
Wayfinding signage and informational resources	19
Welcoming atmosphere and community character	21
Recommendations	22
Implementation	26



The Trail Town Program

Parks & Trails New York (PTNY) and the New York State Canal Corporation developed the Empire State Trail Town program to help upstate communities recognize and capture the economic value of the Empire State Trail, the nation's longest single-state multi-use trail. With the 750-mile trail's completion in 2020, New York's Canalway Trails form a big part of one of the state's premier outdoor recreation destinations. The Empire State Trail Town program was designed to build capacity and guide communities through the process of identifying ways they can transform into trail-friendly destinations where visitors want to stay, explore, and spend.

The Empire State Trail Town program began in 2022 with the city of Brockport as a pilot community, and continued in 2023 with three additional communities: City of Lockport, city of Newark and City of Rome. The program now has eight participating communities, with the addition of the city of Amsterdam and City of Little Falls along the Erie Canalway Trail and Village of Schuylerville

and Town of Fort Edward along the Champlain Canalway Trail in 2024. Having been selected for their already high quality trail-based services and amenities and demonstrated commitment to policies geared towards trail users, the selected communities worked with PTNY throughout the year to identify opportunities and develop the tools to more effectively harness visitation to the renowned long-distance trail in their backyard and enhance quality of life for their residents.

Over the course of nine months, Amsterdam worked with PTNY to develop a network of local partners committed to the Trail Town initiative, conduct research and assessment, and develop promotional resources and strategies. In this document, the work completed through the course of the program is summarized to guide Amsterdam's advancement as a Trail Town. Upon adoption of this Action Agenda, Amsterdam will be recognized as an officially certified Empire State Trail Town.

Empire State Trail Town Goals

Make communities more trail-user friendly.

- Increase the frequency with which residents and visitors walk or bike both on and off the trail.



Help communities realize economic benefits of the Canalway Trail.

- Increase the number of Canalway Trail users who spend money either at retail businesses or at a bar or restaurant as part of their trip
- Increase the number of Canalway Trail users who choose the community for an overnight stay



Empire State Trail Town Objectives

NETWORK: Form a network of individuals (including representatives of the municipality, engaged residents, volunteers, and members of the business community) dedicated to the Trail Town vision

RESEARCH: Conduct research and assessment to identify each Trail Town's strengths and areas for improvement, as well as understand current use of the trail

PROMOTION: Increase the visibility of the Trail Towns as destinations

ADVANCEMENT: Establish a plan and process to guide continued work toward Trail Town goals beyond the direct assistance provided by PTNY



Trail Town Framework

What makes a great Trail Town? Thriving vibrant Trail Towns are places where trail users can find the amenities and services they need, where they can safely travel by foot or by bike around the community (often their primary mode of transportation), where they can find information out about what's around them, whether ahead of time online or in the moment through wayfinding and welcome centers, and finally, probably the least tangible, is that the community is welcoming and has a unique sense of character.

Thriving, vibrant Trail Towns are successful because they exhibit four key qualities and invest in these areas. Each of the Trail Towns embarked on their journey with these four qualities in mind:

Trail-oriented services and amenities

Trail users can find exactly what they need, whether they're just passing through, spending a few hours exploring, or staying the night.

- Restrooms & drinking water
- Overnight accommodations - indoor lodging and camping
- Food and drink - especially local fare
- Attractions/destinations
- Information center
- Bike amenities

High-quality and safe bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure

Pedestrians and cyclists can safely travel around the community, both on the trail and off the trail to explore other parts of the community

- Trail conditions
- Connecting trails
- On-road connections to points of interest

Wayfinding and informational resources

Information is crucial for introducing potential visitors to the community or encouraging residents to get out and explore their own trails, be it ahead of time trip-planning resources or signage and welcome centers that help direct trail users in the moment.

- Pedestrian scale wayfinding signage
- Online & print promotional materials

Welcoming atmosphere and unique community character

Successful Trail Towns embrace and showcase what makes them unique, highlighting local history, culture, events and food. Visitors get to know what makes each town along the trail unique, and have more incentive to visit– and spread the word. Residents for their part get to share the best parts of their community and gain an enhanced sense of local pride.

- Festivals, events & programs
- Public art & history

Program Process & Timeline

After the four selected communities for 2024 were finalized, the technical assistance provided through the program began with a virtual Trail Town Orientation. This first virtual convening provided an introduction to the program and space to network with the other trail towns in the program.

Following the orientation, Amsterdam’s first task was to form a Trail Town steering committee that incorporated representatives from the village as well as committed partners, local businesses and trail advocates. Amsterdam’s steering committee was spearheaded by a representative of the local non-profit Friends of the North Chuctanunda Creek Trail and the City of Amsterdam’s Director of Community & Economic Development, with support from Montgomery County and other committee members.

With the steering committee in place, Amsterdam was able to begin the first task - a Trail Town Self-Assessment. The assessment encouraged Amsterdam to take initial stock of their recreation and hospitality assets, and to start thinking about the strengths and weaknesses of the village in terms of attracting bicycle tourists and encouraging residents to walk or bike.

In May, a trail count effort was launched to collect information on use of the Empire State Trail throughout the summer. With input from the Trail Town steering committee, PTNY installed an EcoVisio electronic trail counter on the Erie Canalway/Empire State Trail on the east side of the city on the stretch of trail parallel to Cleveland Avenue.

In June, PTNY held a two-part participatory workshop in Amsterdam with an evening Placemaking Workshop on June 17th and a morning Bike Around Workshop the following day. The Placemaking Workshop provided a hands-on opportunity for 15 Trail Town steering committee members and other interested community members to learn more about outdoor recreation tourism and continue the conversations that the Trail Town Self-Assessment started. Through an interactive mapping exercise, workshop participants identified Amsterdam’s top assets (including places, businesses, events, and experiences), as well as gaps or areas for improved connectivity, services, or amenities.



The following morning, PTNY led a group a bike ride around Amsterdam to highlight some of the assets and gaps identified during the previous evening’s workshop. In order to capitalize on the momentum and ideas generated during the workshop, PTNY compiled the notes from the workshops along with

Amsterdam Trail Town Committee

- Dan Gray - Director of Community & Economic Development, City of Amsterdam
- Nigel Ghotbi - Owner, Amsterdam Castle
- Antonio Lanzi - Owner, Lorenzo’s Southside
- Jacki Murphy - Friends of the North Chuctanunda
- Mike Medwid - St. Mary’s Hospital
- Michelle Pawlik - City of Amsterdam
- Alex Kuttesch - Senior Planner, Montgomery County
- Rob Spagnola - Tourism, Marketing & Recreation Director, City of Amsterdam
- Morgan McClary - Director of Tourism & Communications, Montgomery County
- John Naple - Friends of the North Chuctanunda
- Chris Carpenter - 4th Ward Alderman, City of Amsterdam
- Colin Schwalbach - Schwalbacher Brewing
- Alex Kuchis - Chairman, Town of Amsterdam Planning Board
- Edward Agans - Bike Barn Cycles
- Jane Constantine - Amsterdam resident
- Joe McDermott - Friends of North Chuctanunda
- Audrey Egelston - Friends of North Chuctanunda
- Robert Purtell - Friends of North Chuctanunda

several short-term recommendations, outlining actions that the city could take immediately to improve the trail user experience and start better capitalizing on trail tourism that same summer.

One of the recommendations that came out of the workshop was to continue to educate local businesses on the value of trail tourism. To that end, Amsterdam continued outreach to encourage more businesses to apply to be certified as “Bike Friendly New York” businesses. As a result of these efforts, Amsterdam now has two Bike Friendly New York certified businesses. More information about the certification program and the participating businesses is provided later in this document.

During the second week of July, Amsterdam’s Trail Town Committee helped coordinate a welcome celebration for riders on PTNY’s annual Cycle the Erie Canal bike tour. The event introduced over seven hundred cyclists to Amsterdam, welcoming riders into the city with cheers, free snacks and bottled water. Montgomery County played a role in distributing lawn signs along the trail through the county and city to build excitement and welcome riders.

In August, Amsterdam turned its attention to the next phase of the program, which involved taking a look at its assets with the eye of compiling them into an web-based resource that trail users could use to plan their visits. PTNY used this information to inform the development of [Amsterdam’s Trail Town landing page](#), hosted on the promotional website for the trail, www.cycletheeriecanal.com.

2024 Trail Town Highlights

Even while undertaking this planning process, Amsterdam has advanced several projects and initiatives that contribute to its trail friendliness and its designation as a Trail Town:

Information

- **Opening of Montgomery County Tourism Information Center** - In May 2024, Montgomery County opened a new visitor center at 54 Bridge St. in Amsterdam to be a hub for information on places of interest across the county. The new welcome center is located just off the trail, and will be a resource for travelers passing through or wishing to explore more of Amsterdam.

Infrastructure

- **Re-painting trail crosswalks** - Identified as a priority during the Trail Town Placemaking Workshop, the city repainted key crosswalks in the Southside neighborhood in September, including where the Empire State Trail crosses Bridge St.
- **Wireless e-bike chargers revealed in Amsterdam** - In July 2024, CDTA and Re:Charge launched the nation’s first wireless charging solution for electric bikes and scooters to support the Capital District Transportation Authority’s CDPHP Cycle! bikeshare program on Bridge St.
- **Purchase of 3 bike racks and bike repair station for the Southside** - Montgomery County purchased three bike racks to be installed in spring 2025 around the Southside business district. The County also purchased multi-tools as giveaways for riders that visit the Montgomery County Tourism Information Center.



Events

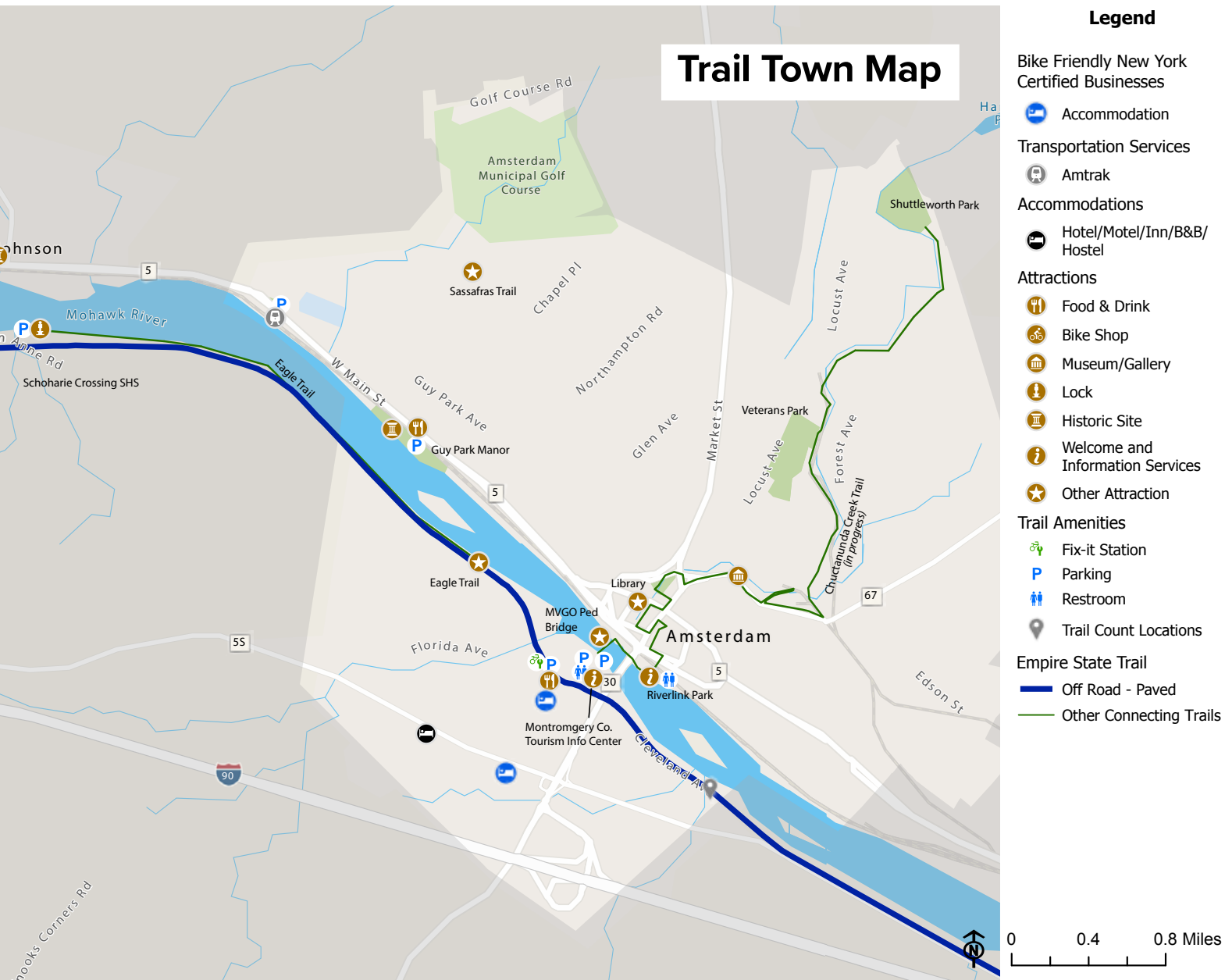
- **Annual National Trails Day Celebration** - On June 1, 2024, the Friends of the North Chuctanunda Creek Trail hosted the second annual National Trails Day celebration, with the purpose of hosting a community forum to bring together local organizations with similar purpose to provide information to the public as to what is available in the region.
- **Cycle the Erie Welcome Celebration** - In July, the Amsterdam Trail Town Committee and Montgomery County organized a table to celebrate and welcome 600+ riders into Amsterdam on Parks & Trails New York’s Cycle the Erie Canal bike tour.

Existing Conditions

This section provides an overview of the community, an inventory of the Erie Canalway/Empire State Trail, a trail count analysis, and a summary of existing plans and upcoming projects.

About Amsterdam

The mill town of Amsterdam is the only Mohawk Valley city built on both sides of the Mohawk River. The former “Carpet City” grew along the North Chuctanunda Creek that plunges through Amsterdam to the Mohawk River. The city is home to about 18,000 residents (2020 US Decennial Census).

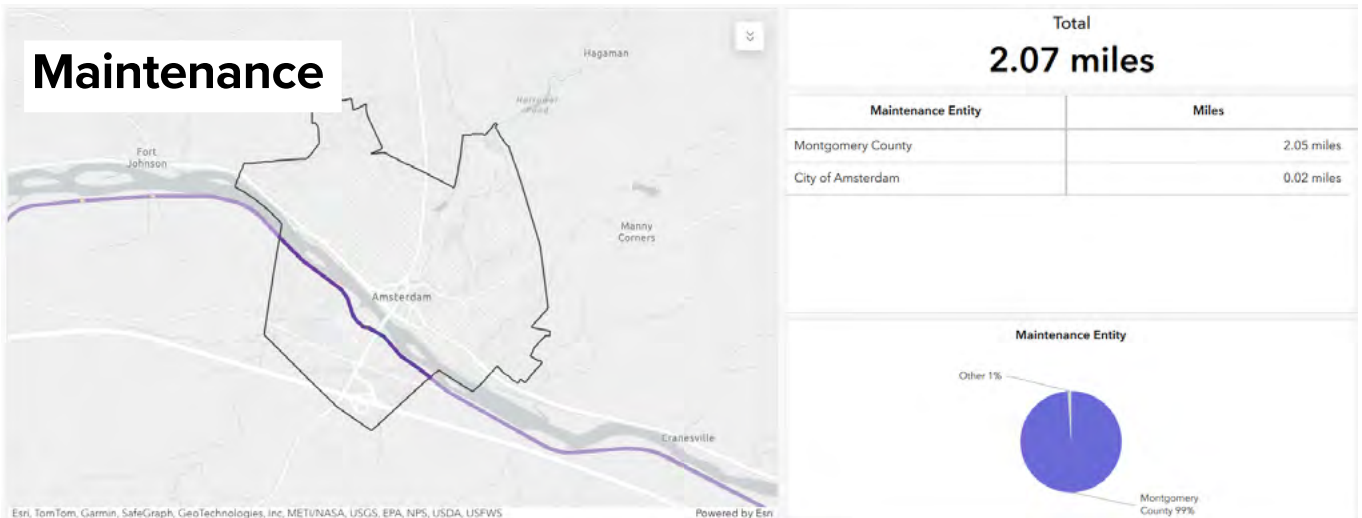
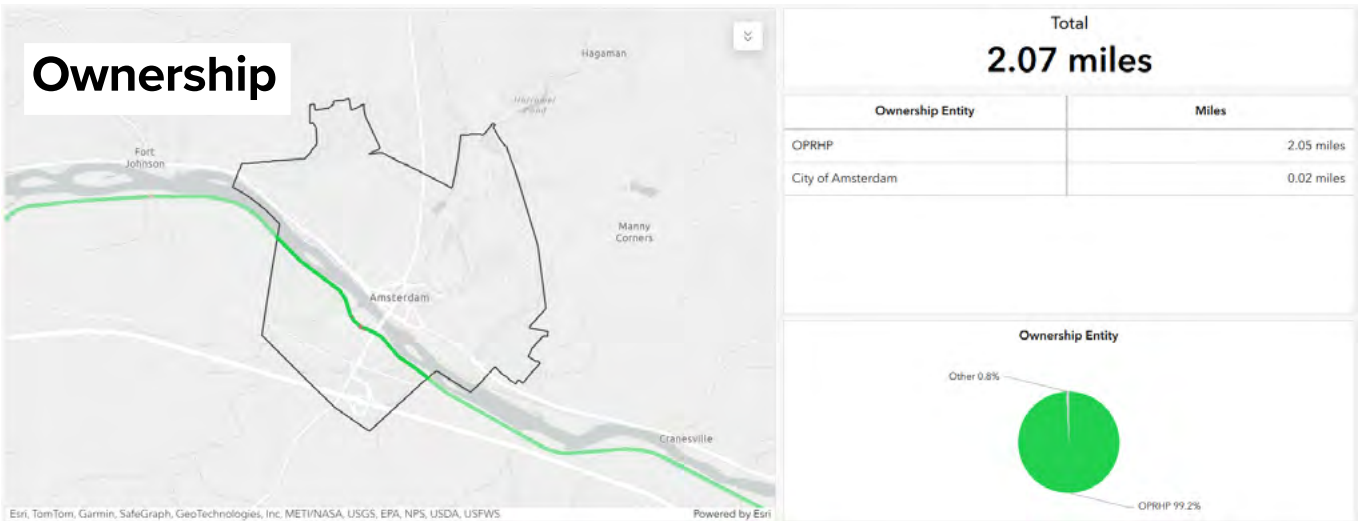
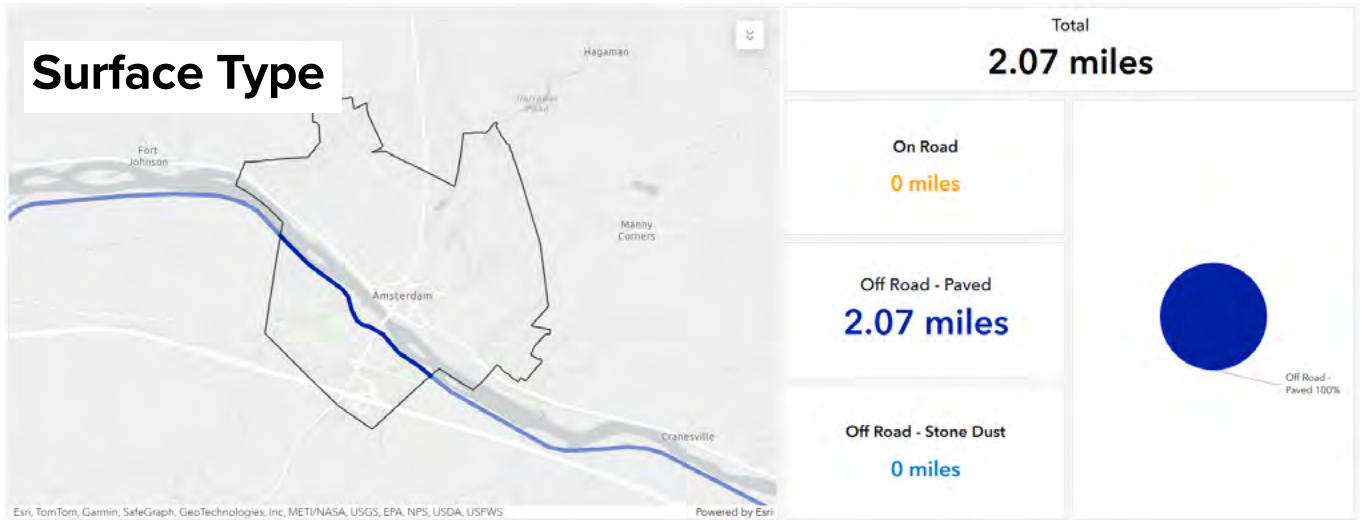


Empire State Trail Inventory

Surface Type, Ownership & Maintenance Responsibilities

Amsterdam is home to 2.07 miles of the Empire State Trail. All of it is completely paved and off-road through the city. The entire stretch of trail is owned by NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, and is maintained by Montgomery County. Road crossings are owned and maintained by the City of Amsterdam.

Data source: [NYS Canal Corporation Trail Data Inventory \(2021\)](#)



Trail Use Counts & Analysis

Trail use data was collected to help understand the potential market for trail user-oriented services and amenities, as well as when people are using the trail so that the community can best serve their needs.

PTNY installed an EcoVisio electronic trail counter on the Erie Canalway Trail/Empire State Trail to the east of downtown along Cleveland Avenue. The counter was installed for almost six months, from May 21, 2024 to November 16, 2024. The electronic trail counter used infrared pyroelectric technology to count the trail users passing within range of the sensor by detecting body temperature. The counter collected data 24 hours a day at one hour intervals for the period it was installed. Analysis was then conducted on the trail use data from the electronic counter to determine trends across different time scales. It should be noted that factors such as weather conditions, accessibility of the trail, and special events may have impacted the trail use patterns seen throughout the year.

Monthly & Daily Trail Use

The trail in Amsterdam sees high use from spring until midway through autumn, with the highest use recorded occurring in May. This could be explained by the good weather upstate New York experienced in spring 2024. The highest recorded day was Friday, August 23, with 700 recorded visits. During the summer from May through September, more than one hundred people used the trail on average each day.

In general, weekend use is higher than weekday use, with the most pronounced difference in spring and early fall. During the summer, weekday and weekend use are very comparable. Weekday trail use stayed consistently high during the summer months through the end of September, while weekend trail use stayed high through the end of October. This could have implications for seasonal trail-oriented businesses, possibly indicating that weekday hours can be cut back after September, but services should remain open through October on weekends.

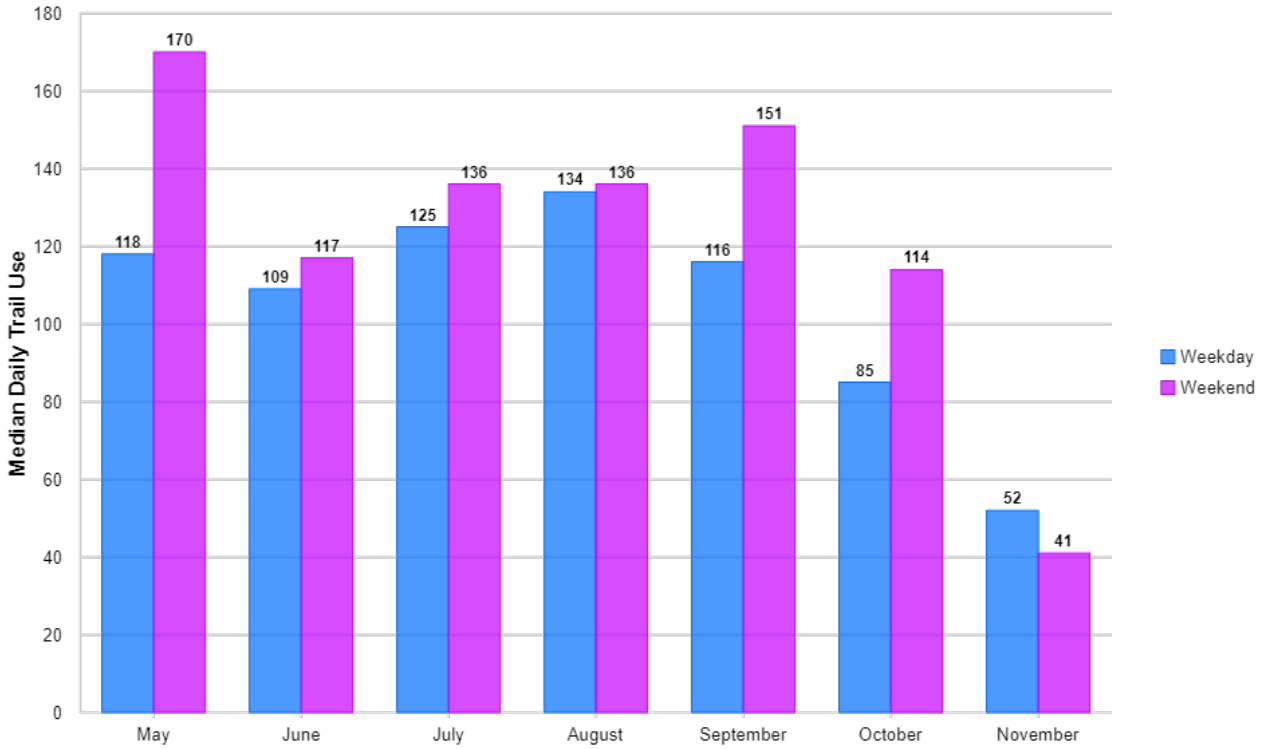


Trail counter installation location east of downtown along Cleveland Ave

Trail Use in Amsterdam by Month (May 21, 2024 - November 16, 2024)

Month	Days Counted	Total Count	Median Daily Use	Median Daily Use - Weekday	Daily Median Use - Weekend
May	11	1,524	128	118	170
June	30	3,433	110	109	117
July	31	4,284	125	125	136
August	31	4,856	136	134	136
September	30	3,912	130	116	151
October	31	2,606	86	85	114
November	16	829	46	52	41
Total	180	21,444	111	109	127

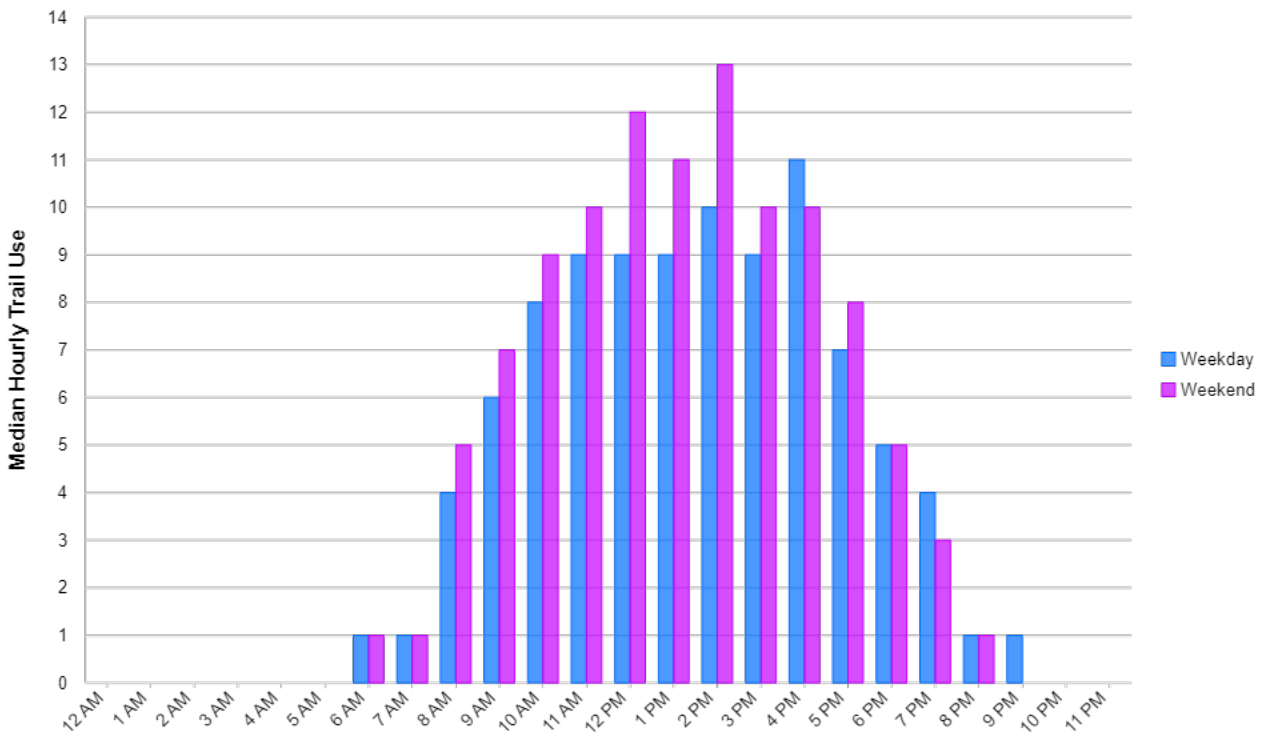
Median Daily Trail Use by Month



Hourly Trail Use

Hourly trail use trends reveal that on both weekdays and weekends, trail use increases throughout the morning until 11am, remaining high until 5pm, and decreasing again steadily through the evening. Weekday use peaks at 4pm, while weekend use peaks in the middle of the day at 12pm and 2pm. Across weekdays and weekends, the trail is used throughout the day, primarily from 8am to 7pm.

Median Hourly Trail Use



Plans & Upcoming Projects

Comprehensive Plan Update

The City received a Smart Growth Planning Grant from the NYS Department of State to complete an update to its 2003 Comprehensive Plan and build upon the momentum of other successful efforts, such as the DRI. The updated plan will identify key goals, strategies, and actions to guide future sustainable growth within the municipality, enhance the local cultural identity, and protect natural and cultural local resources. Community engagement has been underway since 2023.

Downtown Revitalization Strategic Investment Plan

The City of Amsterdam was selected in 2018 to receive \$10 million in funding as the Mohawk Valley winner of the third round of New York State’s Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI). Many of the projects align particularly well with the Trail Town goals:

- **Chuctanunda Creek Trail Expansion Project** - The official opening of Chuctanunda Trail Park in October 2024 — a new gathering spot to downtown Amsterdam — marked the completion of the first Downtown Revitalization Initiative project in the city.
- **NYS Rt5 Closure Project** - The removal of Route 5 eastbound and the creation of a new public gathering space, encouraging economic growth and enhancing community connectivity between Downtown Amsterdam, the East End Neighborhood, and Riverlink Park. Construction will begin once the Route 30 Bridge project (described below) is completed.
- **Public Art Project** - The City has planned to install public art reflective of community identity, with projects underway through a grant-funded contract with the Albany Center Gallery. As part of the project, a 3-D sculpture is planned for the entrance to the Empire State Trail.
- **Southside Public Boardwalk Project** - The elevated boardwalk will be built near the levee wall overlooking the Mohawk River on the edge of the former Chalmers Knitting Mill site. The amenity featuring a variety of seating and open space will connect to the Mohawk Valley Gateway Overlook Pedestrian Bridge. A splash pad, amphitheater-style seating and public art are planned on the western end to expand the versatility of the scenic gathering spot. Construction is anticipated in 2025.
- **Amsterdam Complete Streets & Gateway Project** - The Complete Streets project will transform the city's two primary commercial streets, Bridge Street and East Main Street, into the signature components of a walkable, vibrant downtown environment, drawing residents and visitors to local businesses around the clock. Streetscape improvements include decorative lighting, sidewalk upgrades, and landscaping. Public engagement is underway as of 2024. Construction will commence in 2025.
- **Wayfinding Project** - This project includes the development of a vehicular and pedestrian wayfinding system for destinations throughout the downtown, a public realm art program and the marketing of downtown assets through a unified branding strategy. It is considered a phase 2 project, and will begin once NYS Route 5 eastbound is closed. This project will be crucial for providing wayfinding signage for pedestrians and cyclists from the trail to local businesses and other amenities.



Chuctanunda Creek Trail Expansion project behind the library.

Local Waterfront Redevelopment Plan

In June 2023, the City published a draft Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan, providing a comprehensive land and water use program that expresses a vision for the waterfront area and how to get there. The final plan is anticipated to be published in 2025. Relevant priority projects identified in the plan include:

- **Chuctanunda Creek Trail Completion:** This project includes extending the Chuctanunda Creek Trail south to Downtown and north to the City's boundary throughout the greenway on both banks of the creek. The expansion of the trail would allow for its connection to all neighborhoods, businesses, and public amenities along its path. It would also form a recreational spine from Riverlink Park and the Mohawk Valley Gateway Overlook to Kirk Douglas Park, through the Upper Mill Complex to Flat Rock Park on to Veterans Park, and up to Shuttleworth Park. The trail is envisioned to have multiple creek crossings for increased access and opportunity.
- **111 Erie Terrace:** This site is city-owned. There is interest to convert this property for recreational use due to its proximity to the waterfront, Empire State Trail, and the Port Jackson Boat Launch. There have been conversations about camping or cabins for cyclists using the trail but they have not moved forward.

Multimodal Station & Pedestrian Connector

The City of Amsterdam is planning to relocate the existing Amtrak station that is currently located outside of the downtown and establish a multimodal facility in the heart of the city. The new facility would provide space for all future transit needs, including rail, bus, car share services, taxi service, and bicycle/scooter facilities. The main train station hall will be fully integrated into the proposed pedestrian connector to the Mohawk Valley Gateway Overlook pedestrian bridge. This project can proceed after removal of NY-5 eastbound.

West End Brownfield Opportunity Area

The City of Amsterdam received a Brownfield Opportunity Area (BOA) program grant from the Department of State to prepare a Nomination for the West End Study Area. The study area includes the waterfront on the northern side of the Mohawk River, which has been proposed as a potential location for an “Amsterdam Riverwalk” trail, which would create a connection from the Riverlink Park area west to Guy Park Manor. This connection was studied in the Amsterdam **Riverwalk Feasibility Study (2014)**, conducted by Barton & Loguidice.

Addition of Northbound Lane on Route 30 Bridge

In 2024, NYSDOT was awarded \$5 million through the Federal Highway Administration’s Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement and the Carbon Reduction programs to add a northbound lane on the Route 30 bridge that connects the Southside to Downtown.

Guy Park Manor Restoration

The Guy Park Manor Environmental Education and Resiliency Park, is part of the State's Reimagine the Canals Initiative, a project that will restore the historic manor along the Erie Canal and Mohawk River in the City of Amsterdam and create a new educational facility and community gathering space. In addition to the work being done on the Manor, the second phase of work will focus on the creation of an educational landscape and demonstration gardens that will support public park and recreational programs for the Amsterdam community and visitors, including those traveling on the Erie Canal and Empire State Trail. Originally intended to include a pedestrian bridge to connect the north and south sides of the river, this element has since been removed from the project.



Assessment

The assessment sought to understand the community's strengths and weaknesses in each of the overarching categories as identified in the Trail Town Framework: Services & Amenities, Bike & Pedestrian Infrastructure, Wayfinding & Informational Resources, and Welcoming Community Character.

Trail-oriented services and amenities

This section assesses whether trail users can find what they need while visiting Amsterdam whether they're just passing through, spending a few hours exploring, or staying the night.

- Restrooms & drinking water
- Businesses & attractions
 - Overnight accommodations - indoor lodging and camping
 - Food and drink - especially local fare
 - Attractions/destinations
 - Information center
- Bike amenities

Restrooms & Drinking Water

Restrooms and water are available, but they are not immediately visible from the trail and they are not open consistently or reliably.

Montgomery County Tourism Information Center - Restrooms and water available; Currently open only on weekdays

Riverlink Park - Restrooms and water available during events or when the restaurant is open; Portable toilets are available during the tourism season, although it is unclear when they are open

Bridge St parking lot restrooms - Only open for events

Businesses & Attractions

Amsterdam has some strong local businesses that contribute character to the trail experience. The Amsterdam Castle and Microtel are the only certified Bike Friendly NY businesses in the city. Bike Barn Cycles is also certified Bike Friendly NY, however they are located outside of the city limits. The biggest barriers to increasing the number of Bike Friendly NY certified businesses in Amsterdam have been lack of bike racks, business closures, and inconsistent opening hours.



Bike Friendly New York Business Certification Program

Launched in 2017, Bike Friendly New York (BFNY) is a bicycle friendly business certification program administered by Parks & Trails New York and the New York State Canal Corporation. BFNY aims to recognize and promote businesses that provide accommodations for bicyclists and value them as customers. A wide range of businesses are eligible for bike-friendly certification, including restaurants and bars, lodging, shops, and museums. Amsterdam has three certified Bike Friendly businesses - two hotels and one bike shop.



At the most basic level, businesses must meet the following requirements:

1. Have a physical location, which is open to the general public and has hours of operation clearly posted at the location and/or online.
2. Be located near, and easily accessible from, a greenway trail.
3. Have an identified parking area for bicycles (this can be a public bike rack, a bike parking area in front of the business, covered and secure bike parking indoors, or another solution)

In addition, businesses must meet a few category-specific criteria. For example, Food and Drink Service establishments must have a menu posted outside and/or online and overnight accommodations must offer one night stays and provide covered and secured bike storage. All criteria can be found at ptny.org/bikefriendly.

Bike Friendly NY Certified Businesses in Amsterdam

Business Name	Category
Amsterdam Castle NY Inc.	Accommodation (hotel, motel, B&B)
Microtel Inn and Suites by Wyndham - Amsterdam	Accommodation (hotel, motel, B&B)
Bike Barn Cycles	Bike Shop

As of January 2025

Accommodations

The City has two certified Bike Friendly NY hotels, but lacks other accommodation options.

Lodging

- **Amsterdam Castle:** Unique accommodations offering an interesting overnight experience for cyclists. The hotel has a storage shed where cyclists are welcome to store their bikes overnight. There is an unwelcoming sign on the front door that says "No Bikes," and no signage directing cyclists to the castle from the street or explaining what the castle is (a hotel). The future of the Amsterdam Castle is unclear, with the building currently up for sale.
- **Microtel Inn and Suites by Wyndham - Amsterdam:** Cozy accommodations, a complimentary breakfast and secure bike storage in our meeting room. The hotel is a good option for cyclists, however it is at the top of a significant hill, and requires riding a short stretch along busy 5S.

Bike storage at the Microtel



Camping

There are no camping facilities in Amsterdam.

Two locations have been identified for potential development as camping facilities, and are briefly discussed here as well as in the recommendations section.

- **Riverlink Park & Harbor:** Riverlink Park would be a natural fit for permitting cyclists to camp, as the harbor already offers many of the amenities that overnight cyclists seek for use by boaters, including fresh water and electrical power (240 volts to 120 volts) for visitors. Other amenities included for visitors traveling by boat are bathrooms, shower, and laundry facilities. The harbor master currently facilitates connections with boaters. Challenges associated with this site include concerns about security and the need to modify the city's permit with NYS Canal Corporation to include camping.
- **111 Erie Terrace:** There have been proposals to convert this property for recreational use due to its proximity to the waterfront, Empire State Trail, and the Port Jackson Boat Launch. There have been conversations about camping or cabins for cyclists using the trail but they have not moved forward.

Warm Showers

Warm Showers is a reciprocal hospitality website and app designed for touring cyclists. Many touring cyclists use the platform to find hosts to stay with while traveling along the trail. There are no Warm Showers hosts in the city or its surroundings.

Food & Drink

Most of the businesses most easily accessed by cyclists are on the Southside. Between Lorenzo's Southside, Shorties, L'Ultimo (only open select Sundays and Thursdays), and Herk's Tavern, trail users can usually find lunch, dinner, and bar fare. Lorenzo's Southside is a particularly great asset, with its trailside location, shared parking lot with the trailhead, and reputation for great food. Drifter's, the restaurant in Riverlink Park, is another spot that cyclists are likely to visit, however it does not have reliable opening hours or a consistent online presence.

A few challenges preventing Amsterdam from offering a high-quality food & drink scene for cyclists include:

- Limited bike parking options
- Businesses outside of the Southside or Riverlink Park are difficult to access by bike
- No businesses in the Southside area are open for breakfast
- Recent closures of businesses in the Southside neighborhood

Destinations & Attractions

The City of Amsterdam blends interesting history with the natural beauty of its waterways, and offers various ways for visitors to experience both.

Guy Park Manor: A historic house built in 1774 in Amsterdam, NY. It was constructed in the Georgian architectural style for Guy Johnson, the nephew and son-in-law of Sir William Johnson, the British Superintendent for Indian Affairs in colonial New York. The House played a significant role in the Revolutionary War and has been preserved as an Historic Site. The manor's reconstruction, initiated in 2023, is the anchor of a 11-acre resilience park planned for sustainability and community use. Blending heritage with innovation, the park features flood management, native landscaping and recreational spaces delivering a dynamic hub where history and resilience meet.

Mohawk Valley Gateway Overlook Pedestrian Bridge: Spanning 511 feet over the Mohawk River, this impressive bridge gives the history of Amsterdam, displays artwork, and connects us to the Mohawk River. Opened in August 2016, the bridge connects Riverlink Park on the north shore to Bridge Street on the south shore.

Waterfalls along the Chuck: The cascading falls of the Chuctanunda Creek are a highlight, with great views and a nice spot to rest right behind the Amsterdam Free Library and Post Office on the north side of the river.

Other recreational amenities & trails:

Southside:

- Kayak launch at Port Jackson Boat Launch
- Eagle Trail: This waterfront nature trail along the Mohawk River provides scenic views of the river along the historic towpath of the Erie Canal from Yankee Hill Lock to Port Jackson—the south side of Amsterdam. Use of the trail is provided by the Friends of Schoharie Crossing who have adopted this section of river front and the Montgomery County Soil and Water Conservation District.

North of the river:

- Riverlink Park
- Chuctanunda Creek Trail (described on page 17)

Trails and parks not directly accessible from the Empire State Trail:

- Sassafras Trail: Hiking trail behind the former Clara S. Bacon School at 40 Henrietta Boulevard used for bird watching. The school was closed and sold but the trail is still open to the public.
- Walter Elwood Museum
- Shuttleworth Park
- Amsterdam Municipal Golf Course



Information Center

The new Montgomery County Tourism Information Center is the primary visitor information hub for the trail at 54 Bridge St. Currently the hours are May-September, 9-4 Mon-Friday and occasionally Saturdays. Amenities include a bike pump, restrooms, water, food and lodging information, Wi-Fi and cyclist amenities.

Bike Amenities

Bike parking

There is a limited number of bike racks in the city, especially for businesses. The existing bike racks are located at the EST trailhead, the MVGO bridge, and a few of the parks.

Bike shops

- Bike Barn Cycling & Fitness (8+ miles away from the trail)
- Spike's Trikes (specialty tricycles, open by appointment only)

Fix-it Station

There is one fix-it station at the EST trailhead, although the air pump is broken. There is a pump and tools available at Montgomery County Tourism Information Center, but no way for cyclists to find out about it. An additional fix-it station has been purchased and is going to be installed in 2025.

Bike share/bike rental

There is one CDPHP Cycle! station at the south end of the MVGO bridge.



High-quality and safe bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure

This section looks at the extent to which pedestrians and cyclists can safely travel around the community, both on the trail and off the trail to explore other parts of the community, looking specifically at

- Erie Canalway/Empire State Trail conditions
- Other trails
- On-road connections to points of interest

Erie Canalway/Empire State Trail Conditions

- Generally good condition of the trail through the City of Amsterdam
- The trail east of the City of Amsterdam’s boundary is very bumpy with raised roots and has received many complaints by trail users. This section is owned by NYS OPRHP and maintained by Montgomery County. A capital project to repave it will likely be necessary.

Trail crossings

- Three trail crossings lack crosswalk markings where the trail crosses the roadway - Broad St, Minaville St, Arch St
- Stop sign for trail users at Broad St is vandalized
- No traffic control signage for vehicles or trail users at Minaville St

*Note: According to the 11th edition of the **Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices**, updated and adopted by NYS in 2024, crosswalks are required to be installed where shared-use trails cross roadways (p. 1106).*



Broad St trail crossing featuring vandalized sign and lack of crosswalk.

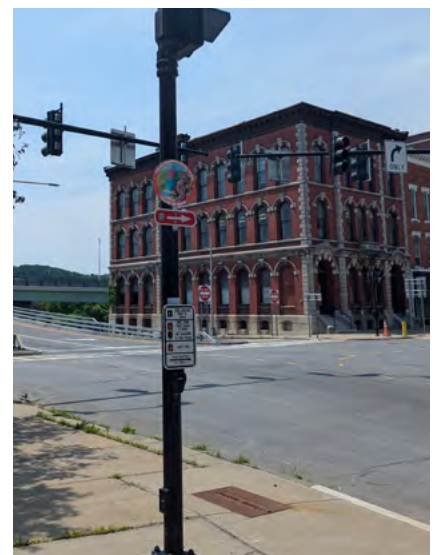
Connecting Trails

Mohawk Valley Gateway Overlook Pedestrian Bridge

The Mohawk Valley Gateway Overlook Bridge provides a high-quality pedestrian and cyclist connection to Riverlink Park. However, from the entrance on the southside, there is no information about where the bridge goes, and there is no cycling connection from Riverlink Park to Amsterdam's downtown.

Chuctanunda Creek Trail

The Chuctanunda Creek Trail is a 4-mile walking and biking route that winds through Amsterdam from the MVGO bridge north to the historic Power House building, with an extension to Shuttleworth Park. Some sections of the trail are off-road greenway trails, but the majority through downtown is a signed route, and often does not have facilities for cyclists. There are still quite a few gaps in the trail.

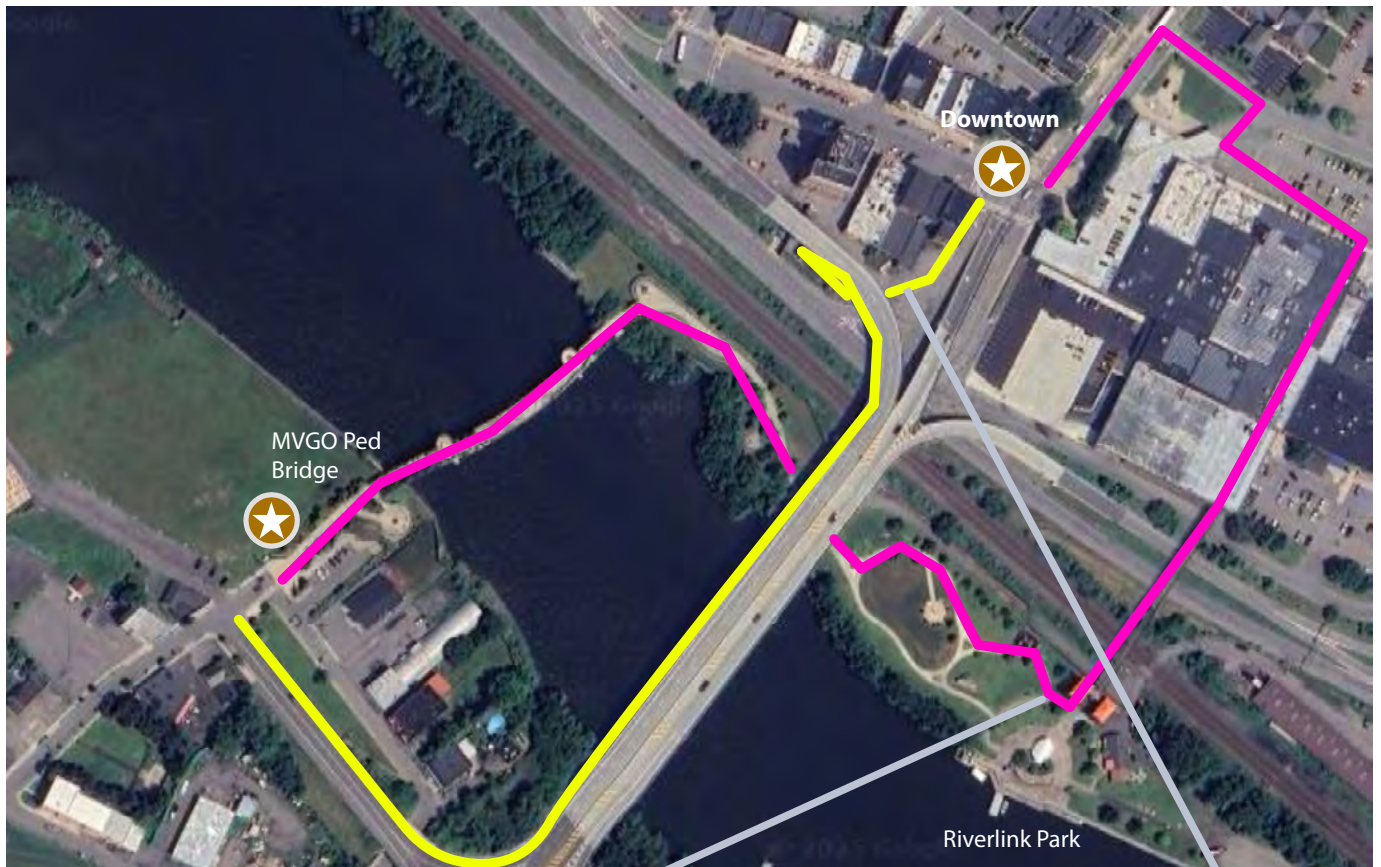


Connecting to Key Destinations

Connecting from ECT/EST to Downtown Amsterdam:

There are significant barriers between the ECT/EST on the south side and downtown on the north side - the Mohawk River, Route 5, and the railroad tracks. There are two ways to get there, each with their own challenges.

- **Via Mohawk Valley Gateway Overlook Bridge:** The bridge provides a good connection to Riverlink Park, but connecting from Riverlink Park to Downtown is more difficult. The stairs to the pedestrian bridge over the railroad tracks are a barrier to cyclists and the elevator is unreliable.
 - There is no signage at the stairs/elevator to indicate that this bridge is the way to reach downtown.
 - There is no signage on the elevator stating that bikes are welcome and no bike racks at the bottom of the stairs to allow cyclists to lock their bikes and proceed on foot.
- **Via Sidewalk on Route 30 bridge:** As an alternative to using the MVGO bridge to reach the north side, the sidewalk along Route 30 provides a relatively easy alternative for accessing downtown, although it is not built for cyclists and google maps will not direct cyclists or pedestrians that way. The pedestrian ramp on the north side was also overgrown when the assessment was performed.



Connecting from the ECT/EST to Southside business district:

The trail runs directly through the Southside business district. While connecting roads generally have sidewalks, they do not have any bicycle infrastructure. Despite the lack of bike facilities, they are generally low-traffic and easily navigable by bike. The Complete Streets upgrades for Bridge St will help make this corridor much more welcoming.

Connecting from the ECT/EST to Route 5S businesses:

There are quite a few businesses trail users may wish to visit on Rt 5S, including the Microtel Inn and Suites (certified Bike Friendly NY), a diner, and a Stewart's Shops. There are a few barriers that make reaching these busiensses difficult:

- There is a significant hill to climb to reach Route 5S
- Many of these roadways do not have sidewalks.
- There is no pedestrian crossing infrastructure to cross Route 5S to reach the businesses on the south side of the road. Ps St does have a traffic light, making it the safest place to cross.

Wayfinding & Informational Resources

Information is crucial for introducing potential visitors to the community or encouraging residents to get out and explore their own trails, be it ahead of time trip-planning resources or signage and welcome centers that help direct trail users in the moment. This section looks at the quality of the signage on the ground and the trip-planning resources available online.

- Pedestrian scale signage
- Online & print promotional materials

Signage

Maps & Kiosks

There are two kiosks with large maps and takeaway printed maps of Amsterdam.

Empire State Trailhead: There is a kiosk located at the Empire State Trail Trailhead (pictured right), although it is facing away from the trail and could easily be missed by trail users.

MVGO bridge trailhead: There is a kiosk with takeway maps similar to the EST Trailhead, as well as smartscreen news kiosk.



ECT/EST blazes

ECT/EST signage on the trail is consistent and well-marked.

Directional Wayfinding Signage

There is limited signage to direct trail users to businesses, attractions, destinations, or downtown. Notably, there are no wayfinding or welcome elements at the intersection with Bridge St, where most cyclists would turn off to explore more of the city.

Gateway/Welcome Signage

In July for the Cycle the Erie Canal bike tour, Montgomery County creates and distributes “Welcome Cyclists” lawn signs along the trail, which contributes a nice welcoming feel to the trail through Montgomery County, including where the trail passes through Amsterdam. Otherwise, there is no "Welcome to Amsterdam" signage or presence.

Interpretive Signage

There is no interpretive signage along the trail in Amsterdam. There is some interpretive signage along the MVGO bridge and other trails. The Cycling the Erie Canal audio tour listed below does provide a way for visitors to learn more and interact with the history along the trail.

Informational Resources

There are a few resources trail users can consult to find more information about Amsterdam and exploring the area's trails.

Print Resources:

The City of Amsterdam has a printed map and brochure of the city that is available at the trailside kiosks. The guide however is not focused on the trail.

Online resources:

Visit Montgomery County website

The County's website provides links to other sites with information about the trail, but does not have information about the trail itself specifically (aside from blog posts). The County does have a few cool resources though for visitors and promoting the trail:

- [Cycling the Erie Canal Audio Tour](#)
- [Video highlight](#) of Cycling in Montgomery County

City of Amsterdam's Website

- **Visiting Amsterdam:** Information about how to access Amsterdam, but the trail/by bike is not listed as an option.
- **Trails:** Good listing of trails, but not quite enough information to plan out visits, with limited information on use, condition or quality pictures of the trail.
- **Chuctanunda Creek Trail website:** Storymap that shows the route and points of interest along the trail, but the links to photos seem to be broken, and the page does not indicate that it is a primarily on-road and on-sidewalk trail (rather than off-road greenway)

As part of the Trail Town program, Amsterdam identified its distinct assets, which were used to create a digital landing page to host all the information trail users need to plan a trail adventure in Amsterdam.

Trail Town Landing Page -
Amsterdam: Small City, Big Heart

Amsterdam: Small City, Big Heart



The mill town of Amsterdam is the only Mohawk Valley city built on both sides of the Mohawk River. The former "Carpet City" grew along the North Chuctanunda Creek that plunges through Amsterdam to the Mohawk River. Its warm residents will always welcome you and gladly assist you in this Limestone City.

Why visit Amsterdam?

- **Guy Park Manor:** A historic house built in 1774 in Amsterdam, NY. It was constructed in the Georgian architectural style for Guy Johnson, the nephew and son-in-law of Sir William Johnson, the British Superintendent for Indian Affairs in colonial New York. The House played a significant role in the Revolutionary War and has been preserved as an Historic Site.
- **Mohawk Valley Gateway Overlook Pedestrian Bridge:** Spanning 511 feet over the Mohawk River, this impressive bridge gives the history of Amsterdam, displays artwork, and connects us to the Mohawk River. Opened in August 2016, the bridge connects Riverlink Park on the north shore to Bridge Street on the south shore.
- **Waterfalls along the Chuc:** The cascading falls of the Chuctanunda Creek are a highlight, with great views and a nice spot to rest right behind the Amsterdam Free Library and Post Office on the north side of the river.
- **World-class Italian Food:** The city's name may not bring up visions of Italy, but between the pizza at Lorenzo's, just steps from the trail, or any of the house specialties at Russo's across the river, you can't go wrong.
- **The Royal Treatment:** Did you know you can stay in a castle just a few hundred yards from the trail? The Amsterdam Castle,

Welcoming Atmosphere & Unique Community Character

Successful Trail Towns embrace and showcase what makes them unique, highlighting local history, culture, events and food. Visitors get to know what makes each town along the trail unique, and have more incentive to visit– and spread the word. Residents for their part get to share the best parts of their community and gain an enhanced sense of local pride.

- Festivals, events & programs
- Public art & history

Festivals & Events

Amsterdam is home to many vibrant festivals, many of which are held along the waterfront near the trail. A full list of festivals and special events can be found on the [City's website](#). A few highlights include:

- Spring Fling: A lively annual event that marks the city's first big outdoor festival of the year, held on Main Street downtown. (Mid May)
- Amsterdam RiverFest: An annual event held at Riverlink Park. (First Saturday in August)
- LatinoAmericano Festival: a vibrant celebration of Latin American culture at Riverlink Park. (Early/mid August)
- ItaliaFest: A popular annual event celebrating Italian culture and heritage. (Early September)
- WishFest: An annual community music festival with a mission to make a difference in the community. (Early/mid October)
- **New for 2025:** "Music on the Mohawk." This program will offer music events five days a week from late June to early September across five municipalities along the Mohawk River/Erie Canalway Trail on different nights. This initiative aims to enhance both domestic and out-of-county tourism. The participating municipalities are Amsterdam, Fonda, Canajoharie, Fort Plain, and St. Johnsville.

Amsterdam has also hosted **Plein Air painting classes** on the MVGO bridge through **On the Canals**, an initiative by the NYS Canal Corporation. On the Canals offers free recreational adventures sponsored by the NYS Canal Corporation and NY Power Authority. Enjoy unique opportunities to experience the Canal waterways and trails. On the Canals excursions include kayaking, cycling, cruising, hiking, outdoor painting, snowshoeing and accessible adventures such as adaptive kayaking.

Public Art

- The Mohawk Valley Gateway Overlook Pedestrian Bridge is an outstanding example of public art, and one of the highlights of visiting Amsterdam.
- Submerge NY project to be sited at Guy Park Manor 2026
- No public art directly along the ECT/EST, although there is a planned installation as part of the DRI Public Art project for the entrance to the trail.



Recommendations

When planning for projects on land owned by the NYS Canal Corporation (NYSCC), all necessary permits and approvals will be required. All signage on land owned by the Canal Corporation must conform to the forthcoming Canal Corporation Design Guidelines (anticipated spring 2025).

Trail Oriented Services & Amenities

Short Term

- Increase the number of bike racks at Southside businesses and downtown.**
 - Refer to the **Essentials of Bike Parking** guide for best practices. Companies like **CycleHoop**, **Dero**, and **Saris Infrastructure** are good options for purchasing racks and have options for custom racks.
 - Pursue the installation of more bike racks, especially in the Southside around businesses near the trail, like at Lorenzo's, Herk's Tavern, Shorty's, or the old site of Guge's Dogs.
- Continue to engage and educate the business community about how to be bike friendly and attract more cyclists.**
 - Continue to certify businesses on the Southside that cater to trail users as Bike Friendly NY. Lorenzo's Southside should be a high priority given its trailside location.
 - Provide welcoming signage at the Amsterdam Castle to direct cyclists into the entrance and welcome them at the front door (providing a bike rack or other friendly signage that indicates that bikes are welcome in the back shed to discourage them from bringing bikes through the front door)
- Expand access to restrooms and water during the tourism season.** Locks that are on a timer or operated via app may be a solution.
 - Extend opening days and hours of the restroom in the parking lot on Bridge St across from the Montgomery County Tourism Information Center beyond special events.
 - Extend opening hours of the RiverLink Park restrooms and ensure water is functioning
 - Extend opening days and hours of the Montgomery County Tourism Information Center to include weekends.
- Continue to elevate the Southside as a recreational destination and amenity for residents by reviving kayak rentals at the Port Jackson Boat Launch**



Upstate Kayak Rental Self-Serve Kiosk in Schenectady County.

Note that this property is owned by the Canal Corporation and any work or installation at this site would require amending the existing permit #77-6-58

Long Term

- Provide an outdoor source of drinking water near the trail that is not limited by opening hours.**
Options could include:
 - Install a water fountain at the Empire State Trail trailhead or provide a water spigot on the outside of the restroom in the parking lot across from the Montgomery County Tourism Information Center.

2. Develop a plan to provide hiker/biker camping in Amsterdam. Options could include:

- Continue to encourage the development of the city-owned 111 Erie Terrace as a hiker/biker campground.
- Offer 48-hour hiker/biker camping at Riverlink Park, capitalizing on the existing amenities of showers, laundry, electricity, and water already provided for boaters. This strategy would likely involve a need for camper registration via a call or online form to the Harbor Master or police department, as well as a patrol or security procedure via an incorporation of the site into a police patrol route or security cameras.

Note: This property is owned by the NYS Canal Corporation, and any changes to use or infrastructure would require a new or amended permit.

High-quality and safe bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure

Short Term

1. Enhance the safety and visibility of trail crossings through the Southside

- Mark all trail crossings with crosswalks per MUTCD requirements, especially prioritizing Broad St, Minaville St, and Arch St which are currently unmarked.

2. Enhance the connection between Riverlink Park and Downtown by ensuring that access to the bridge over the railroad tracks is functional and welcoming to cyclists.

- Install a sign that states that bicycles are welcome on the elevator and ensure elevator is in good condition.
- Install a bike rack at the base of the stairs to the bridge over the tracks to encourage cyclists to cross on foot.



Bike elevator sign at the Monona Terrace in Madison, Wisconsin.

3. Investigate the possibility of encouraging pedestrians and cyclists to use the sidewalk on the Route 30 bridge to access downtown.

- Provide signage on Bridge St that indicates that downtown can be accessed via the sidewalk on the Route 30 bridge, considering marking the sidewalk with icons that indicate that this is a route to Downtown.
- Ensure that the vegetation is trimmed at the base of the ramp up to the Route 30 bridge on the north side.

This viability of this recommendation may depend on the status of upcoming construction work on the Route 30 bridge.

3. Reduce the City-wide speed limit to 25 mph.

- Refer to the [growing list of municipalities](#) that have lowered their speed limit to 25 mph for sample legislation and other tips.

Long Term

1. Resurface the section of the Erie Canalway/Empire State Trail east of Amsterdam in poor condition.

- Work with Montgomery County and NYS Office of Parks, Recreation, & Historic Preservation to pursue a capital maintenance project to resurface the section of trail owned by OPRHP and maintained by Montgomery County on the east side of Amsterdam that is in poor condition.

2. Ensure that plans for the new Multimodal Station & Pedestrian Connector include accommodations for cyclists to access the station and Downtown.

- Options may include an elevator that specifically welcomes bicycles or a ramp for cyclists.
- 3. **Enhance bike and pedestrian connectivity over the river by adding a multi-use path to one side of the bridge or otherwise improve the bike and pedestrian experience on the bridge.**
 - Leverage NYSDOT's plans to add a northbound lane to the Route 30 bridge to enhance the bike/pedestrian experience by potentially widening the sidewalk on the west side to create a multi-use path.
- 4. **Continue to develop off-road greenway trails on the city's north side:**
 - Develop a feasibility study for the Chuctanunda Creek Trail to fully connect it as an off-road, pedestrian and bicycle-friendly trail through downtown.
 - Revive the Amsterdam Riverwalk Feasibility Study (2014) to connect downtown Amsterdam to Guy Park Manor.

Wayfinding & Informational Resources

Short Term

1. **Direct trail users to the Montgomery County Tourism Information Center**
 - Put a sandwich board or lawn signs out on the trail to direct trail users to the Montgomery County Tourism Information Center during opening hours
2. **Provide more information to potential trail users on the City's "Visiting Amsterdam" webpage.**
 - Add a "By bike" to the Visiting Amsterdam webpage, with information for trail users and a link to Amsterdam's Trail Town landing page.

Long Term

1. **Use signage to direct trail users to Amsterdam's amenities and services.**
 - Incorporate pedestrian-scale gateway and wayfinding signage into the DRI Wayfinding Project that will direct trail visitors to the amenities available on the Southside, and at the MVGO, Riverlink Park, and downtown.
2. **Provide enhanced information online about Amsterdam's trails using mapping.**
 - Create an ArcGIS inventory and public-facing map of Amsterdam's trails, indicating what the trail type is (on road/sidewalk, off-road paved path, off-road natural surface path) and what types of uses are permitted. This map can help serve as a planning tool to connect trails and also help the public plan trips.



Wayfinding sign along the Old Erie Canal State Historic Park in Central New York, developed by the Old Erie Canal Working Group, Madison County Planning, and NYS OPRHP.

Welcoming Atmosphere & Unique Community Character

Short Term

1. **Coordinate public festivals, especially those held on or near the MVGO, to incorporate or celebrate the Erie Canalway/Empire State Trail in some way.**
2. **Host a Cycle the Erie Canal bike tour welcome event to celebrate the trail and cycling in the city.**
Note: This may require coordination with the Antique Car Show, traditionally held on the same Saturday
3. **Encourage businesses to “put a bike on it” or otherwise embrace the trail**
 - Ideas could include naming a pizza after the trail; putting bike decorations outside or in the window.
4. **Enhance the gateway to Amsterdam at the crossing with Bridge St**
 - Continue to pursue the 3-D public art project at the Empire State Trail crossing at Bridge Street
5. **Continue to host On the Canals excursions,** with the potential to expand to recreational activities that activate use of the city’s trails.

Long Term

1. **Continue to develop and install gateway elements** on the trail, like “Welcome to Amsterdam” signage or other public art, that lets trail users know that they are entering a place that would be worth stopping to explore.
 - Investigate next steps to paint a mural on the Route 30 underpass that showcases Amsterdam’s history or identity and welcomes riders



Murals along the Rideau Canal Trail in Ottawa, Canada.

Implementation

Amsterdam is poised to become a model Empire State Trail Town, showcasing its rich history, vibrant community, and commitment to enhancing the trail user experience.

» Adoption of this Action Agenda

The City of Amsterrdam is planning to pass a resolution to formally adopt this Action Agenda and form and recognize a Trails Committee to carry out the goals and recommendations of this plan. The minimum number of members is yet to be determined. The committee shall meet quarterly or on as-needed basis.

» Celebrating Certification as an Empire State Trail Town

The Trails committee will determine the next steps to celebrate designation as an Empire State Trail Town. One possibility is to combine it with a National Trails Day Celebration.

» Maintaining Empire State Trail Town designation

- Continue to meet Trail Town criteria as set forth in the [Empire State Trail Town handbook](#).
- Prior to each tourism season (April of each year), the Trail Town steering committee shall verify with PTNY that the information on the Trail Town landing page is accurate.
- Each year, PTNY will host a virtual meeting for all Trail Towns to provide updates about the Empire State Trail and Trail Town initiative and allow Trail Towns to share progress on their action agendas. The Trail Town committee shall send at least one representative and will submit a brief written update prior to the meeting on progress and challenges.

Potential Funding Sources

A sampling of available funding sources is listed below. For a complete list, visit PTNY's [funding webpage](#).

Consolidated Funding Application (CFA) Grants

- [Recreational Trails Program \(Available in odd-numbered years\)](#)
- [Environmental Protection Fund Grant Program for Parks, Preservation and Heritage \(EPF\)](#)
- [Canalway Grant Program](#)
- [Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan Implementation Funds](#)
- [Community Development Block Grant](#)
- [Regional Council Capital Fund Program \(ESD Grants – REDC\)](#)
- [NEW: Municipal Parks and Recreation Grant Program \(MPR\) - Open March 19, 2025 - May 2, 2025](#)

Other Government Funding

- [NYS Canal System Tourism Infrastructure and Events Grants](#)
- [Northern Border Regional Commission \(NBRC\) Grants](#)

Private/Non-profit Funding

- [Rails-to-Trails Conservancy Grants](#)
- [Project for Public Spaces Community Placemaking Grants](#)
- [League of American Bicyclists Community Spark Grants](#)
- [People for Bikes](#)
- [T-Mobile Hometown Grants](#)

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About Parks & Trails New York

Parks & Trails New York (PTNY) is New York’s leading statewide advocate for parks and trails, dedicated since 1985 to improving our health, economy, and quality of life through the use and enjoyment of green space. PTNY works to expand, protect, and promote a network of parks, trails, and open spaces throughout our state for use and enjoyment by all. For more information, visit www.ptny.org.



About the New York State Canal Corporation

The New York State Canal Corporation runs the New York State Canal System, which includes the Erie, Champlain, Oswego and Cayuga-Seneca canals. Spanning 524 miles, the waterway links the Hudson River with the Great Lakes, the Finger Lakes and Lake Champlain. In 2017, the Canal Corporation celebrated the 200th anniversary of the groundbreaking for the Erie Canal, which occurred in the city of Rome on July 4, 1817. The Canal System includes the Canalway Trails, a network of approximately 420 miles of multiple-use trails across upstate New York. The Canalway Trails follows the towpaths of both active and historic sections of the New York State Canal System as well as adjacent abandoned rail corridors. Together, the canals and trails create a world-class recreationway that is a vibrant, scenic, and unique New York resource. To learn more about the New York State Canal and Canalway Trail System or to obtain a free map, please call 1-800-4CANAL4 or visit the Canal Corporation’s website at www.canals.ny.gov.