



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **New Yorkers call on Legislators to Advance “Trails Across New York” Agenda, Extend Empire State Trail to Long Island**

***Grassroots trail groups travel to Albany to call for coordinated planning, sustainable funding,  
and bicycle and pedestrian safety policies to grow New York’s multi-use trail network***

**Albany, NY**— Outdoor enthusiasts and grassroots trail groups from across the state gather today in Albany for Trails Advocacy Day, a day of legislative advocacy on behalf of New York’s growing multi-use trail network.

The day’s activities are organized by New York’s leading trail advocacy organization, Parks & Trails New York, in partnership with Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, Scenic Hudson, the Trust for Public Land, and REI.

Trails Advocacy Day comes at a pivotal time for New York’s rapidly developing trail network. With the massive Empire State Trail project approaching completion in 2020, advocates will outline the “**Trails Across New York**” agenda, including next steps necessary to fully connect the state’s trails network. Key asks include legislation to create a comprehensive trails planning process (A5035 / S4416) and funding to extend access to the Empire State Trail to millions more New Yorkers with a Long Island extension. Trail groups will also be championing regional and local trail projects, and supporting legislation to improve bicycle and pedestrian safety on roads and trails, namely closing the loophole in the state’s Complete Streets law (A6029 / S1549).

Trails Advocacy Day begins with a morning briefing for advocates and remarks from Assemblymember Patricia Fahy and Empire State Trail Executive Director Andy Beers. After the morning program, advocates will ask for support for **Trails Across New York** in meetings with their legislators. They’ll point to both the overall tourism impacts of long-distance trails, as well as local benefits that result from connecting and completing community ‘backyard’ trail sections. They’ll also outline the need for comprehensive trails planning and measures to ensure bicyclist and pedestrian safety in communities across New York.

Slated for completion in 2020, the Empire State Trail will create the nation's premier multi-use trail – a full 750 miles of off-road trail and safe on-road connections. This initiative will secure New York's place as a destination for outdoor recreation and heritage tourism, and contribute substantially to New York's economy. The Erie Canalway Trail, a main component of the Empire State Trail, already generates \$253 million in annual economic impact and supports 3,400 jobs across Upstate New York.

At more than twice the length of the Erie, the Empire State Trail is projected to have a significantly larger economic impact. Extending this marquee trail to millions of Long Island residents will increase these gains, as well as addressing a vital need for safe, off-road recreation and transportation options.

“With completion of the Empire State Trail scheduled for 2020, New York needs a coordinated statewide vision and blueprint to guide future investments in multi-use trails, and a dedicated funding source to set those investments in motion,” said Robin Dropkin, Parks & Trails New York Executive Director.

“The Empire State Trail will make New York a destination state for trails, but it's just the beginning,” said Andrew Dupuy, Manager of Policy Outreach for Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, the nation's largest trails organization. “The Empire State Trail will serve as a ‘spine’ to connect more communities to it and to connect those communities to each other, creating networks of trails and active transportation across the state that spur economic, tourism, environmental, and health benefits.”

“The Empire State Trail, coupled with the Hudson Valley Trail Grants program and Hudson River Valley Greenway, will link communities in the Hudson Valley and New York State with a world-class recreational resource that will help drive our tourism economy, revitalize downtowns along its route, and provide meaningful and safer transportation choices for the state's residents,” said Andy Bicking, Director of Public Policy for Scenic Hudson. “The benefits of these initiatives will be felt statewide, and we support calls for a planning process to identify additional trail opportunities throughout New York.”

“We are committed to providing ways for healthy communities to flourish by protecting close to home access to nature, and trails are a great way to get outside,” says Carter Strickland, New York State Director of The Trust for Public Land. “We urge the state to increase funding for trails, which are a vital resource for New York residents and our economy, so we may continue to extend the Empire State Trail across Long Island, buffer the Appalachian Trail, protect the Long Path and get the route off roads, and develop new community connections to trails.”

Said Becky Smith, REI Director of Retail in the North East: “At the co-op, we believe a life outdoors is a life well lived, and that public lands are for everyone. Trails provide entry points for communities all across New York, and by creating more multi-use trails, you create more access. REI believes in collective accountability – creating onramps for all to find inspiration and purpose outside and to protect and create access to outdoor places. We are proud to be

advocating for trails in Albany and will continue to let the voices of our members be heard when it comes to the importance of outdoor recreation in New York.”

“Investments in the expansion, improvements and maintenance of New York State’s parks and trail system will continue to support New York’s robust performance as a tourism destination, driving economic growth, employment and pride of place for all New Yorkers,” observes Robert Provost, President & CEO of the New York State Tourism Industry Association. “Fast growing traveler segments (family/active/adventure seekers) as well as NYS residents are attracted to New York State’s unrivaled outdoor assets and the ability of travelers to access them on foot and by bicycle.”

***About Parks & Trails New York***

Parks & Trails New York is the leading advocate for New York’s parks and trails, providing a voice for parks and trail users and supporters with decision makers and the environmental community. For more information, visit [www.ptny.org](http://www.ptny.org).

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