

Dear <<Legislator>>,

I am writing to encourage you to support funding proposed in Governor Cuomo's 2017-2018 Executive Budget to construct the Empire State Trail.

By finishing the Erie Canalway Trail between Buffalo and Albany, and connecting New York City to the North Country via the Hudson River Valley Greenway, Champlain Canalway Trail, and several bicycle-friendly on-road enhancements along NY Bike Route 9, the Empire State Trail will create the nation's premier bicycle and pedestrian trail. At 750 miles of off-road trail and safe on-road connections, it will also be the nation's longest trail. 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, public health, and environment.

The SFY 2017-18 Executive Budget Proposal includes \$53 million for Phase 1 of the project, to be split between the Hudson River Valley Greenway and the Erie Canalway Trail.

The 360-mile Erie Canalway Trail, a major component of the proposed Empire State Trail, already demonstrates how trails contribute to economic development. Currently 80% complete as an off-road route, a 2014 study found that the Erie Canalway Trail generates \$253 million in economic impact and supports 3,400 jobs across Upstate New York. Imagine the impact that a 750-mile, statewide trail, more than double the length of the Erie, will have!

The Hudson River Valley Greenway, which is currently 50% complete, will connect popular state parks and historic sites such as Walkway Over the Hudson, FDR National Historic Site, and Saratoga Battlefield National Historic Park to the millions of New Yorkers that live between the Adirondacks and Manhattan. The allure of the completed trail will encourage more New York City residents and visitors to venture north to experience these destinations.

INSERT LOCAL IMPACT OR PERSONAL DETAILS – HOW WILL TRAIL SPUR REGIONAL TRAIL DEVELOPMENT, ECONOMIC GROWTH, AND PROVIDE NEEDED RECREATIONAL SPACE? HOW WILL TRAIL AFFECT YOUR AREA?

In addition to increased economic development, millions of New Yorkers will gain a community space for walking, biking, jogging, and other recreation. This access to fresh air and "screen-free" physical activity will support efforts by health agencies to combat chronic health issues such as obesity and diabetes.

Your support for the Empire State Trail as proposed in the Governor's FY 2017-2018 Executive Budget proposal demonstrates a commitment to community economic development, healthy lifestyles, and strengthened communities. I look forward to seeing Empire State Trail constructed as a sustainable legacy for New York.

Sincerely,

YOUR NAME

TITLE

ORGANIZATION