



NEWS RELEASE

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Bicyclists Bring Business Roundtable and Bike-a-Round Events to Help Utica and the Mohawk Valley Attract Cyclists, September 12 & 13

Two events that aim to help Canalway Trail communities take advantage of the growing bicycle tourist market will be held in Utica, in the heart of the picturesque Mohawk Valley.

On Tuesday, September 12, Parks & Trails New York (PTNY) and NYS Canal Corporation present "Bicyclists Bring Business: Canalway Trail Tourism for Your Downtown!" The evening presentation, which begins at 5:30 PM at thINCubator (326 Broad St, Utica) will focus on the demographics and needs of the bicycle tourist, as well as offering tips for making Mohawk Valley communities and businesses more bike-friendly and attractive to outdoor recreationists. Representatives from PTNY, the NYS Canal Corporation, the City of Utica, Troy Bike Rescue, and Herkimer Oneida Counties Transportation Study will provide updates on the Mohawk Valley's growing cycling network, opportunities presented by the creation of the Empire State Trail, and strategies for realizing the full economic potential of trail tourism. There will also be time for networking and light refreshments, as well as time for general discussion and brainstorming.

Local business owners, elected officials, Chambers of Commerce, Tourism Promotion Agencies, and interested citizens are invited to attend. Attendees will receive a copy of the handbook, [*Bicyclists Bring Business: A Guide for Attracting Bicyclists to New York's Canal Communities*](#), which was produced by PTNY and the NYS Canal Corporation.

As a follow up to the roundtable, PTNY and Utica Bike Rescue will host a community Bike-a-Round on Wednesday September 13. Participants will bring their bikes and meet at 10 AM in the parking lot of Aqua Vino, alongside the Erie Canalway Trail. They'll take a relaxed ride through Utica and on a short stretch of the Canalway Trail, experiencing it all from the perspective of a cycling tourist. Afterward, they'll discuss their observations and suggestions over lunch at Aqua Vino. All bicyclists must wear a helmet.

2017 Bicyclists Bring Business events are organized by PTNY and the NYS Canal Corporation and hosted by the City of Utica, Oneida County Tourism, Oneida County Health Department, Utica Bike Rescue and Homegrown Bike Adventures. Lunch is sponsored by Mohawk Valley GIS, the web mapping firm that constructed the Erie Canalway Trail Interactive Map.

Quotes

New York State Canal Corporation Director Brian U. Stratton said, "The Canalway Trail continues to grow in popularity, both for residents of the 200-plus communities that share the Trail and for an ever-growing number of visitors who come here to ride, to explore and to enjoy our historic canal system. We continue to close the gaps in our Trail because we know a fully connected trail will allow cyclists to ride from town to town, to explore our villages and to enjoy our hospitality, and in turn, they will help fuel our local economies."

Robin Dropkin, Executive Director of Parks & Trails New York, said, "Utica and the Mohawk Valley have so much to offer cyclists, including breathtaking scenery and intriguing history. With the Canal's Bicentennial celebration in full swing, and with funding secured to connect the Empire State Trail to the Mohawk Valley, it's the perfect time to take a look at the impact of cycling and develop strategies that local communities can use to attract more cycling visitors."

Utica Mayor Robert M. Palmieri said, "The City of Utica is a great location for bike enthusiasts to visit and enjoy all the amenities our community has to offer. In partnership with many organizations, we are working collaboratively to enhance the overall biking experience as it is a great quality of life asset and economic driver."

Economic Impact of the Canalway Trail

The statewide Canalway Trail System attracts cyclists from near and far, and communities along the trail are becoming increasingly aware of the economic opportunities that these visitors provide. According to a 2014 study, the Erie Canalway Trail, the backbone of the statewide network, experiences more than 1.58 million visits per year. Spending by ECT visitors annually generates \$253 million in economic impact and \$28.5 million in sales and income taxes and supports 3,440 jobs. Trail visits and cycling tourism generally received a significant boost in 2017 with the announcement of \$200 million in funding to complete the Erie Canalway Trail, and to connect it to New York City and the Canadian border through construction of the Empire State Trail. The new trail system will be the nation's largest.

Parks & Trails New York is the state's leading advocate for parks and trails. Since 1998, Parks & Trails New York has been working in partnership with the New York State Canal Corporation to help canal communities plan, develop and promote the Canalway Trail. Parks & Trails New York organizes the Cycle the Erie Canal bike tour, an eight day ride along the historic Erie Canal that attracts more than 650 participants, now in its 20th year, and publishes the popular guidebook, *Cycling the Erie Canal: A Guide to 400 miles of adventure and history along the Erie Canalway Trail*. In 2015, the organization created a new resource, CycletheErieCanal.com, to assist visitors in planning their Canalway Trail adventures and sharing their trail stories. Learn more at www.ptny.org.

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.nyscanals.gov.

For more information on the Erie Canalway Trail, visit www.CycletheErieCanal.com.