

# BICYCLISTS BRING BUSINESS

A Handbook for Attracting Bicyclists to New York's Canal Communities



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Corporation

Parks & Trails New York, in partnership with the New York State Canal Corporation, developed this Bicyclists Bring Business guide to help communities and businesses attract and benefit from the increasing number of cycling tourists along the New York State Canalway Trail System. The Erie and Champlain Canalway Trails are also now a part of the state's Empire State Trail.

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

Parks & Trails New York (PTNY) is a non-profit organization working to expand, protect, and promote public green space and outdoor recreation throughout New York State. PTNY publishes a comprehensive Erie Canalway Trail guidebook and a digital and print map of the Trail, and maintains the Bike Friendly New York (BFNY) certification program. Since 1999, PTNY has organized the eight-day Cycle the Erie Canal bicycle tour, guiding 650 riders from across the country and the world from Buffalo to Albany. For more information, visit [ptny.org](http://ptny.org).

### **About the New York State Canal Corporation**

The New York State Canal Corporation is responsible for the operation, maintenance, and promotion of the 524-mile New York Canal System. The Canal System features numerous recreation areas and more than 360 miles of Canalway Trail for biking, hiking, and other trail activities. For more information about the Canal Corporation and the Canal System, visit [canals.ny.gov](http://canals.ny.gov).

Since 2005, PTNY and the Canal Corporation have hosted an annual [Bicyclists Bring Business roundtable and bike-around](#) in a community along the Canalway Trail system to help localities and businesses capitalize on the rise in bicycle tourism. These community discussions have provided insights into what works and what doesn't in attracting bicycle tourists, and highlighted the importance of business owners and community leaders in driving these efforts.



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## INTRODUCTION

The New York State Canalway Trail system consists of the Erie Canalway Trail (ECT), Champlain Canalway Trail (CCT), and a number of connecting trails, and serves as the spine of New York's multi-use trail system and the largest component of the Empire State Trail. Communities along the Canalway Trail have many characteristics that bicycle tourists seek: safe, off-road cycling between historic communities, scenic landscapes, interesting attractions, and plentiful services. In addition, detailed maps and route descriptions are easily available, and cyclists have many options for trip length, from day trips to week-long adventures.

With all this going for it, the Canalway Trail has been an economic engine for trailside and nearby communities, and has the potential to be even more so. An [economic impact study](#) completed by PTNY in 2014 showed that the ECT attracts nearly 1.6 million annual visits and generates over \$250 million in annual economic impact. [Updated figures from 2020](#) estimate that the Erie and Champlain Canalway Trails draw over 4.2 million annual visits, and this was before many new stretches of the Empire State Trail (see next page) were opened for public use.

Many communities along New York's historic Canalway Trail are already capitalizing on the bicycle tourism market, working to transform themselves into walkable and bikeable destinations. But many other communities have not yet taken the actions needed to realize the potential economic benefits from bicycle tourists.



### Purpose of this Guide

This guide focuses on how canal community leaders and business owners can strengthen their local economies by tapping into the bicycle tourism market. Doing this will entail:

- Encouraging bicycle tourists to decide to visit a community;
- Ensuring that bicycle tourists can safely and comfortably get to and around a community;
- Meeting the needs and desires of bicyclists with cyclist-oriented infrastructure and amenities;
- Giving bicyclists positive experiences that draw them back for repeated visits and that they will share with fellow cyclists; and
- Getting organized and taking the first steps to build up partnerships and resources.

The following pages lay out strategies for growing the economies of local communities by building on existing strengths and ensuring that communities provide the amenities that bicyclists seek.





## EMPIRE STATE TRAIL

In 2020, the [Empire State Trail](#), the longest multi-use trail network in the nation, was officially completed. Proposed in 2017, the 750-mile-long trail runs along the historic Erie Canal corridor from Buffalo east to Albany, along the Champlain Canal and Lake Champlain corridors north to the Canadian border and south through the Hudson Valley to New York City.

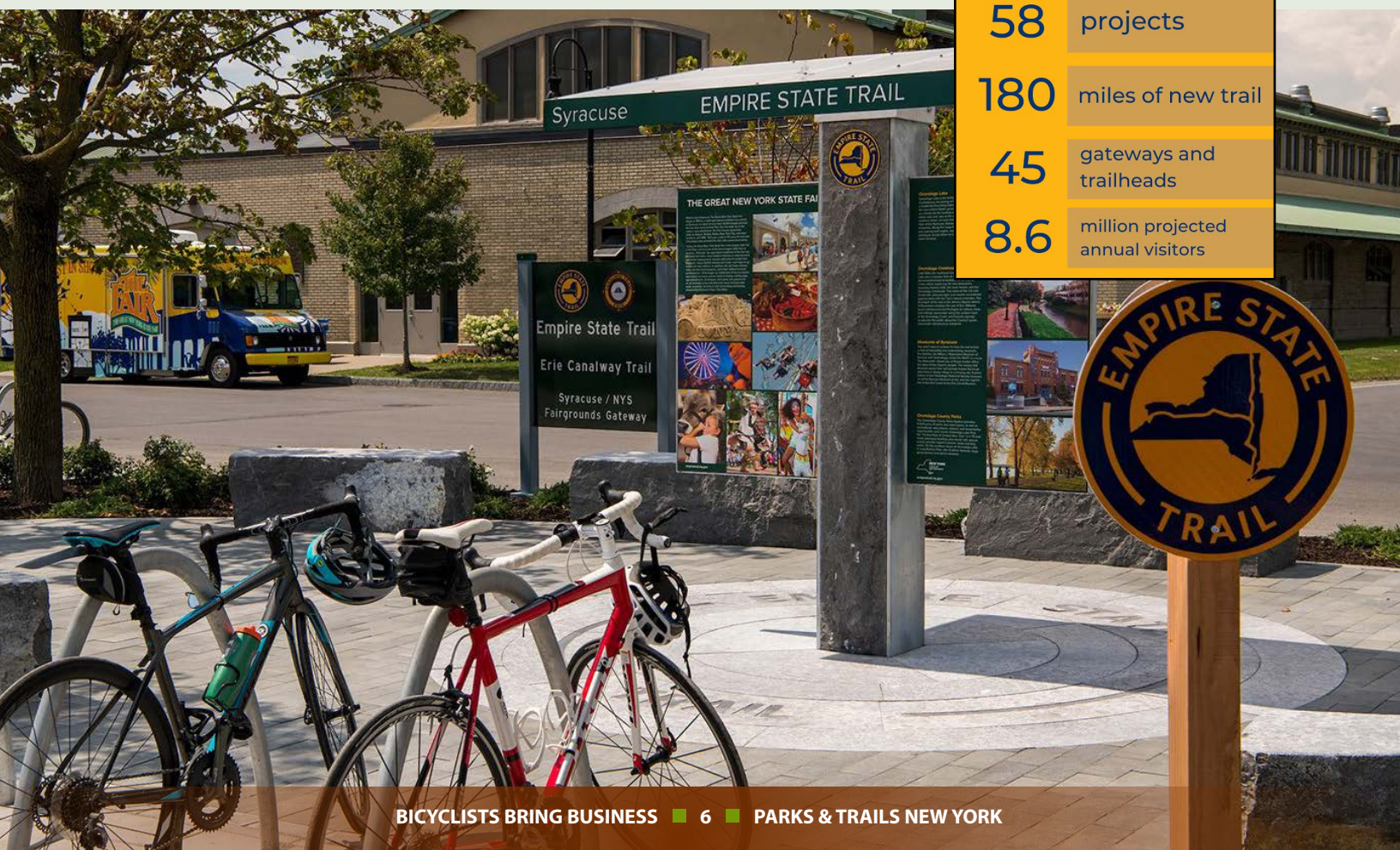
The mega trail, a source of recreation, economic development and tourism, connects 20 regional trails to create a continuous statewide signed route. It is 75 percent off-road to provide a safe and accessible route for cyclists, hikers, runners, cross-country skiers and snow-shoers.

New York's trail network has seen tremendous growth over the past 20 years, underscored by the Empire State Trail. Greenway trails have become popular core community amenities, drawing tens of millions of users statewide and encouraging residents and visitors alike to be more active. They have been especially popular and appreciated during the difficult COVID pandemic. New York State estimates

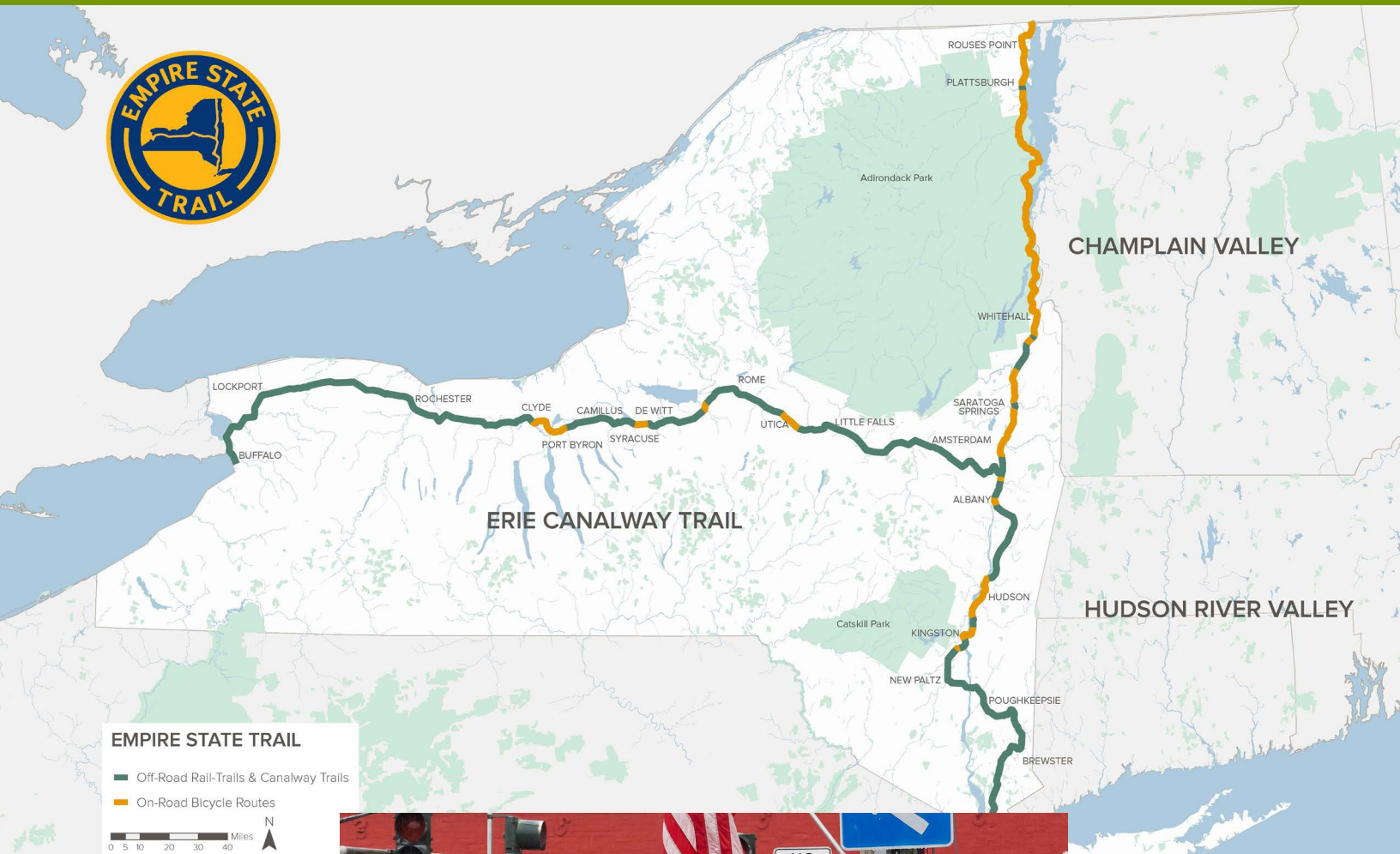
that the trail will be used by 8.6 million people each year, including multi-day adventurers and locals out for a walk.

From 2017 to 2020, work steadily progressed on the 58 projects that comprised the historic \$200 million investment in the flagship trail, many of which benefited the Erie Canalway Trail by closing significant gaps and increasing the amount of off-road trail to 85%. Particularly noteworthy are the achievements as the trail passes through the city of Syracuse, making this section much safer and more accessible with bridges and off-road connections.

The Empire State Trail, and the Erie Canalway Trail as the longest branch of it, has risen into the national spotlight as a prime destination for bike tourists from across the state and country. Communities along the Erie Canalway Trail are in the perfect situation to build on the momentum and high-profile status of the Empire State Trail.









## BICYCLE TOURISM: A VITAL SEGMENT OF THE TRAVEL SECTOR

*"We loved all of the little towns. Our goal was to support small businesses when we stopped...so we sought out open restaurants and services that were local and not chains."*

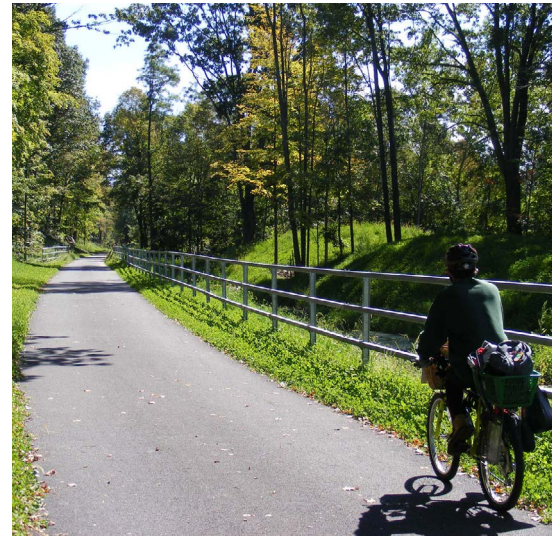
— Christine from Tracys Landing, MD

### Why Focus on Visitors who Bike?

Recreational bicycling is popular and growing, with more people than ever seeking out bicycle touring opportunities. These bicyclists can be a major source of revenue for local communities and businesses along the Canalway Trail. If a destination is appealing, bicyclists will spend more time, and thus more money, in that community.

#### Recreational bicycling is very popular

According to the Outdoor Industry Association, bicycling is the third most popular outdoor recreation activity in the United States, with 48.9 million Americans riding bicycles recreationally per year.<sup>1</sup> In fact, more Americans bicycle than birdwatch, hunt, skateboard, snowboard, and surf combined. Cycling is also one of the fastest growing outdoor recreational activities for young people, leading among youth aged six to 17 as the most popular outdoor activity, and coming in second only to running among young adults aged 18 to 24. Across all ages, people ride their bikes on average 56 times per year – that's 2.4 billion total bike outings per year.<sup>2</sup> On the Erie Canalway Trail and other similar multi-use trails, bicycling is the most common activity.<sup>3</sup>



#### More people than ever are becoming bicycle tourists

The Adventure Cycling Association, a non-profit membership organization with a focus on bike travel, has grown in membership by 20% over the last ten years, with over 52,000 active members in 2020.<sup>4</sup> Likewise, Warm Showers, a free, world-wide hospitality exchange for touring cyclists, has grown in membership by almost 300% over the last five years, with almost 32,000 members from the United States alone, the country with the highest membership. This trend is also not lost on major bike manufacturers, all of whom recognize the rising demand and now produce adventure or touring bikes.<sup>5</sup>





### Bicycle tourists spend money

Bicycle tourists spend money in communities on everything from food and lodging to new experiences and gifts. To start, bicycle tourists need to eat and do so often. Cyclists work up an appetite from biking all day, burning between 480 and 700 calories per hour.<sup>6</sup> They particularly enjoy and seek out unique, local, and sustainable dining options. Cyclists also spend money on drinks—not only do they need a large amount of liquid to stay hydrated, but they also enjoy taking stops to cool off at everything from lemonade stands to breweries. At the end of a long day, bicycle tourists need somewhere to sleep, seeking out B&Bs, inns, hotels, motels, or campgrounds. These tourists love to explore new areas, taking in all they can about the unique history and local flavor of each of the destinations they visit. They do this by seeking out new experiences and by shopping, buying gear for their trip and souvenirs and gifts to send to friends and family.



### Who are Bicycle Tourists?

*"I decided to bike the Erie Canal with my mother and my daughter.*

*We were three generations and three women biking a historic route through our home state."*

— Sara from West Chazy, NY

Bicycle tourists are potential customers who can support local business and bring revenue into trailside communities. They share some common characteristics.

### On average, bicycle tourists are well-educated, older adults from upper-income households

In a study of bicycle tourists in Montana, the average age was 53, with 58% earning \$75,000 per year or more.<sup>7</sup> On the Erie Canalway Trail, PTNY has collected data on End-to-Enders, or those who have bicycled from one end of the Erie Canalway Trail to the other. The average age of End-to-Enders between 2018 and 2020 was 52, and 57% of the riders had a household income of \$100,000 per year or more.





### **Bicycle tourists typically travel in groups of friends or family members**

A study conducted on the Great Allegheny Passage trail in Pennsylvania revealed that approximately 80% of riders traveled the trail with at least one other person.<sup>8</sup> An earlier study of the same trail found that those traveling in groups of three or more were significantly more likely to report an overnight stay.<sup>9</sup> On the Erie Canalway Trail, PTNY research indicates that 70% of End-to-Enders from 2018 to 2020 traveled in groups of two to five.

### **Bicycle tourists are interested in learning about what makes a community unique, and what it has to offer**

Having already chosen a slower-paced mode of travel, bicyclists will typically take time to enjoy what they encounter. Bicycle travelers are 'geotourists,' defined by National Geographic as travelers who are "interested in experiencing distinct characteristics of a place, including culture, landscape, history, and the well-being of its residents."<sup>10</sup> The Erie Canalway Trail, with its rich, living history provides these types of authentic experiences.

### **Bicycle tourists spend money**

Many bicyclists who tour independently carry minimal equipment and pay for indoor lodging and meals. These travelers are sometimes known as "credit card cyclists" because of their willingness to spend money on lodging, food and entertainment.<sup>11</sup> Some bicycle tourists are more self-supported and carry camping and cookware. They may be more frugal but are still likely to make purchases at the beginning and during their trip as needed to replenish supplies. These cyclists may prioritize spending on experiences, such as visiting museums and other points of interest, and are likely to search out bars and other entertainment at the end of a day's ride.

In addition to independent tourists, many cyclists engage in supported multi-day bike rides or guided group tours. Group tours are coordinated by organizations or businesses that make all the arrangements for lodging and food. Cyclists on PTNY's [Cycle the Erie Canal tour](#) spend between \$800 and \$2,000 for their eight-day adventure, depending on the type of accommodations and amenities they choose. Other tours charge even more for trips along the canal corridor, much of which ends up in the communities the tours pass through.





**Bicycle tourists are relatively low-impact visitors**

They do not contribute to traffic, occupy limited parking spaces, or contribute to the noise and air pollution associated with motor vehicles.

**Bicycle tourists provide an incentive for preserving a community's character, heritage, and natural features**

Because of their interest in exploring and learning about the places they visit, they are likely to spend more money in communities that have preserved and interpreted their past. More than 85% of tourists surveyed along the Erie Canalway Trail by PTNY were interested in the history of the canal.<sup>12</sup>

**What do Bicycle Tourists Seek?**

*"We actually started in Toronto to visit friends then rode to Niagara Falls and crossed the Peace Bridge to Buffalo. We explored the history and did genealogy research along the route. The scenery is spectacular and the history quite rich."*

— Bob and Mavis from Fort Collins, CO

Bicycling tourists choose their destination based on using three broad criteria: the actual ride, support and services, and nearby attractions.

**The Ride**

When planning a ride, cyclists take several factors into consideration. One factor is the route itself, including its length, difficulty and type of surface. The physical challenge cyclists prefer varies from easy to moderate (although some do prefer a challenging route). Trails and/or bicycle-friendly roads with low traffic volume and speed are often sought out. Bicycle tours typically take between two and seven days. Daily riding tends to be between 30 to 50 miles per day, with family groups tending toward the lower end and solo or small groups favoring greater distances.





### Support and Services

Cyclists hope to find certain support and services along their route. Especially important is infrastructure to help cyclists find their way, including detailed maps and route descriptions, signage, and route markings. Bicycle tourists expect to be able to easily find convenient places to stay and readily available food options. In general, cyclists will feel more drawn to a place if services have a general “bicycle friendly” orientation.

### Attractions

Nearby attractions and destinations play a huge role in how cyclists choose their destinations. In the context of bicycle tourism, the journey is the destination. Cyclists are drawn toward natural scenery that is visible from the trail or a short distance away. Rural areas are particularly popular, partially because of low traffic volumes, but also due to the naturally occurring scenic beauty in many of these areas. Historic sites, museums, and authentic local establishments such as restaurants, breweries and shops are big hits with cyclists. These sites give a window into the culture of the community and allow visitors to appreciate what makes a place unique.

The Erie Canalway Trail satisfies many of these criteria, providing a 360-mile adventure that is more than 85 percent off-road, showcasing a diverse selection of amenities that bicycle tourists are seeking. The Bike Friendly New York business certification program (see page 15) enables bicyclists to easily find establishments that welcome bicyclists and offer services important to them.





## How Much Do Bicycle Tourists Spend?

*"I enjoyed eating in the local restaurants, and drinking in a couple of craft breweries."*

— Mark from Knoxville, TN

Due to the bicycle's slower pace, bicycle tourists on average spend more time, and 40% more money, in each place they stop than those traveling by motor vehicle.<sup>13</sup> Because the travel cost of bicycling is significantly lower than motorized options (no need for gas, tolls, parking fees, etc.), bicycle tourists spend more money on extras and amenities.

Daily spending by bicycle tourists varies considerably but is consistently higher than other groups of visitors. Some End-to-Enders reported that they travelled quite inexpensively while others reported spending more than \$2,000 for the week. On average, End-to-Enders spend around \$250 a day, traveling on the trail for an average of seven days. A visitor research report conducted by the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor estimated that visitors cycling the Erie Canalway Trail spent an average of \$563 on food, lodging and entertainment per trip, with cyclists spending significantly more than other visitors, including paddlers, sightseers, and day-trippers. Prospective visiting cyclists were also much more likely than other groups of visitors to spend three or more days in the corridor, thus compounding their economic impact.<sup>14</sup>

Data from other trails around the country support these findings. In a 2015 survey of trail users on the Great Allegheny Passage in Pennsylvania, 62% of trail users stayed overnight, spending an average of \$124 per night on lodging. Aside from accommodation, trail users spent the most on food, with groups spending an average of \$79 per day at restaurants or on snacks/beverages.<sup>15</sup> The 270-mile Erie to Pittsburgh trail, also in Pennsylvania, saw similar amounts of spending. More than 75% of visitors to that trail reported having purchased food, drinks, or small souvenirs while using the trail, spending just over \$20 per visit.<sup>16</sup> In a 2015 survey from Michigan, out-of-state bicycle tourists spent an average of \$71 per day and \$520 overall on their visits.<sup>17</sup> In Montana, the average touring cyclist spent \$76 a day and stayed eight days in the state during their trip, much longer than the average tourist.<sup>18</sup>





The longer the trip, the more bicycle tourists tend to spend per day. Single-day riders from outside an immediate area spend four times as much as local residents using the trail, and multi-day cyclists spend twice as much per day as those taking a day trip.<sup>19</sup>

The impact of bicycle tourism is cumulative. A group of three cyclists, each spending approximately \$250 per day on a seven-day trip would contribute \$5,250 to local communities. Imagine a thousand such groups and the result is significant.

### **Bicycle tourism can generate big money**

On a national scale, bicycle tourism generates \$83 billion per year in trip-related spending (not including gear sales), according to the Outdoor Industry Association.<sup>20</sup>

In New York, the Erie Canal corridor is already a popular destination, generating big money for the region. In 2020, the Erie Canalway Trail saw an estimated 3.97 million visits, based on an extrapolation using automated trail counter data. The 2014 economic impact study of the Erie Canalway Trail, conducted when trail usage was estimated at around 1.6 million visits per year, found that visitor spending generated approximately \$253 million in sales, including direct and secondary effects. With nearly twice as many visits as in 2014, the economic impact will only have increased. A 2017 report from the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor shows that canal-related events and tours, including bicycle tours, generate around \$1.3 billion annually. These tours and events attracted 3.3 million visitors in 2017.<sup>21</sup>

These effects are evident in other states as well. An economic impact study of the Delaware & Lehigh Trail, a 165-mile greenway trail in northern Pennsylvania, found that the trail generated nearly \$500 million annually in local economies, through direct jobs, wages, consumer spending, taxes and more.<sup>22</sup> A 2018 trail user survey of this trail found that 37 percent of visitors made trail-related purchases at locally owned stores.<sup>23</sup> In Michigan, out-of-state visitors participating in bicycling events and multi-day trips on recognized bike routes were found to contribute \$21.9 million to the state's economy by visiting local businesses along their ride.<sup>24</sup>





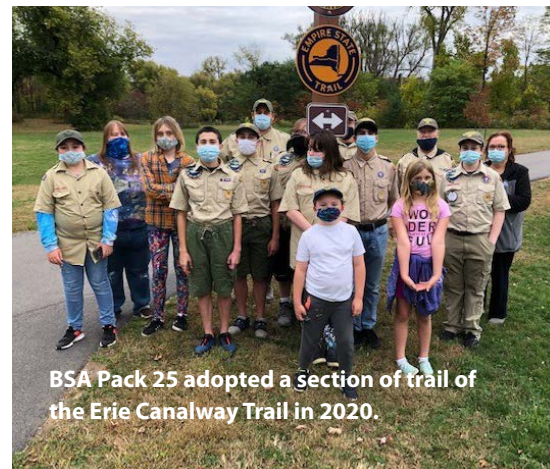
### Current Assets of Canal Communities

The Erie Canal has been called the “Mother of Cities,” as it provided the impetus for the founding of numerous cities, towns and villages along its 360-mile route. Many of these communities were founded where there were locks or where the canal crossed other waterways. These stopping points started as simple trading posts, but as the industrial revolution swept across the state, these communities evolved into centers of manufacturing and industry. However, as the economy shifted, the industrial era of the canal ended and commercial traffic along the canal dwindled. In its place, the canal corridor now primarily serves recreational uses. Many canalside communities face uncertain and challenging economic outlooks, and are in need of new ways to fuel economic growth.

Canal communities are ideally positioned to take advantage of bicycle tourism for several reasons. To start off, the Erie Canalway Trail is a world-class destination, with more than 85 percent of the trail complete as an off-road bicycle trail — and visiting cyclists love it. When cyclists visiting to the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor were asked how they would rate the corridor (including the New York State Canal System, Canalway Trail, canal towns and sites) as a tourist destination, they gave a rating of 8.56 out of 10, significantly higher than other visitors.<sup>25</sup>

In addition, the Canalway Trail system is part of the Empire State Trail, the nation’s longest state trail system, which is bringing new visibility and dynamism to trails across the state. It is clear that long distance trails attract new visitors to nearby communities. In a survey of 91 businesses along the Great Allegheny Passage, a 150-mile rail trail in western Pennsylvania, 97% said that revenue increased since the opening of the trail.

The Erie Canal itself has international name recognition as a result of its iconic and transformative role in American history. Bicycle tourists are part of the new “cargo” on the Erie Canal. The Erie Canalway Trail is once again connecting canal communities to each other and the world. While it once brought natural resources and manufactured goods, it now brings new visitors and potential customers to communities. New York State has recognized the potential for transforming the Canal to meet twenty-first century needs with its [Reimagine the Canals](#) initiative, which recognizes the tourism potential of the canal corridor in plans which are investing \$300 million in the Canal System. Parks & Trails New York, in conjunction with the New York State Canal Corporation, has also invested in the vibrancy of the trail by organizing volunteer programs such as [Adopt-a-Trail](#) and [Trail Ambassadors](#) to maintain and enhance the trail experience, and a Bike Friendly New York (BFNY) business certification program (detailed on page 15).



BSA Pack 25 adopted a section of trail of the Erie Canalway Trail in 2020.



Rendering of a new pedestrian bridge in Brockport by SHoP Architects, one of the projects proposed by the Reimagine the Canals initiative.



**Trails Don't Just Attract Bicycle Tourists**

The Canalway Trail enhances a community's appeal for those looking to visit for reasons other than bicycle tourism. When researching destinations, tourists look for exercise or sightseeing options beyond their primary reason for visiting. Options for outdoor recreation, such as the presence of the Canalway Trail, can be a big draw in getting people to choose to visit towns along the canal corridor.

The Canal System attracts thousands of motorized recreational boaters every year. The boaters, some of whom are completing the "Great Loop," circumnavigating the Eastern United States, will often have bikes on board as they pass through the Canal System.<sup>26</sup> When they reach their evening destinations, they will travel from the boat to restaurants, bars, and shops by bike.

The Canal System is also home to the [NYS Canalway Water Trail system](#), which provides access to the canal by kayak, canoe, and stand-up paddleboard, and connects to the Hudson River Greenway Water Trail. These waterborne users and those who visit the trail by foot are looking for many of the same amenities as bicyclists.





## BIKE FRIENDLY NEW YORK

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 special accommodations for bicyclists. A wide range of businesses can apply for bike-friendly certification, including restaurants and bars, lodging, shops, and museums. BFNY was conceived with businesses located along the statewide Erie Canalway Trail in mind; however, eligible businesses across New York may apply and be certified.

Bike friendliness is not a yes or no matter. Businesses don't have to offer every amenity or make expensive additions to be certified - a business may already be bike friendly and not even know it! There are small, incremental modifications and ways to better welcome bicyclists to an establishment. Visiting bicyclists strengthen businesses by sharing their experiences with business owners, other bicyclists, and their loved ones.

### Going the Extra Mile

What does it mean when you see the Bike Friendly New York logo outside of a business? It depends on the business. Above all, bike friendly businesses value cyclists as customers. They strive to meet the unique needs of cyclists.



To become certified as a Bike Friendly New York business, establishments must meet simple requirements. Beyond the basics, there are a wide range of ways that businesses serve cyclists. To become certified as a Bike Friendly New York business, the establishment **MUST**:

- Have identified parking area for bicycles (preferably sheltered and secured).
- Have knowledge of local cycling routes, local bike shops, bike rentals, and tourist information, or can direct bicyclists to where they can find information on these resources.
- Have a physical location that is open to the public and keeps posted hours.

### How to Get Certified

1. [Review program requirements](#)
2. Fulfill required criteria and bike friendly amenities or services for your business category
3. Complete the [online application](#)
4. Your application will be reviewed and you may be contacted with further questions
5. Receive your certification packet, and put up your BFNY decal (and optional signage)

There is no cost to participate in the BFNY program. Certification is good for three years. Applications are reviewed on a rolling basis.

All BFNY-certified businesses will receive a window decal and have the option to purchase durable exterior signage. Certified businesses are highlighted in a number of ways, including being listed on [CycletheErieCanal.com](#).





## 2 PROMOTION AND ATTRACTING CYCLISTS

*"We have begun riding rail trails, such as the Great Allegheny Passage/Chesapeake and Ohio Canal Trail and the Katy Trail, and the Erie Canal was next on our list. We had heard, by word of mouth, so much good about this trail."*

— Mark from Raleigh, NC

### Marketing the Community

Cyclists need to know about the community and what it has to offer before deciding whether or not to stop there. Ensuring that the Canalway Trail and the communities along it are well marketed is a multi-faceted endeavor requiring consistency and coordination.

The best marketing strategy is to provide quality services and products that people remember and are eager to tell others about.

### Getting the Word Out

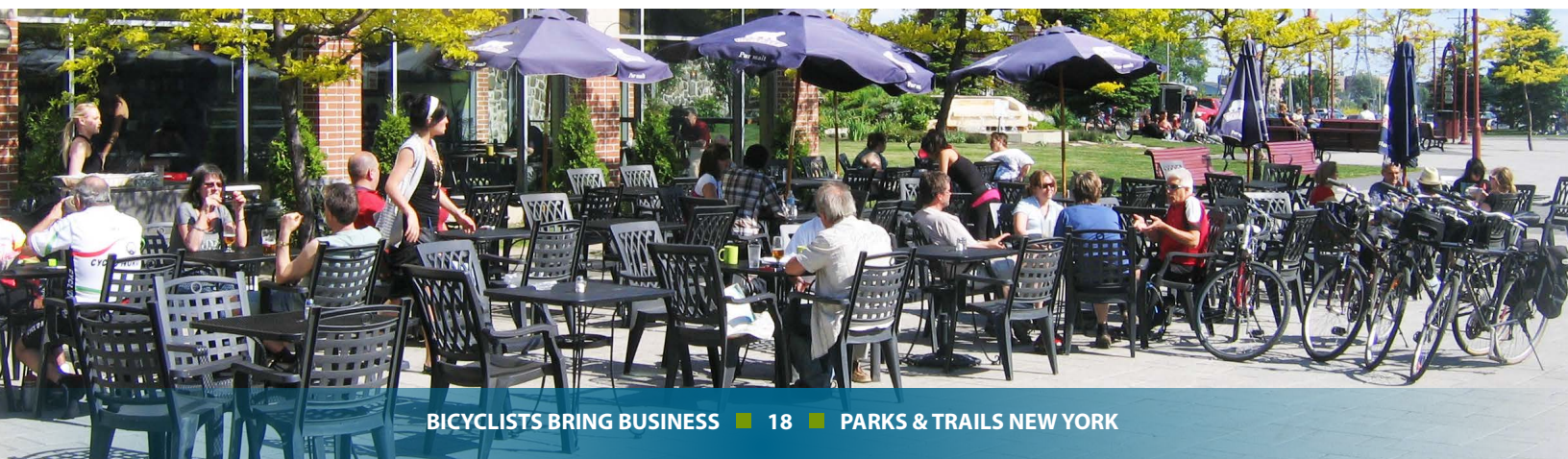
#### Word of Mouth

Word-of-mouth is a powerful tool, especially for bicyclists. As many as 42% of Erie Canalway Trail End-to-Enders first heard about the trail through word-of-mouth. Friends, family, neighbors, and coworkers are often the greatest and most influential sources of information.

#### Online Promotion

In 2020, one-third of those who completed the entire Erie Canalway Trail identified the Internet as their main source of information. From social media to official websites to business listings on travel sites, the Internet is a go-to source of information for many trail users.

The [www.CycletheErieCanal.com](http://www.CycletheErieCanal.com) website, which PTNY administers, includes an interactive map of the Canalway Trail and listings of things to see and do, visitor information centers, and bike shops along the trail. Business owners and community advocates can confirm information about their communities is correct on this and on other pages that promote use of the trail and the canal corridor.





Communities can also develop a website or section of their community's website with information about the trail, including links to local businesses and attractions. Maintaining the site and keeping it up to date will help visitors feel confident in the information.

A listing on major travel sites, such as Google Maps, Yelp and TripAdvisor, is essential for tourism-based businesses. By being listed on these sites, businesses make themselves visible to trail users who might be relying on these sites to plan their trips and daily activities. It also creates opportunities for patrons to leave reviews and for businesses to engage with them by thanking reviewers or addressing concerns.

### Social Media

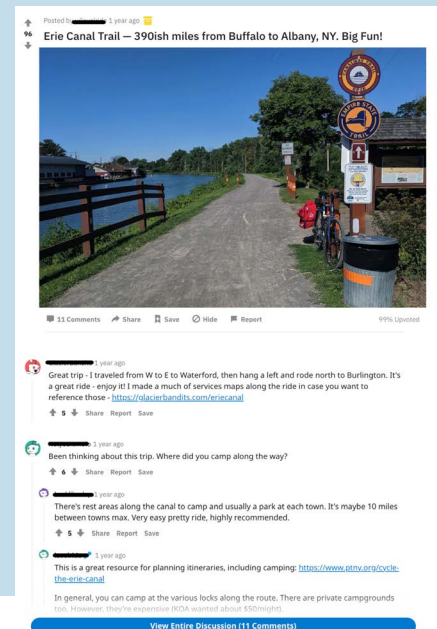
Blogs and social media platforms provide those who are visiting the trail or those who recently visited the trail with places to write about their experiences, inspiring and encouraging others to plan their own trips.

A creative way to encourage trail users to share their experience is by identifying and developing an iconic destination that users can photograph and post to platforms such as Facebook or Instagram. One way to do this is by marking specific "selfie spots," with footprints on the ground where visitors stand to get the perfect selfie, as was done on the D&L Trail in Pennsylvania. Another way to do this might be to identify iconic or photogenic landmarks and mark them with signage and on maps of the trail. Communities can consider creating a hashtag in line with their town's branding that visitors can post along with their pictures, creating a cohesive online and in-person experience.



Credit: Jim Thorpe, PA Visitor Information

***A great example of word of mouth promotion of the trail on social media is a cyclist who posted on Reddit about completing the trail in 2020. In response, others asked him direct questions, generating an entire thread of useful information about the trail and about the trip.***



**TIP:** Active social media shows trail users and potential trip planners that the information they are reading is current. Re-sharing user content is a great way to keep social media up to date with minimal effort. Sharing related content is also a great way to do this, such as content created and posted by the Erie Canalway Trail accounts on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), and [Instagram](#). These channels are kept up to date with trail corridor-wide news and updates on new sections and closures.



### Print Materials

Although a lot of people get their information online, many still prefer printed materials. An up-to-date bicyclists' guide to the community that includes a map and information about services and attractions and that can be placed around town can be an effective marketing tool. This printed guide should embrace the town and the trail's special features and branding. There may also be opportunities to collaborate across the corridor, creating a series of printed guides with consistent design elements.

### Traditional Media

Traditional media, such as guidebooks, magazines, and newspapers, still play a role in getting the word out. For businesses, traditional advertising can be very effective, especially when focused on bicycle tourist audiences. Potential travelers will look to purchase guidebooks or maps of the places they are planning to visit on a ride, such as PTNY's [Cycling the Erie Canal guidebook](#). Many of these outlets will include opportunities for advertisers to appeal to potential, very targeted customers.

Some bicycle tourists also subscribe to or read magazines or other media about bicycle touring; advertising in these outlets, while potentially expensive, can effectively target potential customers. Adventure Cyclist, the magazine of the Adventure Cycling Association, is just one resource that is widely used and respected by touring cyclists.



Wayne County bike publications.

**TIP:** To maximize reach, consider pooling resources with other businesses. For example, Shop Little Falls, a collection of businesses from downtown Little Falls, pooled resources to purchase an ad in PTNY's Cycling the Erie Canal that listed multiple locations. This enabled the businesses to purchase an ad that any single one wouldn't have been able to afford.



Canal Celebration in Little Falls.



### Events

Events are a great way to attract attention and a large number of people to a community. Organizing or collaborating on an event, while capitalizing on the proximity to the trail, can be a huge draw for bicycle tourists. To make sure touring cyclists know about any events or festivals going on, make sure they are included in the calendar of events on the New York State Canal Corporation's website ([canals.ny.gov](https://canals.ny.gov)), Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor website ([www.eriecanalway.org](https://www.eriecanalway.org)) and Parks & Trails New York's website ([www.ptny.org](https://www.ptny.org)). Each year, hundreds of thousands of residents and visitors celebrate their canal heritage at a variety of canal-related festivals and events.

Credit: fairportcanaldays.com



One of the most popular arts festivals in the state, Fairport Canal Days is put on by the Fairport Perinton Merchant Association and includes a juried art festival.



Credit: littlefallscheesefestival.com



Credit: My Little Falls

Little Falls celebrates an annual Cheese Festival to recognize the town's long-standing history and connection to New York State farm-produced cheeses, attracting thousands of visitors each year.

### Branding

Establishing favorable brand recognition relies on the ability to link a unique identity and recognizable image with a memorable experience, and then have word of that experience spread far and wide.

#### Trail Branding

The Erie Canalway Trail already has brand recognition. People have heard of the Erie Canal and the name evokes certain associations: an engineering marvel, westward expansion, nation building, patriotism, a simpler and slower era, even a song, "Low bridge, everybody down." Branding can remind visitors that the canal is still active, vibrant, and accessible to visitors via the trail. In addition, it reinforces the idea that promotion of the Erie Canalway Trail and the success of individual businesses and communities are linked. What's good for business is good for the trail and vice versa.

Credit: Mike Mellman





Communities can capitalize on the branding that already exists for the Erie Canalway Trail, and for the larger, statewide Empire State Trail network, by including the Canalway Trail logo and color scheme in advertisements and signage to reinforce the connection between the trail and the communities along it. The Empire State Trail's official design guide is available at [empiretrail.ny.gov](http://empiretrail.ny.gov).

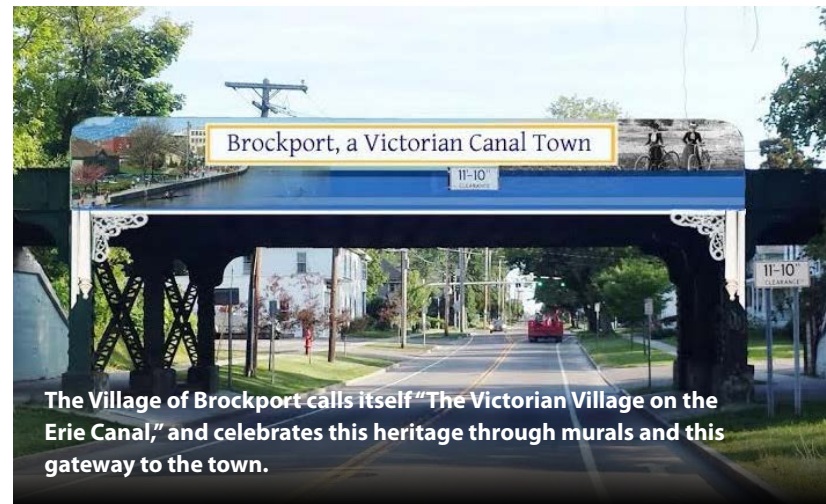
### Town Branding

Building off of the trail-wide branding, communities have the opportunity to establish a unique identity or theme by focusing on what makes the community special or interesting for visitors. Such a theme need not limit the offerings or image, but it will help people remember their visit. For example, the Village of Brockport capitalizes on its stature as the “Victorian Village on the Erie Canal.” Rochester is known as “Flower City,” Lyons was the peppermint oil capital of the U.S., and Lockport is renowned for its “Flight of Five” locks. While each town should promote its own personality, it is important to coordinate with other communities along the trail corridor to make sure that the themes are cohesive and fit well into the overall trail branding.



Lyons embraces its legacy of peppermint production in the town's logo, a museum and an annual Peppermint Days Celebration.

Credit: Chuck D'Imperio via New York Upstate



The Village of Brockport calls itself “The Victorian Village on the Erie Canal,” and celebrates this heritage through murals and this gateway to the town.

Credit: Barbara Burke via Westside News

### Bicycle Friendly Branding

Embracing a bike friendly identity and incorporating it into advertising and publicity is a good way to get the word out and let cycle tourists know that they are welcome. A great way to do this is by encouraging businesses to participate in the Bike Friendly New York business program, which helps build their identities and allows trail users to identify them immediately as good places to visit. By engaging in the best practices laid out by the program, businesses will build up a reputation as bicycle friendly, and trail users will notice it through word of mouth and by seeing the “Bike Friendly New York” sticker or sign in the window. See page 15 for more information on the BFNy program.





### 3 TRAIL-TO-TOWN CONNECTION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

*"I really loved getting to see and experience the small canal towns and the businesses, specifically coffee shops, breweries, and restaurants that call them home. These are towns that I'd never have found myself in without the trail."*

— Christian from Jenkintown, PA

While ensuring that cyclists know about nearby communities is an important first step, it is also important that cyclists feel comfortable leaving the trail to reach communities.

#### Welcome to Our Community

*Clearly identifying the main community access points conveys the message, "you have arrived."*

#### Be Informative with Maps and Signage

After a long day on the bike, cyclists are looking for clear, informative signage when they get off the trail and into a community. First and foremost, this signage should include a map showing the location of important services (bike shops, restaurants, lodging, laundry facilities, etc.), attractions and amenities. In addition, it can include a brief introduction to the community, highlighting what makes the community special. Bike tourists, especially on the Erie Canalway Trail, are interested in learning about the history of the community and what makes it unique. An up-to-date and well-kept rack for cards or brochures of local businesses and a bulletin board announcing community events are also useful additions.



#### Invite Cyclists to Take a Break

An inviting rest stop might include amenities such as benches, water fountains, a repair station, and public restrooms. A bike rack at this location encourages longer-term visits. For more details on these types of infrastructure upgrades, see page 23.





### Make it Eye-catching

Art, such as murals or sculptures, that is unique and relevant to a community is a great way to highlight the community's identity and attract attention. Other options include landscaping, plantings, benches and banners. Gateways, indicating the threshold between the trail and the downtown, can be created as a community-based project by inviting volunteers to help paint or plant.

### Develop a Welcome Center

Welcome centers, where visitors can learn more about the community and seek respite from the weather, are a particularly dynamic way to attract trail users to the town. While a separate building can be a larger investment, welcome centers can also be located in dedicated space within existing municipal buildings. These facilities act as a centerpiece and attract trail users searching for information or protection from the elements. They might also include restrooms and showers - both are greatly appreciated by overnight visitors.

### Clear, Safe Connections

*If cyclists can't easily access a community, they're not going to stop and stay.*

If the central business district is not immediately visible from the trail, it may be necessary to use additional signs and pavement markings to guide cyclists to and from the community and the trail.

Starting at the trail, signage should identify the distance to the heart of the town, as well as distances to the next few destinations down the trail in either direction. It is also useful to identify directions to any dining, drinking, camping, or lodging accommodations that are not located downtown.

Gateway Bridge in Amsterdam



The Brockport Welcome Center offers services for boaters and cyclists, including restrooms, water, showers, internet access, plus information on attractions and walking and cycling tours.

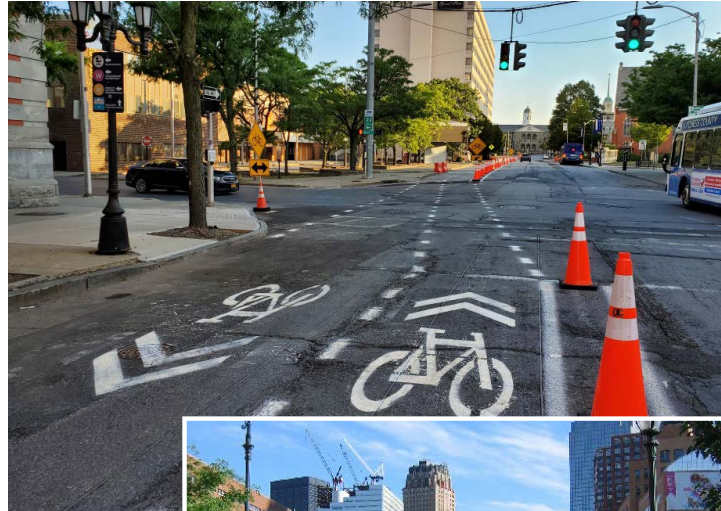




Once off the trail, signage should be clear and visible. The identified route should be safe and free of conditions that are not appropriate for pedestrians or cyclists, such as high traffic volumes or speeds. If no such route exists, it will be challenging to convince cyclists to visit your community. Alternatives that can attract cyclists include protected bicycle lanes and constructing short connector trails between the Canalway Trail and the nearby community. There are many resources to aid in planning for effective bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure that will ensure that cyclists feel safe and are willing to travel to your community. Visit [www.ptny.org/biketoolkit](http://www.ptny.org/biketoolkit) for more information and links to some of these resources.

### Make roads bicycle-friendly

Throughout the community, measures should be taken to make the streets more bicycle-friendly, so visiting cyclists feel safe and secure as they explore. First and foremost, communities should install cautionary signage wherever the trail or other off-road path intersects roads. On streets, it is important to maintain bike lanes and shoulders. These areas should be kept clear of the debris that tends to accumulate over time and after storms. Another consideration is to avoid slotted stormwater drainage grates that can put bicyclists in danger by grabbing tires. These can be replaced with mesh or curb face. At intersections, bicycle stop lines should be marked closer to the actual intersection to increase visibility of and for cyclists.



### Integrate bicycle use into the community

Communities that incorporate bicycling into their identities are better able to fully take advantage of the benefits trail tourism has to offer. Some ways to do this include providing bike racks on buses and other public transit, and cultivating a “share the road” outlook through signage and other educational activities.

## Infrastructure

*Meeting cyclists’ needs is key to making them feel comfortable and welcome.*

### Bike parking

Bike racks are a simple infrastructure upgrade that will entice riders to stay and explore a community. An inventory of the location and condition of bike racks can reveal where upgrades or additional racks may be necessary. Racks that are easily visible and accessible throughout the community, especially at trailheads and other public locations, will be heavily used. Communities can consider installing custom bike racks that align with their town’s branding, or buy racks “off the shelf.”

*Credit: Downtown Ithaca Alliance*



*Credit: Downtown Ithaca Alliance*



In 2017 the Downtown Ithaca Alliance (DIA) and the City of Ithaca, together with the Tompkins County Tourism Program and Bike Walk Tompkins, launched a Community Bike Rack Design Competition with the idea of encouraging cycling as a desirable mode of transportation as well as enhancing downtown Ithaca with creative functional art, designed by and for the local community.

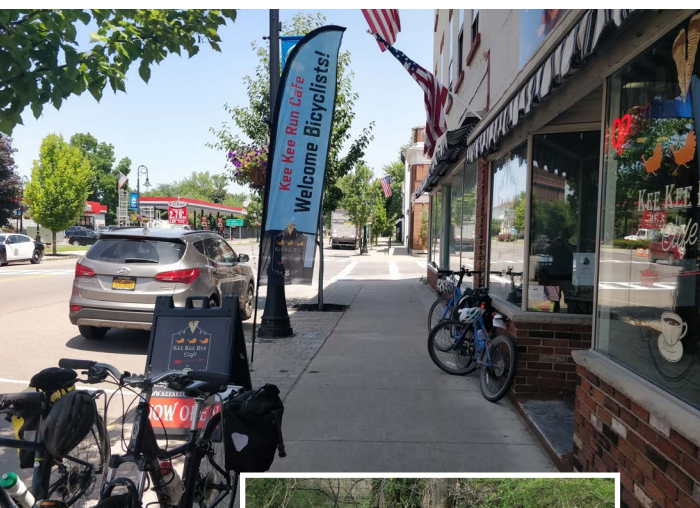


**77% of users on the Great Allegheny Passage said they were more likely to patronize a business with bike racks/storage.<sup>27</sup>**

Businesses can search out mini-grant opportunities to fund installing their own bike racks. Another option is to allow cyclists to bring their bikes inside the establishment and publicize this, so cyclists know they are welcome, and that their bikes will be secure.

#### **Public restrooms or businesses that allow use of restrooms**

Public permanent or portable restrooms are an essential amenity for cyclists passing through a community. For communities where cyclists expect to spend the night, or places where they may stop for dinner, having public showers available will make them feel welcomed and more likely to stay.



If this type of infrastructure is not logistically possible at a given time, another good option is for businesses to allow the use of their restrooms, and advertise that they are open to cyclists. Cyclists that use restrooms at a business are more likely to spend money at that business.

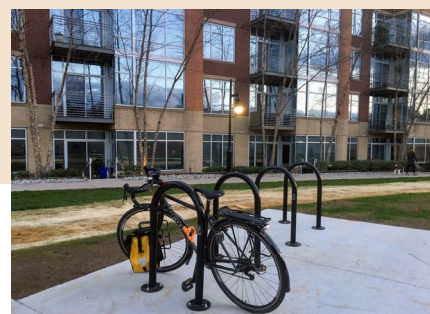
#### **Easily accessible drinking water**

Biking all day makes cyclists thirsty, and they need places to refill their water. There should be easily accessible public water fountains that make it easy for cyclists to refill water bottles. Fountains that include a drinking fountain and water bottle filling station are ideal.



#### **Bike Rack Best Practices:**

*U-racks or serpentine racks that have two points of contact and allow cyclists to secure the frame and the wheels to the rack are the best type of bike rack. They should be well-lit at night and easily visible, potentially painted with bright colors that fit in with the community or trail's branding. It is important to not place bike racks too close to other objects such as walls that might prevent bicyclists from securely locking their bikes, or in places that will result in bikes potentially being hit by cars or obstructing walkways for pedestrians.*



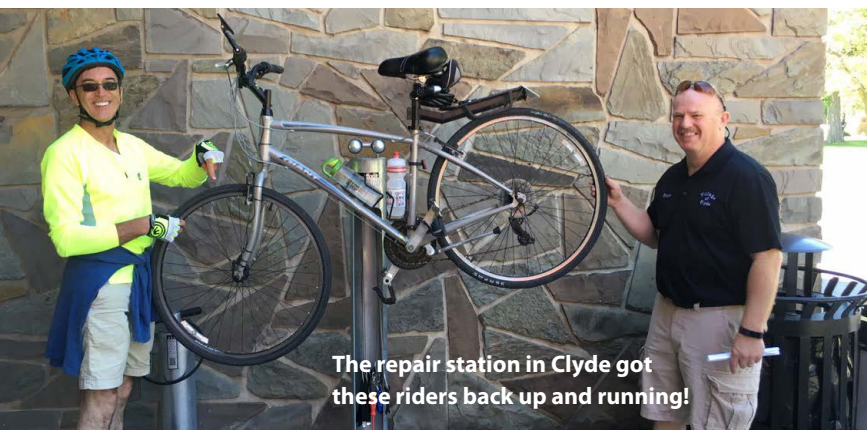


### Benches/covered shelters

Cyclists get tired and appreciate places to stop and rest. Benches and covered shelters give trail users the opportunity to take a breather, and might encourage them to stick around the community a little longer. Benches and shelters can sometimes be installed by community or volunteer organizations that want to help improve the trail experience. They can even be incorporated into the overall community branding by providing space for public art.

### Repair Stations

Repair stations allow cyclists to make minor adjustments and quick fixes to their bikes, and are an indication that cyclists are welcome. A repair station with hanger arms, a pump, and a set of wrenches is all most riders need to make a quick adjustment and get back on their way. The repair station can also serve as a way to draw cyclists in to a community if it is in sight of the downtown or has directions or signage to it.



The repair station in Clyde got these riders back up and running!



Covered benches can also be pieces of art. This bench in Niskayuna was created as part of the [Color the Canal](#) initiative, a joint project by the Friends of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail and CREATE Community Studios, to celebrate the local section of the historic Erie Canalway Trail with visual and sculptural art and welcome the cyclists that pedal the trail from Buffalo to Albany each July during the Cycle the Erie Canal ride, as well as the many Capital Region residents who use the trail every day.

### Day-use car parking for trail users

Many tourists will be thru-riders, but many others may be attracted to the community for other reasons and want to take a day ride as part of their vacation. Still others might come to the town just for the chance to ride this stretch of trail. To best serve these visitors, it is important to provide well-marked day-use car parking for trail users.





## 4 CREATING A POSITIVE EXPERIENCE FOR CYCLISTS

*"We highly enjoyed all the ice cream shops and bakeries along the trail. It made for a nice break and treat, and gave us a taste of the towns we were passing through. The farmer's market at the Waterford Canal Center was a particularly surprising treat! There was even live music which was a great way to spend our last morning of the trip. It was fun to talk to the people we met along the way. Everyone was friendly and liked to hear about our trip and share their own experiences along the canal."*

— Jessica from Hamden, CT

### Food & Drink

Cycling all day is hard work, and cyclists will need places to stop and refuel. Trail users especially look out for unique, local and sustainable foods and beverage options.

Farmer's markets, trailside stands, and wayfinding signage to nearby farms and stores are great ways to showcase local produce and products to visiting cyclists, as is highlighting locally sourced ingredients at restaurants and cafes. Cyclists will often go out of their way to search out non-chain establishments that have character and authenticity. Ideally, communities would have a variety of establishments, and businesses would cater to different visitors, with options for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, ice cream, coffee, and other beverages.





Breweries, wineries, and cideries are particularly popular places for cyclists to stop for a rest. Visitors to the Erie Canalway Trail are able to easily take advantage of all of the local brewing options with the help of the Empire State Trail Brewery Passport on the official New York State Craft Beer App.

## Accommodations

Touring cyclists seek a variety of accommodations, from rustic campgrounds to luxury hotels.

Cyclists traveling on a budget will look for campsites or anywhere they can pitch a tent. The Erie Canalway Trail includes a number of **Biker-Hiker-Boater** campsites that require advance reservation by contacting the sites by phone prior to arrival. In several places along the trail, dedicated private campgrounds or campgrounds at state parks provide another low-cost option. The most important thing for campgrounds to offer are sites that are always available for cyclists, even when the campground is otherwise full.

Credit: New York State Brewers Association



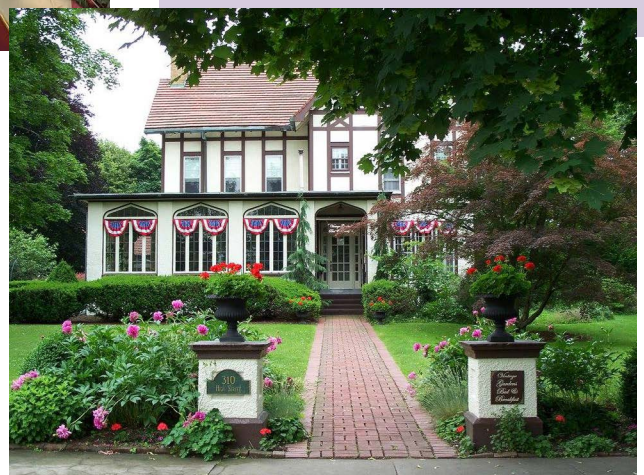
## Tips for restaurants and cafés:

- *Publicize that bicyclists are welcome.*
- *Offer a variety of menu options, including vegetarian and other special diets.*
- *Provide hearty meals. Bicyclists especially need robust, high-caloric breakfasts.*
- *Post a menu where bicyclists can easily see it without having to go inside.*



For those willing to spend a little bit more on accommodations, bed & breakfasts and hotels or motels provide cyclists with a place to rest for the night. At these types of accommodations, cyclists are looking for one-night stay options, laundry facilities, and secure parking for their bikes, preferably indoor. Some cyclists prefer to be able to take their bikes into their rooms.

**Vintage Gardens Bed & Breakfast is a certified Bike Friendly New York business situated off the Erie Canalway Trail in Newark.**





Beyond the basics, several services and options are of particular interest to cyclists. One such service is to offer bicycle rentals or partner with another business to offer rentals to guests. This allows guests who are visiting the area, but not with the express purpose of cycling, to take advantage of the nearby trail. Another service businesses can provide is to accept packages mailed ahead of time. Advertising that you provide this service will attract cyclists to your place of lodging. When cyclists arrive at a place of lodging at the end of the day, they appreciate well-lit outdoor spaces to work on bicycles, including a water source for washing them. And of course, if an accommodation is not directly on the trail, it can be helpful to offer shuttle services to and from the trail for bicyclists and their bicycles.

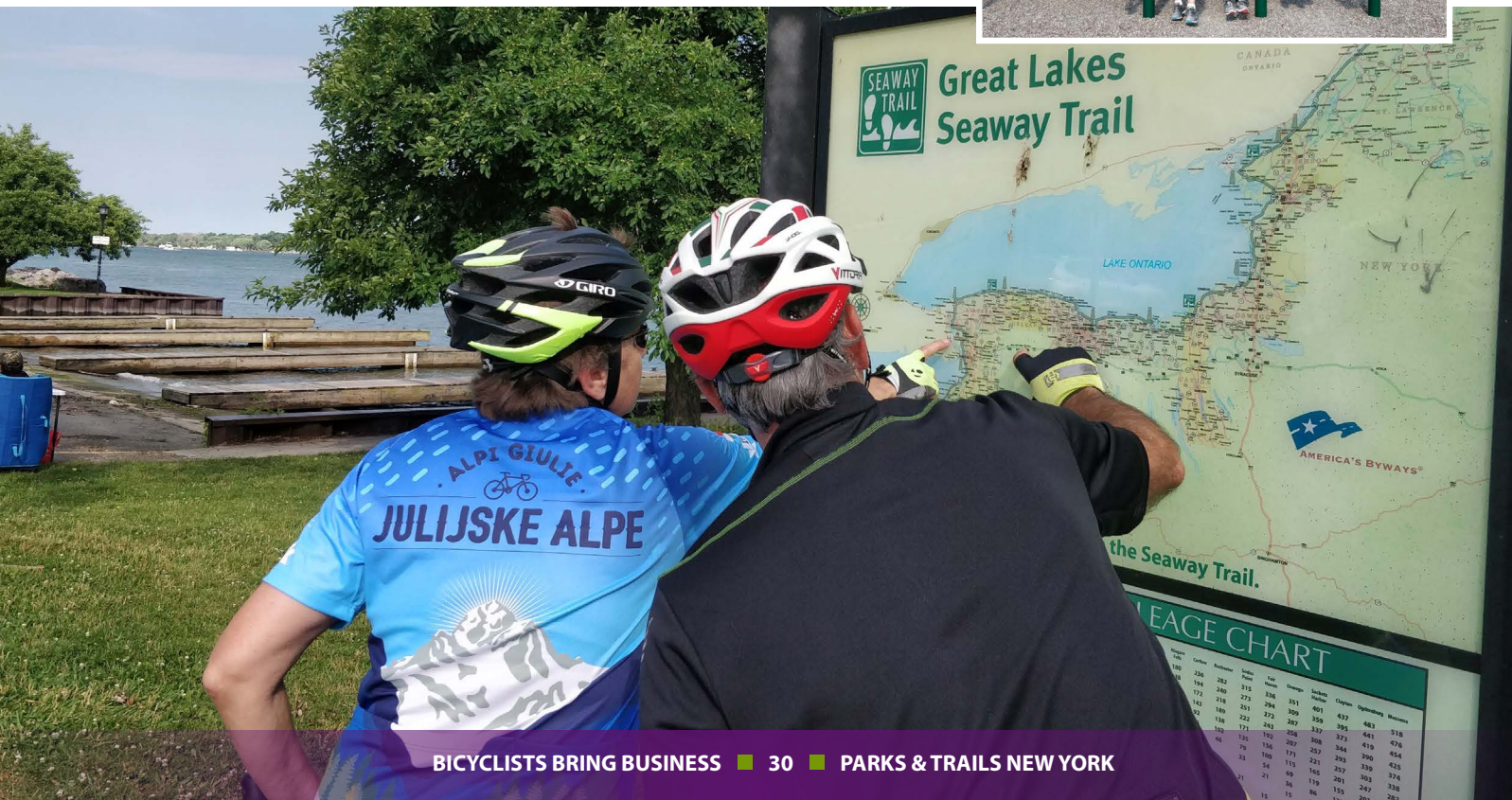
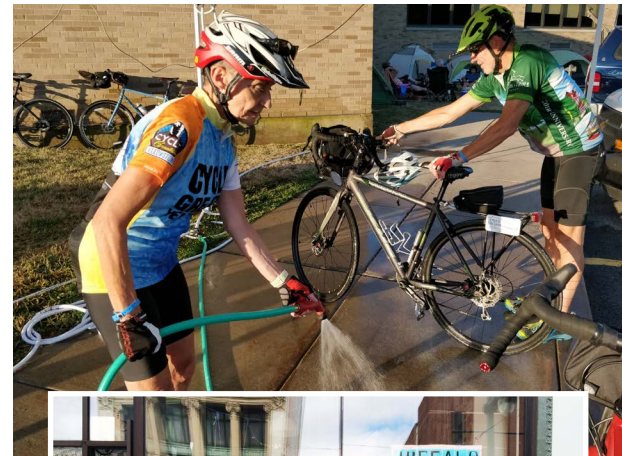
***In 2020, 85% of End-to-Enders stayed in a hotel or motel.***

### Opportunities to Play

Developing additional opportunities for bicycle tourists to explore and learn about the community is a key way to attract more attention to a town. Walking tours, side trips to nearby parks and historic sites, and themed bike loops are great ways to engage visitors. A best practice is to have brochures and print-outs describing these options readily available at welcome centers or other prominent locations.

### Connections to other outdoor recreational activities

Many cyclists are out on the trail because they love being outside, so more opportunities to explore the natural surroundings on or off the trail are a big attraction. Some examples of this might include signage to direct cyclists to nearby parks or natural areas, or other activity offerings along the Canalway Trail.





The Erie Canalway Trail as a canal towpath is in a particularly unique position to capitalize on aquatic recreation opportunities on the Canal. Opportunities to kayak, canoe, or stand up paddleboard are attractive to cyclists hoping to get out of the saddle for a little while and give their legs a rest.

### History and cultural heritage

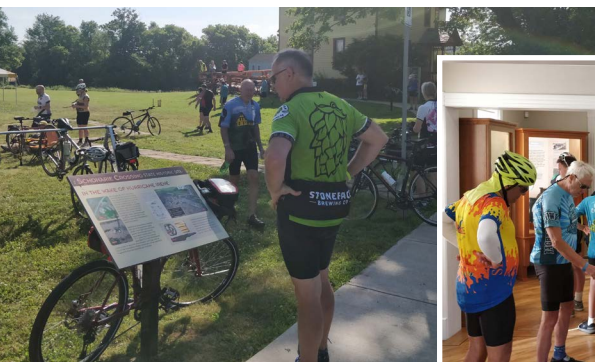
The Erie Canalway Corridor is full of history and cultural heritage, and visitors to the trail want to learn about it. A significant number of End-to-Enders mentioned that the canal's history was one of their favorite parts about visiting the Erie Canalway Trail, even if it hadn't been their primary reason for cycling the trail. Highlighting local history and cultural heritage can be accomplished with informational signage, themed loops or spurs, or wayfinding to historical sites within a community. Communities along the Erie Canalway Trail can stand out by telling their unique role in the history of the canal. This can be tied in with branding and community identity, as discussed in Section 2.



*In 2020, the NYS Canal Corporation organized popular NY Canal Staycations at six locations along the trail, which gave New Yorkers the chance to hike, bike, swim, and paddle while enjoying the iconic canals, celebrating the state's history, and supporting canalside businesses.*

### Examples included:

- *Paddle-Pedal the Mohawk: Schenectady and Niskayuna, which included free bike and kayak rentals along this historic stretch of the canal.*
- *The Confluence: Bikes, Boats and Beer along the Genesee River and Erie Canal, which encouraged visitors to explore the creeks of Genesee Valley Park by boat, bike by the Genesee Falls and Court Street Dam, and check out some of the area's many waterside dining options and local breweries between Rochester, Pittsford, and Fairport.*



### Shopping

Tourists love finding something special to remember their trips by, but cyclists are often limited by space and weight. Some ways to attract cyclists' attention (and business!) are to carry small, place-specific mementos of the community and offer shipping for heavy or bulky items.





Shops can also create a welcoming atmosphere for cyclists by offering the basics like bike parts, gear, and supplies. Another way to earn points with travelers is to sell postage stamps and accept outgoing mail. It may seem outdated, but many people still love sending postcards or mail to loved ones when they're out on a slower-paced adventure like bike touring.

### Events

As mentioned in Section 2, events and festivals are a great way to attract a wide range of people to a community. Events can center around cycling, such as themed rides or a multi-day tour, or can focus on the character and traditions of a local community. Events like these help visitors feel like they are experiencing, rather than just passing through, a community.



## All Businesses Can Create a Welcoming Experience

All types of businesses can play a role in making cyclists feel welcome in a community, and some things will be consistent across them all. To begin, cyclists want to interact with someone who is knowledgeable about the community— someone who can tell them where they are, and how to get back to the trail. Some other information bicyclists might seek includes the location of the nearest bike shop, ATM, laundry or shower facility, grocery store, and hospital or walk-in medical clinic. They also might want to know what the lodging/camping options are in the community. Having basic information on how cyclists can get back on the trail, side trips, bike loops, and other points of interest in the area are key to making cyclists feel at home in a community. Having maps on hand of the downtown area, community or region can be a useful resource as well.





Cyclists want security – for bike travelers, their bike is the most important thing they have and the way they plan on getting home – so they want to be sure that they have a secure place to lock the bike and to store their belongings. For bikes, this means providing secure bike storage or collaborating with neighboring businesses on shared bike racks or lockers. For personal belongings, businesses can offer temporary storage.

Bicycle tourists are often likely to need basic bike repair equipment like a pump or a simple repair kit, and they may need places to charge cell phones and other devices, and to use WiFi whenever possible. Offering and advertising these services will make it more inviting for visiting cyclists to stop in and patronize the business.

Finally, businesses can make a point of being an advocate for making the entire community more friendly to people riding bicycles (see Section 3). Bicyclists bring business, but businesses can also bring more bicyclists to their community.





## 5 BUILDING THE MOVEMENT

*"It is clear that many communities are still developing the trail and making it better. Please let them know that their efforts are appreciated and valued."*

— Mary from Charleston, IL

### Within the community

Once a community has decided that it wants to better serve bicycle tourists along the Erie Canalway Trail, a core group of dedicated individuals should be identified to move the effort forward. While a core group typically organizes and executes first steps, it is important to offer all residents opportunities to be involved by encouraging them to offer input and feedback throughout the process. Some initial steps that can be taken include:

- *Establish a Bicycle (or Bicycle and Pedestrian) Advisory Committee* that could either lead the effort or offer assistance to the group that is leading it.
- *Set SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely)* to encourage and facilitate bicycling in your community.
- *Encourage businesses to become certified Bike Friendly New York businesses* (see page 15)
- *Adopt a "complete streets" transportation policy* and commit to including bicycle facilities in community plans and projects. "Complete streets" considers bicyclists and pedestrians of all ages and abilities.





## Conducting Research and Assessments

*Community assessments and research are critical tools to determine how bicycle friendly communities are and to identify the actions needed to make them more bikeable.*

### **Community Assessment/Bike-around**

Community assessments are critical to determine how bicycle friendly communities are and to identify the actions needed to make them more bikeable. A community bike-around that brings together local residents and decision makers to experience their local trail system as if they were visiting cyclists allows participants to see what the community does well in attracting cyclists and what it could improve upon. Community bike-arounds are often the best way to understand the challenges bicyclists of all ages and abilities face when seeking services from or exploring a community.

PTNY leads a community bike-around as part of the annual [Bicyclists Bring Business](#) event, hosted in a different Canalway Trail community each year. Contact PTNY staff for assistance in planning a bike-around or for more information on hosting Bicyclists Bring Business in the future.



Bike-around participants stop to talk at the entrance to the Feeder Canal Trail at the 2019 Bicyclists Bring Business event in Glens Falls.

### **Conduct a bike-around:**

- *Plan a route from the trail to the downtown and back to the trail.*
- *Gather a group of key players, including elected and other governmental officials, business owners, tourism promotion agencies, trail or bicycle advocacy groups, community organizations and local residents.*
  - *Include a diverse range of participants, so that the needs of all potential cyclists are considered, and not just those “strong and fearless” riders who may be more active advocates.*
- *Use our Bike-around Checklist Assessment to identify strengths and weaknesses of the community.*
  - *Keep an eye out for gaps in signage, potential safety issues, and alternative routes that would enable riders to more easily access local businesses.*



### **Trail User Counts and Surveys**

Trail user counts can be used to track the average number of visitors to the trail at different times and show growth as the trail gains popularity. Tracking visits to the trail as early as possible is important in order to establish a baseline of trail use. PTNY conducts trail user counts across the Erie Canalway Trail. PTNY Trail Count data for the Canalway Trail system is available in annual *Who's on the Trail* reports, available at [www.ptny.org/trailcounts](http://www.ptny.org/trailcounts).

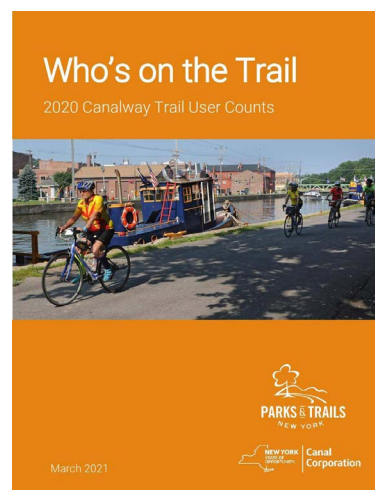
If PTNY does not have trail count data for a certain stretch of trail or community, trail counts can be conducted by the communities themselves, using either electronic trail counters or manual counts. Trail user surveys can also allow communities to understand more about trail users and how they use the trail network. Contact PTNY for more information on how to best conduct this research and for count and survey templates that can be effectively used along the Canalway Trail.

### **Business Surveys**

Business surveys are useful to take inventory of what services a community has to offer, and to track the impact the trail might have on these businesses over time.

Some useful information to gain from these surveys is the type of business and kind of services they offer, the number of employees, the days/months they are open and which ones are busiest, the percent of customers that come from the trail, what those customers are typically doing or buying, whether the business chose their location based on the trail, and whether the business has plans to expand in the next year.

These surveys can take time, so it is best to reach out to businesses during the off-season and allow for plenty of time for them to respond.





## Along the Erie Canalway Trail Corridor

For cycle tourists, the trail is the destination, so it is important to give visitors a reason to leave the trail to visit the nearby communities along the corridor. Collaboration with other communities along the Erie Canalway Trail is key. Create a network of communities, each within biking distance of the next, and make sure lines of communication stay open.

Partnering with nearby communities can also be good for business. For example, businesses within surrounding communities can organize a public event along the trail, such as a themed bike ride or a series of pop-up markets with live music, connecting multiple communities and drawing visitors to all. Awareness of and participation in regional promotional efforts with Tourism Promotion Agencies, chambers of commerce, and business groups is a good way to combine efforts.

As a statewide non-profit, Parks & Trails New York is also poised to facilitate connections between communities along the canal. PTNY can assist communities by identifying resources, making introductions, and sharing guides and models for the various techniques identified in this guide, transforming the canal corridor into a world-class, cohesive cycling destination where cyclists come from all over to visit, explore and spend.

The Erie Canalway National Historic Corridor (ECNHC) also has a wealth of resources for communities to preserve their heritage and is in a good position to connect projects and communities along the corridor. ECNHC has information on heritage tourism projects, preservation and management, and grant opportunities for annual event sponsorship and creative, place-based projects.





- <sup>1</sup>The Outdoor Foundation. 2020. *2020 Outdoor Participation Report*. Boulder, CO. [www.outdoorindustry.org/resource/2020-outdoor-participation-report](http://www.outdoorindustry.org/resource/2020-outdoor-participation-report)
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