

2024

Empire State Trail Town Action Agenda



City of Little Falls

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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, Little Falls 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 Little Falls's advancement as a Trail Town. Upon adoption of this Action Agenda, Little Falls 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 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, Little Falls's first task was to form a Trail Town steering committee that incorporated representatives from the city as well as committed partners, local businesses and trail advocates. Little Falls's steering committee was led by Dave Warner, executive director of the Creative Outpost, who convened a volunteer group of representatives from local businesses and interested community members.

With the steering committee in place, Little Falls began the first task - a Trail Town Self-Assessment. The assessment encouraged Little Falls to take initial stock of their recreation and hospitality assets, and to start thinking about the strengths and weaknesses of the city 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 just east of the Miracle Mile-and-a-half Trailhead.

In June, PTNY held a two-part participatory workshop in Little Falls with an evening Placemaking Workshop on June 10th and a morning Bike Around Workshop the following day. The Placemaking Workshop provided a hands-on opportunity for

about 18 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 Little Falls'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 bike ride around Little Falls 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 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 priorities identified during the workshop was the need to educate more local businesses on the value of trail tourism. To that end, the Trail Town committee continued outreach to encourage more businesses to apply to be certified as **"Bike Friendly New York"** businesses. As a result of these efforts, Little Falls now has a total of ten Bike Friendly New York certified businesses.

In August, Little Falls 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 a web-based resource that trail users could use to plan their visits. PTNY used this information to inform the development of **Little Falls's Trail Town landing page**, hosted on the promotional website for the Canalway Trail, www.cycletheeriecanal.com.



2024 Trail Town Highlights

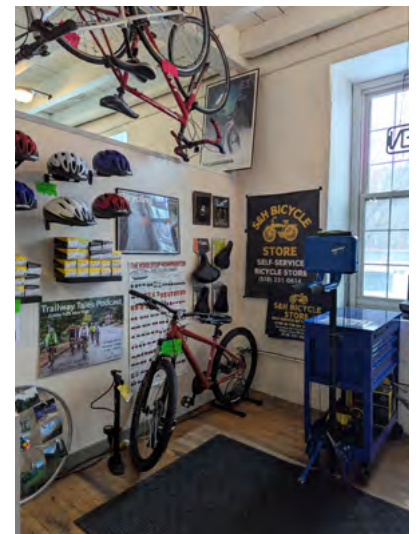
Even while undertaking this planning process, Little Falls has advanced several projects and initiatives that contribute to its trail friendliness and its designation as a Trail Town:

Promotion

- The City launched a new website and developed a “Cycle Here” webpage that highlights the City’s participation in the Empire State Trail Town program, Bike Friendly NY businesses, and places to stay overnight as a cyclist.
- In preparation for the tourism season, the Trail Town committee developed a promotional brochure for cycling in Little Falls.
- Studio25, a project of the Creative Outpost, Inc, launched a new podcast series called “Trailway Tales.” It shares the stories of thru-cyclists traveling through the city on the trail, aimed at boosting awareness of these travelers and sharing their often entertaining stories.

Services & Amenities

- In July, S&H Bicycle Store launched a self-service bike shop in the ground floor of the historic Stone Mill building, boasting a repair stand, bike repair tools, and the basic repair parts for almost every bike encountered on the trail.
- The South Side Improvement Group took on projects to improve the trail and enhance the visitor experience over the summer, trimming back vegetation, power washing benches, and installing a brand new “Trail Parking” sign at the Miracle Mile and a Half Trailhead.
- The Creative Outpost, Inc., a 501c3 organization in Little Falls focused on creative content, film, and media education, opened its offices at 25 West Mill St, in the Antique Center building in Canal Place. The office serves as a welcoming space for visiting trail users, with Little Falls swag, restrooms, and drinking water available.
- Rock Valley Brewing Company installed a bike rack.



Self-service S&H Bicycle Store in the historic Stone Mill building.

Community Organizing

- In response to the need for continued beautification identified at the Placemaking Workshop in June, a new volunteer Friends group, ‘Friends of Canal Place,’ was formed to take on maintenance and beautification at Canal Place and Sternizar Park. One of the priorities for the group is to enhance the signature wayfinding signage. Since forming, the group has hosted two volunteer events.



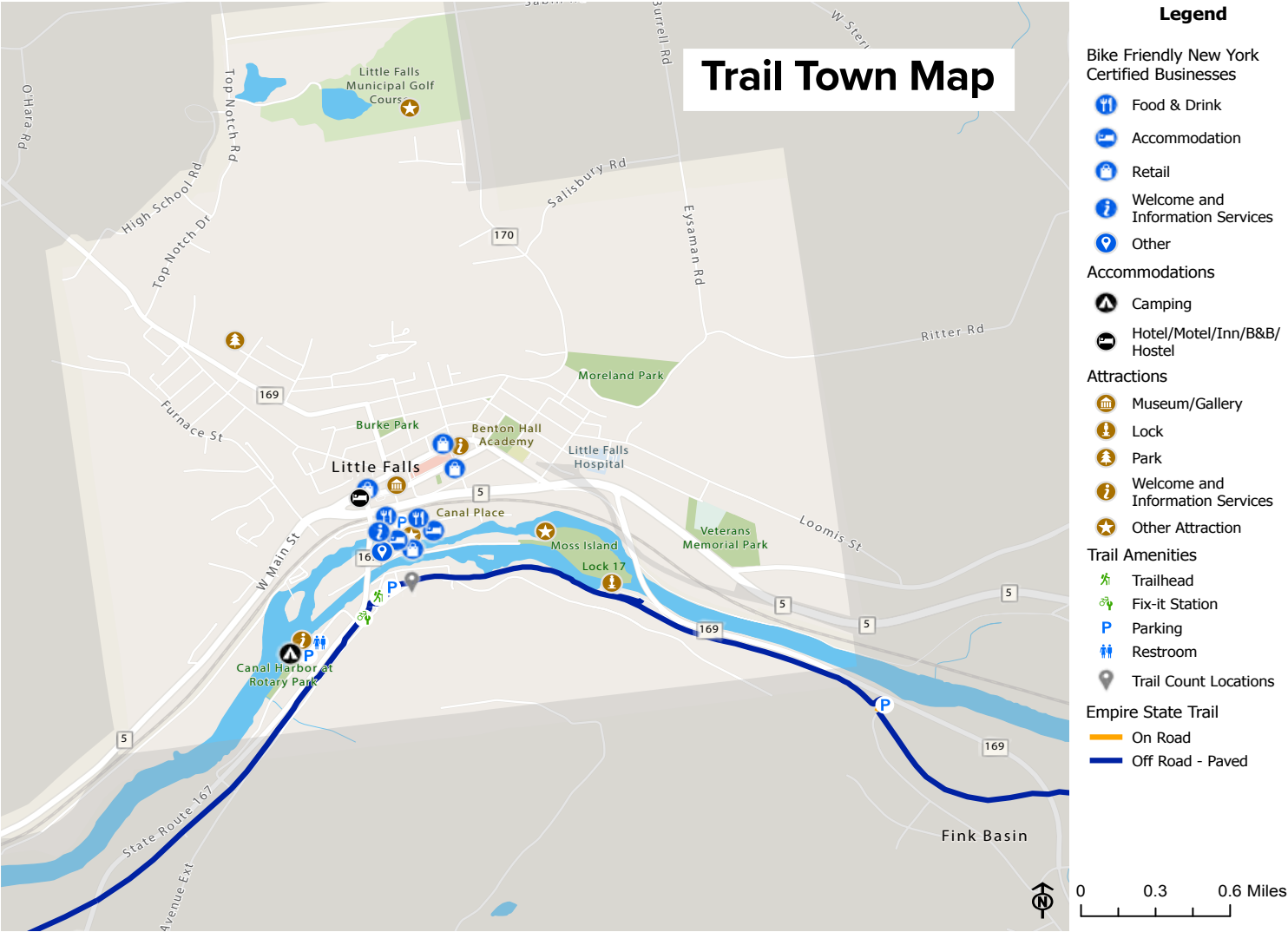
Fresh trail parking sign installed to clearly designated trailhead parking at Miracle Mile and a Half Trailhead

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 Little Falls

The friendly, scenic city of Little Falls is a vibrant cultural gem that sparkles among the Mohawk River's whitewater rapids. Indeed, Little Falls owes its very existence to the waters of the Mohawk River and the Erie Canal. Canal Place and Main Street in Little Falls offer modern shopping opportunities. They are the gateway to the sprawling Little Falls National Historic District, encompassing nearly 350 historically significant buildings that preserve the heritage of the vibrant way of life that the Mohawk River and Erie Canal made possible in this scenic small city. The City has a population of about 4,600 residents.

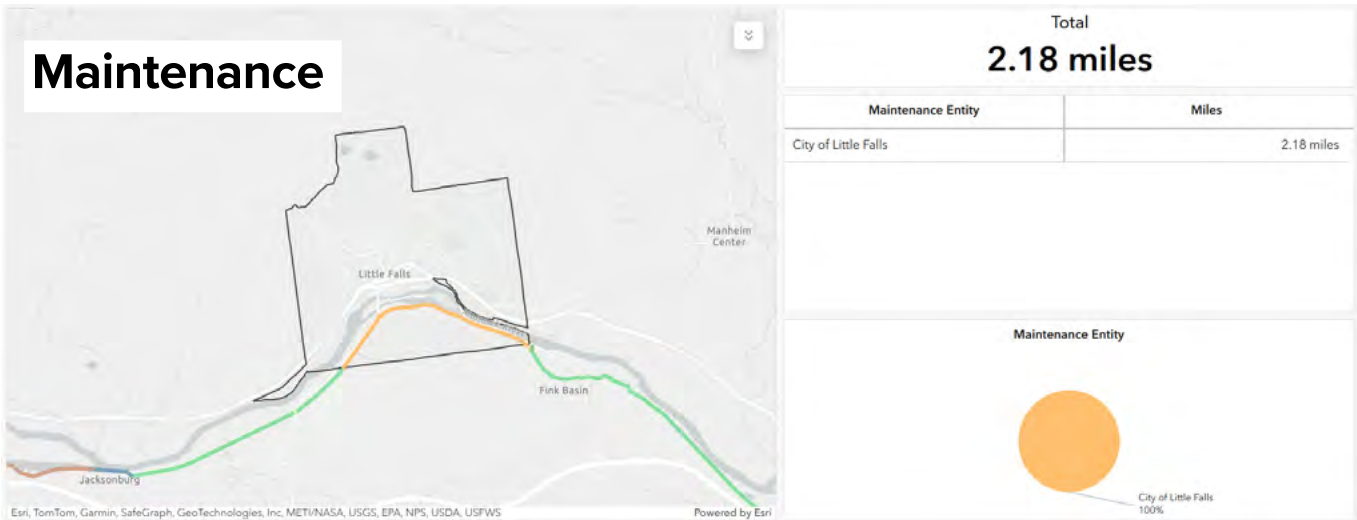
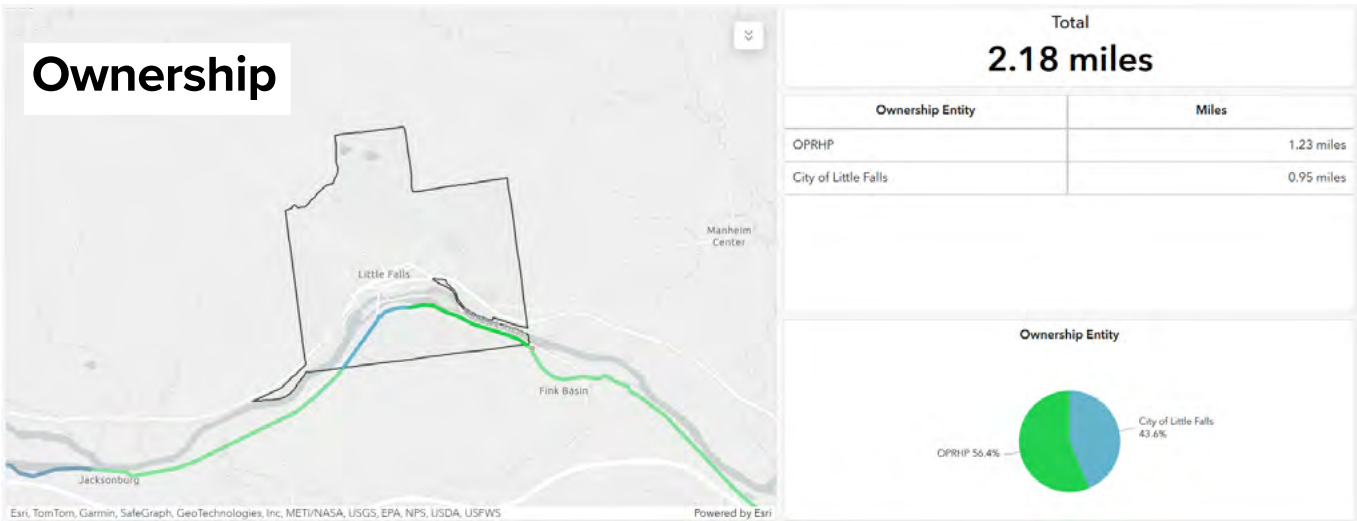
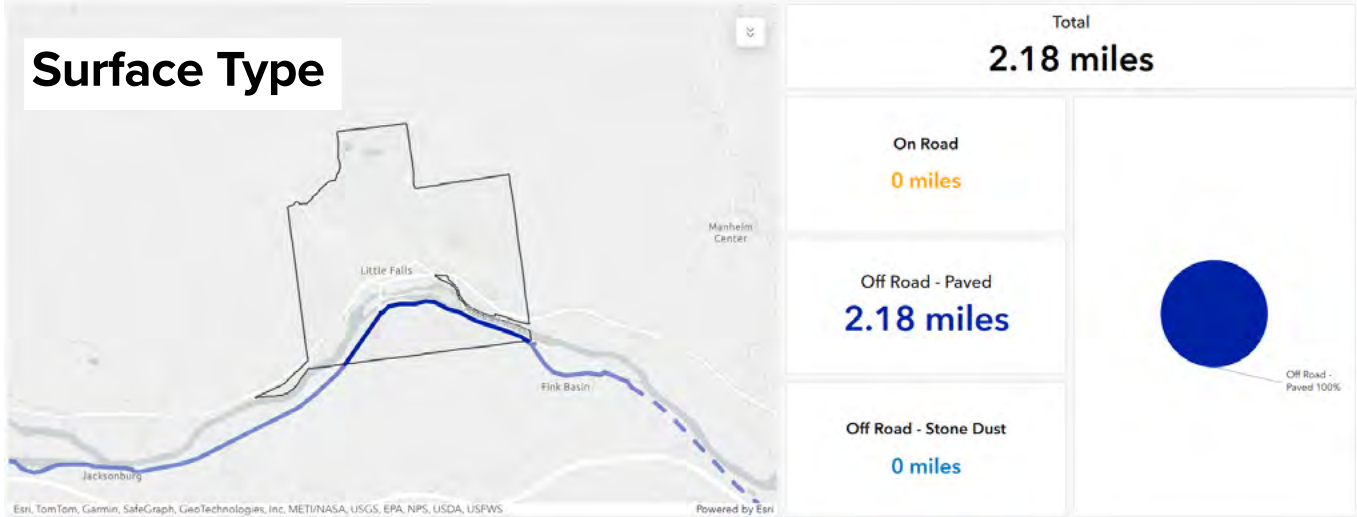


Empire State Trail Inventory

Surface Type, Ownership & Maintenance Responsibilities

Little Falls is home to 2.18-miles of the Erie Canalway/Empire State Trail, which is a 100% off-road, paved trail through the city. 1.23 miles of the trail is owned by NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) on the west side, while 0.95 miles of the trail is owned by the City of Little Falls on the east side. All of the trail through the city is maintained by the City of Little Falls, with OPRHP picking up maintenance responsibility at the city boundaries on both the east and west sides. The Town of Danube maintains the very short stretch of on-road trail on Fincks Basin Road on the east side.

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 just east of the Miracle Mile-and-a-Half Trailhead. 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. Unfortunately, the counter experienced technical issues from June 28, 2024 to August 15, 2024, so there is no data from that period.



Monthly & Daily Trail Use

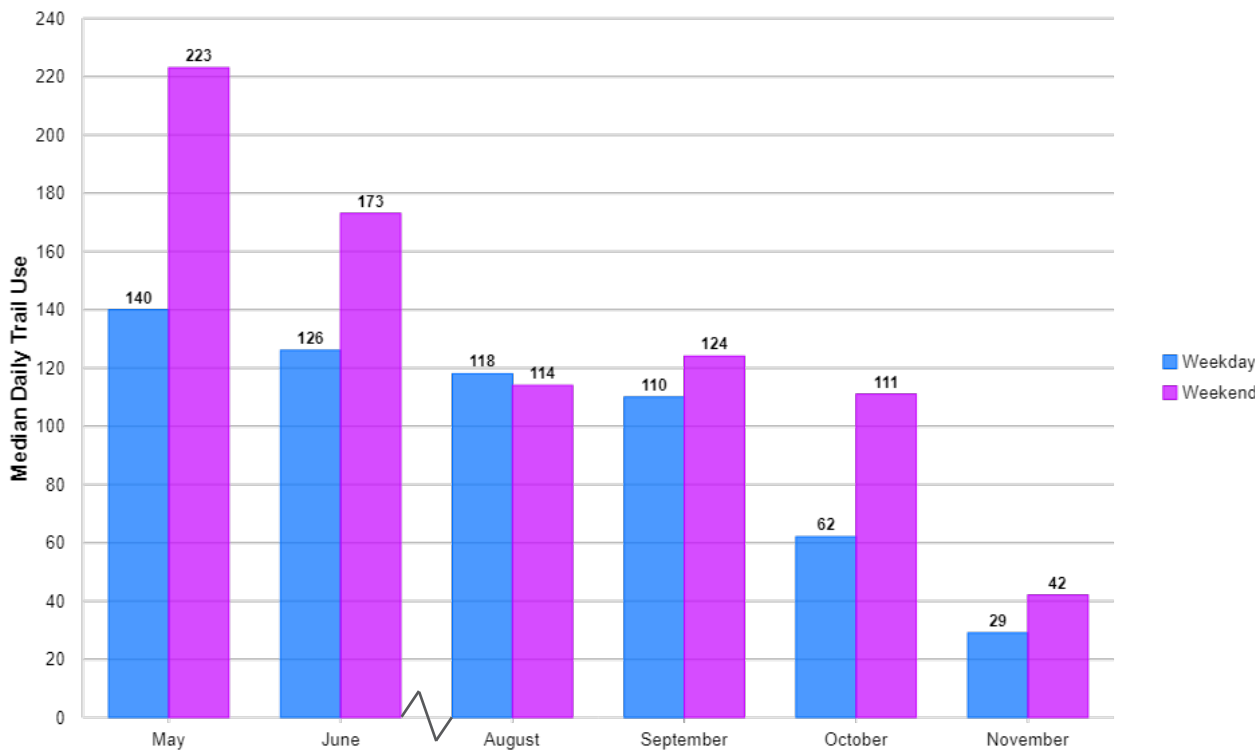
The trail in Little Falls sees high use during the summer, with the highest use recorded occurring in May. This could be explained by the good weather upstate New York experienced in spring 2024. The highest recorded day was Saturday, June 15, with 282 recorded visits. During the summer from May through 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 early summer and October. Trail use during the week versus on weekends was more consistent in August and September. 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 Use in Little Falls by Month (May 21, 2024 - November 16, 2024)

Month	Days Counted	Total Count	Median Daily Use	Median Daily Use - Weekday	Daily Median Use - Weekend
January	-	-	-	-	-
February	-	-	-	-	-
March	-	-	-	-	-
April	-	-	-	-	-
May	11	1,609	151	140	223
June	27	3,760	131	126	173
July	-	-	-	-	-
August	16	1,956	116	118	114
September	30	3,308	110	110	124
October	31	2,644	67	62	111
November	16	574	31	29	42
December	-	-	-	-	-
Total	131	13,851	102	97	122

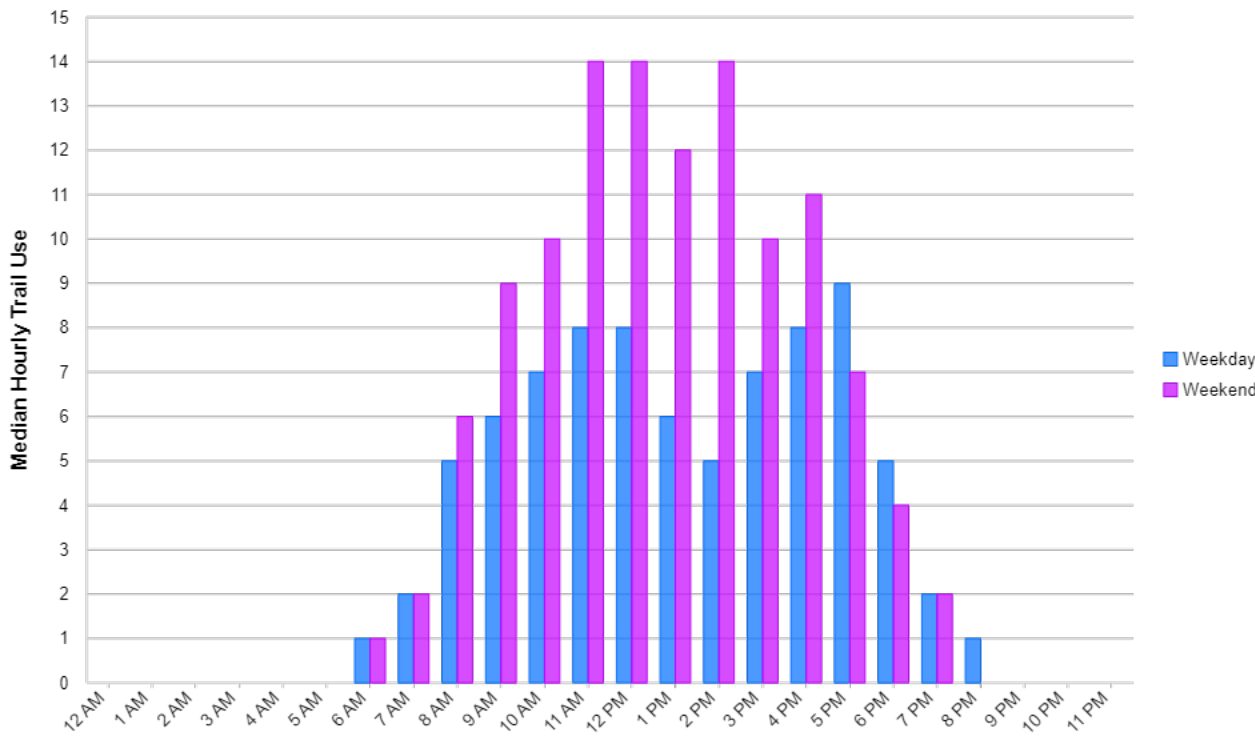
Median Daily Trail Use by Month



Hourly Trail Use

Hourly trail use trends reveal that on weekdays, trail use rises steadily in the morning between 8am and 11am, tails off between 1pm to 2pm, then climbs again to its highest point at 5pm. In contrast, weekend trail use peaks in the middle of the day, from 11am to 3pm.

Median Hourly Trail Use



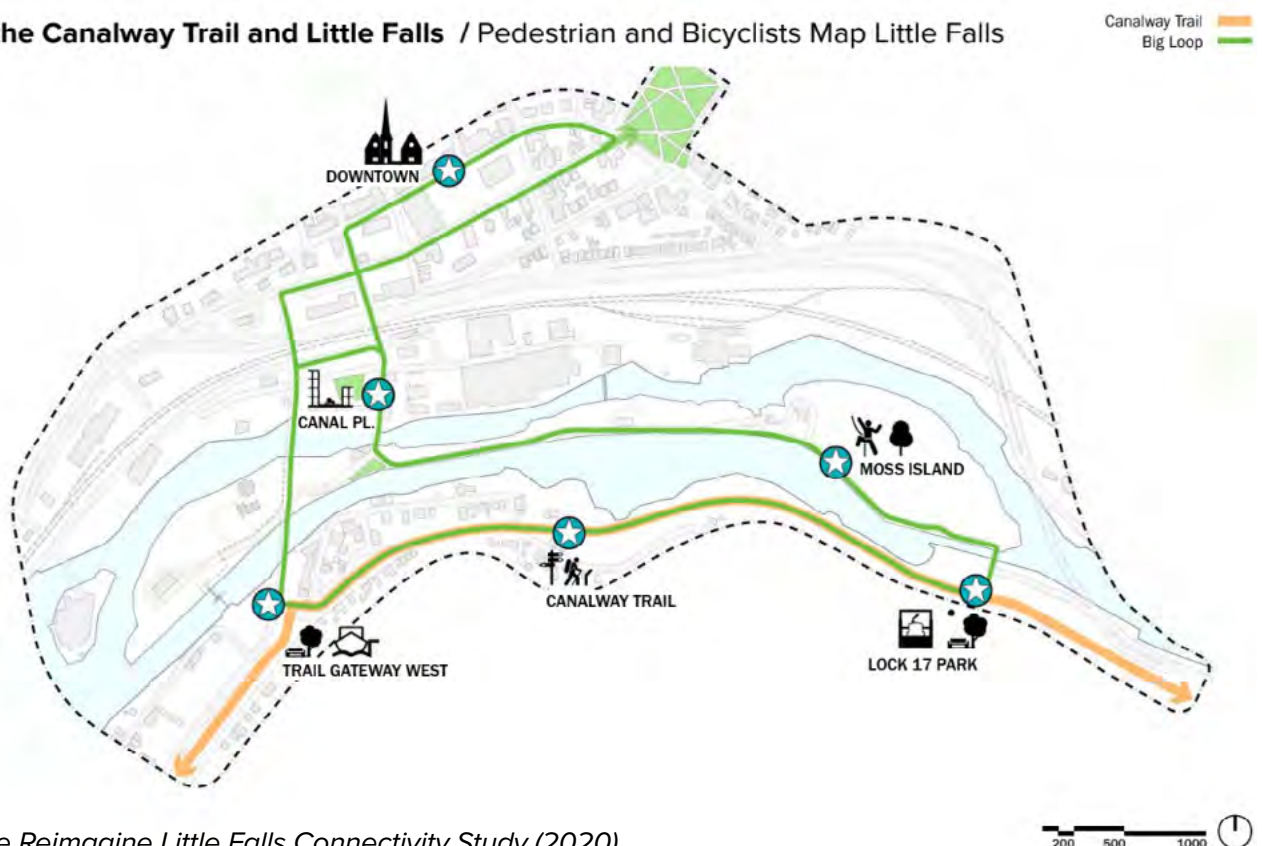
Plans & Upcoming Projects

Reimagine Little Falls Connectivity Study (2020)

In 2020, Buro Happold/ShoP published the Reimagine Little Falls Connectivity Study, which identified a 3.1-mile Pedestrian and Bike Connectivity Loop to connect the Erie Canalway/Empire State Trail with Canal Place, Downtown, and Moss Island. The plan identified many improvements, including the Little Falls Sky Bridge at Lock 17, conversion of Seeley Street to a multi-use path, dedicated cycling infrastructure downtown, dedicated two way bike lanes on NY-167 and improved crossing at Elizabeth St, a trail gateway and improvements to the connection to the NY-167 bridge, improvements to the Main Street Walkway Underpass and safety enhancements for crossing NY-5, and Improvements to the pedestrian experience on S Ann St.

The loop was originally part of the Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) application, but was removed by the Local Planning Committee (LPC). The current City administration is looking for funds to revive this project.

Connecting the Canalway Trail and Little Falls / Pedestrian and Bicyclists Map Little Falls



Page from the Reimagine Little Falls Connectivity Study (2020)

Little Falls Strategic Investment Plan

In December 2021, the City of Little Falls was selected as one of two Mohawk Valley Region recipients of a \$10 million Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) grant. As a recipient of this grant, the City went through a community-informed planning process to develop a Strategic Investment Plan for the awarded funds. Many projects were identified that would strengthen Little Falls as a Trail Town, but a few especially relevant projects included:

- **Improve Access to Seeley Street to Enhance Connectivity and Expand Recreational Opportunities** - This proposed project consists of the redesign and resurfacing Seeley Street to create a shared-use path including new lighting, guide rails, and a public parking area to better connect Canal Place, Lock 17, and the Empire State Trail.
- **Improvements to Main Street to Expand Public Space** - This proposed project consists of repaving Main Street, installing new streetscape amenities, and reconfiguring on-street parking from parallel to diagonal along the length of Main Street. It also includes the creation of a two-way separated bike lane

between Albany and Ann Streets and the narrowing of Main Street from Ann Street to School Street and the integration of green infrastructure.

- **Install Two Public Restrooms** - This proposed project consists of the creation of two new public restroom facilities each with two stalls: one facility at the corner of Garden Street and 2nd Street and the other in Canal Place.
- **Install Wayfinding** - Throughout the Downtown Waterfront District - This proposed project consists of the installation of wayfinding and interpretive signage throughout the DRI area to improve connectivity between several downtown destinations.

As of fall 2025, only the project to enhance Seeley Street as a multi-use path is underway, but there may be opportunities to revive the other projects or pursue them through other means.

Little Falls Sky Bridge at Lock 17

As part of the Reimagine the Canals Initiative, the New York State Power Authority and the New York State Canal Corporation are in the process of designing the “Little Falls Connector.” The project aims to create a new pedestrian bridge connecting the Empire State Trail directly to the Erie Canal at Lock 17. It enables easy access to Moss Island, Seeley Street, and the City of Little Falls for pedestrians and cyclists. As of 2024, the project is in the design phase.



Image from 2023 public meeting about the Little Falls Connector 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 Little Falls, 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 at multiple locations within the city, however many of them are limited by the hours of operation of the facility.

Little Falls Harbor & Marina - Offers drinking water, restrooms, and showers during open hours.

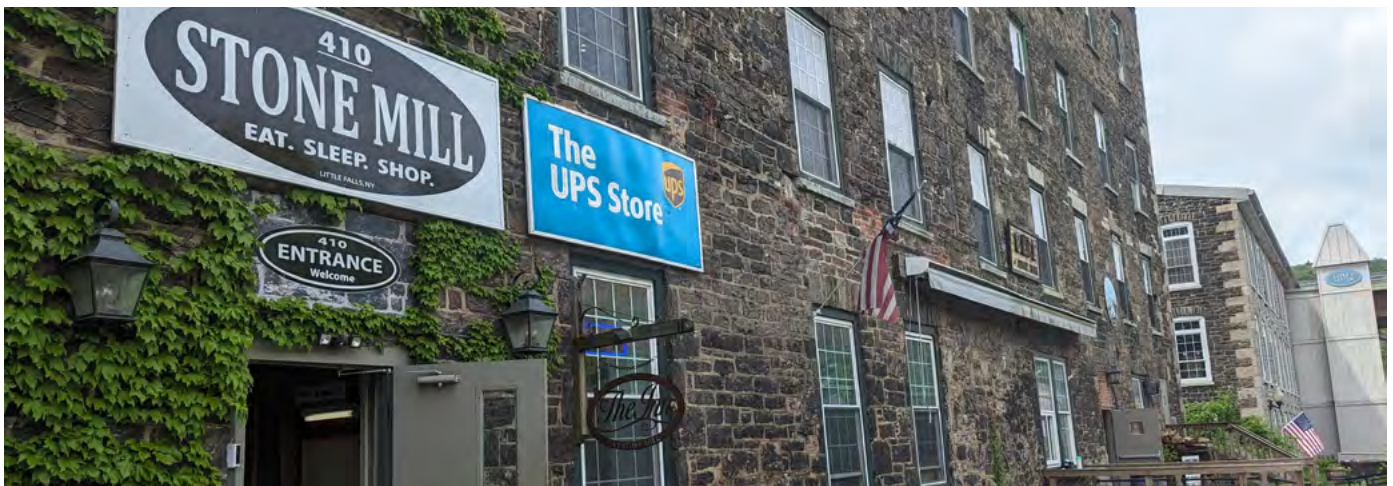
Stone Mill building - Bike Friendly NY certified business that offers restrooms and water for cyclists during open hours.

Composting toilet on Moss Island - Appears to be mostly geared toward rock climbers. It was locked during the Bike-Around assessment in June 2024.

Portable toilet at Lock 17 - Portable toilet managed by the Canal Corporation on the north side of the lock.

Businesses & Attractions

Little Falls has a strong business community and unique attractions that serve as draws for visiting trail users. None of the city's businesses or attractions are located directly on or visible from the trail, with the exception of Lock 17 (although it still needs to be accessed via a connector trail). This means that creating safe connections and providing clear wayfinding is especially important for connecting trail users to the city's businesses and other destinations.



Bike Friendly New York Business Certification Program

Little Falls has ten certified Bike Friendly businesses providing a range of services. Little Falls boasts a particularly strong community of retail businesses that value visiting cyclists as customers. 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.



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

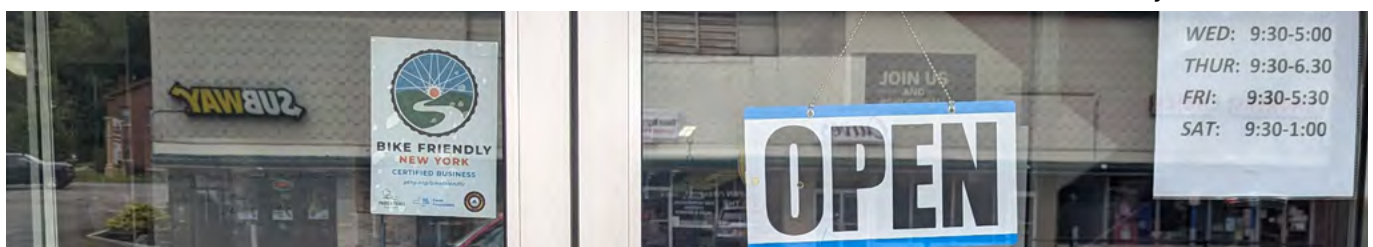
1. Have a physical location, which is open to the general public and has hours of operation clearly posted at the location and/or online.
2. Be located near, and easily accessible from, a greenway trail.
3. Have an identified parking area for bicycles (this can be a public bike rack, a bike parking area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

Business Name	Category
Canal Side Inn	Accommodation (hotel, motel, B&B)
The Inn at Stone Mill	Accommodation (hotel, motel, B&B)
Canal Side Inn Restaurant	Food & Drink
The Café at Stone Mill	Food & Drink
The UPS Store #7193	Other
Community Co-op	Retail
Chickweed Boutique	Retail
Paca Gardens	Retail
The Mustard Seed	Retail
The Creative Outpost, Inc./Studio 25	Welcome and Information Service

As of January 2025



Bike Friendly NY decal on the door of the Community Co-op, the only Bike Friendly NY certified co-op on the Erie Canalway Trail.

Accommodations

The City has plentiful lodging and accommodations for traveling cyclists, ranging from a high-quality room at the Inn at Stone Mill overlooking the river to camping along the canal at Little Falls Harbor.

Lodging

- The **Inn at Stone Mill and Canal Side Inn** are both certified Bike Friendly accommodations and are very popular with cyclists. The Inn at Stone Mill goes above and beyond to offer a newly restored pair of vintage bicycles for guests to use to explore the city. The Inn at Stone Mill also tracks data on the number of guests that are staying with them for the purposes of cycle touring, a data point that may be useful in future advocacy.
- The **Rodeway Inn** provides a more economical option for traveling cyclists. As of 2024, it is undergoing renovations. It is not certified Bike Friendly NY yet.
- There are **Airbnb** accommodations throughout the city, though none are certified Bike Friendly.

Camping

There are two locations where cyclists can overnight camp in Little Falls. One is along the trail in the harbor area, and the other is through downtown and up a hill in Moreland Park.

- **Little Falls Harbor:** The (Canal Season) rates and regulations for the harbor are: \$20/per person, maximum two nights, Free shower, Free Wifi, Kayak Rental \$5/hr. To make a reservation, cyclists email kmiller@cityoflittlefalls.net. It is not clear where exactly camping is permitted and what the rules and regulations are for hiker/biker campers when arriving on site.
- **Moreland Park:** Camping is permitted and advertised at Moreland Park, however it is unclear what amenities are available and whether there is any procedure for checking in.



Designated camping area for cyclists at the Little Falls Harbor.

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

The City has a range of food & drink options that appeal to trail users, including a brewery, food co-op, cafes, restaurants, and convenience stores. Most food & drink is located across the river/canal either in Canal Place or downtown, but the seasonally open Take-ria food truck on the south side is a great food stop for trail users, although it does not appear to be open on weekends.

Destinations & Attractions

The City of Little Falls is a hub for outdoor recreation, featuring opportunities to rock climb, kayak the canal, and hike to a waterfall—all without leaving the city.

Information Centers

- **The Little Falls Harbor** on Southern Avenue (seasonally available when the canal is open) is open from 7 am until 5 pm. The facility offers kayak and canoe rentals, as well as overnight docking, electricity, water, showers, bathrooms, and useful area information.
- **City Hall** at 659 E Main Street, has a wealth of information for travelers and is open from 8:30 am-4:30 pm Monday through Friday.
- The historic **Stone Mill building** serves as an unofficial welcome center for trail users, with the Cafe at Stone Mill and the S&H Self Service Bike Shop on the first floor of the building.
- The **Creative Outpost/Studio 25**, located in the Little Falls Antique Center, welcomes visiting trail users during open hours.

Bike Amenities

Bike parking

Bike parking is limited in the city. The City has one bike rack on West Main St. There is another on Albany St by the Historical Society. Another three racks are located along Canal Place, while another (private) is in front of the antique center. There is also a bike rack on Moss Island. Notably, there is no bike rack near the entrance to the Walkway to Main Street, discouraging cyclists from using the tunnel to access Main Street.

The Trail Town committee is currently identifying bike-friendly businesses and has a program where a local group is going to provide some of the cost of adding bike racks to those businesses.

Bike shops

- The **Self-Service S&H Bicycle Store** is located on the first floor of the Stone Mill building. The original S&H Bicycle Shop is located in Sloansville, about 40 minutes away from Little Falls. The owner has indicated that he is willing to travel to Little Falls to help cyclists with serious mechanical issues. The self-service shop currently does not have its own online presence separate from the S&H Bicycle Store in Sloansville or a listing on google maps, making it difficult for cyclists to know that it is there if they have an issue.
- **Dick's Wheel Shop** is the nearest full-service bike shop to the city, located seven miles away at 411 Mohawk St, Herkimer NY 13350. The bike shop has a good relationship with the city and maintains the fix-it station along the trail. The bike shop does have an online presence on google and Facebook, but no website.

Fix-it Station

There is one fix-it station along the trail, across from Rock City Barbershop. It is maintained by Dick's Wheel Shop. The repair station is not very easy to see from the trail, and there have been some challenges maintaining the pump in working order.

Bike share/bike rental

There is no public bike share or rental available in town, although guests of the Inn at Stone Mill can explore Little Falls on two wheels on a pair of vintage bicycles.



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

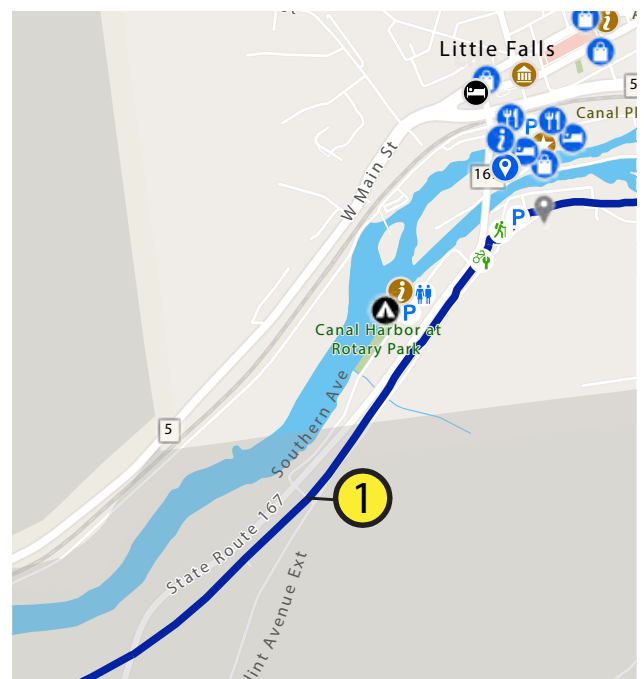
The trail is in very good condition through the city of Little Falls.

On the western side of the city, the trail is paved and in good condition. During the summer months, the section of trail experiences rapid vegetation growth that the city has indicated can be difficult to manage.

The eastern section of the trail, starting at the Miracle Mile-and-a-Half sign off of Flint Ave and running to Finck's Basin was resurfaced and widened in 2022 and has a smooth asphalt surface in good condition.

TRAIL CONFLICT POINTS:

- 1. Trail Crossing at Towpath Road** - This trail crossing, located directly to the west of the city boundary in the Town of Little Falls, presents a hazard to trail users. The crosswalks are faded and all but invisible, and when approaching this intersection from the east, there is no signage indicating that the trail is approaching a road crossing. This roadway crossing is in the Town of Little Falls, and the trail here is owned and maintained by NYS OPRHP.



Connecting Trails

Connector Ramp to Lock 17

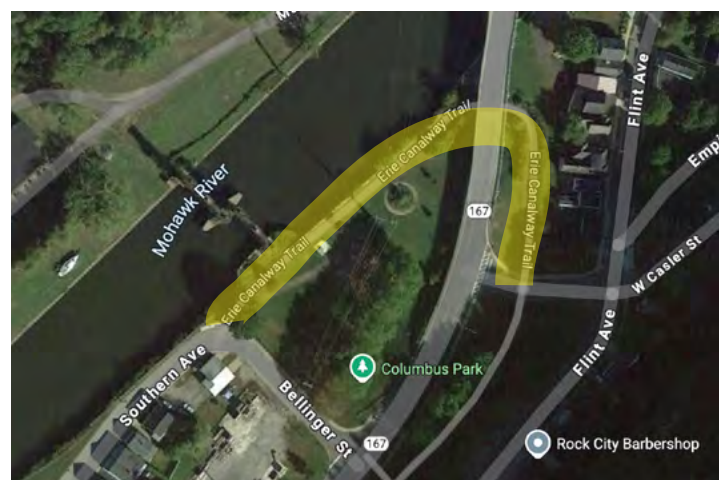
The ramp down from the ECT/EST can become overgrown with vegetation, as it was during the Bike Around assessment. This bike/pedestrian ramp is owned and maintained by the City of Little Falls.

NY-167 Underpass Trail

There is a nice underpass trail to help cyclists and pedestrians access the Little Falls Harbor without crossing NY-167, however it contributes to confusion because it is not officially part of the ECT/EST.

Moss Island

Moss Island is best known for its rock climbing, but also has miles of hiking trails around glacial potholes. Maps for these trails are faded and difficult to follow, and it is unclear how often these trails are maintained.



NY-167 Underpass Trail

Connecting to Key Destinations

Connecting from the ECT/EST to Canal Place

Via NY-167 bridge

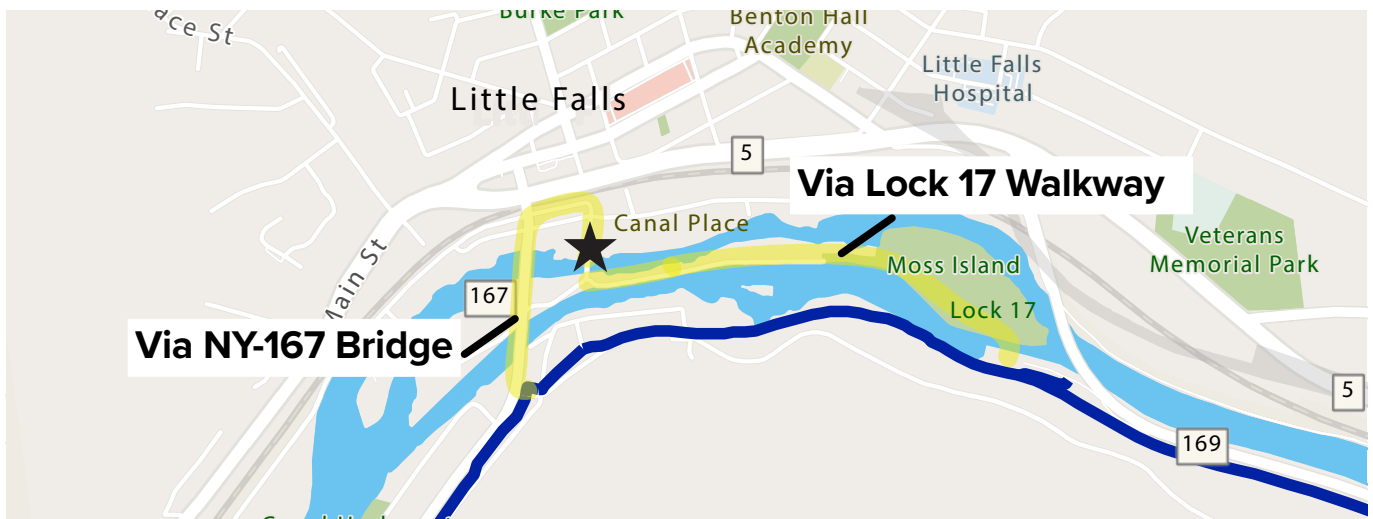
- When approaching the intersection with W. Casler St, it is unclear where the NY-167 bridge will take you. When approaching from the west, there is no evident cycling infrastructure nor signage directing cyclists onto the NY-167 bridge to get to Canal Place or Main Street.
- The NY-167 bridge has bike lanes but they are narrow and the bridge feels uncomfortable to ride on.
- The intersection with Elizabeth St is wide and feels unsafe and confusing, with the right-of-way given to the east and west ramps. Limited lane markings and what seems like the bike lane disappearing does not help.



View from the crossing with W. Casler St approaching from the west. There is no indicator that taking the bridge will take you to downtown.

Via Lock 17 walkway and Seeley Street

- The walkway over Lock 17 is only accessible by foot (not bike). The Lock 17 Sky Bridge project will enhance bike and pedestrian access to Moss Island, Canal Place, and downtown.
- The surface condition of Seeley Street, running from Lock 17 on Moss Island to Canal Place, is currently poor, with deep ruts presenting hazards for pedestrians and cyclists. The Seeley Promenade Project is poised to turn this stretch of road into a multi-use path.



Connecting from Canal Place to Main Street

The Walkway to Main Street (tunnel under the railroad tracks) provides an off-road connection from Canal Place to Downtown but does not have accommodations for bicycles - either bike racks for cyclists to get off and walk or ramps so that cyclists could bring their bikes to the other side.

On the north side of the tunnel after emerging from the tunnel, there is no guidance as to where to go, and crossing NY Rt 5 (four lanes of traffic) feels stressful as a pedestrian, even though there is a traffic signal.



Crossing of NY Rt 5 after emerging from the tunnel (out of view to the left).

Getting around Downtown

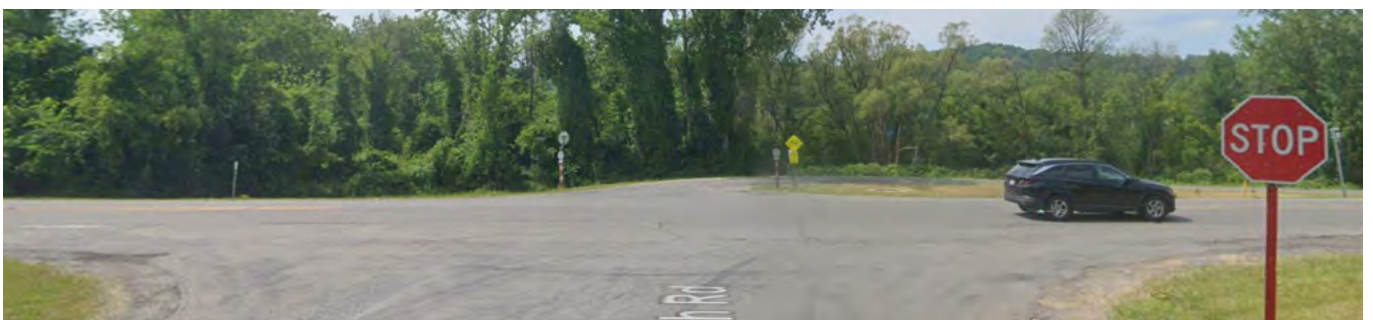
Overly wide, one-way streets makes cycling downtown on Albany St and Main St uncomfortable and confusing. Walking around downtown is more pleasant than cycling.



Riding on Albany Street feels uncomfortable because the roadway is so wide.

Connecting to the Little Falls Harbor

There is no pedestrian/bike crossing infrastructure between Southern Ave and Towpath Road across NY-167. Southern Ave is relatively pleasant to ride, with low traffic. However the pedestrian experience is less pleasant, with discontinuous sidewalks.



Lack of crossing infrastructure to get across NY-167, facing north.

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 no maps or kiosks directly on the trail. At Little Falls Harbor, there are kiosks, a business directory, and maps. There are also faded maps of the trails on Moss Island.

CCT/EST blazes

- ECT/EST signage on the trail on the west side of the city is confusing because the route of the trail has been modified over the years. A particularly confusing spot is on Southern Ave, which is not the current official route of the ECT/EST (pictured above).
- There are instances where there are ECT signs but no EST signs, and EST signs but no ECT signs. Sign posts should strive to include both trail blazes where possible, but EST should be prioritized.

Directional Wayfinding Signage

There are a few different types of signs on the trail with different designs directing trail users to points of interest. The painted pointer signs at the intersection of the ECT/EST at W. Casler St are a particularly nice touch, however it is difficult to see the signs that point to downtown when facing the sign pole from the trail due to their orientation.



Gateway signage

The Miracle Mile-and-a-Half Sign off of Flint Ave serves as a gateway to this section of trail.

In general however, there is no “Welcome to Little Falls” signage on the trail.

The new Trail Parking sign/bike art for the Miracle Mile and a Half parking lot contributes to the placemaking and welcoming nature of this trailhead.



Interpretive Signage

There is not a lot of interpretive signage along the trail. This is especially notable regarding the industrial ruins along the trail that fascinate trail users.

Informational/Promotional Resources

There are quite a few resources where trail users can find information about the city. Notably, the City added a "Cycle Here" page to the City's website as a result of the Empire State Trail Town program. As part of this initiative, a Facebook page, CycleLittleFallsNY, was also created to share updates about cycling and bike tourism.

"Cycle Here" page on their municipal website as part of the Trail Town program, which has information on the Empire State Trail Town program, Cycle the Erie Canal, Camping, Lodging, and Bike Friendly NY businesses

CycleLittleFallsNY Facebook page posts content about biking and the trail

Cycle Here Brochure is a print brochure that highlights Little Falls as an Empire State Trail Town.

Little Falls Historical Society Audio Tour: Interactive map and self-guided audio tours of historic sites in Little Falls

Trailway Tales Podcast: Podcast created by Studio25 to tell the stories of cyclists coming through the City
Itineraries developed by external partners:

Hike Bike Explore Little Falls Itinerary (2018)

Mohawk Valley History Indian Castle to Dolgeville Bike Loop

Little Falls: A Perfect Place to Call Home: As part of the Empire State Trail Town program, PTNY worked with the Trail Town Committee to develop a Trail Town Landing Page, which highlights what makes the City unique and contains everything a trail user would need to plan their visit.

Little Falls: The Perfect Place to Call Home

Screenshot of Little Falls' Trail Town landing page.



The friendly, scenic city of Little Falls is a vibrant cultural gem that sparkles among the Mohawk River's whitewater rapids. Indeed, Little Falls owes its very existence to the waters of the Mohawk River and the Erie Canal. Canal Place and Main Street in Little Falls offer modern shopping opportunities. They are the gateway to the sprawling Little Falls National Historic District, encompassing nearly 350 historically significant buildings that preserve the heritage of the vibrant way of life that the Mohawk River and Erie Canal made possible in this scenic small city. **Learn more about cycling in Little Falls.**

Why visit Little Falls?

- **Rock Climbing at Moss Island**—Climbers worldwide come to Little Falls. They say, "If you can climb here, you can climb anywhere. It's hard climbing. There are only about six easy climbs." They rank the difficulty of climbs with numbers up to 15. Most of the climbs on Moss Island are from 5-8 to 5-10. They are top-roped, but some of them are underrated.
- **Canal Harbor and Rotary Park**—The City of Little Falls and the New York State Canal Corporation operate Canal Harbor and Rotary Park. The facility offers kayak and canoe rentals, overnight docking, electricity, water, showers, bathrooms, and useful area information.

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

Little Falls has public events and festivals, some of which focus more on the trail than others:

- **Rock Valley Music Festival** is the third Saturday in May - This festival features live local music, food vendors, and NYS craft beer.
- **Canal Celebration** is the second week of August - The Annual Canal Celebration, spanning 36 years, represents our recognition of the community, our heritage, and the spirit that makes Little Falls a unique place in the Mohawk Valley. The Committee is investigating integrating a cycling race during the Canal Celebration in 2025 and making that a regular event.
- **Garlic & Herb Festival** is the second Saturday in September - The Mohawk Valley's climate and soils are ideal for growing garlic and herbs, which is why we have so many local producers in this non profit agricultural festival.
- **Cheese Festival** is the first Saturday in October - The Little Falls Cheese Festival has become known as New York State's premier gathering of cheesemakers, reminiscent of its early history as the nation's cheese market capital.
- **Christmas in Little Falls** is the second weekend of December - It is a fun, family-oriented holiday celebration brought to you by businesses and not-for-profit agencies serving the City.

Programs

- Benton Hall Academy (elementary school) teaches a bike safety program at Eastern Park.
- Run clubs like **Rock City Runners** use the trail for group runs.

Public Art & History

- Little Falls is home to the **Mohawk Valley Center for the Arts**, and has two prominent sculptures - One at Benton's Landing and a large sculpture in Sterzinar Park.
- The **Little Falls Historical Society**: Originally an 1833 bank, the building where The Little Falls Historical Society Museum is located in Herkimer County, New York, was converted and restored to house thousands of artifacts, family records, and relics of the past. The museum is an educational, eye-opening experience, suitable for all ages.



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

1. **Install bike racks in the downtown business areas, working with the business community and other partners.**
 - ☒ 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.
 - ☒ Install a bike rack at the entrance to the Main Street Walkway from Canal Place to encourage cyclists leave their bikes and walk through the tunnel.
2. **Continue to engage and educate the business community about how to be bike friendly and attract more cyclists.**
 - ☒ Continue to certify qualifying businesses as Bike Friendly NY. Especially approach accommodations that have not yet been certified Bike Friendly NY yet and ensure that they are prepared to welcome cyclists.
 - ☒ Work with trail-oriented businesses, welcome centers, and attractions to align opening hours with days/times when the trail sees the most use.
 - ☒ Educate local businesses about key information trail users will often ask about, including where cyclists can stay overnight (lodging and camping) and where to find more information.

Long Term

1. **Investigate the potential to offer a bike share or bike rental program** to encourage active recreation and transportation. See the example of the Village of Brockport's "**Borrow a Bike**" program
2. **Consider developing a business ambassador program** that formalizes businesses as tourism ambassadors, providing the businesses with education about outdoor recreation opportunities and identifying the businesses with a sign or flag.
3. **Continue to work with partners to invest in and enhance Moss Island as an outdoor recreation destination park for rock climbing and hiking**, ensuring that the trails and facilities are well-maintained.



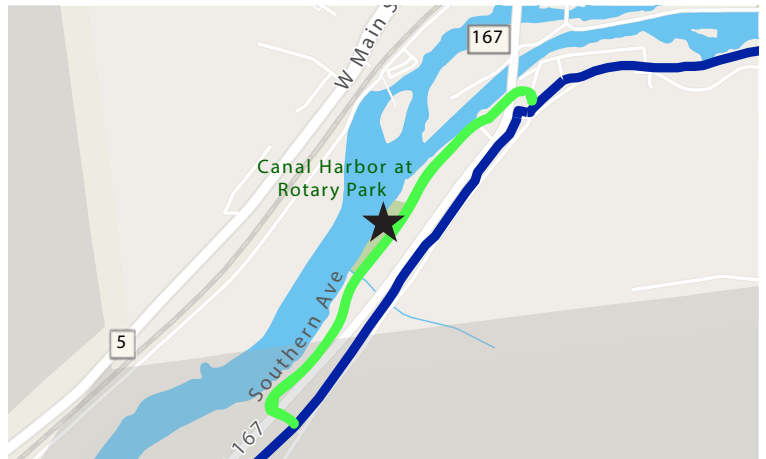
High-quality and safe bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure

Short Term

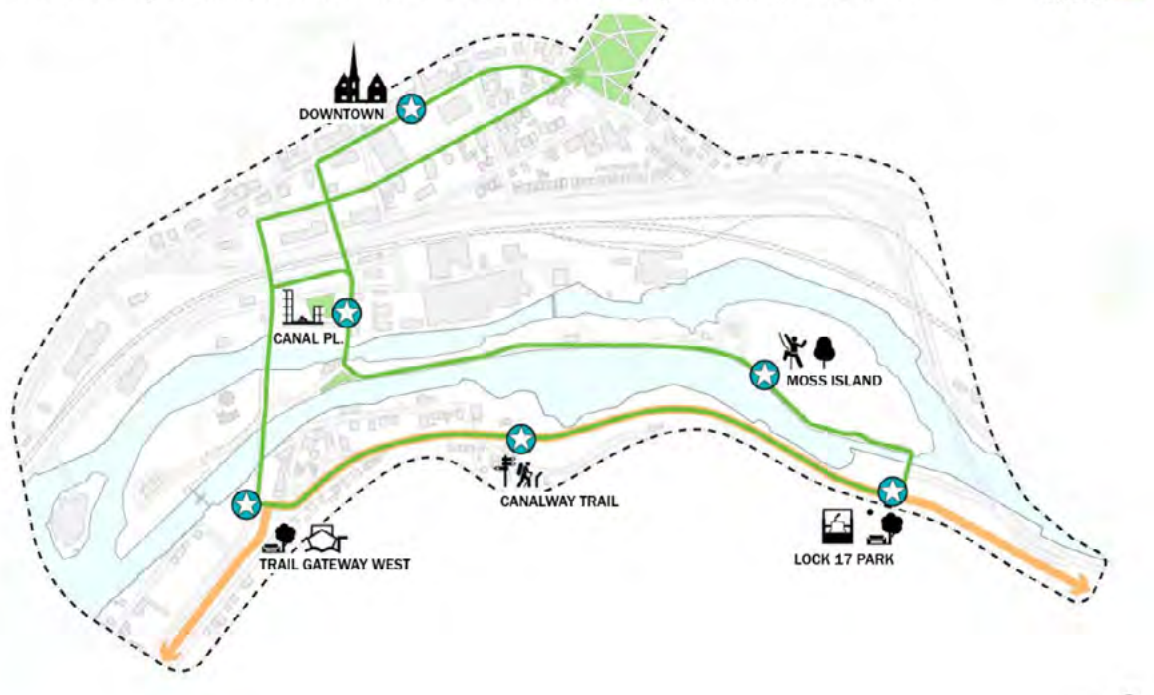
1. **Ensure that vegetation on the trail and connecting paths that the city is responsible for is trimmed consistently throughout the summer.**
2. **Address safety concerns at the trail crossing across Towpath Road.** Work with the Town of Little Falls and NYS OPRHP to determine ownership and maintenance responsibilities and repaint the crosswalks across Towpath Road.

Long Term

1. **Create a designated “Little Falls Harbor Loop” with clear branding and signage that provides an on-road route that directs cyclists off the trail to the Harbor and the amenities located there.**
 - ☒ Install signage or pavement markings along Southern Ave to create a clear route.
 - ☒ Engage the Town of Little Falls and NYS DOT about installing a crosswalk and pedestrian crossing signs at the intersection of Towpath Road/Southern Ave with NY-167.
2. **Implement the “Little Falls Loop,”** the 3.1-mile loop from the ECT/EST originally proposed in the DRI that would provide seamless bike and pedestrian connections from the trail to downtown, building on the success of the Little Falls Connector/Sky Bridge and Seeley Street improvements.
3. **Reduce the City-wide speed limit to 25 mph** to make it safer for bicyclists and pedestrians to get around. Refer to the resources available from the [NY Bicycling Coalition](#) for a growing list of municipalities that have lowered their speed limit to 25 mph and for sample legislation and other tips.



Connecting the Canalway Trail and Little Falls / Pedestrian and Bicyclists Map Little Falls



Wayfinding & Informational Resources

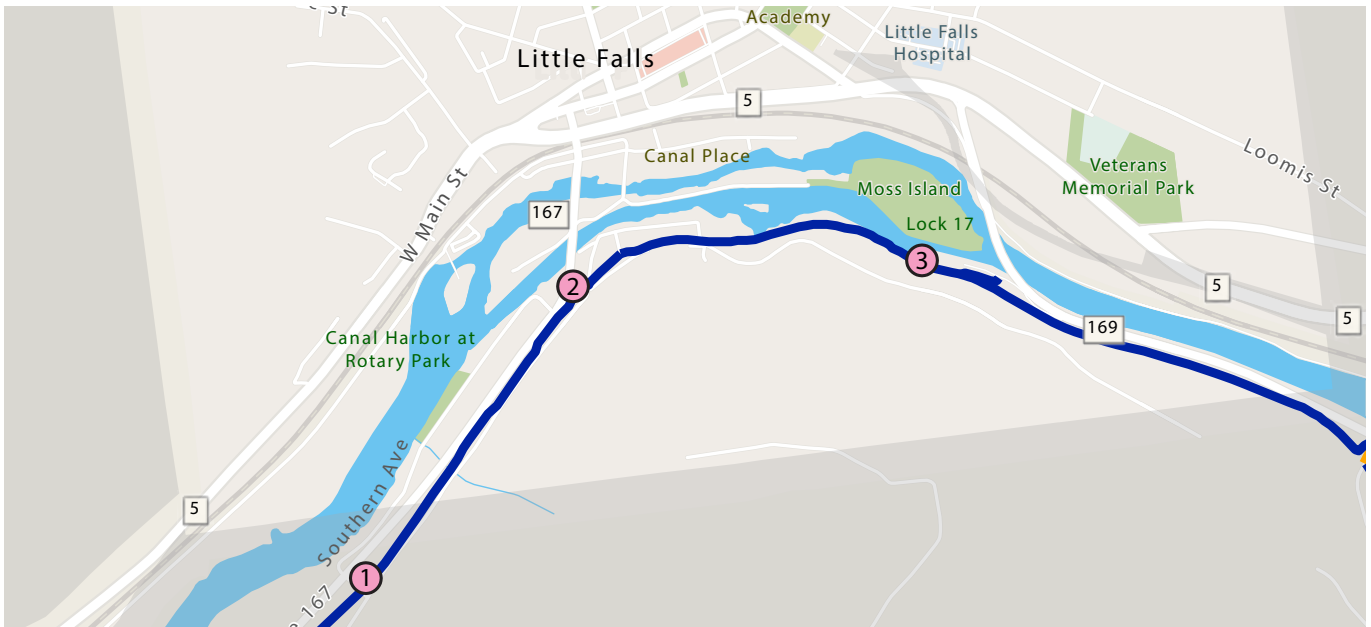
Short Term

1. Evaluate ECT/EST blaze signage and ensure it is consistent with official routing.

- ☒ Remove outdated ECT signs from Southern Ave.
- ☒ Work with NYS OPRHP to install EST blaze signs to complement the existing ECT signs along the trail route through the City.

2. Develop a Little Falls directional wayfinding plan to improve wayfinding to key destinations and the amenities available at each, including Little Falls Harbor, Canal Place, Main Street/Downtown, Moss Island, and Lock 17.

- ☒ Collaborate early and often with all landowning entities where signage may be installed. Key partners will be NYS OPRHP, NYS Canal Corporation, and NYSDOT.
- ☒ In addition to wayfinding signage, each of the priority signage locations have the opportunity to be "gateways" that welcome trail users to Little Falls. Location ② specifically could serve as a gateway moment, taking advantage of city-owned greenspace between NY Rt 167 and Flint Ave, and the nearby connection to the bridge to Canal Place and downtown.



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.

3. **Keep digital resources up to date** to ensure cyclists have the most up-to-date information and inspire people to get outside.
- ☒ Keep the “Cycle Here” webpage up to date with Trail Town updates and projects, and consider expanding the page to include an embedded interactive map from the Trail Town landing page directly into the page.
 - ☒ Consider expanding the page to include more information, such as recommended trail parking locations, info about the Trailway Tales podcast and links to previous episodes, info about bike shops nearby (Self Service bike shop and Dick’s contact info), trail events and programs, and volunteer opportunities to get involved with the Trail Town effort.
 - ☒ Continue to seek out cyclists to interview for the Trailway Tales podcast, and share their stories on the Cycle Little Falls Facebook Page.

Long Term

1. **Develop an informative brochure for cyclists** that will include everything from bike-friendly locations to ‘tourist’ spots and other points of interest and information hubs.
2. **Building on the self-guided audio tours, develop interpretive signage at each of the points of interest** with QR codes that direct to webpages and voice recordings that explain each site.

Welcoming Atmosphere & Unique Community Character

Short Term

1. **Develop new events and coordinate existing events to include a focus on using the trail.**
 - ☒ Integrate a cycling race or ride during the Canal Celebration in 2025 and making that a regular event.
 - ☒ Host a celebration of cycling and Little Falls’ heritage for the annual Cycle the Erie Canal bike tour.
2. **Continue to work with Benton Hall Academy** to expand the cycling program to encourage children to use the trail.
3. **Encourage businesses to “put a bike on it”** or otherwise embrace the trail and/or canal Ex: Name a pizza after the trail, put bike decorations outside or in the window.

Long Term

1. **Continue to celebrate the city, the canal and its history through public art and partnerships with local galleries and the Mohawk Valley Center for the Arts.**
 - ☒ Consider installing public art at key locations along the trail, especially on the trail section on the west side that is owned by the city.

Implementation

Little Falls 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 Little Falls is planning to pass a Mayoral Proclamation to formally adopt this Action Agenda and recognize the Mayor's Trail Town committee to carry out the goals and recommendations of this plan. The Trail Town committee has also considered reviving the "Think Local Falls" or similar business group. Once passed, the City of Little Falls will be recognized by PTNY and the NYS Canal Corporation as an officially certified Empire State Trail Town.

» Celebrating Certification as an Empire State Trail Town

The City is planning to host a celebratory event in recognition of certification. Various platforms will be used to advertise the city's certification, including the Cycle Little Falls Facebook page and My Little Falls news platform.

» 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](#).

Cosolidated 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](#)

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.