Who's on the Trail
Genesee Valley Greenway

2021-2023 Trail Count Report

Published January 2024

PARKS & TRAILS
NEW YORK

Table of Contents

RALPH C. WILSON, JR.
F O U N D A T I O N

Introduction

The 90-mile Genesee Valley Greenway (GVG) State Park runs from Rochester, south along its namesake valley, to Hinsdale in rural Cattaraugus County. The greenway trail connects nearly two dozen communities, offering a place for residents and visitors to walk, jog, and bike. The GVG connects to the Erie Canalway Trail–the east-west leg of New York's 750-mile Empire State Trail–at its northern end in Rochester and offers additional connections to the Genesee Riverway Trail into downtown Rochester, the Lehigh Valley Trail, and other major regional trails. The centrality of the GVG as an important western spine for New York's growing greenway trail network cements it as a key asset for the region.

Since 2019, community partners including Parks & Trails New York (PTNY), the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP), Letchworth Gateway Villages (LGV), Friends of the Genesee Valley Greenway (FoGVG), and numerous other organizations and community members have gathered to support a regional a "Trail Town" initiative. Active in 10 communities across the rural Genesee Valley Region, the Trail Town initiative harnesses the power of the trail and other outdoor recreation resources to boost the region's economic recovery and create a robust, sustainable outdoor economy focused on natural assets and quality of life. Through this initiative, participating communities have united under a regional Genesee Valley Trail Town brand–an identity that can serve as the basis of their planning and promotional efforts for years to come.

In an attempt to measure baselines and impact of the Trail Town initiative, PTNY, with support from OPRHP, LGV, and FoGVG, has monitored and measured the trail's popularity. The trail count process has relied on electronic counters installed at select locations along the corridor, which use infrared pyroelectric technology to count the people passing within range of a sensor by detecting body temperature. PTNY typically installs counters for one year or longer, allowing for a full year of count data rather than estimates based on sample data.

Between 2021 and 2023, PTNY counted trail use at seven locations along the Genesee Valley Greenway. These counts, analyzed in the Who's on the Trail: Genesee Valley Greenway report, provide a snapshot of the immense popularity and potential of this important regional asset. Supporting data also provides detail on when and how people use the trail.

In December 2023, PTNY received access to data from Placer.ai, a location analytics company that aggregates visit trends, trade areas, and demographics using location data from mobile apps. A mobile user who spends more than 7 minutes within a point of interest (POI) is counted as a single visit. These count sets are aggregated to provide trends and demographic information when enough counts are present to meet a privacy threshold. The Placer.ai product uses these counts in addition to data streams from a large marketplace of partners to analyze migration trends, event performance, seasonal customer trends, routes usage, and more.

A preliminary analysis of data obtained from Placer.ai is provided in this report, including an estimate of annual visitation to Genesee Valley Greenway State Park dating back to 2017. The report also includes an analysis of demographic and other use characteristics of those who visited the Genesee Valley Greenway between 2021 and 2023.

This growing body of visitation data illuminates and underscores the growing popularity of trails and outdoor recreation networks, not to mention the significant public value of securing funding to close the remaining gaps in the Genesee Valley Greenway. Moving forward, the data and accompanying analysis can optimize future investments and impact.

Note: Additional information on the process used to gather data, and standards used to estimate full-year trail use, can be found in the companion to this report, "**Who's on the Trail: GVG Methodology.**" Data recorded from individual count locations can be requested from PTNY by emailing **trails@ptny.org.**

Count Locations Overview

PTNY used electronic counters to record trail usage along the Genesee Valley Greenway at seven locations between 2021 and 2023. Counters were installed at Scottsville, Mount Morris, and Fillmore in June 2021 and generally left in place for a full year, with the exception of Scottsville which was removed after one summer.

In June 2022, counters were moved to three new locations: Avon; Piffard; and the Nunda Branch Trail. Due to technical difficulties with mounting the counter at Piffard, the counter was moved to Fillmore in June 2023 and recorded trail use through October of that year.

Genesee Valley Greenway Trail Counter Locations (2021-2023)
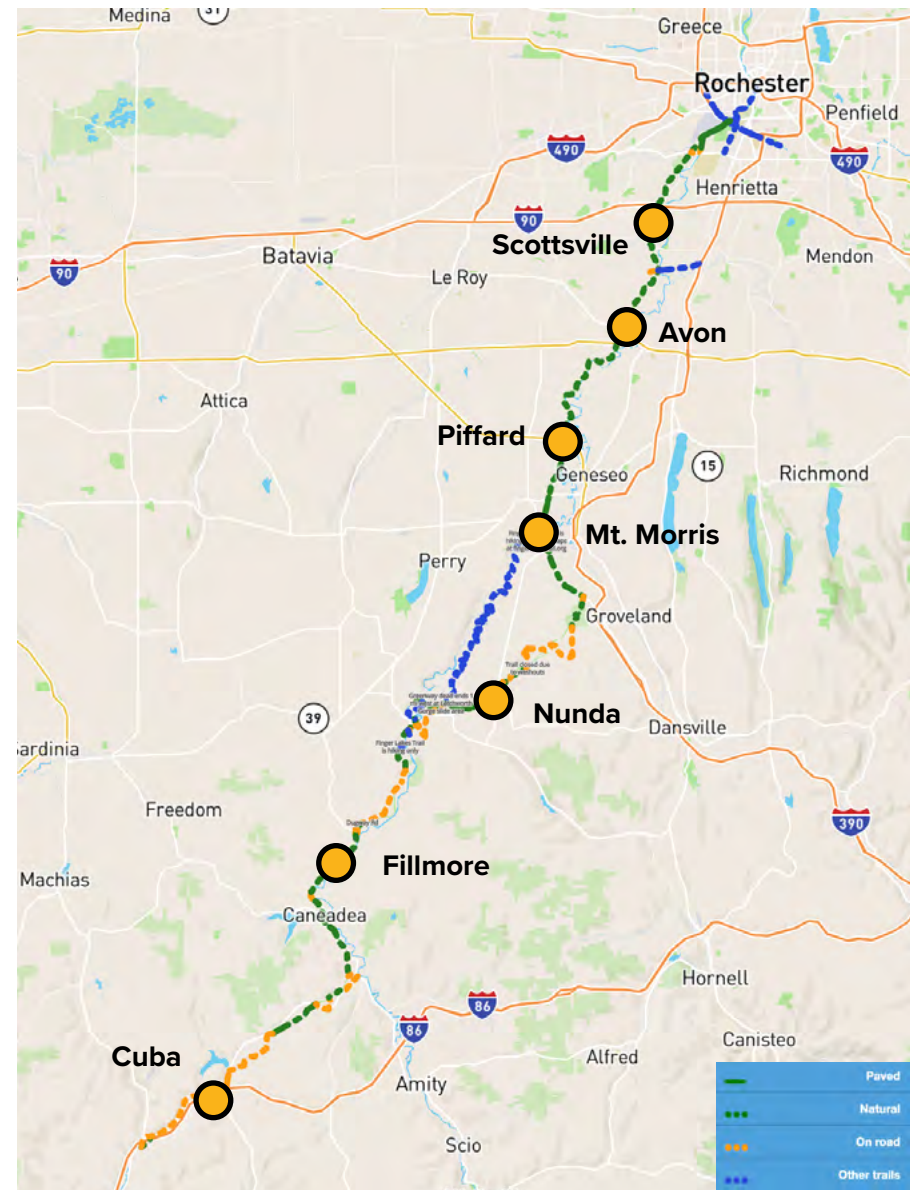
Trail Count Profiles

The table on this page summarizes trail use at each of the count locations. The following pages serve as profiles of trail use recorded at each of the count sites. Each page provides information on the counter location, the dates the counter was installed and an image to demonstrate trail conditions, as well as monthly trail use and an estimate of annual trail use/ Estimated annual use was calculated using National Bicycle and Pedestrian Demonstration Project extrapolation criteria (see our accompanying **Who's on the Trail: Methodology** report for more information on how extrapolation calculations are conducted).

Genesee Valley Greenway Trail Use Summary 2021-2023

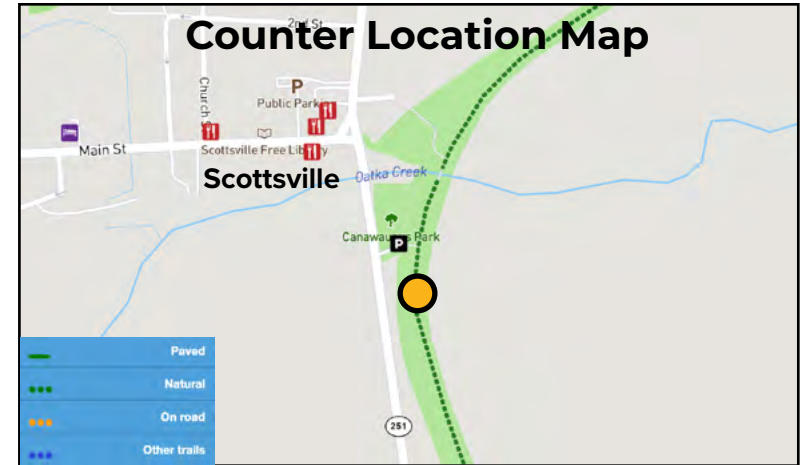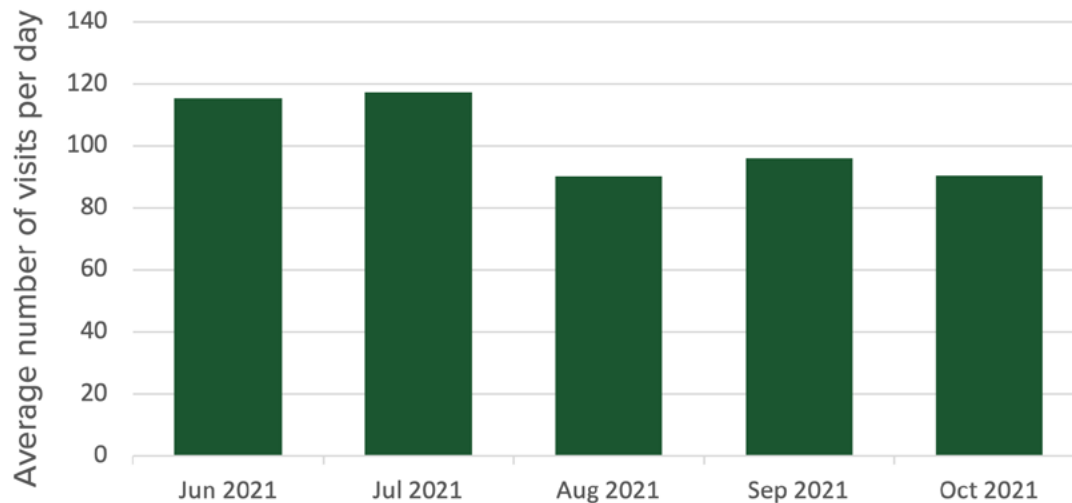| PTNY Electronic Count Locations	Dates Installed	Days Installed	Total Observed Use	Average Use by Day	Estimated Annual Use			
					2021 Use	2022 Use	2023 Use	Average Annual Use
Scottsville - Canawaugus Park	6/11/2021 to 10/28/2021	140	14,108	101	27,512	-	-	27,512
Avon - White Creek Bridge	6/9/2022 to 10/3/2023	482	17,815	37	-	12,318	11,962	12,111
Piffard - Route 63	6/10/2022 to 11/4/2022	149	2,074	14	-	3,898	-	3,898
Mount Morris - South of Genesee River Bridge	6/8/2021 to 6/8/2022	366	7,429	20	7,099	7,969	-	7,431
Nunda - Branch Trail	6/10/2022 to 6/12/2023	368	2,763	8	-	2,358	3,320	2,736
Fillmore - "Funky Fence" Pedestrian	6/13/2023 to 10/3/2023	113	620	5	-	-	1,365	1,365
Cuba - Griffin Creek Bridge Pedestrian	6/8/2021 to 6/10/2022	368	8,300	23	7,707	9,127	-	8,251

Scottsville
Canawaugus Park

Installed June 11, 2021 - October 28, 2021

The counter was installed just south of Canawaugus Park on the south side of the village of Scottsville, in the town of Wheatland. Canawaugus Park is a popular trail access point close to Rochester. The trail in this section is stone dust, having been resurfaced as part of a project completed in 2020.

Estimated Annual Use

27,512

Counter Location Map

Month	Monthly Use	Daily Average
Jun 2021 (part)	2,307	115
Jul 2021	3,640	117
Aug 2021	2,794	90
Sep 2021	2,881	96
Oct 2021 (part)	2,529	90

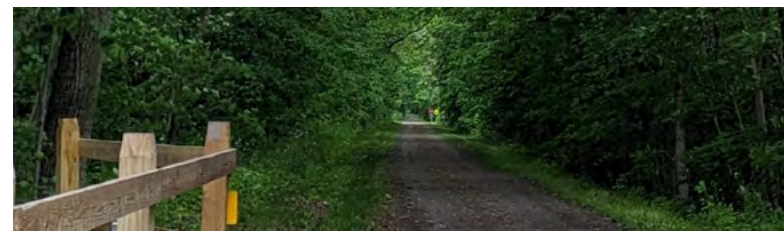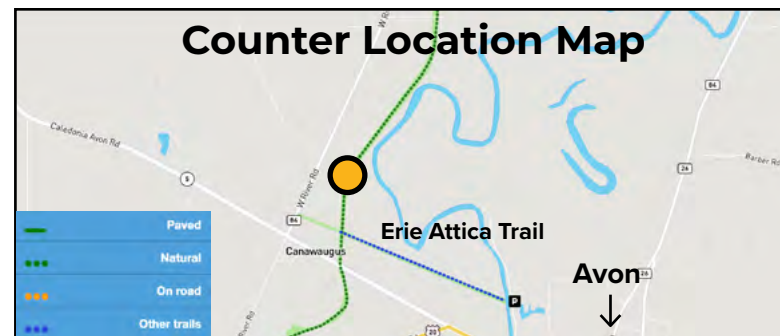Scottsville Daily Average Use by Month
(June 2021 - October 2021)
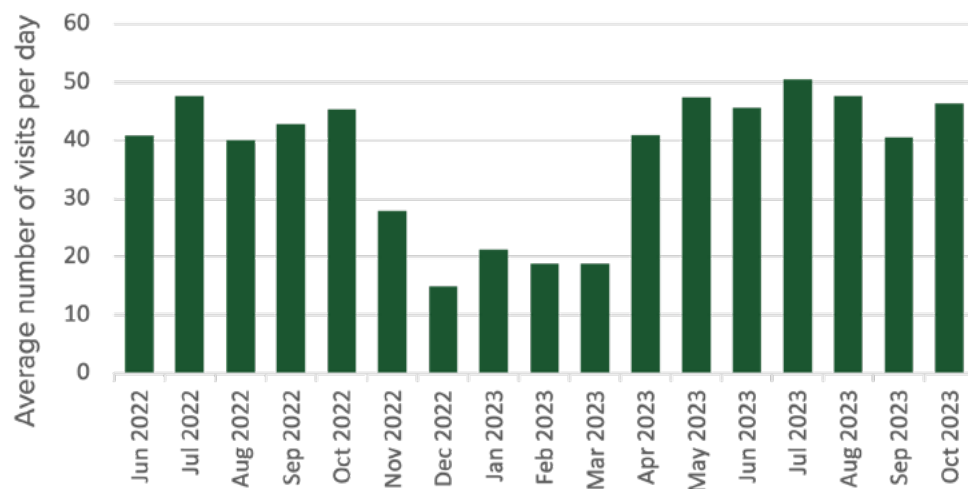
Avon
White Creek Bridge

Installed June 9, 2022 to October 3, 2023

The counter was installed just north of the point where the 1-mile Erie-Attica Trail connects with the main route of the GVG. The Erie-Attica Trail is the primary connection between the GVG and the Village of Avon. The trail in this section is also stone dust and was resurfaced as part of a project completed in 2020.

Estimated Annual Use

12,111

Counter Location Map

Month	Monthly Use	Daily Average
Jun 2022 (part)	897	41
Jul 2022	1478	48
Aug 2022	1242	40
Sep 2022	1285	43
Oct 2022	1404	45
Nov 2022	836	28
Dec 2022	461	15
Jan 2023	658	21
Feb 2023	529	19
Mar 2023	584	19
Apr 2023	1228	41
May 2023	1471	47
Jun 2023	1368	46
Jul 2023	1568	51
Aug 2023	1479	48
Sep 2023	1214	40
Oct 2023 (part)	139	46

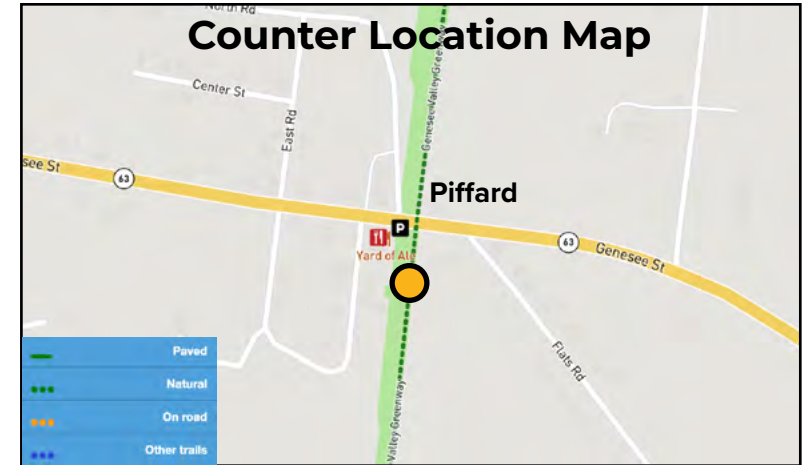## Avon Daily Average Use by Month
(June 2022 - October 2023)

Piffard
Route 63

Installed June 10, 2022 to November 4, 2022

The counter was installed along a wooden fence just south of where the Greenway crosses NYS Route 63, adjacent to the restaurant "Yard of Ale." The trail in this section has a natural surface. While the Greenway crosses NYS Route 63 just north of this location, the crossing lacks a crosswalk, which likely deters trail users approaching from either direction from continuing along the trail past the crossing.

Estimated Annual Use

3,898

Counter Location Map

Piffard Daily Average Use by Month
(June 2022 to November 2022)
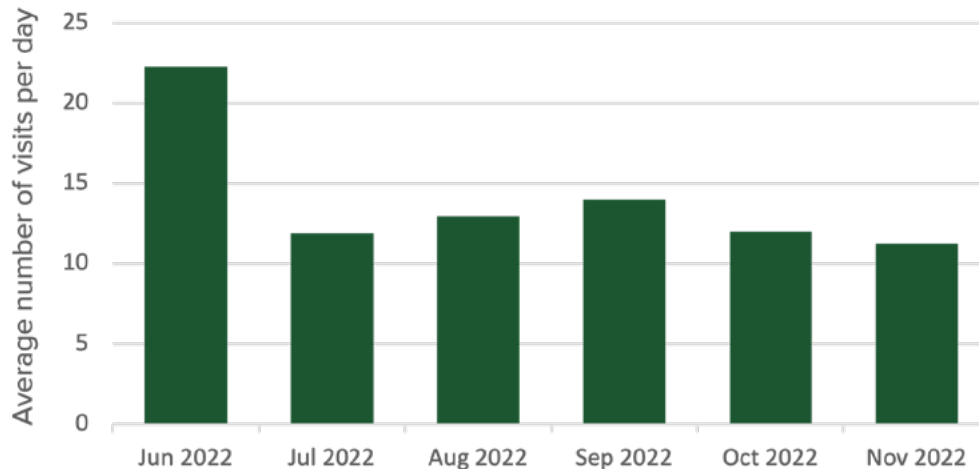
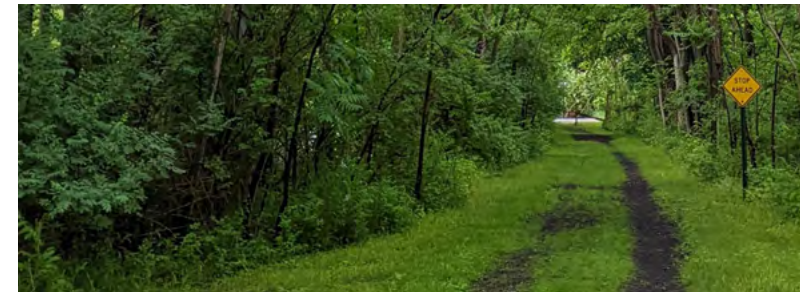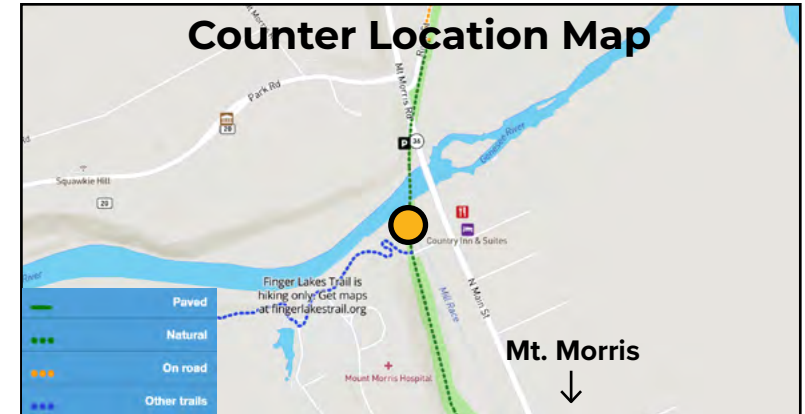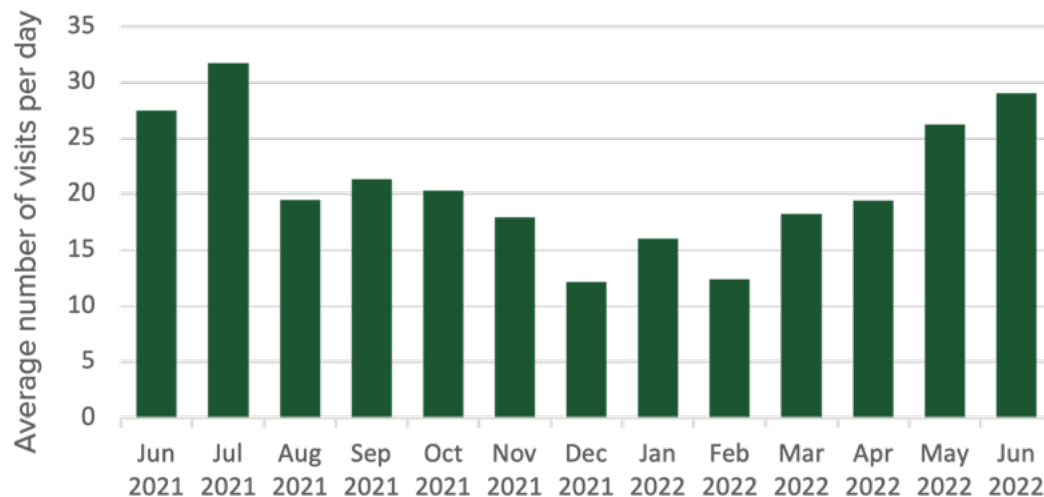| Month	Monthly Use	Daily Average
Jun 2022 (part)	468	22
Jul 2022	369	12
Aug 2022	402	13
Sep 2022	420	14
Oct 2022	372	12
Nov 2022 (part)	45	11

Mt. Morris

South of Genesee River Bridge

Installed June 8, 2021 to June 8, 2022

The counter was installed just south of the bridge that carries the GVG across the Genesee River in Mount Morris. This section of trail runs through the center of the Village of Mount Morris, and has a natural surface.

Estimated Annual Use

7,431

Counter Location Map

Mt. Morris ↓

Mt. Morris Daily Average Use by Month
(June 2021 - June 2022)

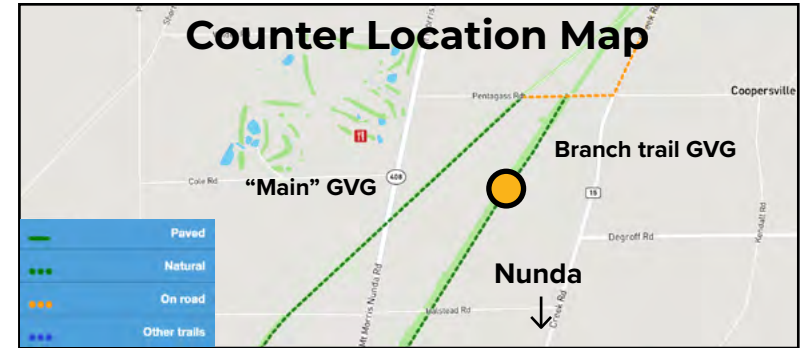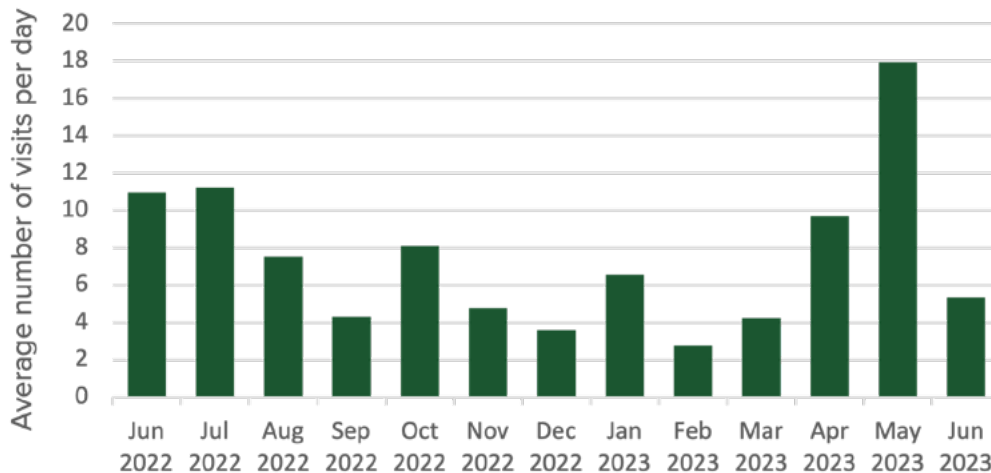| Month	Monthly Use	Daily Average
Jun 2021 (part)	632	27
Jul 2021	983	32
Aug 2021	604	19
Sep 2021	640	21
Oct 2021	628	20
Nov 2021	538	18
Dec 2021	376	12
Jan 2022	498	16
Feb 2022	347	12
Mar 2022	566	18
Apr 2022	584	19
May 2022	812	26
Jun 2022 (part)	232	29

Nunda

Branch Trail

Installed June 10, 2022 to June 12, 2023

In the town of Nunda, in southern Livingston County, the Genesee Valley Greenway has two routes. The "main" route continues southwest towards Letchworth State Park and the southern terminus of the trail. A spur trail, known as the "Nunda Branch Trail," splits from the main trail and runs south into the Village of Nunda. A counter was installed along the branch trail, between Halstead Road and Pentagass Road. The trail in this section has a natural surface.

Estimated Annual Use

2,736

Counter Location Map

Nunda Daily Average Use by Month
(June 2022 - June 2023)

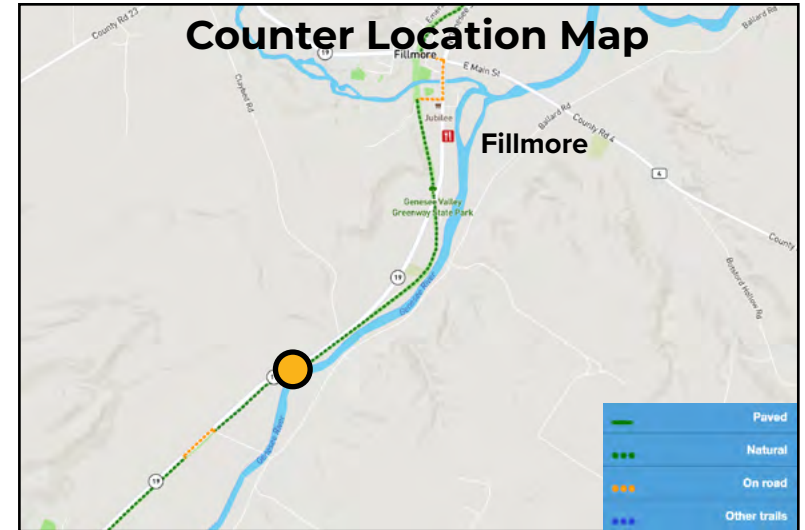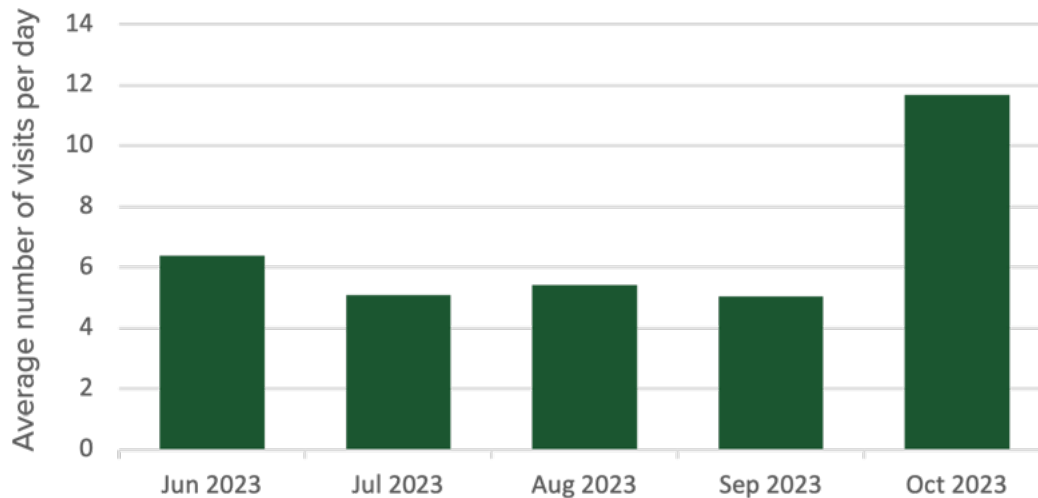| Month	Monthly Use	Daily Average
Jun 2022 (part)	230	11
Jul 2022	348	11
Aug 2022	234	8
Sep 2022	129	4
Oct 2022	251	8
Nov 2022	143	5
Dec 2022	111	4
Jan 2023	203	7
Feb 2023	77	3
Mar 2023	131	4
Apr 2023	291	10
May 2023	556	18
Jun 2023 (part)	59	5

Fillmore

"Funky Fence"

Installed June 13, 2023 to October 3, 2023

South of the hamlet of Fillmore in Allegheny County, the GVG crosses NYS Route 19 and runs alongside the Genesee River. The counter was installed on a wooden fence (locally known as the "Funky Fence") roughly one mile south of this crossing. The trail in this section has a natural surface.

Estimated Annual Use

1,365

Counter Location Map

▬	Paved
•••	Natural
•••	On road
•••	Other trails

Fillmore Daily Average Use by Month
(June 2023 - October 2023)

Average number of visits per day

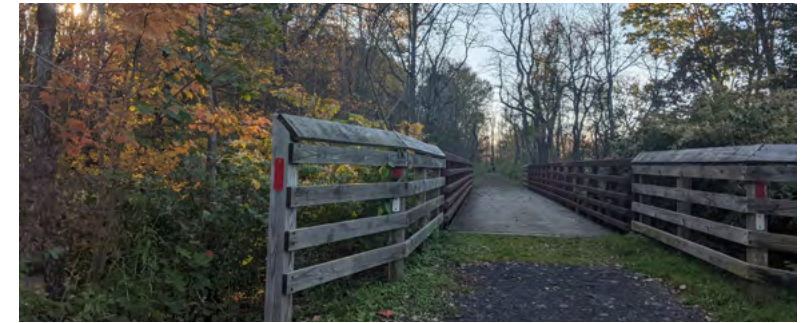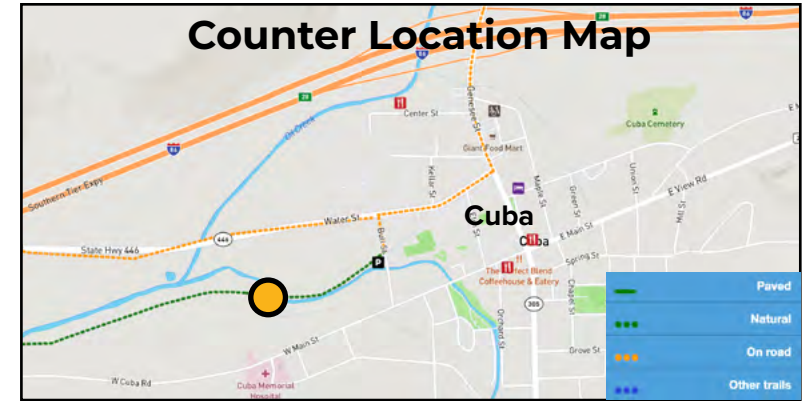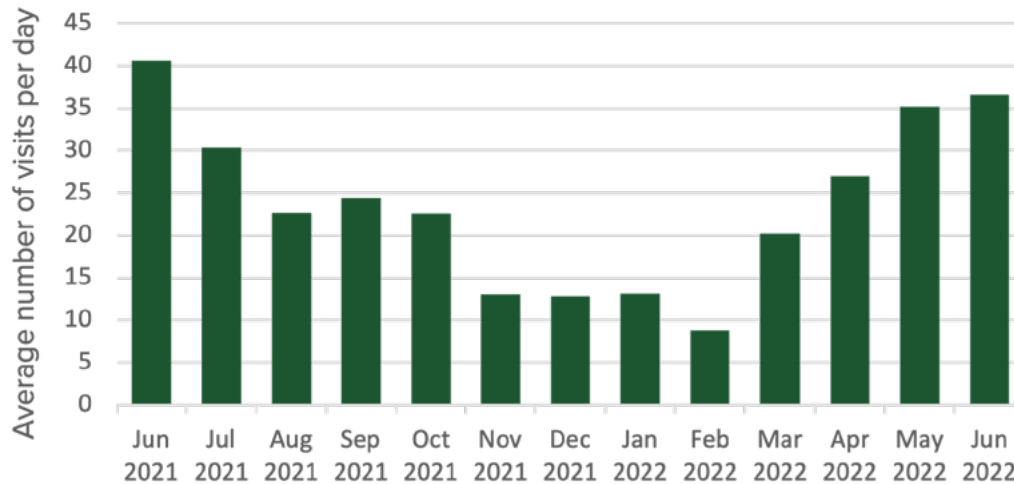| Month	Monthly Use	Daily Average
Jun 2023 (part)	115	6
Jul 2023	158	5
Aug 2023	168	5
Sep 2023	151	5
Oct 2023 (part)	35	12

Cuba

Griffin Creek Bridge

Installed June 8, 2021 to June 10, 2022

In the village of Cuba, the GVG runs for roughly one mile extending from a trailhead off of Bull Street to Old Cuba Road, a dead-end street. This local segment of trail is not directly connected to any other section of the GVG, and features a stone dust surface.

Estimated Annual Use

8,251

Counter Location Map

Cuba Daily Average Use by Month
(June 2021 - June 2022)

Month	Monthly Use	Daily Average
Jun 2021 (part)	932	41
Jul 2021	941	30
Aug 2021	702	23
Sep 2021	733	24
Oct 2021	699	23
Nov 2021	392	13
Dec 2021	397	13
Jan 2022	406	13
Feb 2022	247	9
Mar 2022	625	20
Apr 2022	808	27
May 2022	1090	35
Jun 2022 (part)	366	37

Placer.ai Data & Analysis

An innovative new data source
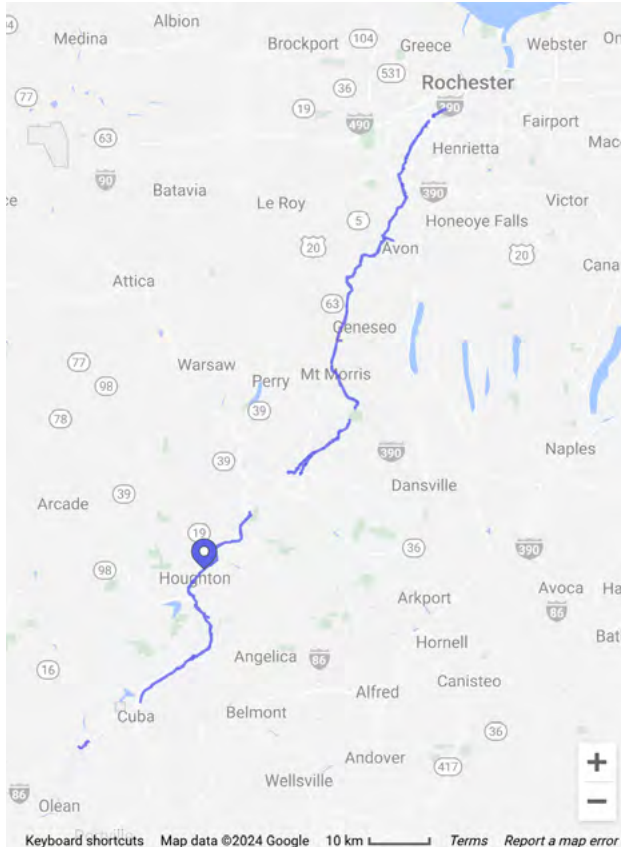
In December 2023, PTNY received access to data gathered by Placer.ai. Placer.ai is a proprietary data source using anonymized data from cell phones and other sources to estimate visitation numbers, in addition to providing valuable information on visitors in the aggregate, such as demographics, trends, and points of origin. Data from Placer.ai is available dating back to 2017. Via Placer.ai, PTNY gathered visitation and further data for Genesee Valley Greenway State Park. The greenway's geographic footprint was based on park boundaries defined by the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation's official dataset, accessed through New York State's GIS Clearinghouse at gis.ny.gov.

Placer data relies on a sample "panel" of visits to any site and uses proprietary algorithms to extrapolate this data to the full population. These algorithms are frequently tested and updated to ensure maximum accuracy. The following analysis is based on a preliminary examination of Placer.ai's data for Genesee Valley Greenway State Park.

As the table below shows, visitation to Genesee Valley Greenway State Park has steadily increased over the seven years of available data, nearly doubling between 2017 and 2023. The number of discrete visitors to the park has also increased, although at a slower rate, reflecting that users are re-visiting the park more frequently each year. Visit frequency–defined as the number of times each individual, on average, visited the park–increased by 17% from 2017 to 2023.

Visitors to the GVG also stayed longer for each visit in 2023. Average time spent increased in 2023 to 78 minutes per visit, a rise from 58 minutes in 2017 (to note: while time spent did increase in 2023, year-to-year variance in the data does not necessarily show a clear trend).

.

During the three year timeframe covered in this report, **from 2021 to 2023, a total of 53,011 visitors made 266,012 trips to Genesee Valley Greenway State Park**, a visit frequency of 5.02 visits per person.

Visits to the Genesee Valley Greenway (2017-2023)

Year	Visits	Visitors	Visit Frequency	Avg. Dwell Time (min.)
2017	45,891	21,261	2.16	58
2018	49,065	22,805	2.15	71
2019	61,980	26,458	2.34	65
2020	88,243	35,852	2.46	64
2021	82,932	33,764	2.46	67
2022	85,766	30,846	2.78	63
2023	97,314	38,392	2.53	78

Visits by Month and Year

Over the three year stretch, visitation was highest in the summer months. Nearly half (48.8%) of all visits to the trail occurred in May, June, July, or August. When including September and October, that number rose to nearly two-thirds of visits (66.4%). Unsurprisingly, December, January, and February saw the least use, with only 13.9% of visits occurring across those months. However, the Greenway did maintain a consistent minimum of usage across all three years, with the lowest visitation number–3,358 visits–occurring in January 2022.
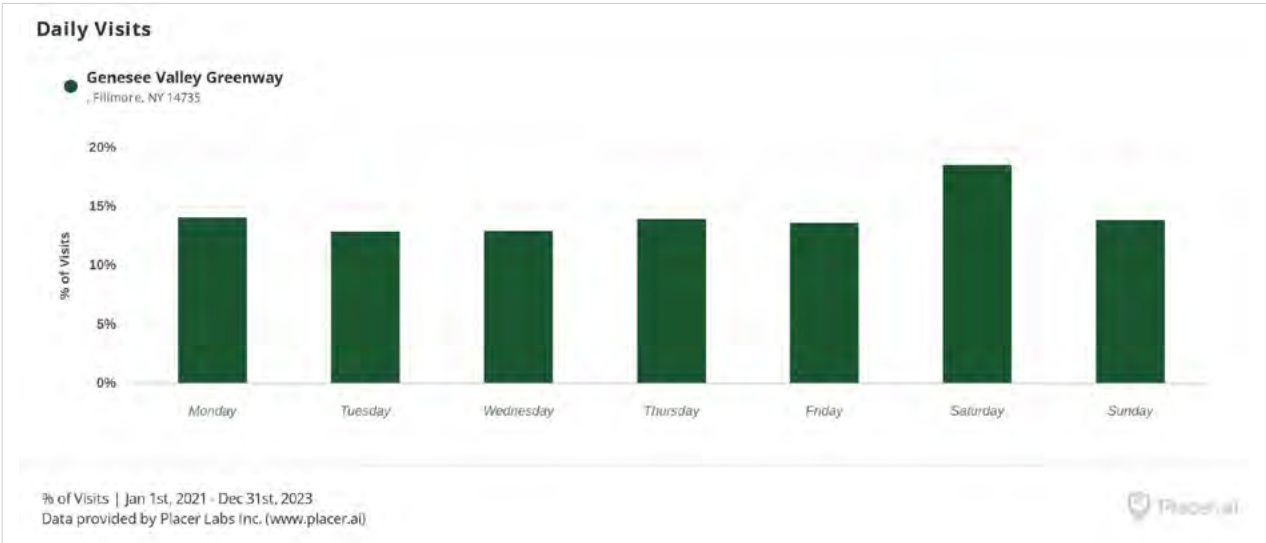
Visits Trend
Jan 1, 2021 - Dec 31, 2023

Visits Trend

Genesee Valley Greenway
Fillmore, NY

Monthly | Visits | Jan 1st, 2021 - Dec 31st, 2023
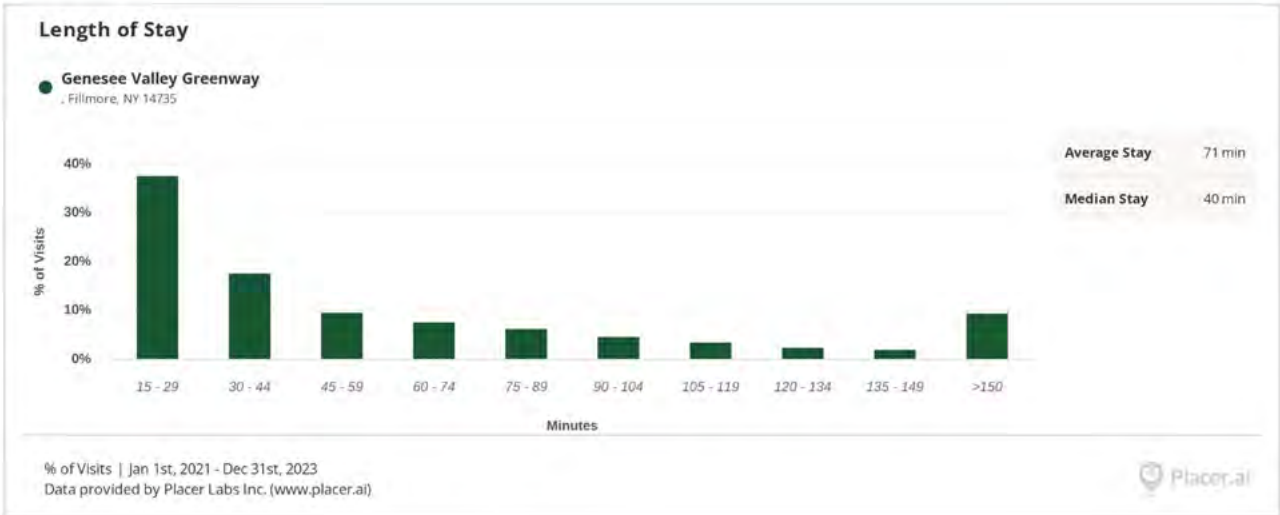Data provided by Placer Labs Inc. (www.placer.ai)
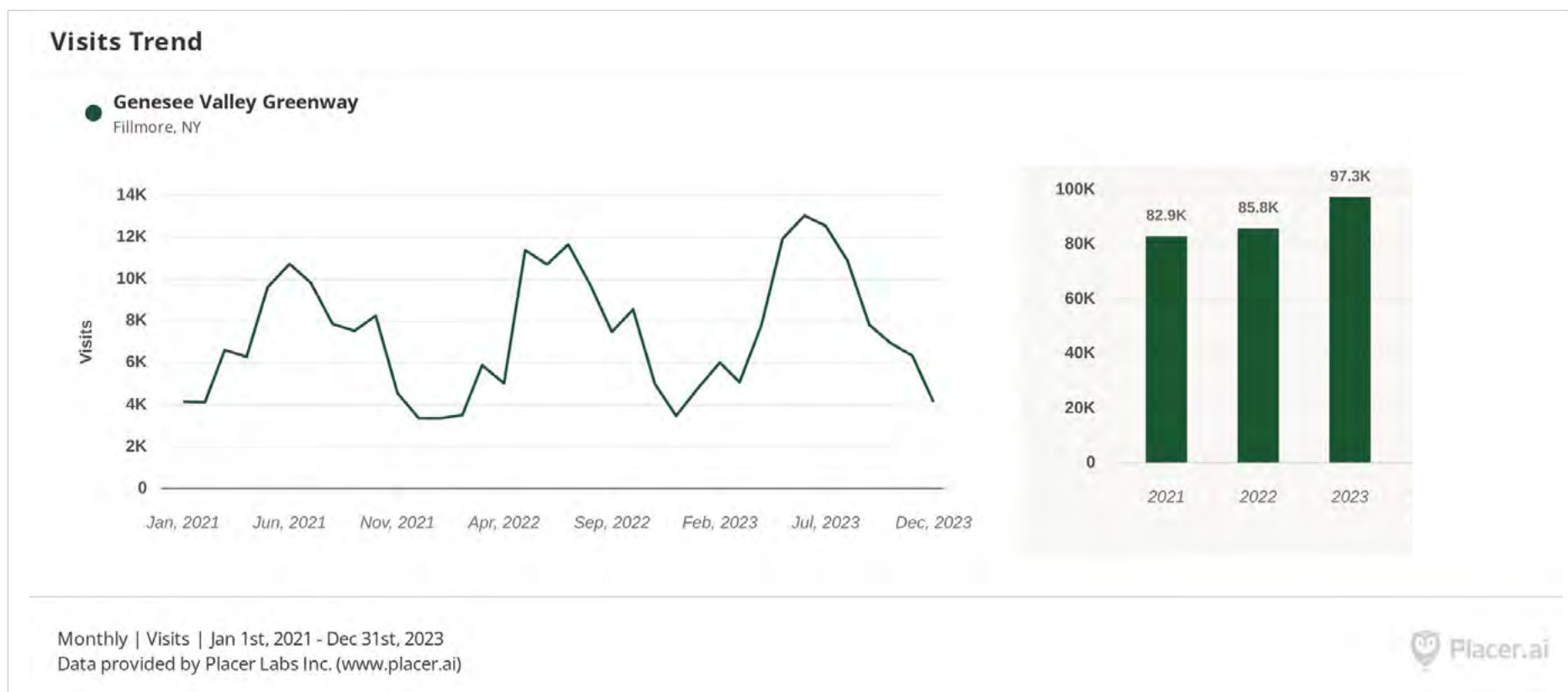
Visits by Day of the Week

Saturday was the most popular day for trail visitors, with 19% of total visitation to the trail occurring on that day. Surprisingly, Monday and Thursday were second and third, with Sunday fourth, contrary to expectations that weekend days see the most visits.

Daily Visits

● **Genesee Valley Greenway**
, Fillmore, NY 14735

% of Visits | Jan 1st, 2021 - Dec 31st, 2023
Data provided by Placer Labs Inc. (www.placer.ai)

Duration of visit

Data is also available on the amount of time spent during trips to the Greenway. Across the three years, 62% of visits to the greenway lasted for more than 30 minutes, with 35% lasting for more than an hour. Only 38% of visits lasted for less than 30 minutes. The median visit duration during this period was 40 minutes, while the average visit duration was much longer, at 71 minutes.

Length of Stay

● **Genesee Valley Greenway**
, Fillmore, NY 14735

| Average Stay | 71 min |
| Median Stay | 40 min |

% of Visits | Jan 1st, 2021 - Dec 31st, 2023
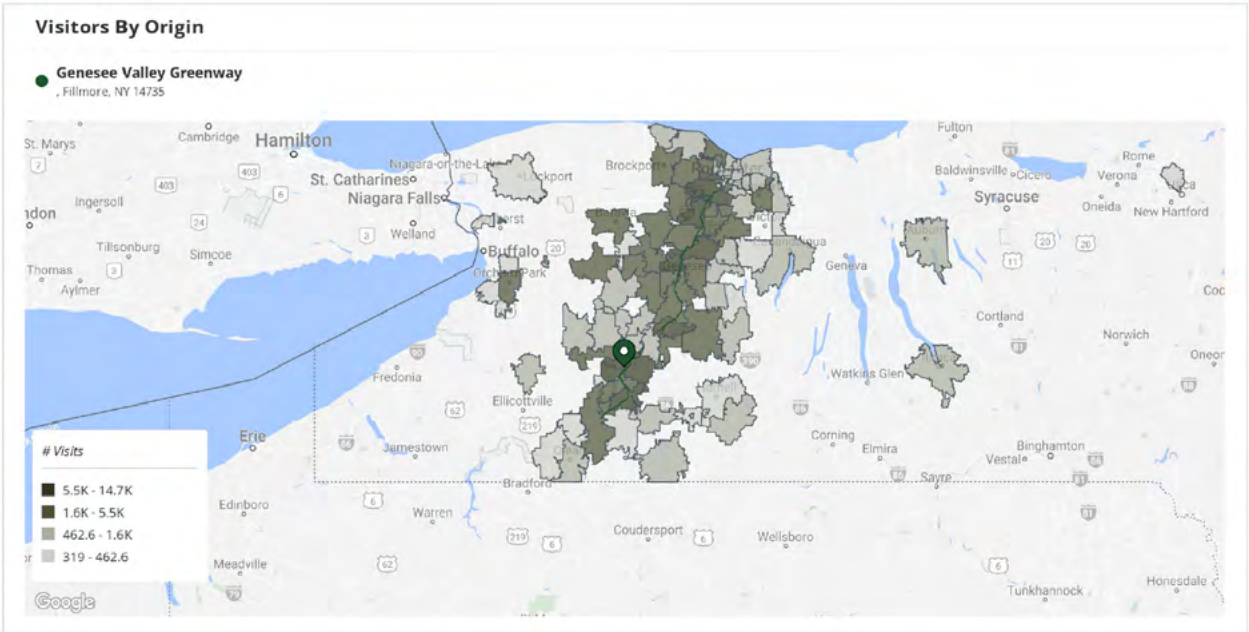Data provided by Placer Labs Inc. (www.placer.ai)

Zipcode of origin

Placer.ai, through its complementary data sets, also provides the origin of visitors by zip code. During the three year stretch **from 2021 to 2023, visitors were recorded to the GVG from 534 zip codes in 39 states across the United States.** Unsurprisingly, the greatest number of visits originated from zip codes near or directly along the trail, with 14623 and 14624 (Rochester), 14546 (Scottsville), and 14735 (Fillmore), each recording more than 4 percent of total visits. These findings underscore the importance of the Greenway as a community asset as the vast majority of visits were from communities in Western New York. The Greenway primarily serves as a regional draw, attracting visitors from the Buffalo area in addition to communities located more closely to the trail. There is additional potential to attract visitors from other portions of New York and from other states.

Looking ahead

More research is necessary to fully evaluate the potential of the Placer.ai data as well as confirm accuracy and analyze limitations. For example, the dataset does not currently provide information on international-originated visits, leading to a likely undercount of total use. Even given this and other possible gaps, access to Placer.ai's data provides a heretofore unprecedented window into visitation patterns across the entire 90-mile stretch of Genesee Valley Greenway State Park, not to mention a greater understanding of demographic and market data tied to the visitors.

Visitors By Origin

● **Genesee Valley Greenway**
, Fillmore, NY 14735

Visits
■ 5.5K - 14.7K
■ 1.6K - 5.5K
▨ 462.6 - 1.6K
▨ 319 - 462.6

● **Genesee Valley Greenway**
, Fillmore, NY 14735

Zipcode / City	Visits (% of Total)
14623 Rochester, NY	14.7K (5.5%)
14624 Rochester, NY	13.2K (4.9%)
14546 Scottsville, NY	13K (4.9%)
14735 Fillmore, NY	11.4K (4.3%)
14414 Avon, NY	10.2K (3.8%)
14533 Piffard, NY	8.1K (3.1%)
14517 Nunda, NY	7.8K (2.9%)
14711 Belfast, NY	7.5K (2.8%)
14744 Houghton, NY	7.1K (2.7%)
14606 Rochester, NY	6.3K (2.4%)

Conclusion

Genesee Valley Greenway State Park is a beloved, well-used linear park. The usage figures shown in this report support that. However, it is not without opportunities for future improvement–and there is ample room for growth in trail use. As would be expected, use was higher at the north end of the trail, closer to Rochester's more populous areas. However, not all population centers saw similarly increased trail use. Upgraded stone-dust surfacing, and longer continuous sections of completed trail at the north end likely helped contribute to the increased levels of use in those sections, suggesting that further investment in the Genesee Valley Greenway would lead to increased usage across its entirety.

Continuing to upgrade the trail with an improved, stone-dust section, completing the discontiguous stretches of trail, and ensuring that all roadway crossings are safe for users of all ages and abilities are all critical measures needed to help ensure that the Genesee Valley Greenway meets its full potential as a centerpiece of New York's greenway trail network. The counts in this report indicate the untapped potential of this resource in addition to providing a baseline to analyze visitation impact once projects–in progress and future–are completed.

Parks & Trails New York's *Who's on the Trail: Genesee Valley Greenway* report is the first of its kind to combine analysis of trail use from "traditional," on-the-ground counting methods with cutting-edge data available from large data aggregators such as Placer.ai. The analysis provided herein is groundbreaking, but by no means exhaustive. Rather, it is the beginning to a deeper and more complex dive into green space usage throughout the state. By exploring data available from a wide array of sources, we can gain a more comprehensive understanding of who is using the Greenway, how, and when. Further, we can design, manage, maintain and host programming along greenway trails to ensure these resources are meeting their full potential and meeting the needs of all New Yorkers.