

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



**PARKS & TRAILS**  
NEW YORK

## THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE EMPIRE STATE TRAIL

**JUNE 2026**





The Empire State Trail is a 750-mile multi-use trail spanning New York State, making it the longest single-state multi-use trail in the United States. Completed in December 2020, the network connects New York City to the Canadian border and Buffalo to Albany, creating a continuous route for bicyclists, hikers, and outdoor enthusiasts.

The Empire State Trail gives millions of New Yorkers safe places to walk, bike, run, and spend time outdoors. For families, it provides car-free routes for recreation and transportation. For communities, it provides safe, accessible places to walk, bike, exercise, and spend time outdoors while strengthening connections among neighborhoods, downtowns, and local destinations.

This report is a comprehensive analysis and documentation of the Empire State Trail's economic impact five years after its completion, offering policymakers, advocates, partners and trail users a holistic, shared understanding of the Trail's role supporting economic development, public health, and the environment for communities across the state. The report highlights the statewide impact of the Empire State Trail, while also providing metrics for each major trail segment that makes up the Trail. Diving even deeper, the accompanying appendices provide a county-by-county breakdown of annual trail visitation estimates, economic output, physical health benefits, and environmental protection impacts that can be attributed to the trail in each of the 26 counties it travels through.



## Where the Trail goes, the economy grows.

*The Trail supports:*

**\$1.87 billion** in total economic output

**9,680 jobs** statewide

**\$640.9 million** in employee earnings each year

**\$206 million** in annual state and local tax revenue

**The Empire State Trail is an investment that has improved outcomes for New York's economy, public health, and environment.**



## KEY FINDINGS

### LONGEST MULTI-USE TRAIL IN THE NATION

at 750 miles long, with 9.75 million visits each year

### SIGNIFICANT PHYSICAL HEALTH BENEFITS

The Trail creates \$78 million in annual healthcare savings by enabling more physical activity

### VISITORS SPEND MONEY

Day visitors spend \$30 per visit on average

### OFF-ROAD TRAILS HAVE GREATEST IMPACT

with four times the economic impact of on-road trail segments

### LAND PRESERVATION & CLIMATE SERVICES

The Trail preserves 23,300 acres of land and reduces vehicle travel by over 96 million miles per year

### THE TRAIL INFORMS BUSINESS DECISIONS

Surveys show 24% of business owners chose to operate near the Trail

### The 750-mile Empire State Trail sees 9.75 million Trail visits per year.

Spanning from New York City north to Canada, and from Albany west to Buffalo, the Empire State Trail is a 750-mile, world-class greenway connecting 26 counties and hundreds of communities across urban, suburban, and rural landscapes.

As the longest multi-use trail in the nation, each year the Empire State Trail attracts 9.75 million visits, offering New Yorkers and visitors of all ages and abilities safe access to outdoor recreation while showcasing the state's natural beauty, cultural landmarks, and historic corridors.

### Each year, the Trail generates \$1.87 billion in economic output, including \$206 million in tax revenue.

The benefits of this network extend far beyond its 750 miles of gravel, grass, boardwalks, and pavement. Mile after mile and year after year, the Empire State Trail is a high-return investment that delivers jobs, tax revenue, and private-sector growth statewide.

The Empire State Trail is a critical piece of New York State's economic infrastructure, supporting \$1.87 billion in total economic output, 9,680 jobs statewide for \$640.9 million in annual employee earnings, and \$206.6 million in state and local tax revenue.

### Every \$1 invested in the Empire State Trail yields \$5.43 in economic output.

Investment in off-road trail infrastructure creates strong economic returns. Every \$1 invested in the Empire State Trail returns \$5.43 in sales revenue. Off-road segments of the Trail generate four times the economic impact of on-road segments. Each off-road mile of the Empire State Trail is estimated to produce \$3.9 million in annual economic output, 20 jobs, \$1.3 million in earnings, and \$430,000 in state and local tax revenue.

### Communities of all shapes and sizes benefit from the Trail.

This study examines benefits at the statewide level as well as that of the three main trail segments: The Erie Canalway, The Champlain Valley Trail, and the Hudson Valley Greenway Trail. The study also offers aggregate information across longer stretches, including the broader Canalway Trail (including the Erie and Champlain Canalway Trails) and the Hudson River Valley Greenway (including the Hudson Valley Greenway Trail and the Champlain Canalway Trail).

The Trail's unique ability to reach urban, suburban and rural communities across the state means it can generate benefits in areas that are often hard to reach with traditional economic development tools, including small towns, legacy downtowns, and rural corridors.

About two-thirds of the Empire State Trail (540 miles) serves communities considered moderately or severely distressed by Empire State Development, communities experiencing higher rates of poverty, unemployment, or stagnant income. For these communities, the trail is increasingly integral to improving economic opportunity.

### The Empire State Trail improves health outcomes for New Yorkers.

By keeping New Yorkers active, the Empire State Trail generates \$78 million in annual health-related savings by providing accessible outdoor space for walking, jogging, biking and a host of other active uses. Surveys of trail users revealed that 70% of visitors engage in over an hour of exercise per trip, and 38% depend on the trail for at least half of their weekly physical activity.

### The Empire State Trail mitigates carbon impacts and protects the environment.

The Trail preserves 23,300 acres of off-road land, where plant life removes 78,067 metric tons of CO2 annually and stores an additional 4.3 million metric tons of carbon. By enabling multimodal transportation, it also reduces vehicle travel by more than 96 million miles each year, further contributing to environmental sustainability.



## WHAT'S NEXT FOR THE TRAIL?

The completion of the Empire State Trail was a major milestone for the state of New York, but there are still opportunities to advance the Trail and its impact. Parks & Trails New York works daily to encourage additional investment and dedicated resources, and to encourage New Yorkers to get out on the Trail.

### Continue to build off-road connections to complete separated infrastructure for the Trail.

Knowing that the economic benefits of off-road Trail segments are four times that of on-road segments, continuing to build out the Trail makes financial sense. When every dollar spent on the Trail returns fivefold, this is an investment in our economic future. Over 100 miles of the Trail remain on road, ripe for opportunity.

### Partner with local communities through the Trail Towns program.

Parks & Trails New York is proud to support communities that embrace the economic, health, and recreational benefits of trails. Across the state, these towns are transforming into thriving destinations where visitors can explore scenic bike trails, enjoy local businesses, and connect with the outdoors. By partnering with local leaders, businesses, and residents, we help cultivate trail-friendly infrastructure and experiences that boost tourism, foster community pride, and elevate the livability of the Empire State.

### Continue to champion a state connected by greenways.

We believe in the transformative power of greenway trails for communities, for the environment, and for the health and well-being of all New Yorkers. Greenway trails are essential infrastructure that strengthen communities and enhance quality of life. As demand for outdoor spaces and sustainable transportation grows, trails provide lasting benefits, supporting healthier lifestyles, local economies, and more equitable access to public resources. Their continued development is a key investment in New York's future.

Completing this expansion of the trail network would—in addition to strengthening the Trail's already significant economic impact—create safer, more comfortable experiences for trail users, provide more family-friendly connections between communities, and encourage more New Yorkers to get outside.



## EMPIRE STATE TRAIL ANNUAL IMPACT BY SEGMENT

VISITORS	ECONOMIC OUTPUT	STATE & LOCAL TAX REVENUE	JOBS SUPPORTED	EMPLOYEE EARNINGS	PHYSICAL HEALTH BENEFITS	EMISSIONS SAVINGS
<b>ERIE CANALWAY TRAIL (BUFFALO TO ALBANY)</b>						
3,664,000	\$687.4 MILLION	\$75.4 MILLION	3,555	\$234.2 MILLION	\$29.4 MILLION	\$4.3 MILLION
<b>CHAMPLAIN VALLEY TRAIL (ALBANY TO ROUSES POINT)</b>						
526,000	\$101.6 MILLION	\$11.0 MILLION	530	\$35.2 MILLION	\$4.2 MILLION	\$0.6 MILLION
<b>HUDSON VALLEY GREENWAY TRAIL (NEW YORK CITY TO ALBANY)</b>						
5,560,000	\$1.08 BILLION	\$119.4 MILLION	5,605	\$371.5 MILLION	\$44.6 MILLION	\$6.5 MILLION
<b>EMPIRE STATE TRAIL TOTAL</b>						
9,750,000	\$1.87 BILLION	\$205.7 MILLION	9,690	\$640.9 MILLION	\$78.2 MILLION	\$11.4 MILLION



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