



PARKS & TRAILS
NEW YORK

THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE EMPIRE STATE TRAIL

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CONTENTS

4	Executive Summary	20	Study Findings
10	Trail Context	30	Trail Segment Findings
14	Methodology	56	Conclusion: What's Next

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



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
ERIE CANALWAY TRAIL (BUFFALO TO ALBANY)						
3,664,000	\$687.4 MILLION	\$75.4 MILLION	3,555	\$234.2 MILLION	\$29.4 MILLION	\$4.3 MILLION
CHAMPLAIN VALLEY TRAIL (ALBANY TO ROUSES POINT)						
526,000	\$101.6 MILLION	\$11.0 MILLION	530	\$35.2 MILLION	\$4.2 MILLION	\$0.6 MILLION
HUDSON VALLEY GREENWAY TRAIL (NEW YORK CITY TO ALBANY)						
5,560,000	\$1.08 BILLION	\$119.4 MILLION	5,605	\$371.5 MILLION	\$44.6 MILLION	\$6.5 MILLION
EMPIRE STATE TRAIL TOTAL						
9,750,000	\$1.87 BILLION	\$205.7 MILLION	9,690	\$640.9 MILLION	\$78.2 MILLION	\$11.4 MILLION

THE EMPIRE STATE TRAIL

Connecting New York since 2021

The Empire State Trail is a 750-mile 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 trail consists of three primary sections:

Hudson Valley Greenway Trail: Stretching approximately 200 miles from Manhattan's Battery Park north to Albany, it features iconic landmarks like the Walkway Over the Hudson and connects dense urban centers and riverside communities.

Erie Canalway Trail: Running 360 miles from Albany to Buffalo, this section follows the historic Erie Canal corridor, offering a mostly flat, off-road experience through the Mohawk Valley and Central New York.

Champlain Valley Trail: Extending about 190 miles from Albany north to the Canadian border at Rouses Point. This route weaves through historic battlefields and rural landscapes, following the Champlain Canal and the shores of Lake Champlain.



EMPIRE STATE TRAIL: BY THE NUMBERS



750 total miles
of connected trail access

479 off road miles of trail

540 trail miles serving distressed communities



26 counties linked
across New York State

Within a quarter mile of the trail:



35 NY State Parks



2 million residents



26,000 businesses

The projects were coordinated by five primary New York State entities, many of which are still involved in the trail's continued development and maintenance:

- Hudson River Valley Greenway: Coordinated trail construction projects in the NYC to Albany corridor and oversaw planning of the statewide 750-mile route.
- New York State Canal Corporation: Oversees the extensive Canalway portions.
- New York State Department of Transportation: Manages on-road connections and safety improvements.
- New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation: Developed and maintains significant portions of the trail infrastructure.
- Metro-North Railroad: Assisted in converting underutilized rail corridors (such as the Beacon Line) into trail segments.

BUILDING THE EMPIRE STATE TRAIL

The completion of the Empire State Trail is the result of decades of planning and advocacy to connect New York state through a series of off-road trail investments. A comprehensive, statewide effort to close the remaining trail gaps in the Canalway and Hudson River corridors, supported by the advocacy efforts of PTNY and partners, led to the creation in 2017 of the Empire State Trail initiative by New York State.

The trail network was developed and managed through a multi-agency initiative resulting in 60 separate construction projects to link existing trails and close critical gaps.

The State's effort provided \$200 million and leveraged nearly \$97 million of additional funds for the construction, adding 180 miles of new off-road trails, improving on-road sections, and establishing a continuous, signed route for the entire 750-mile length. Wayfinding signage for the Empire State Trail can be found along the entire length, along with improved gateways and access points that include parking facilities, welcome and orientation signage, picnic tables and benches, and bicycle racks and self-service bicycle "fix-it" stations.

THE EMPIRE STATE TRAIL TODAY

The Empire State Trail is a transformative infrastructure investment, pairing recreational utility with strategic economic revitalization. Offering access to outdoors and transportation for a wide variety of users, the Trail is a scenic yet vital connector that bridges diverse landscapes and communities, from dense urban centers to rural historic districts.

With nearly two thirds of the Trail separated from motor vehicle traffic, the Empire State Trail offers users a safe way to get around on foot or bicycle, while driving tourism and local commerce year-round. Given its ability to reach people and places that aren't always accessible by major roads or train lines, the Trail represents a significant opportunity for economic revitalization and increased access for communities where enhanced infrastructure can drive socioeconomic impact.

Community & Economic Connectivity

Touching hundreds of communities across 26 counties, the Trail is an economic engine. Nearly two million residents, roughly 10% the population of the State of New York, live within a quarter-mile of the Trail, and more than 26,000 businesses are located within that same distance. This proximity promotes regional tourism and provides seamless access to state parks, historic sites, and local business districts year-round.



Accessibility & Universal Design

More than 479 miles, or approximately 63% of the Trail, is off-road, comprised of rail trails, canal towpaths, and dedicated greenways. The remaining sections use on-road connections, often along low-speed rural roads or state highways with wide shoulders.

The Trail typically features a 10-to-12-foot wide level, hardened surface (paved or stone dust) designed to accommodate users of all abilities. This infrastructure invites bicyclists and walkers to explore a variety of environments, from vibrant urban centers and village main streets to quiet rural communities and the rugged Adirondacks.

Economic Impact & Equity

The Trail promotes economic diversity, particularly in rural and suburban communities across the state, and is a major asset for adjacent communities. Over 2/3 the length of the Trail (540 miles) intersects communities facing challenges including high poverty, unemployment, or stagnant income, categorized by Empire State Development (ESD) as moderately or severely distressed communities. Of these, 460 miles provide recreational and economic infrastructure in moderately distressed communities, with another 80 miles of the Trail serving severely distressed areas, providing outdoor recreation and investment where it is a crucial community asset.



STUDY METHODOLOGY

A layered approach was used to determine the economic impact of the Empire State Trail.

- Surveys of Trail Users
- Surveys of Businesses near the Trail
- Economic Modeling of Business Linkages
- Benefit-Cost Analysis
- Health Economic Assessment
- Benefits of Carbon Sequestration
- Comparative Trail Behavior Analysis

This study used a multi-disciplinary methodological framework to quantify the trail's economic, health, and environmental impacts, adapting proven practices to the specific context of the Empire State Trail.

Economic Impact includes the financial benefits of the Trail through spending and investment. This includes a comprehensive look at the economic output (value of direct expenditures during Trail visits), activity (dollars attributed to the Trail's existence), impact (net changes and new activity), and benefit (increase in social welfare).

Physical Activity includes the benefits to public health and wellbeing calculated into quantifiable monetary benefits.

Environmental Benefits include the financial impacts of land preservation, carbon footprint reduction through both carbon sequestration and carbon storage, and reduction in Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT), calculated geospatially.

Trail Visitation is a critical component of calculating all the benefits of the Trail. A specific methodology was developed to provide this baseline Trail Visitation data point.

Basic methodology for each of these is provided here.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

To estimate the economic impact of the Empire State Trail, this study utilized an IMPLAN input-output modeling framework to track how Trail user spending ripples through 528 industry sectors. The process began by developing user expenditure profiles from primary survey data, capturing direct spending on categories like dining, retail, and lodging. These figures were then refined using GIS analysis, which categorized areas by population density to accurately reflect localized spending intensity.

By calculating the indirect effects (business-to-business supply chain purchases) and induced effects (household spending from increased labor income), the model provides a comprehensive measure of total economic output, employment, and labor income across the Hudson River Valley, Erie Canalway, and Champlain Valley Trail corridors.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

This study estimates the physical health benefits of the Empire State Trail by combining Trail user survey data with the USDOT Benefit-Cost Analysis (BCA) framework. By identifying the specific shares of cyclists and pedestrians, the analysis applies to the World Health Organization's Health Economic Assessment Tool (HEAT) to link increased activity levels to reduced mortality risks. This analysis uses evidence-based dose-response functions to calculate the reduction in health risks for active users compared to inactive ones. These health improvements are then monetized using the Value of a Statistical Life (VSL), allowing the total impact of trail-induced physical activity to be expressed as a multi-million-dollar annual societal benefit.

ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

To evaluate the Trail's land preservation benefits, a geospatial analysis was conducted within a 200-foot buffer of the Empire State Trail to measure its carbon stock (stored carbon) and carbon sequestration (the annual rate of carbon removal). By cross-referencing National Land Cover Database maps with European Environmental Agency sequestration tables, the study estimated the specific storage capacities of the trail's diverse habitats. These ecological volumes were then monetized using the USDOT's social cost of carbon, providing a clear economic value for the trail's role in actively mitigating climate change through natural land preservation.

To assess the Trail's impact on carbon emissions, this study conducted a comparative travel behavior analysis using trail intercept surveys to calculate the net change in Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT). By comparing the distance users currently drive to the trail against the distance they would have driven to an alternative destination, the analysis found that 68.3% of users traveled shorter distances, saving an average of 16.3 miles per trip. While a small portion of users (11.4%) traveled farther, the weighted average across all users resulted in a significant net reduction in vehicle travel. This decrease in VMT serves as a direct proxy for carbon savings, proving that the trail's accessibility and proximity successfully lower the region's overall greenhouse gas emissions.

The Empire State Trail attracts **9.75 million annual visits.**



Residential parcel classifications and size groups were included only when at least 100 observations were available, ensuring sufficient sample sizes for reliable analysis. Average assessed property values were then calculated for each parcel group within each proximity zone, and values in Zones A and B were compared to those in the control group to identify potential property value premiums or discounts associated with proximity to the Empire State Trail.

TRAIL VISITATION ESTIMATES

To estimate the annual usage of the Empire State Trail, an approach was developed to balance actual count data with mathematical modeling to fill in data gaps. Analysts gathered trail traffic data from 78 locations across New York, using existing records and new counts taken between 2020 and 2025. For locations where data was missing for certain months, the team calculated the missing numbers by applying a monthly average percentage based on sites with complete year-round data. Because trail usage naturally changes depending on the surrounding environment, the study developed two distinct formulas to predict traffic in areas without physical counters: one for urban settings and another for rural areas, where population density has a different relationship with trail activity.

To develop a final estimate that was as realistic as possible, the methodology accounted for the unique geography of the Trail’s main sections. In Manhattan, analysts used conservative figures to avoid double-counting users in high-traffic areas. In more remote northern sections, the distance between estimated points was adjusted to reflect the reality of use; people are less likely to walk long stretches of on-road segments. By blending these specific counts with regional 5-mile and 10-mile interval projections, the study estimated with confidence that the trail sees about 9.75 million annual visits.

More information about the methodology used in the creation of this report is available as an appendix on www.ptny.org/reports/the-economic-impact-of-the-empire-state-trail/

PROPERTY VALUE ANALYSIS

The property value analysis evaluated whether residential parcels located near the Empire State Trail had higher assessed property values than comparable properties located farther away. Using parcel-level assessment data and geographic information systems (GIS), residential parcels were assigned to one of three proximity zones based on their distance from the trail:

- Zone A (0–0.25 miles)
- Zone B (0.25–1 mile)
- Zone C (2–5 miles), with Zone C serving as the control group.

To ensure fair comparisons, parcels were grouped according to New York State property classification codes and lot size categories so that similar properties were evaluated against one another.

STUDY TERMS & DEFINITIONS

This study contains frequently-used terms about trail visitation, how economic activity was measured, and common language used by economists in a specific way. A selection of these terms are included for clarity in the table below.

Visitor or Trail User	Anyone using the Trail. No specifications for the amount of time spent on the trail or distance traveled; these can be day visits or overnight visits.
Day Visits	Same-day visits to the Trail. A day visit could be made by someone who lives beside the Trail and is visiting for exercise or to commute, or by someone who drove from a town over to spend time on the Trail. These users do not stay overnight.
Overnight Visits	Multi-day visits requiring visitors to stay overnight (often in hotels) before continuing their use of the Trail.
Economic Activity	Dollars spent within region that are attributable to a given industry, event, or policy, such as the existence of a new Trail segment.
Economic Impact	The net changes in new economic activity associated with an industry, event, or policy in an existing regional economy. Only refers to changes in new economic activity that can be assigned a market value (or monetary value).
Economic Benefit	A net increase in total social welfare. Economic benefits can be both market and nonmarket values, including physical health and environmental benefits.
Economic Output	Value of expenditures made at businesses that are a direct result of the existence of a trail segment. This could include expenditures made at grocery stores, restaurants, trail equipment rental and outfitters, or other establishments for planned activities on the Trail. It could also include expenditures for activities planned after Trail use.
Employment	Jobs supported by economic activity from Trail users.
Labor Income	Total employment compensation, including wages and other benefits (e.g., healthcare insurance payments, retirement contributions, and others) that are supported by expenditures from Trail users. (Similar terms: payroll, wages)
Direct Impacts	The first round of spending, or where the initial purchase occurs. If a Trail user makes a purchase at a nearby restaurant, the total value of that purchase is the direct impact.
Indirect Impacts	Portions of direct revenues used to purchase goods and services from businesses within the region. For example, increased spending at a restaurant may result in that restaurant investing in a better reservation system to improve its overall efficiency. Indirect impacts result from business-to-business purchases.
Induced Impacts	Income earned by workers from direct and supplier sales transactions that is then spent within the region’s economy. Induced impacts result from people spending their paycheck earnings in the local economy.



PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

Community engagement was a foundational component of the Economic Impact Study, marrying information about lived experiences of Trail users and stakeholders with the statistical evidence to produce a well-rounded understanding of the Trail's role in the economy and day-to-day lives of New Yorkers statewide.

Between September and December 2025, Parks & Trails New York (PTNY) conducted extensive outreach to residents, visitors, and business owners along the Trail using three distinct survey instruments as well as physical field assessments.

OVER 1,100 VISITORS WERE SURVEYED TO DETERMINE SPENDING TRENDS ALONG THE TRAIL.

Engagement efforts included:

LONG-FORM SURVEYS

The long-form user survey was designed to capture high-fidelity data regarding user behavior and fiscal contributions. Over 1,000 respondents completed this comprehensive assessment, providing the granular detail required to model the trail's total economic footprint. Participants provided specific information on their spending behavior across a range of categories, including meals and beverages, groceries, retail purchases, entertainment, and bicycle rentals. Beyond direct expenditure, respondents also provided data on their activity types and travel distances, which allowed the study to quantify the broader health and carbon-reduction benefits associated with the Trail.

To build a diverse representative sample, the survey was hosted online and promoted via email distributions, social media, and physical collateral. Outreach materials, including business cards and posters, were placed at high-traffic venues, while weather-resistant signage was strategically installed every 10 to 20 miles along the entire length of the Empire State Trail.

SHORT-FORM SURVEYS

To supplement this data and capture feedback during visits to the Trail, consultant staff conducted short-form intercept surveys directly along the Trail. Staff traversed off-road segments by bicycle and on-road sections by vehicle to engage users in varied environments, ultimately speaking with over 100 Trail users. During these field sessions, staff also distributed materials and provided in-person training to local volunteers to administer the survey.

A key component of this outreach was a volunteer guidance document, included in the report's appendix, which ensured methodological consistency across all intercepts. To maintain data integrity and ensure results aligned with the study's geographic goals, staff and volunteers were directed to only provide the survey access code to participants while they were physically present on the Empire State Trail.

BUSINESS SURVEYS

A dedicated business survey targeted companies located on or near the Trail to evaluate the private sector's relationship with the Trail. These surveys investigated Trail-related capital investments, the use of the Trail's proximity in marketing materials, and the level of collaboration between local businesses and tourism bureaus or trail organizations. The surveys also identified specific resources and support mechanisms that would help these businesses better serve Trail visitors. These instruments were distributed through the PTNY Trail Town network, local Chambers of Commerce, and targeted social media campaigns to ensure a broad reach across the business community.



STUDY FINDINGS

The Empire State Trail is not just a path through New York, but also a pathway to economic growth, shaping where businesses open and operate and the investments they make to attract customers.

This study examines the Trail's economic impact, as well as the physical and environmental benefits generated from this unique infrastructure, at three different scales: Statewide, Trail segment, and County. This leveled analysis helps contextualize the role of the Empire State Trail across a range of geographies and economic sectors, such as tourism, outdoor recreation, health, housing and small business development, in a wide variety of community contexts.



ANNUAL TRAIL USAGE

The Empire State Trail is a major recreational hub, attracting **9.75 million annual visits**. The majority of these visits (81%, or 7.93 million visits) are day visits on the trail, made by both local community members and visitors using the trail and returning home. Overnight visits account for about one fifth of trail usage, representing 1.82 million annual visits from those staying overnight along the corridor.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

The Empire State Trail is a significant financial asset that contributes over **\$1.8 billion to New York's economic output each year** and generates over **\$205.8 million annually in local and state tax revenue**. It also supports nearly 9,700 jobs and \$640.9 million in employee earnings. **Every \$1 invested in Trail development yields \$5.43 in sales revenue in Trail communities.**

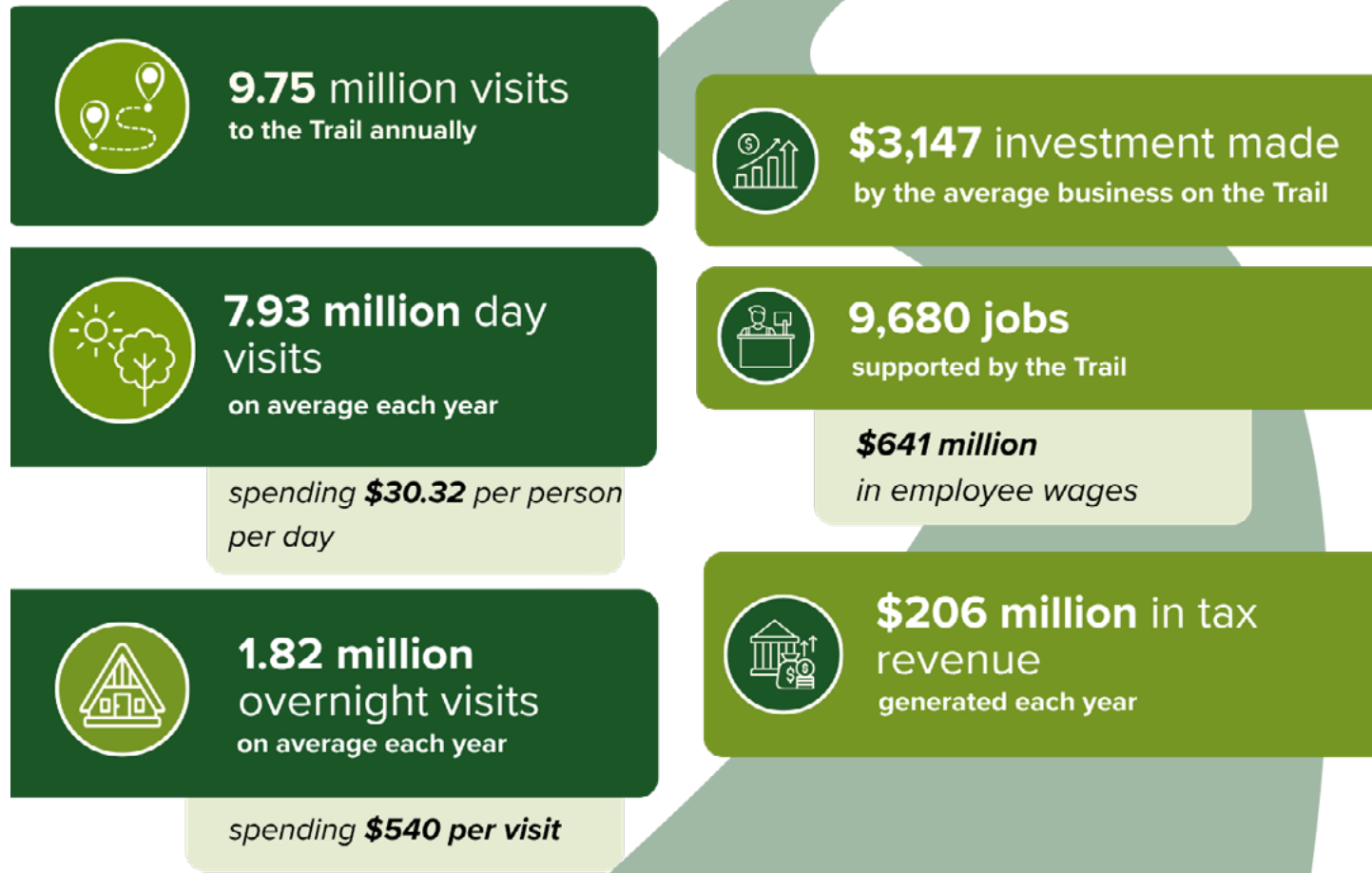
PHYSICAL HEALTH

The Empire State Trail is keeping New Yorkers active, turning miles into **\$78 million in annual health-related savings**. By providing space for walking, biking, and rolling, the Trail has become a primary fitness hub: 70% of visitors get over an hour of exercise per trip, and 38% rely on it for at least half of their weekly physical activity.

ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

The Empire State Trail **preserves 23,300 acres of off-road land**, playing a vital role in climate health. Each year, the Trail's plant life actively removes 78,067 metric tons of CO₂ from the atmosphere. The habitat is also a reservoir, holding 4.3 million metric tons of carbon (storage). The Trail also provides multimodal access, **accounting for a reduction of over 96 million vehicle miles traveled annually.**

EMPIRE STATE TRAIL: ECONOMIC IMPACT



\$1.87 billion in economic impact across New York State

ECONOMIC IMPACT

How the Trail shapes the local economy

The Empire State Trail is a transformative economic catalyst for New York State, sustaining a complex ecosystem of tourism, local commerce, and private investment. Its influence extends across multiple sectors, driven by the diverse spending habits of millions of annual visitors and a growing business community that increasingly views the Trail as a decision point in their location and operations.

The Empire State Trail contributes an estimated \$1.8 billion in economic output to the economy of New York.

This includes direct spending by visitors to the Trail, indirect spending by the businesses in the area to support the visitors, and induced spending from those whose employment is supported by the Trail.

How it works: Trail visitors spend money at a locally-owned coffee shop near a trailhead (*direct impact*). The business owner upgrades their payment system and purchases signage to better serve and attract customers (*indirect impact*). Next, they hire two new staff members, who spend their wages on living expenses like housing and transit (*induced impact*).

Economic Output by Type



Day visits and overnight visits both play an important role in the Trail's success.

The economic vitality of the Empire State Trail is driven by a consistent and significant influx of day visits from local residents and nearby visitors. Annually, the Trail attracts approximately 7.93 million day visits, including both local residents and regional tourists. These visitors contribute an average of \$30.32 to the local economy per person, per visit.

The Empire State Trail also attracts 1.82 million overnight visitors, averaging seven nights on trips to visit the Trail. These visitors spend an average of \$540 per visit, injecting about \$984 million into the local economies of Trail communities.

These visitors create an economic ripple effect as they enjoy the Trail.

As visitors engage with the Trail, they generate direct revenue for establishments ranging from grocery stores and restaurants to equipment outfitters and rental services. This spending is often tied to planned activities such as concerts, weddings, and community events, with typical expenditures for meals, retail, and recreation ranging between \$11-\$38 per visit.

Businesses recognize and value the Trail's impact on their bottom line.

This concentration of consumer activity has made the Trail an asset for business location and expansion. Survey data indicates that nearly one-in-four business owners (24%) cited the presence of the Empire State Trail as a decisive factor in their current location, while another 5% are actively considering relocating or expanding their operations to be in closer proximity to the network.

More than 40% of businesses located within a quarter-mile of the Trail invest in physical improvements, such as enhanced access points and bicycle amenities, spending an average of \$3,147 annually on these upgrades. Of the businesses surveyed, 54% actively promote their proximity to the Trail in their marketing materials, and respondents attribute an average of 26.2% of their total annual sales directly to the existence of the Empire State Trail.

These impacts build a cycle of economic growth in the Trail communities, bringing additional tax revenue to support future investment.

The cumulative effect of this spending leads a cycle of regional economic growth. The 9.75 million annual users support an estimated 9,680 jobs, which generate \$641 million in employee earnings. This activity strengthens the civic fabric of New York communities on and off the Trail, contributing \$206 million in local and state tax revenue, providing needed capital to continue investments at the local level.

Residential real estate values are also boosted by the Trail.

The Trail adds measurable value to residential real estate. While the influence on property values varies by density, single-family homes on 0.25–0.5 acre lots near the Trail command a 14.3% premium, averaging \$51,000 higher than comparable properties. Similarly, residences on 0.5–1 acre lots see a 3.6% value premium, reinforcing the Trail's role as a vital asset for both the economy and the community at large.



TRAIL-CENTERED TOURISM

The Empire State Trail attracts millions of people to New York to enjoy activities planned on the Trail.

The Empire State Trail serves a wide variety of visitors, including casual users, those using the trail for local events, participants in organized multi-day bicycle tours, and those who undertake multi-day tours on their own. The Trail is one of the nation's premier destinations for bicycle touring, drawing visitors from around the world to experience the history, natural beauty, and communities along the trail.

Many of these visitors are participants in the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor's Canalway Challenge program, which encourages participants to log their miles to complete the Erie Canalway Trail in its entirety or in segments, from the first mile to the full 360 End to End milestone.

HEARING FROM LONG-DISTANCE TOURING CYCLISTS



"FOR BOTH HALVES OF THE TRIP I WAS IMPRESSED WITH THE CONSIDERATION GIVEN TO BIKERS BY THE AUTOMOBILE COMMUNITY... I LOVED THE CHARACTER AND ARCHITECTURE OF THE TOWNS ALONG THE TRAIL."

**KEN B.
GRAND RAPIDS, MI**

"LEARNING ABOUT THE HISTORY OF THE CANAL AND SEEING THE SMALL TOWNS ENRICHED THE CYCLING EXPERIENCE. I WAS ALSO HAPPY TO SEE SOME OTHER RECUMBENT RIDERS."

**CATHERINE K.
SAN JOSE, CA**



"THE ERIE CANALWAY RIDE WAS PHENOMENAL! I REGRET NOT BEING ABLE TO SPEND MORE TIME IN A FEW OF THE CANAL TOWNS, BUT I WILL LIKELY RETURN TO THEM IN THE FUTURE AND DO SOME DAY RIDING ALONG THE CANAL."

**BRIAN M.
ELIZABETHTOWN, PA**





PHYSICAL HEALTH BENEFITS

How the Trail improves health outcomes and provides vital access to recreation.

The Empire State Trail is a vital statewide investment in public health. By providing a dedicated corridor for active recreation, the Trail helps create public benefits such as lower healthcare expenditures, reduced strain on regional infrastructure, and more robust, active New Yorkers.

By making outdoor activity accessible to millions, the Trail allows New Yorkers to lead healthier lives, improve their quality of life and save money that, for many, would otherwise be spent on medical bills.

The Empire State Trail provides access to the outdoors and promotes healthier lifestyles.

The Empire State Trail is a primary source of physical activity for a diverse cross-section of the population. Survey data from over one thousand users reveals that the network is a cornerstone of daily exercise routines.

Approximately 70% of visitors engage in more than an hour of physical activity during every visit. This activity is consistent, with more than half of users visiting the Trail over two times per week. For nearly 38% of visitors, the Trail provides at least half of their total weekly exercise, while five percent of users rely on the network for the entirety of their physical activity.

Trail access lowers the cost of healthcare for millions of New Yorkers.

This access to active mobility directly correlates with financial savings for both New Yorkers and the State. High levels of physical inactivity are traditionally linked to increased medical costs and insurance premiums. The Empire State Trail helps mitigate these burdens by providing a safe and inviting space for movement.

By converting these activity levels into measurable health outcomes, the Trail generates more than \$78 million in annual physical health benefits. These savings represent avoided medical expenses and improved quality of life, allowing residents to redirect their personal income toward other household needs.

EMPIRE STATE TRAIL PUBLIC HEALTH BENEFITS



9.75 million visits
to the Trail annually



Over half of visitors
visit the Trail more than twice a week



70% exercise for over an hour
each visit



68% drive less because of
the trail



61% of visitors
ride a bike when using the Trail



Reducing car travel by
96 million miles



\$78 million saved
in health costs by New Yorkers each year

The Empire State Trail improves the quality of life, health, and wellness of New Yorkers by providing access to recreation and nature.



ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

How the Trail protects the environment and mitigates climate volatility for the region.

The environmental value of the Trail is rooted in the preservation of more than 23,300 acres of off-road land—areas that are either undeveloped or designated for recreational use. These segments function as a continuous green lung for New York State, where forests, wetlands, and grasslands provide essential functions that protect the atmosphere.

This natural infrastructure manages carbon through two distinct processes. First, the vegetation and soil actively remove CO₂ from the air, a process called sequestration. Second, these ecosystems act as a massive storage pool for carbon, keeping it safely contained within the landscape rather than allowing it to contribute to regional climate volatility.

The Trail offsets the equivalent of 8.8 million gallons of gasoline through sequestration.

The scale of the Trail's natural management is immense, sequestering more than 78,000 metric tons of CO₂ every year. This activity creates an estimated \$19.2 million in annual value by helping the State avoid the future costs associated with storm damage, heat-related illnesses, and energy shortages.

Land preservation stores millions of tons of carbon, saving over \$1 billion in prevented emissions.

The preservation of the habitat surrounding the Trail stores an additional 4.3 million metric tons of carbon. This permanent storage represents more than \$1 billion in environmental benefits, as it prevents an enormous volume of emissions from entering the atmosphere and impacting the health of local communities.

The Trail reduces vehicle dependency.

By providing a high-quality route for cycling and walking, the Trail offers a true alternative to driving, decreasing the total number of miles traveled by passenger vehicles. Each year, the Trail accounts for a reduction of over 96 million vehicle miles. This shift not only reduces the amount of exhaust entering the air but also the daily wear and tear on local roads. Through this combination of land preservation, active carbon management, and expanding clean transportation, the Empire State Trail is an essential part of New York's strategy for a sustainable and healthy future.

EMPIRE STATE TRAIL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT



23,300 acres of land preserved



27 times the size of Central Park in Manhattan



78,000 metric tons of CO₂ removed from the air



Equal to **18,194** gas-powered cars not driven for one year



4.3m metric tons of carbon stored



Equal to **2,117,415 homes'** energy use for a year



Generating **\$1 billion** in environmental benefits

The Empire State Trail's natural habitat plays a critical role in New York's ecology and prevents future costs from storm damage, heat-related illnesses, and energy shortages.



TRAIL SEGMENT FINDINGS

ERIE CANALWAY TRAIL | CHAMPLAIN VALLEY TRAIL | HUDSON VALLEY GREENWAY TRAIL

Across 750 miles, the Empire State Trail crosses communities of all shapes and sizes. To gather a deeper understanding of the Trail's context throughout the state, the following section profiles the impact of each trail segment and tells the story of how the Trail impacts local communities.



ERIE CANALWAY TRAIL

The longest and oldest segment of the Trail, conversion of the Erie Canalway towpath began in the 1970s.



CHAMPLAIN VALLEY TRAIL

The Champlain Valley Trail provides the greatest opportunity for investment in additional off-road infrastructure.



HUDSON VALLEY GREENWAY TRAIL

First established in 1991, the Greenway is the most-visited trail in the United States.





ERIE CANALWAY TRAIL

ERIE CANALWAY TRAIL



360 miles of connected trails

308 miles off-road



3.7 million visits
to the Trail annually



685,000 overnight visits



\$687.4 million in economic impact



3,555 jobs supported



\$76 million
in State & local tax revenue



\$33.7 million in environmental benefits



36 million mile reduction in vehicle miles traveled



2.7 million metric tons of carbon stored



46,700 metric tons of CO₂ removed from the air



\$29.3 million in health benefits



ERIE CANALWAY TRAIL

The Erie Canalway Trail extends 360 miles from Buffalo to Albany, forming the east-west branch of the Empire State Trail. The Trail offers a level, accessible surface, making it ideal for cycling, hiking, and jogging. It integrates historic infrastructure, such as the Lift Bridges and Lockport Flight of Five, with modern amenities like bike fix-it stations, interpretive kiosks, and “Bike Friendly NY” businesses.

Originally built in 1825 to revolutionize American commerce, the Erie Canal now functions as a beacon for recreation and culture, including the Erie Canal Museum, NY State Museum, Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge, and Seneca Falls. Today, the Trail connects over 200 communities, linking major urban centers including Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, Utica and Albany with rural landscapes and historic Canal towns.

The Trail connects historic resources and provides economic opportunities in hard-to-reach rural communities.

Across its span, the Erie Canalway connects a host of cultural, historical, and educational institutions for visitors of all ages and backgrounds. Trail users can visit landmarks like the Fort Stanwix National Monument in Rome and the Erie Canal Discovery Center in Lockport, connect to universities from Syracuse University to Buffalo State University, access major attractions like the New York State Fairgrounds, and visit New York State Parks and preserved natural areas.

The Trail has proven to be a major opportunity for economic revitalization in many communities through the center of the state, including rural communities that are harder to reach with the typical economic development toolbox. This growth includes direct visitor spending and new employment opportunities with local vendors, grocery stores, and retailers.

Economic Impact

The Erie Canalway Trail generates a wide range of financial benefits that sustain local communities and the regional workforce through the center of New York. Through a combination of direct visitor spending, supply chain support, and household consumption, the Trail supports 3,555 jobs. These positions provide nearly \$235 million in total employee earnings, contributing to the financial stability of thousands of households. The cumulative effect of this activity results in a total annual economic output of approximately \$687.4 million. This commercial vitality strengthens public resources by generating nearly \$75.4 million in state and local tax revenue, helping to fund essential community services and infrastructure improvements.

Public Health & Active Transportation

The Erie Canalway Trail is a critical public health resource, providing a safe and accessible environment for active recreation. By encouraging regular physical activity among residents and visitors, the Trail helps reduce the prevalence of conditions related to sedentary lifestyles. When these health outcomes are translated into economic terms, the

Trail generates more than \$29.3 million in annual physical health benefits through the 3.6 million visits. This value means significant savings in medical expenditures and improved quality of life for the thousands of New Yorkers who rely on the Trail for their weekly exercise.

In addition to individual health gains, the Trail contributes to the regional active transportation network. By offering a viable alternative to automobile travel for both recreation and short distance commuting, the Trail successfully removes over 36.1 million vehicle miles from the road each year along the footprint of the Erie Canalway. This reduction in Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) decreases the volume of tailpipe emissions and helps lower the overall carbon footprint of the corridor. By shifting trips from cars to the Trail, the Erie Canalway Trail also reduces congestion and lessens the long-term maintenance requirements for local roadway infrastructure.

Environmental Benefits

The environmental value of the Erie Canalway Trail is rooted in the preservation of 14,474 acres of off-road land. This vast, green corridor is a critical natural asset that manages carbon emissions through two primary biological functions. First, the trees and vegetation within the Trail area remove more than 46,700 metric tons of CO₂ from the air each year. This natural removal process called sequestration is valued at \$11.5 million per year in avoided environmental costs.

Beyond annual sequestration, the habitat pool within the Trail buffer acts as a permanent storage system for existing carbon. These natural systems currently store over 2.7 million metric tons of carbon, preventing it from being released into the atmosphere. The value of this carbon storage is estimated at \$668.2 million, representing a significant long-term benefit to regional air quality and climate stability. Through the protection of these acres, the Trail habitat is a self-sustaining investment in green infrastructure that provides massive ecological returns for the public.

THE EMPIRE STATE TRAIL IN FOCUS: ROME, NY



The Empire State Trail and Canalway Trail work to catalyze community growth and development, as demonstrated in Rome.

ABOUT ROME, NY

- County: Oneida County
- Population: ~32,040 residents
- Typology: Urban (Small City / Metropolitan Core)

Canal and Trail connections are being leveraged to create a destination.

The City of Rome is an inspiring example of how a developed urban center can leverage the Empire State Trail to stimulate economic growth and enhance community vitality.

By integrating the Trail into its downtown core, neighborhood networks, and cultural institutions, Rome has transformed this historic transportation corridor into a modern driver of local commerce. This integration allows the City to both capture the spending power of regional tourists and provide its 32,000 residents with a high-quality asset for daily use.

Visitors to Old Erie Canal State Historic Park can travel from Rome to DeWitt along a 36-mile segment featuring a scenic landscape of woodland, wetland and canal locks, which is frequently used for hiking, picnicking, horseback riding and more. By maintaining this continuous link between urban services and natural beauty, the City of Rome demonstrates how the Empire State Trail can bridge the gap between historic preservation and contemporary economic development.

Trail-friendly businesses in Rome are thriving.

A central component of Rome's success is the cultivation of a Trail-friendly business ecosystem. Local restaurants, cafes, and lodging providers have intentionally adapted their services to cater to the needs of cyclists and pedestrians. These businesses have embraced the Trail as a consistent source of new customers, with the City prioritizing adding bicycle racks in downtown areas. The visible shift in transportation habits is evident at local gathering spots, where bike racks are frequently at capacity, signaling a thriving economy driven by active mobility rather than exclusively by automobile traffic.

Public investment supports business growth by encouraging foot traffic.

The City has further maximized the impact of the Trail by prioritizing seamless connections between the waterfront and downtown destinations. Through

improvements in signage, access points, and pedestrian infrastructure, Rome has created an environment where Trail users can easily navigate from the path into the heart of the local economy. This connectivity encourages residents to choose the Trail for commutes and daily errands, reducing vehicle dependency and building better health outcomes.

Low-cost, high-impact investments, like bike racks, are effective in encouraging Trail users to stop and stay a while.

THE EMPIRE STATE TRAIL IN FOCUS: NEWARK, NY



Communities of all types and sizes benefit from the completion of the Empire State Trail.

ABOUT NEWARK, NY

- County: Wayne County
- Population: ~9,020 residents
- Typology: Urban / Rural Village Blend (Urban Cluster)

Small communities are making big plans around the Empire State Trail.

Located in Wayne County along the Erie Canal, the Village of Newark models how a historic rural community can successfully position itself as a destination on the Empire State Trail. The Village benefits from a scenic canal-front setting and a traditional compact downtown area, providing a strong foundation for capturing the economic benefits of trail-based visitation to support its 9,000 residents.

By viewing the Trail as a front door to the community rather than a peripheral asset, Newark is actively transforming its local economy and residential appeal.

The Trail creates opportunities to attract additional funding resources.

Newark exemplifies the powerful benefit of strategic public investment in amplifying the value of existing trail infrastructure. As a recipient of a \$10 million Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI) award, the Village is implementing a suite of projects designed to strengthen its physical and economic connection to the Trail. Newark also applied for and received a federal Safe Streets and Roads for All grant, demonstrating their commitment to the active transportation and recreation network that supports and is supported by the Trail.

These improvements include the creation of new residential opportunities, waterfront enhancements directly adjacent to the corridor, and the development of wellness-oriented spaces. Such investments are specifically intended to encourage Trail users to transition from pass-through visitors into overnight guests and repeat customers for local businesses.

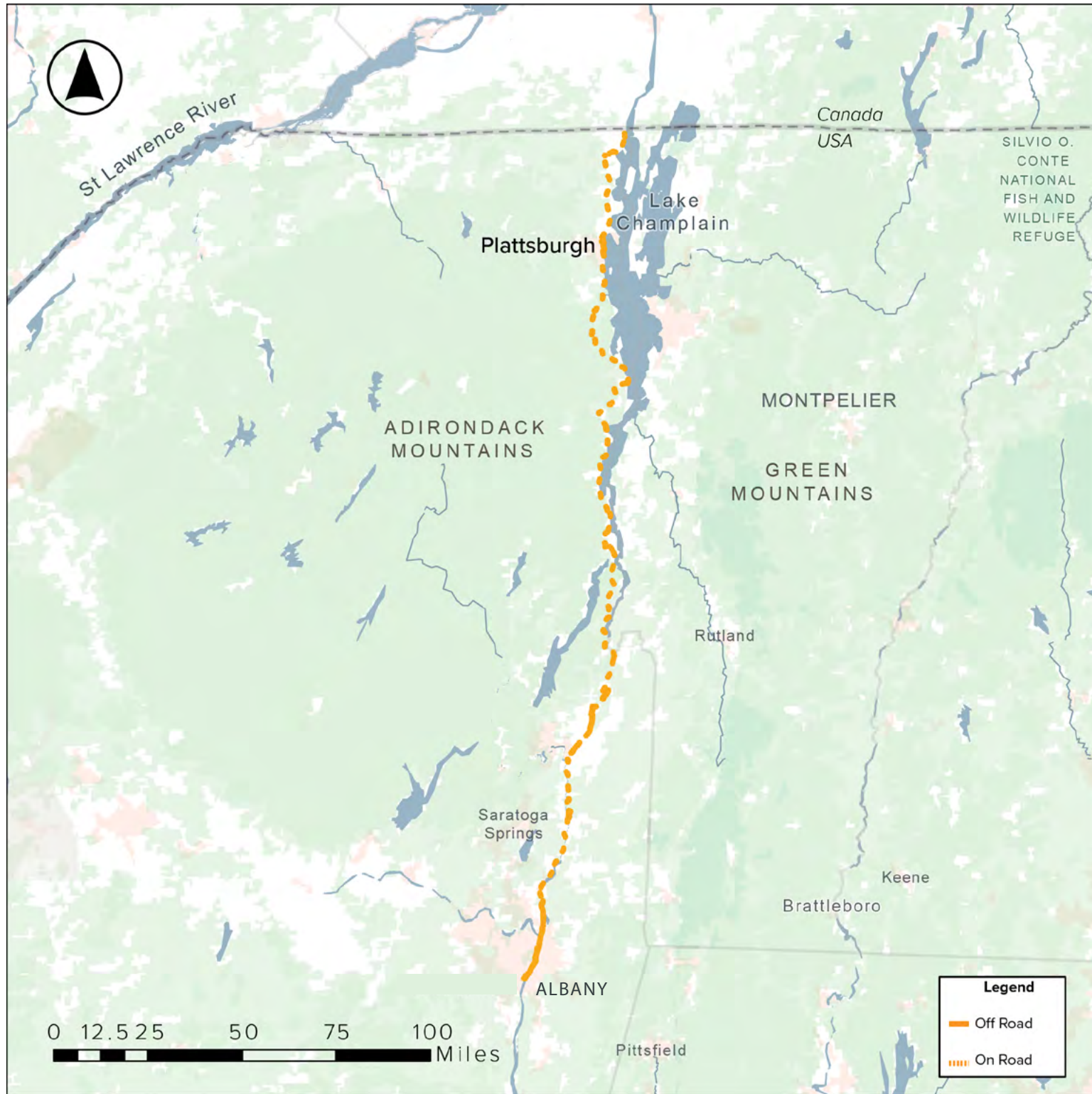
Creating connections brings rewards and attracts additional private investment.

The key lesson from the Newark experience is that connectivity must be intentional to be effective. By

improving wayfinding systems and strengthening the physical links between the Trail and Main Street, the Village has made it easy for visitors to venture into the heart of the community to explore.

This has successfully encouraged private investment, including the conversion of former industrial buildings into high-demand housing. These efforts reinforce Newark's identity as a vibrant canal community and a desirable place to live, showing how the Trail can be a key component in long-term neighborhood revitalization.

Adding State and federal investment to municipal funds has a multiplying effect, even in smaller Trail communities.



CHAMPLAIN VALLEY TRAIL

CHAMPLAIN VALLEY TRAIL



190 miles of connected trails

26 miles off-road



526,000 visits
to the Trail annually



98,000 overnight visits



\$101.7 million in economic impact



525 jobs supported



\$11 million
in State & local tax revenue



\$33.7 million in environmental benefits



5.2 million mile reduction in
vehicle miles traveled



228,857 metric tons
of carbon stored



3,563 metric tons of CO₂
removed from the air



\$4.2 million in health benefits



CHAMPLAIN VALLEY TRAIL

The Champlain Valley Trail is the northern branch of the Empire State Trail, linking New York's Capital Region to the Canadian border and connecting communities along one of New York's most storied landscapes. Stretching roughly 190 miles from Peebles Island State Park north to Rouses Point, the route connects canal towns, farmland, and lakeshore villages. Much of the route follows on-road corridors through rural upstate New York, weaving through protected natural areas and expansive agricultural landscapes.

Along the way, the Trail intersects with small communities and the urban hub of Plattsburgh.

The Champlain Valley Trail connects visitors to a wide range of cultural and natural destinations. Highlights include Saratoga National Historical Park, the scenic Ausable Chasm, and Peebles Island State Park. The Trail also links regional assets such as SUNY Plattsburgh, enhancing its role as a connector for both residents and tourists.

The Trail provides a fresh approach to economic revitalization in post-industrial communities.

The Trail provides a significant opportunity for economic renewal in several communities classified as distressed by Empire State Development. In towns like Ticonderoga, a postindustrial area once sustained by mining and manufacturing, the Trail supports new tourism-based development, and similar benefits are found in areas surrounding Plattsburgh. The Trail contributes to renewed activity by supporting local businesses and encouraging visitors to explore these historic downtown neighborhoods in sparsely populated areas.

The corridor consists of two distinct segments that create a continuous experience. The Champlain Canalway Trail travels 62 miles north from Waterford to Whitehall, transitioning from off-road paths to quiet roadway connections. This section offers level towpath stretches and views of the working canal and Adirondack foothills.

North of Whitehall, the route continues as the North Country Extension, tracing the shores of Lake Champlain to Rouses Point. Almost entirely on-road, this stretch is a signature destination for long distance cycling, serving as a key link for riders traveling between New York City and Montreal. Together, these sections create a continuous, signed route that supports heritage tourism, outdoor recreation, and local economies throughout the Valley.

Economic Impact

The Champlain Valley Trail generates economic benefits for communities across eastern New York by supporting tourism, local businesses, and regional employment. Through a combination of direct visitor spending, supply chain activity, and household consumption, the Trail supports approximately 530 jobs. These positions generate nearly \$35.2 million in employee earnings. Collectively, this economic activity produces an estimated \$101.6 million in annual economic output.

In addition to private sector benefits, the Trail contributes important public revenues through nearly

\$10.9 million in annual state and local tax generation. These revenues help support municipal services, infrastructure improvements, and broader community investment throughout the Champlain Valley region. By drawing visitors to communities that may otherwise experience limited economic development opportunities, the Trail has become an important tool for long-term rural revitalization and sustainable economic growth.

Public Health & Active Transportation

The Champlain Valley Trail provides substantial public health value. By supporting active transportation, the Trail helps reduce health risks associated with sedentary lifestyles and improves overall quality of life for residents and visitors. These outcomes translate into approximately \$4.22 million in annual public health benefits through avoided medical costs. The Trail also reduces Vehicle Miles Traveled by 5.2 million each year.

Environmental Benefits

The environmental value of the Champlain Valley Trail is rooted in the preservation of approximately 1,391 acres of off-road land along the corridor. These protected natural areas provide important ecological functions, including habitat conservation, stormwater management, and long-term carbon reduction benefits. The vegetation and tree cover within the Trail corridor remove an estimated 3,563.4 metric tons of CO₂ from the atmosphere annually through natural carbon sequestration, valued at approximately \$877,000 in avoided emissions costs.

In addition to annual sequestration, the Champlain Valley Trail corridor doubles as a long-term carbon storage system through its preserved habitat pool. These landscapes currently store approximately 228,857.4 metric tons of carbon, preventing it from being released into the atmosphere. The estimated value of this stored carbon is approximately \$56.3 million, representing a significant long-term contribution to regional climate resilience and environmental quality. Through the protection of these natural lands, the Champlain Valley Trail has evolved into an important piece of green infrastructure that delivers lasting ecological and public benefits for New York State.

THE EMPIRE STATE TRAIL IN FOCUS: SCHUYLERVILLE, NY



Communities are seeing firsthand how the Trail is benefitting their businesses and connecting to heritage tourism and cultural sites.

ABOUT SCHUYLERVILLE, NY

- County: Saratoga County
- Population: 1,350 residents
- Typology: Rural

Schuylerville connects the Trail with other community assets to create a destination.

Schuylerville, located in Saratoga County along the Champlain Valley section of the Empire State Trail, is a village where deep historical significance meets modern recreational strategy. The Trail runs through a landscape rich with Revolutionary War history, connecting directly to regional parks, heritage sites, and scenic waterfront areas.

By positioning itself as a key destination along the northern corridor, Schuylerville effectively converts Trail traffic into meaningful economic and cultural activity.

Partnerships have developed community support for the Trail.

What distinguishes Schuylerville is its strong network of nonprofit and civic partners supporting the Trail. Organizations such as Hudson Crossing Park and the Champlain Canal Region Gateway Visitor Center play a central role in managing public spaces and enhancing the visitor experience. These partnerships allow the community to leverage the Trail as both a recreational corridor and an interpretive pathway that showcases centuries of New York history. Through the dedication of committed volunteers and groups like the Saratoga County 250 Commission, the Village has developed local programming that integrates with the physical infrastructure of the Trail.

Local destinations are leveraging the Trail to keep visitors in the community longer.

The Village economy has seen consistent expansion, driven by a unique combination of historic landmarks and abundant outdoor amenities. Local destinations such as Fort Hardy Park, Saratoga National Historical Park, and Saratoga Apple provide a variety of experiences that encourage visitors to extend their stay. Strategic improvements to park connections and local signage aim to further increase this dwell time, prompting through-travelers to stop and explore downtown shops, restaurants, and cafes.

The Trail's effects are noticeable in supporting aspects of the local economy.

Business leaders and community advocates have noted a steady increase in visitors since the installation of the Empire State Trail trailhead. Located halfway between New York City and Montreal, Schuylerville is a natural stopping point for overnight stays and day trips alike, reinforcing its vital role in the regional economy. The Village continues to refine its local access points to capture the full potential of the network.

“Since the installation of the trailhead, Schuylerville has seen a steady stream of travelers stopping to explore the Village’s downtown shops, restaurants and cafes, and visiting historical and cultural sites that continues to increase, proving that the Empire State Trail is delivering real economic benefits to the communities it runs through.”

Kate Morse, Executive Director, Hudson Crossing Park



HUDSON VALLEY GREENWAY TRAIL



200 miles of connected trails

155 miles off-road



5.6 million visits
to the Trail annually



1 million overnight visits



\$1.3 billion in economic impact



5,600 jobs supported



\$120 million
in State & local tax revenue



\$51.1 million in environmental benefits



5.2 million mile reduction in
vehicle miles traveled



228,857 metric tons
of carbon stored



3,563 metric tons of CO2
removed from the air



\$44.6 million in health benefits

HUDSON VALLEY GREENWAY TRAIL



HUDSON VALLEY GREENWAY TRAIL

The Hudson Valley Greenway Trail is the southern branch of the Empire State Trail, linking New York's Capital Region with New York City and tracing the course of one of the nation's most iconic waterways. Spanning 200 miles from Albany to Battery Park in Lower Manhattan, the route connects neighborhoods across eastern New York. More than 75% of the Greenway is off-road, creating a highly accessible recreational corridor while generating significant economic benefits for communities along the route.

The Trail passes through one of the most geographically and culturally diverse corridors in New York State, threading small Hudson River towns, rural farmland, suburban centers, and the dense urban fabric of New York City. Trail users experience working waterfronts, residential neighborhoods, open space, protected parkland, and vibrant commercial districts. This diversity allows the Trail to function both as a destination for long-distance tourism and as an important everyday transportation and recreation asset for local residents.

The Hudson Valley Greenway Trail provides a new way to see some of New York's most iconic sites.

The Hudson Valley Greenway Trail provides a continuous corridor connecting visitors to an expansive array of cultural, educational, and recreational assets. As the Trail enters New York City, it integrates with an urban network of greenways through Van Cortlandt Park and Hudson River Park, linking users to iconic destinations throughout Manhattan. By bridging these rural and urban landscapes, the Trail supports a robust ecosystem of tourism and alternative transportation that strengthens the economic and environmental vitality of the entire Hudson River Valley.

Economic Impact

The Hudson Valley Greenway Trail is an economic stimulus for communities stretching from Albany to New York City. Supported by visitor spending, business activity, and regional supply chains, the Trail contributes to approximately \$301.1 million in labor income tied to jobs generated throughout the corridor. These wages and salaries circulate through local economies, supporting households, restaurants, retailers, lodging establishments, and service providers in both urban centers and small riverfront communities.

More broadly, the Trail produces an estimated \$1.33 billion in total annual economic output, underscoring the Greenway's importance as a driver of tourism, recreation, and community development across the Hudson Valley. This sustained economic activity also generates nearly \$153.8 million in state and local tax revenues, helping municipalities fund public services, infrastructure investments, and long-term community improvements. By linking destinations across one of New York's most traveled regions, the Trail strengthens local economies while supporting continued revitalization along the Hudson River corridor.

Public Health & Active Transportation

The Hudson Valley Greenway Trail delivers significant public health benefits by creating safe and convenient opportunities for walking, bicycling,

running, and other forms of outdoor recreation. By encouraging active lifestyles and expanding access to recreational space, the Trail helps reduce health risks associated with inactivity while improving overall wellness for residents and visitors throughout the region. These benefits are estimated to generate approximately \$44.6 million annually in avoided healthcare costs, increased physical activity, and improved quality of life outcomes.

While many use the Trail for exercise and recreation, the Greenway also supports active transportation, enabling people to safely move between neighborhoods, downtowns, parks, schools, and employment centers. Particularly within denser communities along the Hudson River and in New York City, the Trail provides an alternative to automobile travel that reduces Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) by nearly 55 million miles per year.

Environmental Benefits

The environmental significance of the Hudson Valley Greenway Trail is closely tied to the preservation of approximately 7,435 acres of off-road land along the Trail corridor. These protected landscapes provide valuable ecological services, including habitat preservation, water resource protection, and climate mitigation benefits that extend throughout the Hudson Valley. Vegetation within the corridor naturally removes an estimated 27,770 metric tons of CO₂ from the atmosphere each year through carbon sequestration, an annual value estimated at approximately \$6.8 million in avoided environmental damages.

The Greenway's forests, wetlands, and natural habitats act as long-term carbon storage systems. Collectively, these preserved lands hold approximately 1.36 million metric tons of stored carbon, preventing substantial greenhouse gas emissions from entering the atmosphere. The economic value of this stored carbon is estimated at roughly \$334.1 million, reflecting the Trail's substantial contribution to regional environmental resilience and climate stability. Through the continued protection of these natural resources, the Hudson Valley Greenway Trail is a much-needed investment in sustainable infrastructure and ecological stewardship for New York State.

THE EMPIRE STATE TRAIL IN FOCUS: NEW PALTZ, NY



With the ability to connect people to new places and to each other, the Trail has a profound social impact on communities of all sizes.

ABOUT NEW PALTZ, NY

- County: Ulster County
- Population: ~9,025 residents (Village) / ~14,400 residents (Town total)
- Typology: Urban / College Town Cluster

The Trail is an essential part of the community’s identity in New Paltz.

New Paltz, located in Ulster County, is a well-established destination recognized for its natural beauty, vibrant village center, and robust outdoor recreation economy. The Empire State Trail intersects the community at a critical junction of trails, providing a link between expansive regional trail systems. The long history of New Paltz as a leader in trail-based development led the community to embrace the Empire State Trail, resulting in a profound physical and social impact on the region. New Paltz residents and leaders see the Trail not just as infrastructure, but as a component of their community identity.

The Trail improves community safety.

The completion of the Henry W. DuBois Greenway Connector in June 2025 marked a significant milestone for the network. This 1.7-mile project closed the largest remaining on-road gap in the Empire State Trail between Kingston and New York City. By connecting the Hudson Valley Rail Trail to the Wallkill Valley Rail Trail with a dedicated 10-foot-wide off-road side path, the project significantly improved transportation safety and accessibility for all users.

The completion of the Trail gives residents more transportation choices.

This investment has successfully transformed the trail network into functional economic infrastructure. Local trail systems, some of which were established over a century ago, are now seamlessly connected to the broader state network, making them accessible to a much larger audience. By allowing visitors and residents to move between the Trail and local businesses without relying on vehicles, New Paltz captures a higher level of economic activity and maintains a walkable, bike-friendly environment. The result is a strong alignment between private investment, heritage tourism, and sustainable transportation.

The Trail paves the way for new development.

The completion of the connector has served as an economic catalyst for New Paltz’s hospitality and tourism sector, sparking a wave of new localized openings including Zero Gravity Trampoline Park, a modernized local bowling alley, and the highly anticipated return of a beloved dining spot, The Bakery. The Trail’s completion here also heavily influenced the development of New Paltz Way, a new 28-room boutique hotel. Positioned immediately adjacent to the Trail, the project integrates specialized bike amenities and a nature-forward design specifically curated to capture the growing influx of trail-based tourists, outdoor enthusiasts, and eco-conscious travelers.

The Empire State Trail is a key component of the community’s identity in New Paltz.

AN URBAN OASIS: THE MANHATTAN GREENWAY

In New York City, just 17 miles of Empire State Trail see 3,460,117 visits per year, with visitors spending an average of \$38 per visit. This activity generates more than \$687 million in economic output.

For 12.5 miles in Manhattan, the Trail is easily accessible from city streets and the NYC subway and bus system, offering thousands of visitors per day access to the Hudson River and a way to safely travel by foot or bike.

One key segment within New York City is the Hudson River Greenway, the most heavily used bikeway in the United States. Nearly 7,000 people ride a bike on the Greenway every day (Source: NYCDOT).

Even in a location as dense and constrained by development as Manhattan, the Trail successfully generates economic, physical and environmental benefits.



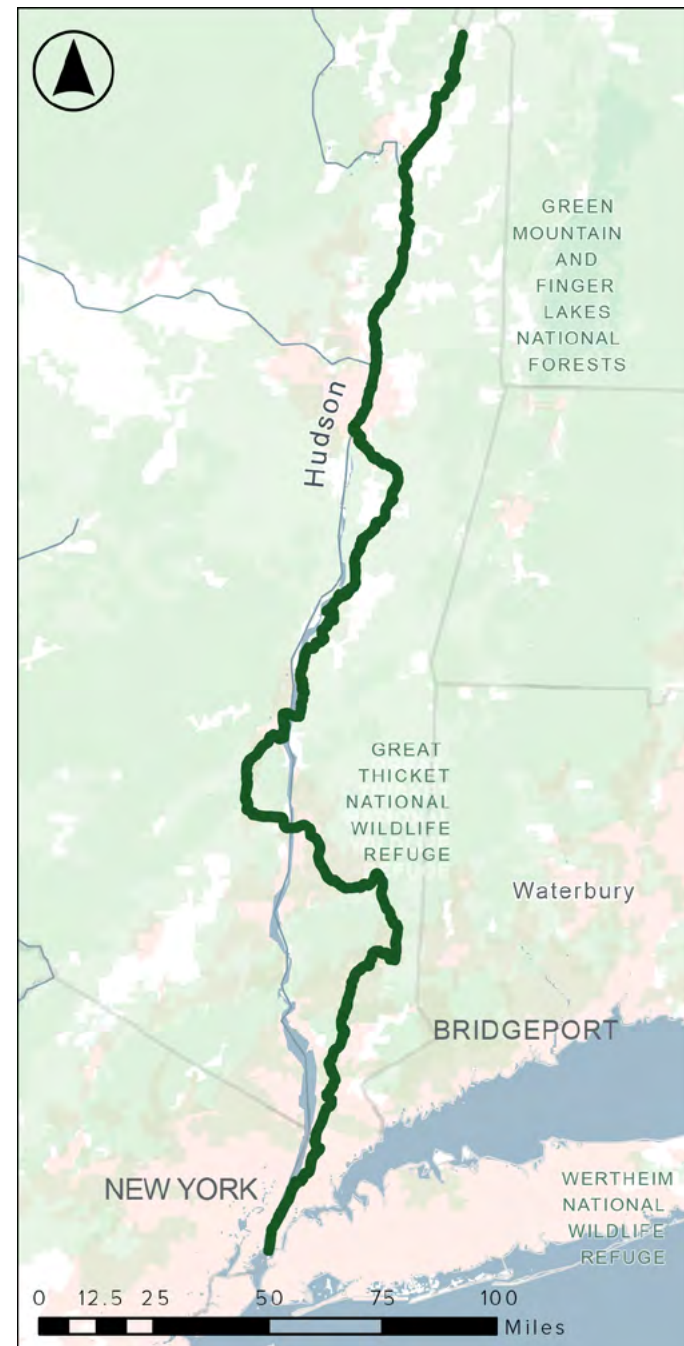
PARTNER SPOTLIGHTS

At 750 miles, the Empire State Trail requires extensive collaboration from public, private and non-profit organization. Two major partners, Hudson River Valley Greenway and New York State Canalway Corporation, which helped fund this study, play a critical role in supporting the Empire State Trail network. The profiles on the following page highlight the impacts of the segments of the Empire State Trail in each agency's service area.



HUDSON RIVER VALLEY GREENWAY

The Hudson River Valley Greenway (HRVG) supports regional planning, natural and cultural resource protection, heritage and environmental education, economic development, and public access throughout the Hudson Valley. HRVG's service area includes the Trail from Albany to Whitehall.



ANNUAL VISITS	ECONOMIC OUTPUT
6 MILLION	\$1,159,481,400
JOBS SUPPORTED	ENVIRONMENTAL & HEALTH BENEFITS
6,020	\$114,025,300

Economic Impact

The segments of the Empire State Trail supported by the Hudson River Valley Greenway see nearly 6 million visits per year, with about 1.1 million staying overnight. This results in over \$1.1 billion in total economic output. These trail segments also generate over \$128 million in state and local tax revenue. These trail segments also support over 6,000 jobs.

Physical Health & Active Transportation

About 59 million vehicle miles traveled are estimated to be eliminated by the Trail's use for active transportation. Benefits to physical health and wellness are estimated to be nearly \$48 million in deferred healthcare costs.

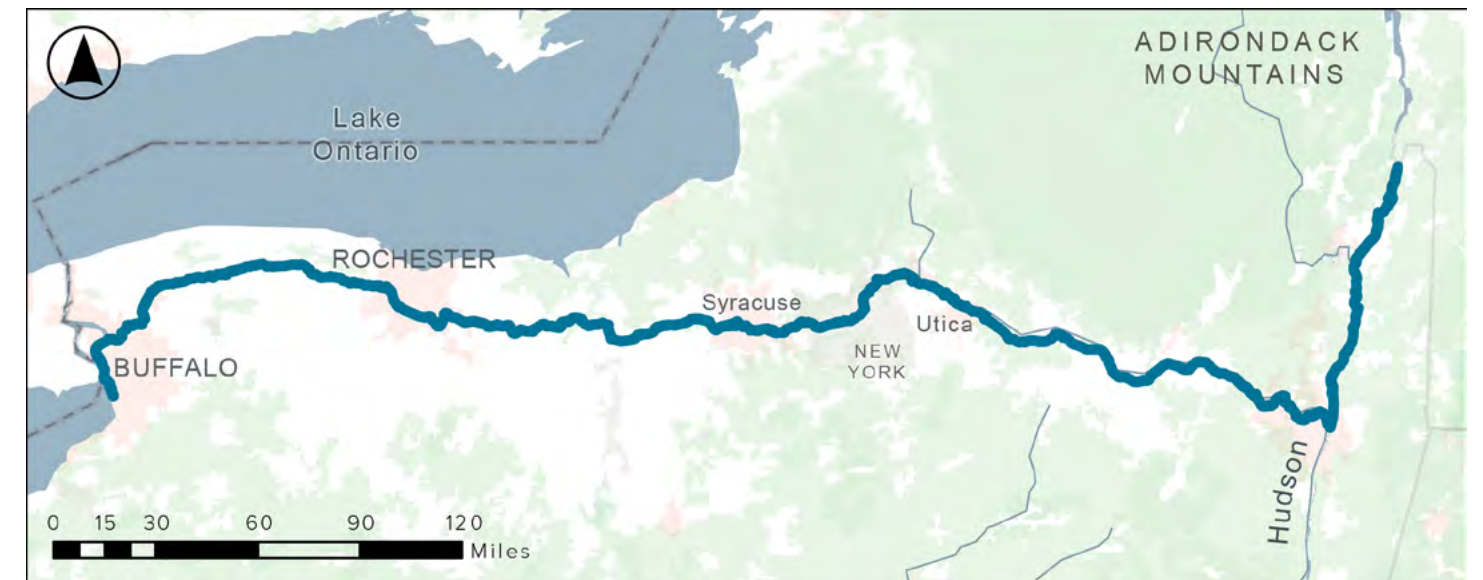
Environmental Benefits

The Trail also benefits the environment, removing carbon dioxide from the air and sequestering (storing) greenhouse gases in the natural habitat lining the Trail. This amounts to over \$7 million in emissions savings each year.



NYS CANAL CORPORATION

The NYS Canal Corporation is responsible for operating, maintaining, improving, and promoting New York State Canal System's 524-mile network of four Canals—the Erie, Champlain, Cayuga-Seneca and Oswego canals, and related waterways—and owns more than 150 miles of trails, including portions of the Empire State Trail.



ANNUAL VISITS	ECONOMIC OUTPUT
4 MILLION	\$767,248,100
JOBS SUPPORTED	ENVIRONMENTAL & HEALTH BENEFITS
3,970	\$37,566,400

Economic Impact

The segments of the Empire State Trail supported by the Canalway Corporation see over 4 million visits per year, with about 420,000 as overnight visits. This results in over \$767 million in total economic output. These trail segments also generate over \$84 million in state and local tax revenue. These trail segments also support nearly 4,000 jobs.

Physical Health & Active Transportation

About 40 million Vehicle Miles Traveled are estimated to be eliminated by the Trail's use for active transportation. Benefits to physical health and wellness are estimated to be nearly \$33 million in deferred healthcare costs.

Environmental Benefits

The Trail also benefits the environment, removing carbon dioxide from the air and sequestering (storing) greenhouse gases in the natural habitat lining the Trail. This amounts to nearly \$5 million in emissions savings each year.





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 those of the 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.

We appreciate the support of New York's communities, partners and Trail users.

Learn more about our upcoming work at ptny.org





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