

2025 Who's on the Trail

Erie & Champlain Canalway Trails



Trail Use Count Report

Published May 2026



**Canal
Corporation**



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Acknowledgements

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Introduction

Twenty years of counting steps, tire tracks, and footfalls along the Canalway Trail has added up to something significant. Since 2005, Parks & Trails New York (PTNY) and the New York State Canal Corporation (NYSCC) have tracked trail use through annual Canalway Trail counts — and the picture that data paints is one of extraordinary, sustained popularity. The Canalway Trail gives New Yorkers in more than 200 communities a dedicated place to walk, jog, and bike right from their doorsteps, while drawing visitors from across the country and around the world to experience one of the Northeast's most distinctive trail corridors. In 2020, the trail was incorporated into New York's flagship Empire State Trail, part of a 750-mile network stretching from New York City north to the Canadian border and from Albany west to Buffalo.

That two-decade body of evidence is now producing results beyond the annual count. In June 2026, PTNY released a comprehensive Economic Impact Study of the Empire State Trail — a landmark analysis drawing heavily on data collected through the Who's on the Trail report series. The study helps quantify what trail advocates have long known: that investments in the Canalway Trail generate real, measurable returns for canal communities, regional economies, and the state as a whole. The numbers documented in this and prior reports form the empirical foundation for that analysis — a record of use that, taken together, speaks to the enduring value of one of New York's most-traveled multi-use trails.

The scale of that use is striking. PTNY estimates that the Canalway Trail system receives roughly 4 million visits per year, including 3.66 million on the Erie Canalway Trail and 445,000 on the Champlain Canalway Trail. These figures represent an annual use estimate for the 2021 to 2025 period based on longitudinal data from electronic counters installed at 36 locations along the trail over the past five years. These figures reflect not a single season but a sustained pattern of heavy use that has persisted across years and weather, through the extraordinary surge in outdoor recreation during the COVID-19 pandemic and into the years that followed. Summer remains the trail's peak season, with average daily use more than doubling that of other seasons at most counter locations, and weekends consistently draw more users than weekdays — a pattern that speaks to the trail's role as a recreational anchor for communities along the canal corridor.

The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor's annual Canalway Challenge program offers another lens on the trail's reach and appeal. In 2025, over 1,000 finishers completed mileage goals ranging from 1 mile to the full 360-mile trail, with participants traveling from at least 41 states to take part. On average, finishers spent three nights in Canalway communities and \$314 along the corridor — with end-to-end finishers spending nearly \$675 and an average of five nights on the trail. These figures offer a preview of the kind of economic evidence that the Economic Impact Study documents in fuller detail.

In 2025, PTNY counted trail use at 17 locations along the Erie and Champlain Canalway Trails. The count process utilizes electronic trail counters that use infrared pyroelectric technology to detect body temperature and count people passing within range of the sensor. The resulting data, analyzed alongside five years of prior counts, forms the basis for the use estimates and trend observations presented throughout this report.

Taken together, the Who's on the Trail data series represents one of the most comprehensive records of non-motorized trail use assembled for any trail system in the country. That record has informed planning and investment decisions along the canal corridor for two decades, and it continues to serve as a resource for communities, agencies, and advocates working to understand, improve, and expand the Canalway Trail. As the trail network grows and the case for completing remaining gaps continues to be built, the data collected each year will remain central to that ongoing conversation.

Note: Additional information on the process used to gather data and standards to estimate full-year trail use can be found in the companion to this report, Who's on the Trail: Methodology, and full data recorded at count locations can be downloaded from PTNY's website at www.ptny.org/whos-on-the-trail-canalway-trail.

2025 Counts Overview

Electronic counters recorded trail usage at fifteen locations along the Erie Canalway Trail and at two locations along the Champlain Canalway Trail during 2025.

Seven counters analyzed in this report were installed in late 2023 or early 2024 and removed in spring 2025, having collected at least a full year's worth of data: Amherst, Medina, Albion, Greece, Ilion, Albany, and Schuylerville. Two counters installed in 2024 remained installed throughout the entirety of 2025: Little Falls, which was installed in May 2024 but had data issues in summer 2024 and as such was left installed through summer 2025 to collect useful data, and Schenectady, which was installed in August 2024 and remained in place through 2025. Counters were installed in seven new locations in May and June 2025: Pendleton, Spencerport, Fairport, Port Byron, Chittenango, Canajoharie and Waterford. Of these, six remained installed into 2026, with only Waterford having been removed in November 2025.

In addition to the above counters installed by PTNY, this report includes data from a counter owned by the City of Rome, which was installed in July 2023 which remained in place through the end of 2025.

2025 Trail Count Locations Map



Trail Count Summary & Profiles

Data on the following pages summarizes trail use recorded at each of the count sites for 2025, including data available from 2023 and 2024 where available. Each page provides contextual information on timeframe, duration, and location of counter installation. The location maps show trail surface type and provide additional geographic context for each location.

Count profiles show estimated annual and monthly uses, as well as daily average use by month and daily average use. Estimated annual use was calculated using an adapted methodology based on the 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).

2025 Trail Use Summary

Electronic Count Locations	Days Installed	Total Observed Use	Average Use by Day (based on annual use)	Estimated Annual Use	Summer			Fall/Winter/Spring		
					Daily average	Weekday average	Weekend average	Daily average	Weekday average	Weekend average
Erie Canalway Trail										
Amherst (April 2024-June 2025)	414	49,362	119	42,806	184	167	221	64	62	69
Pendleton (June-December 2025)	208	40,276	194	59,959	282	241	369	83	73	104
Medina (October 2023-May 2025)	568	24,515	43	18,027	80	79	82	28	27	31
Albion (October 2023-May 2025)	519	11,906	23	10,346	56	53	63	13	12	16
Spencerport (May-December 2025)	233	43,958	189	58,479	262	238	313	77	67	97
Greece (October 2023-May 2025)	567	22,741	40	16,704	99	87	124	16	16	16
Fairport (May-December 2025)	181	168,796	933	246,230	1,036	931	1,266	579	491	767
Port Byron (May-December 2025)	231	20,121	87	26,822	113	108	124	48	44	59
Chittenango (June-December 2025)	130	20,614	159	46,601	202	188	234	20	17	27
Rome (July 2023-December 2025)	905	38,737	43	15,274	61	64	55	29	31	26
Ilion (October 2023-May 2025)	570	36,307	64	26,534	134	129	143	35	34	36
Little Falls (May 2024-December 2025)	541	42,444	78	27,874	124	116	142	43	37	54
Canajoharie (May-December 2025)	231	10,425	45	13,821	63	57	76	18	17	20
Schenectady (August 2024-December 2025)	499	66,326	133	48,438	217	208	236	79	79	79
Albany (August 2023-April 2025)	628	210,833	336	131,237	554	502	669	229	213	264
Champlain Canalway Trail										
Waterford (May-November 2025)	191	18,999	99	26,897	108	97	131	76	67	95
Schuylerville (November 2023-May 2025)	559	40,498	72	30,330	110	115	98	57	53	65

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Amherst

Erie County

Installed April 19, 2024 - June 6, 2025

The counter was installed just west of where the trail crosses Tonawanda Creek Road west of the intersection with Niagara Falls Boulevard in the town of Amherst. The trail in this stretch is paved and largely off-road, with a few short stretches of on-road riding interspersed. The counter is located roughly 17 miles by trail from the western end of the Erie Canalway Trail in Buffalo and is close to the cities of Tonawanda and North Tonawanda.

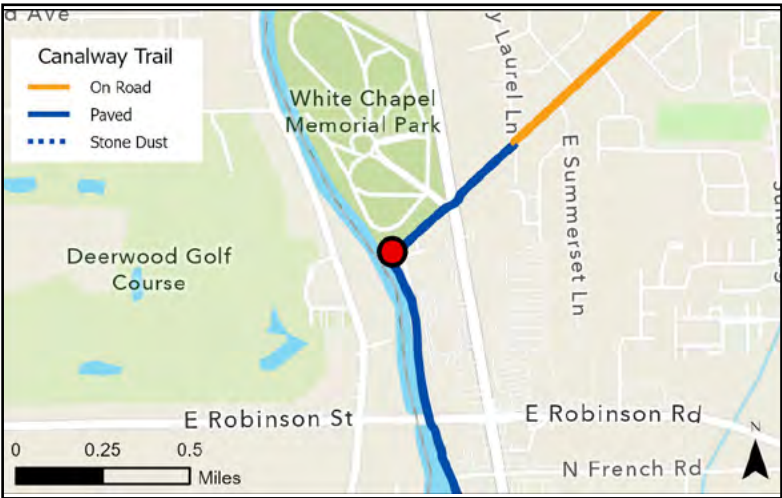


Estimated
Annual Use

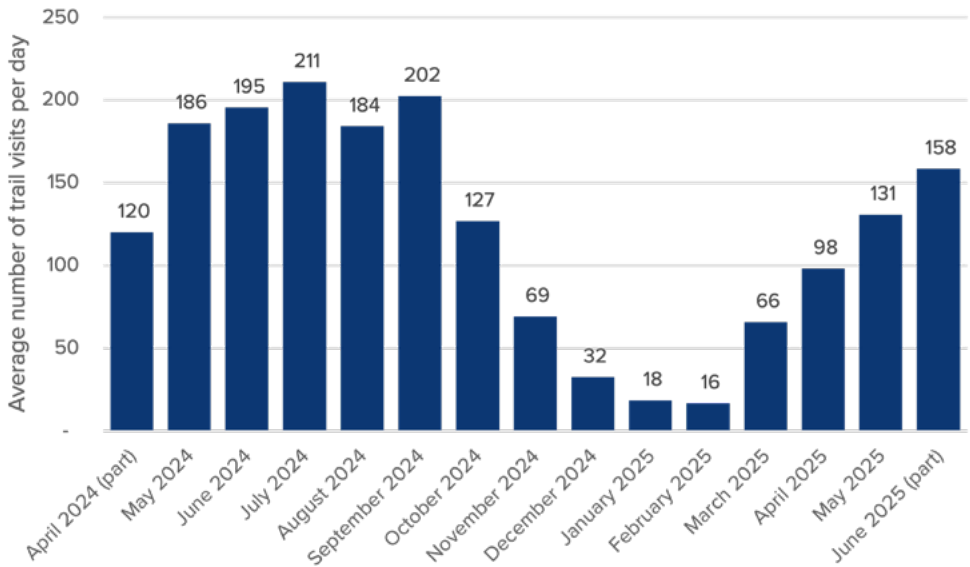
42,806

Daily Average Use

117



Daily Average Use by Month
(April 2024-June 2025)



Month	Monthly Use	Daily Average
April 2024 (part)	1,440	120
May 2024	5,763	186
June 2024	5,858	195
July 2024	6,537	211
August 2024	5,703	184
September 2024	6,065	202
October 2024	3,925	127
November 2024	2,067	69
December 2024	1,004	32
January 2025	571	18
February 2025	460	16
March 2025	2,034	66
April 2025	2,938	98
May 2025	4,047	131
June 2025 (part)	950	158
Recorded	49,362	119

Pendleton

Niagara County

Installed June 7, 2025 - December 31, 2025

The counter was installed near the trailhead at Robinson Road in Pendleton. This section of trail is part of a 7.3-mile paved, off-road stretch running from Orbit Drive in Amherst, crossing Tonawanda Creek into Niagara County at Pendleton, and continuing to Stevens Street in Lockport.

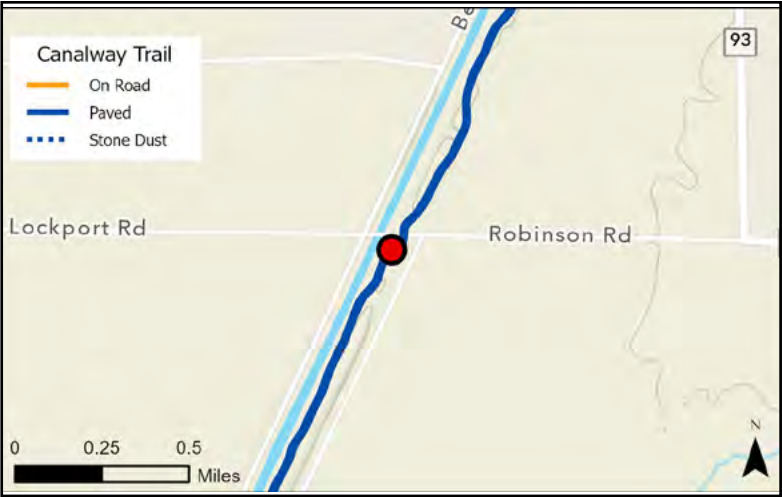


Estimated
Annual Use

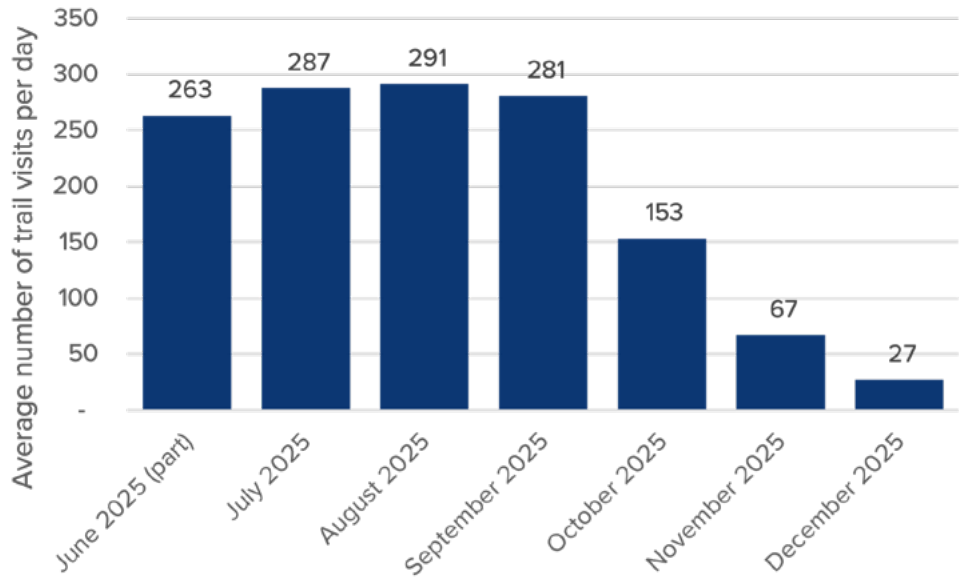
59,959

Daily Average Use

164



Daily Average Use by Month
(June 2025 - December 2025)



Month	Monthly Use	Daily Average
June 2025 (part)	6,309	263
July 2025	8,907	287
August 2025	9,034	291
September 2025	8,420	281
October 2025	4,757	153
November 2025	2,010	67
December 2025	839	27
Recorded	40,276	194

Medina

Orleans County

Installed October 24, 2023 - May 13, 2025

The counter was installed to the east of the Medina Aqueduct and Medina's downtown, directly to the west of Bates Road. This trail section is primarily stone dust surface. The surrounding area is rural, with the village located about halfway between the urban centers of Buffalo and Rochester.



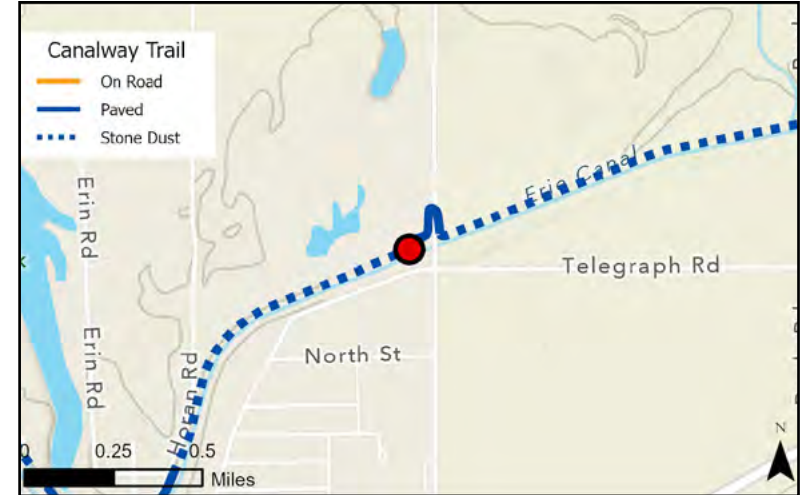
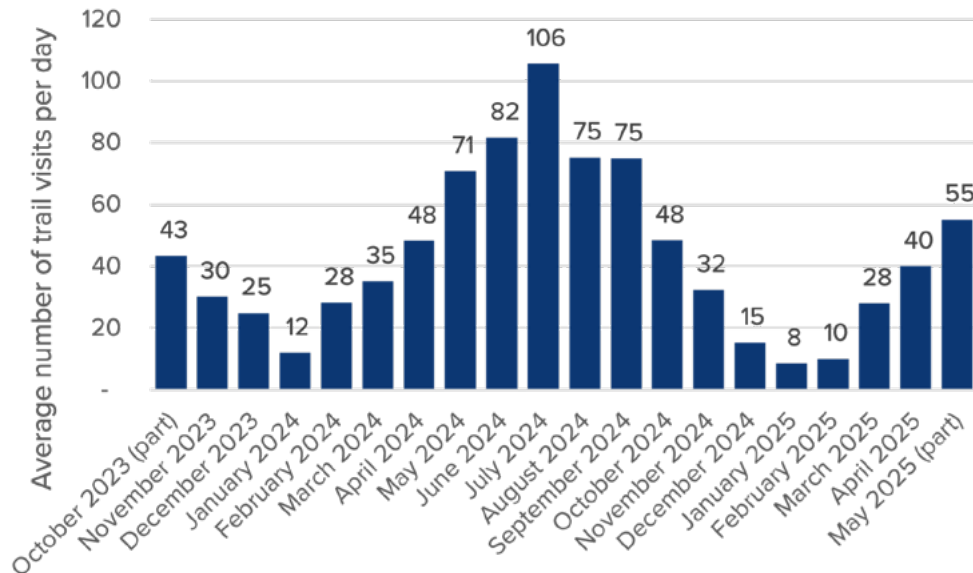
Estimated
Annual Use

18,027

Daily Average Use

49

Daily Average Use by Month
(October 2023 - May 2025)



Month	Monthly Use	Daily Average
October 2023 (part)	347	43
November 2023	905	30
December 2023	770	25
January 2024	369	12
February 2024	816	28
March 2024	1,092	35
April 2024	1,447	48
May 2024	2,196	71
June 2024	2,450	82
July 2024	3,273	106
August 2024	2,330	75
September 2024	2,245	75
October 2024	1,501	48
November 2024	973	32
December 2024	472	15
January 2025	262	8
February 2025	280	10
March 2025	869	28
April 2025	1,201	40
May 2025 (part)	717	55
Recorded	24,515	43

Albion

Orleans County

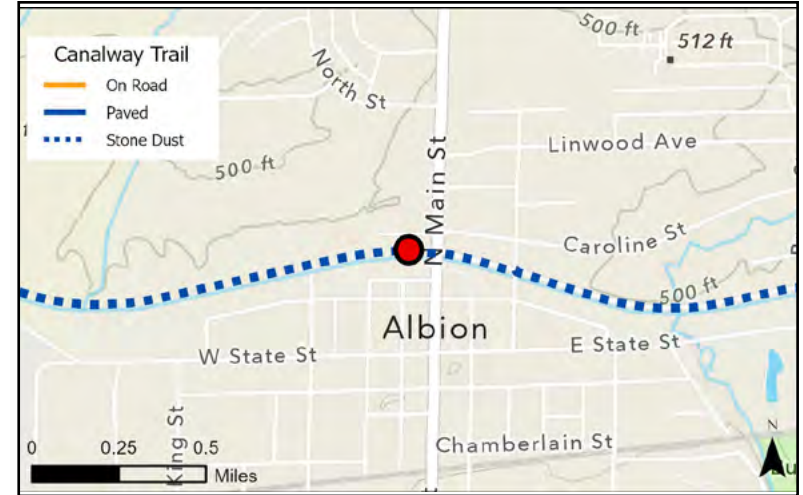
Installed October 24, 2023 - May 13, 2025; data excluded June 17, 2024 to August 4, 2024

The counter was installed just west of Main Street. East of this point, the Main Street Lift Bridge (closed for reconstruction from 2023 into 2024) crosses the canal. The trail surface through this section is primarily stone dust. The surrounding area is rural, with the village located about halfway between the urban centers of Buffalo and Rochester. Likely due to impacts from construction, data at this location was unreliable between June 17 and August 4, 2024, and has been excluded from analysis. Construction near this site may also have resulted in trail use being lower than might otherwise be expected.

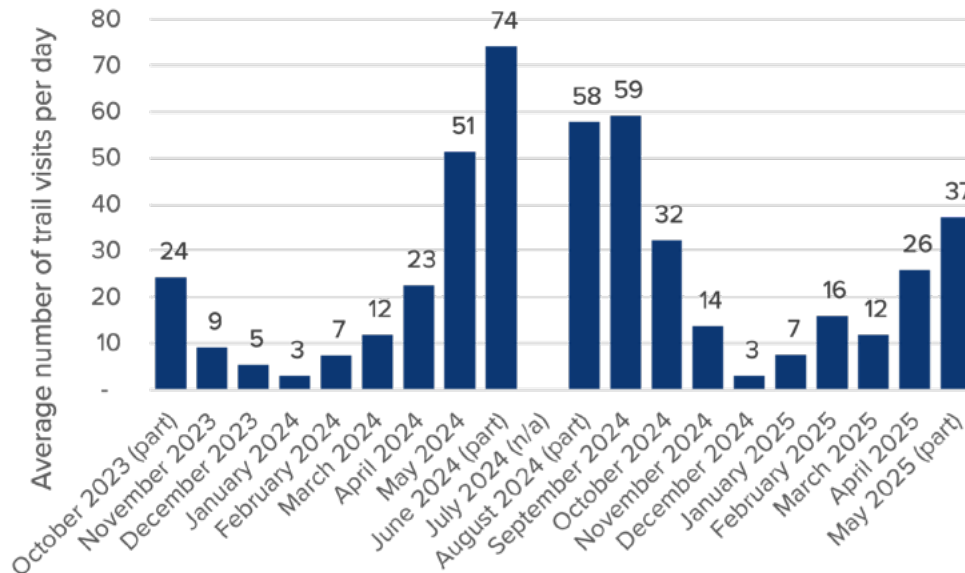


**Estimated
Annual Use**
10,346

Daily Average Use
28



**Daily Average Use by Month
(October 2023 - May 2025)**



Month	Monthly Use	Daily Average
October 2023 (part)	194	24
November 2023	274	9
December 2023	168	5
January 2024	94	3
February 2024	214	7
March 2024	367	12
April 2024	677	23
May 2024	1,591	51
June 2024 (part)	1,186	74
July 2024 (n/a)		
August 2024 (part)	1,561	58
September 2024	1,773	59
October 2024	1,002	32
November 2024	409	14
December 2024	94	3
January 2025	232	7
February 2025	447	16
March 2025	366	12
April 2025	774	26
May 2025 (part)	483	37
Recorded	11,906	23

Spencerport

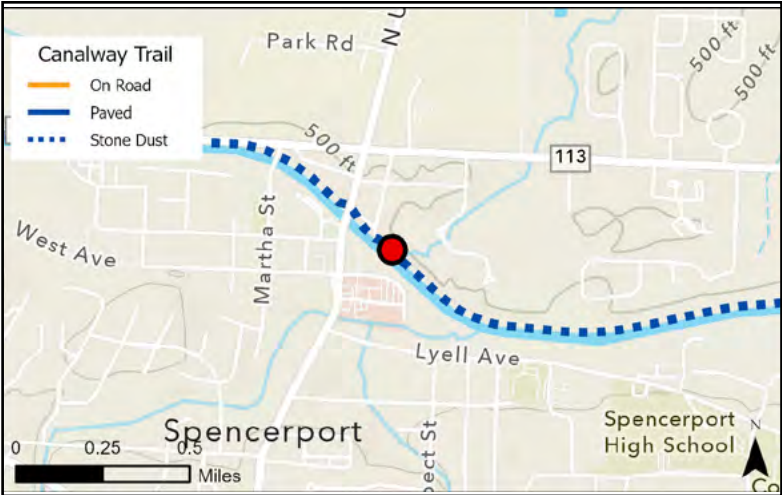
Monroe County

Installed May 13, 2025 - December 31, 2025

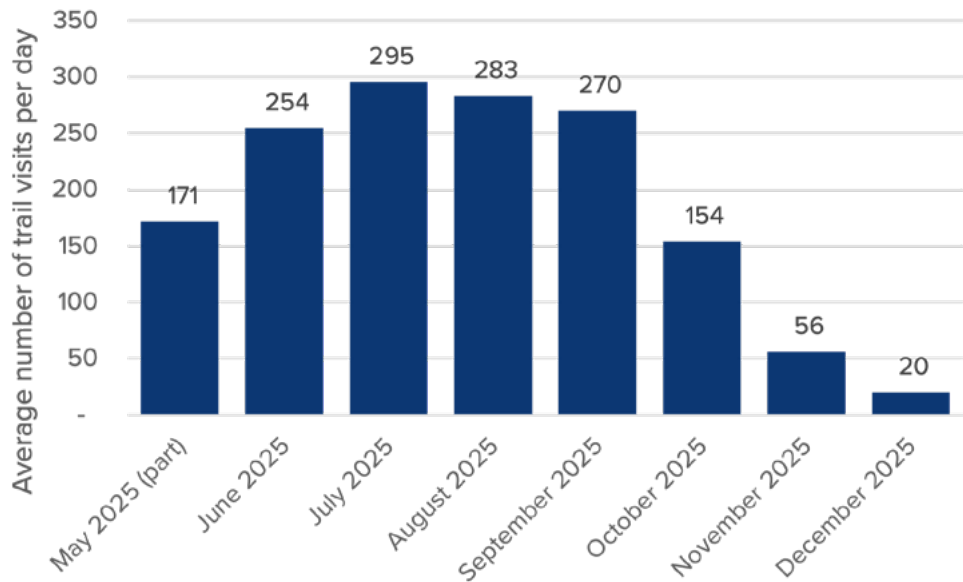
The counter was installed east of North Union Street/ NYS Route 259, the main crossing for trail users to access Spencerport’s downtown. The trail surface through this section is primarily stone dust. Spencerport is on the edge of the Rochester metropolitan area, with mostly rural areas to the west and a mixture of rural and suburban areas to the east approaching the city of Rochester.



Estimated
Annual Use
58,479
Daily Average Use
160



Daily Average Use by Month
(May 2025 - December 2025)



Month	Monthly Use	Daily Average
May 2025 (part)	3,254	171
June 2025	7,631	254
July 2025	9,151	295
August 2025	8,771	283
September 2025	8,088	270
October 2025	4,766	154
November 2025	1,679	56
December 2025	618	20
Recorded	43,958	189

Greece

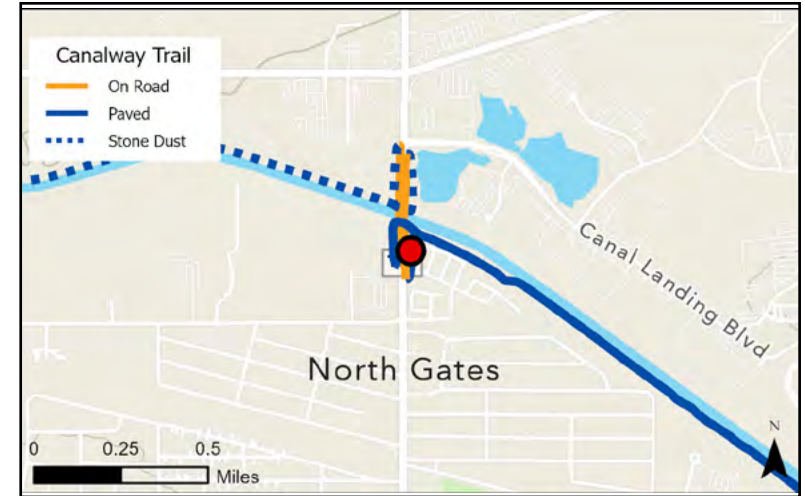
Monroe County

Installed October 24, 2023 - May 12, 2025

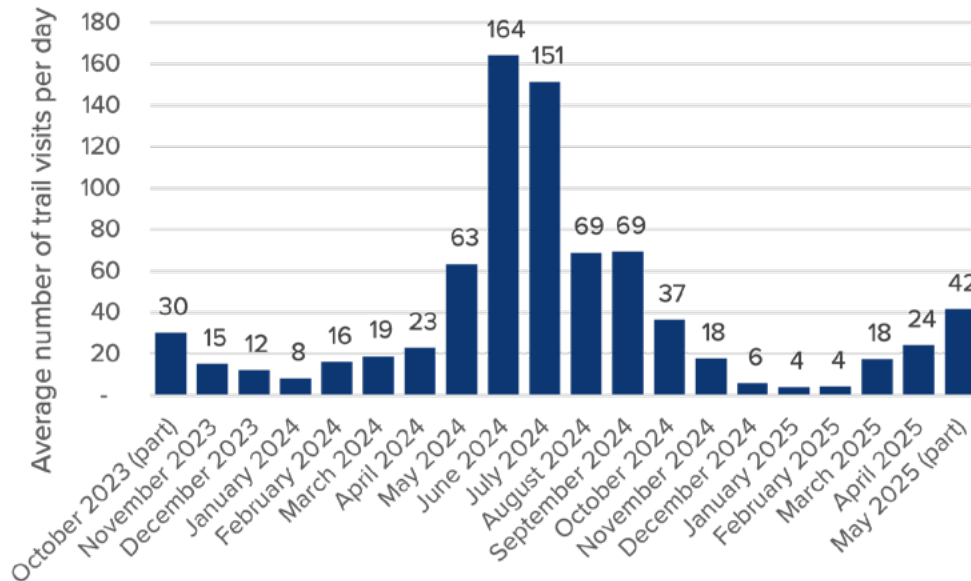
The counter was installed on one of the approach ramps leading from the trail on the canal's south side to Long Pond Road, which carries the trail over the canal to the north side where it continues to the west. The trail in this section is paved from Long Pond Road east into the city of Rochester. As there are two usable approaches from the trail to Long Pond Road, the counter is likely only capturing a portion of total trail users at this location.



Estimated
Annual Use
16,704
Daily Average Use
46



Daily Average Use by Month
(October 2023 - May 2025)



Month	Monthly Use	Daily Average
October 2023 (part)	242	30
November 2023	456	15
December 2023	380	12
January 2024	259	8
February 2024	468	16
March 2024	587	19
April 2024	691	23
May 2024	1,967	63
June 2024	4,922	164
July 2024	4,693	151
August 2024	2,134	69
September 2024	2,078	69
October 2024	1,136	37
November 2024	534	18
December 2024	182	6
January 2025	122	4
February 2025	118	4
March 2025	545	18
April 2025	726	24
May 2025 (part)	501	42
Recorded	22,741	40

Fairport

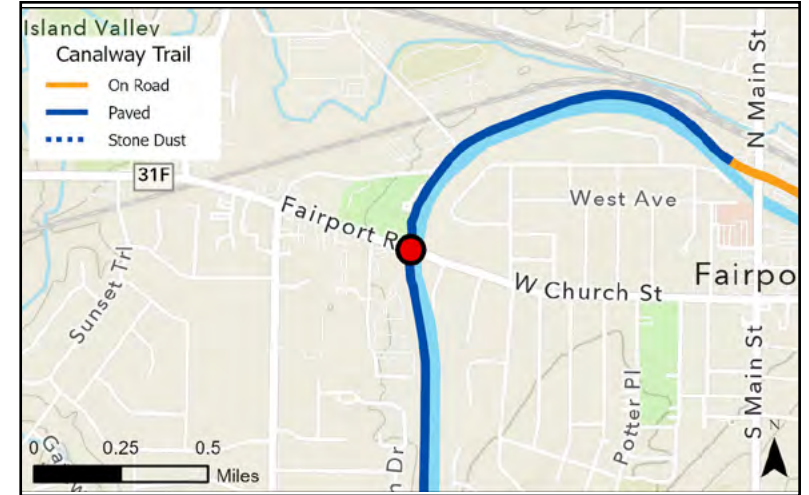
Monroe County

Installed May 13, 2025 - November 10, 2025

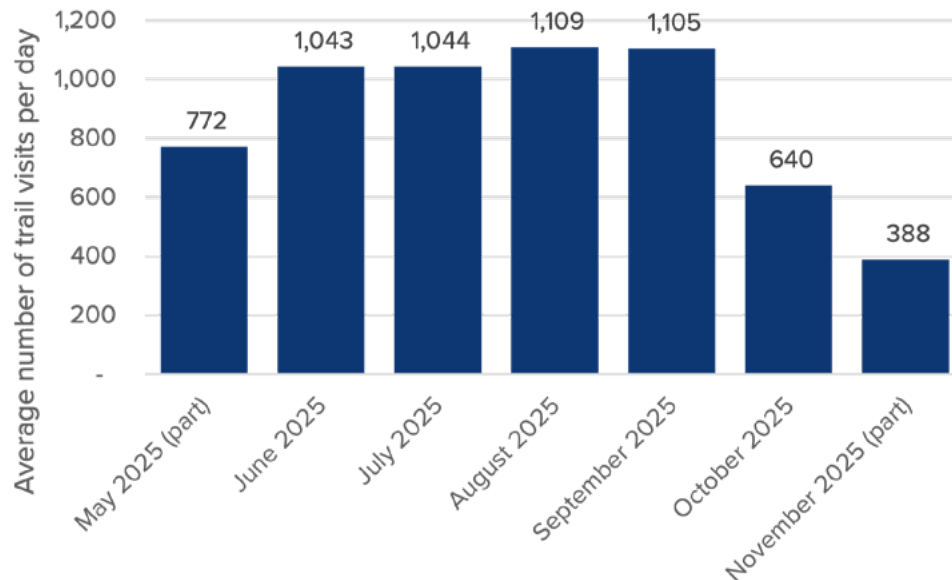
The counter was installed in Perinton Park, a community park at the western edge of the Village of Fairport. The trail follows the northern bank of the canal and is paved in this location. To the west of the park are suburban residential homes and to the east of the park are village businesses. This location is within the roughly 100-mile stretch of uninterrupted trail between Lockport and Newark.



Estimated
Annual Use
246,230
Daily Average Use
674



**Daily Average Use by Month
(October 2023 - November 2025)**



Month	Monthly Use	Daily Average
May 2025 (part)	13,893	772
June 2025	31,284	1,043
July 2025	32,355	1,044
August 2025	34,385	1,109
September 2025	33,150	1,105
October 2025	19,851	640
November 2025 (part)	3,878	388
Recorded	168,796	933

Port Byron

Cayuga County

Installed May 15, 2025 - December 31, 2025

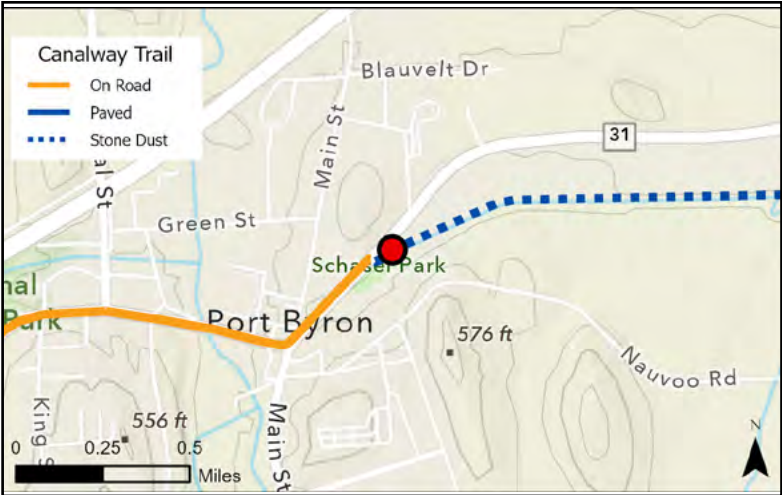
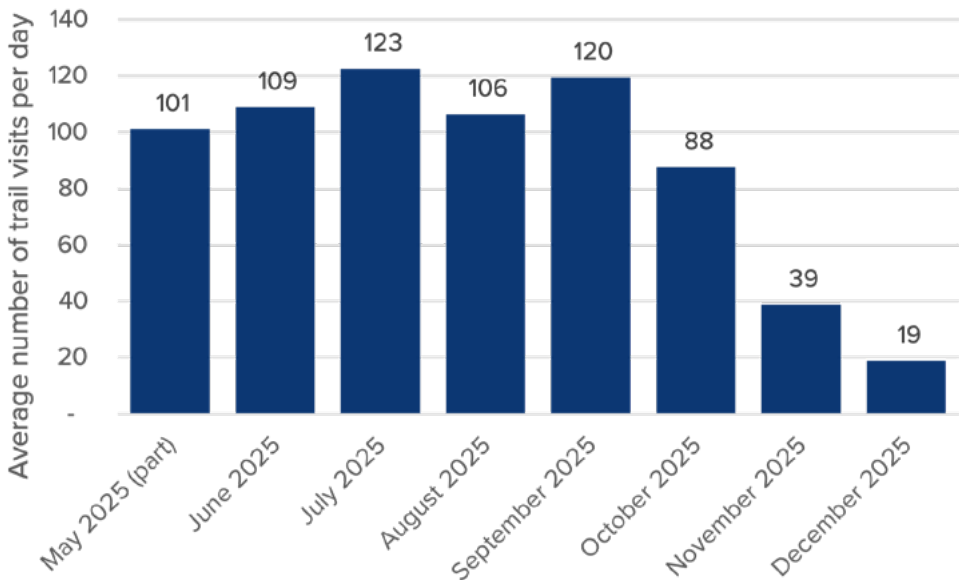
The counter was installed at Schasel Park in Port Byron as part of the 2025 Empire State Trail Town program, at the point where the trail transitions from an on-road section on NYS Route 31 to a stonedust surface. The surrounding area is rural; the closest urban center is Syracuse - around 30 miles away.



Estimated
Annual Use
26,822

Daily Average Use
73

Daily Average Use by Month
(May 2025 - December 2025)



Month	Monthly Use	Daily Average
May 2025 (part)	1,719	101
June 2025	3,265	109
July 2025	3,800	123
August 2025	3,298	106
September 2025	3,585	120
October 2025	2,713	88
November 2025	1,161	39
December 2025	580	19
Recorded	20,121	87

Chittenango

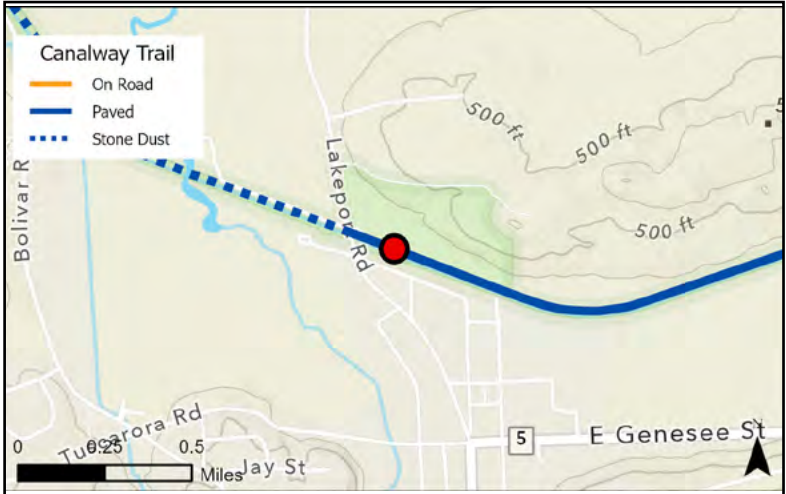
Madison County

Installed June 24, 2025 - December 31, 2025;
data from October 1, 2025 through November 30,
2025 was excluded due to inconsistencies

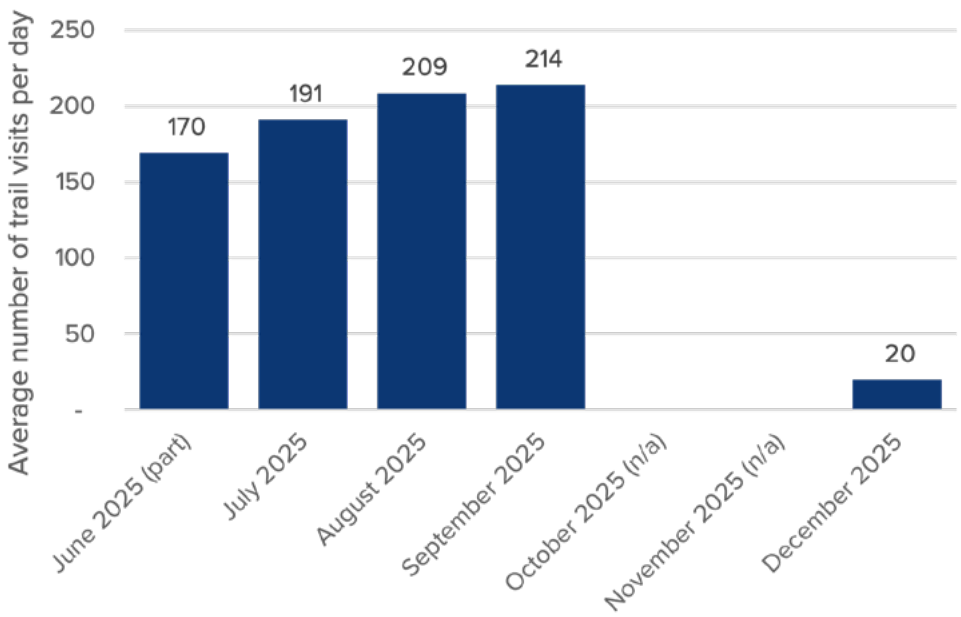
The counter was installed just east of a parking area off of Lakeport Road north of the village of Chittenango. The trail in this segment, part of the 36-mile Old Erie Canal State Historic Site between Syracuse and Rome, is paved between Lakeport Road and the next crossing east, Canaseraga Road. On either side of these roads, the trail is stone dust. On the opposite bank of the canal, west of Lakeport Road, is Chittenango Landing Canal Boat Museum, a regional destination for canal history.



Estimated
Annual Use
46,601
Daily Average Use
128



Daily Average Use by Month
(June 2025 - December 2025)



Month	Monthly Use	Daily Average
June 2025 (part)	1,187	170
July 2025	5,922	191
August 2025	6,466	209
September 2025	6,426	214
October 2025 (n/a)		
November 2025 (n/a)		
December 2025	613	20
Recorded	20,614	159

Rome

Oneida County

Installed July 11, 2023 - December 31, 2025*

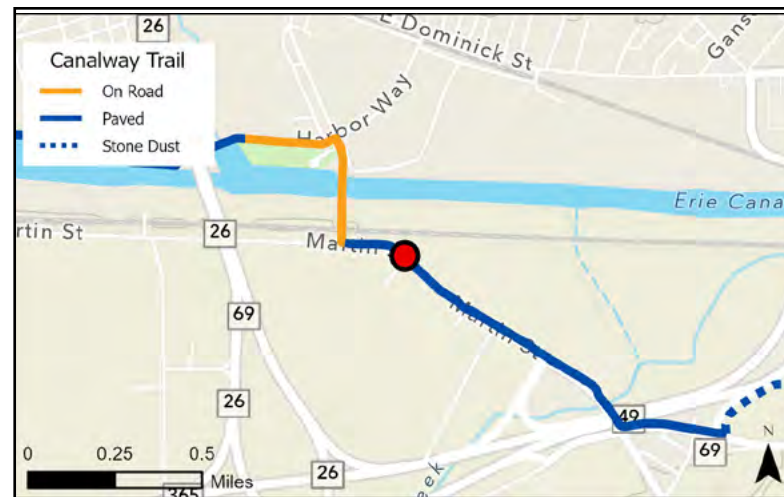
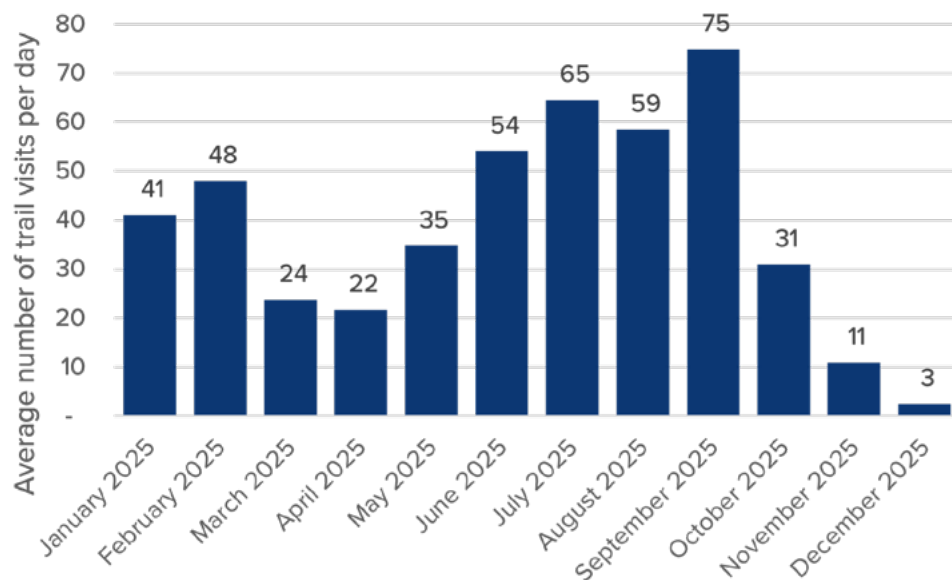
The city of Rome purchased and installed a counter along Martin Street on the east side of the city in 2023, as part of Rome's participation in the Empire State Trail Town program. The counter has remained installed in that location since that time. The trail in this section is paved and connects to a mostly continuous, off-road, stone dust stretch between Rome's south side and the City of Utica.



Estimated
Annual Use**
15,274

Daily Average Use
42

Daily Average Use by Month
(January 2025 - December 2025)



Month	Monthly Use	Daily Average
January 2025	1,271	41
February 2025	1,343	48
March 2025	736	24
April 2025	650	22
May 2025	1,078	35
June 2025	1,624	54
July 2025	2,002	65
August 2025	1,814	59
September 2025	2,248	75
October 2025	960	31
November 2025	330	11
December 2025	78	3
2025 Total	14,134	39

*For data from 2023 and 2024, see Who's on the Trail 2024 report.

**Estimated annual use figure is based on data from total time counter was installed.

Ilion

Herkimer County

Installed October 23, 2023 - May 14, 2025

The counter was installed just east of Ilion Marina, located off Central Avenue/NYS Route 51 in the Village of Ilion. The paved trail in this location was constructed in 2020 as part of the Empire State Trail project, and is approximately one mile from the western end of a 70-mile continuous stretch of off-road trail with only a few minor on-road segments that runs from Frankfort east to Schenectady.

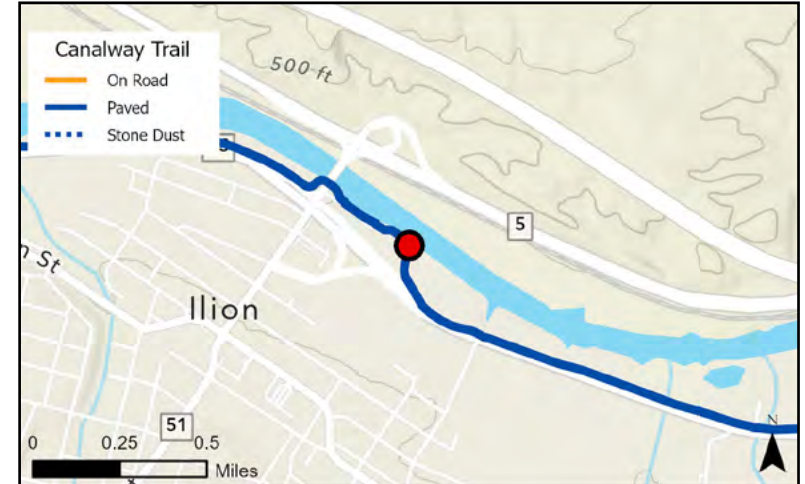


Estimated
Annual Use

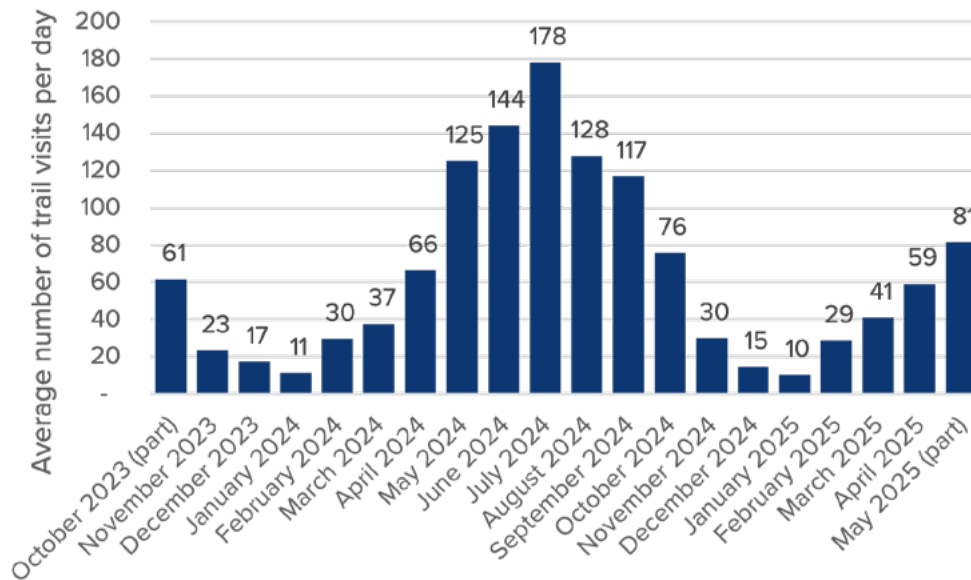
26,534

Daily Average Use

73



Daily Average Use by Month
(October 2023 - May 2025)



Month	Monthly Use	Daily Average
October 2023 (part)	553	61
November 2023	696	23
December 2023	530	17
January 2024	342	11
February 2024	858	30
March 2024	1,160	37
April 2024	1,990	66
May 2024	3,880	125
June 2024	4,323	144
July 2024	5,519	178
August 2024	3,956	128
September 2024	3,501	117
October 2024	2,350	76
November 2024	896	30
December 2024	452	15
January 2025	319	10
February 2025	800	29
March 2025	1,271	41
April 2025	1,774	59
May 2025 (part)	1,137	81
Recorded	22,741	40

Little Falls

Herkimer County

Installed May 21, 2024 - December 31, 2025; data excluded June 28, 2024 to August 15, 2024

The counter was installed on the Erie Canalway Trail/ Empire State Trail just east of the Miracle Mile-and-a-Half Trailhead on the south side of the city of Little Falls. The trail in this location is paved, and was upgraded with a widened surface in 2021-2022. The trail in this location is part of a 70-mile continuous stretch of off-road trail with only a few minor on-road segments that runs from Frankfort east to Schenectady. A counter had previously been installed in Little Falls 0.6 miles east of this location, at the access point from Lock 17.

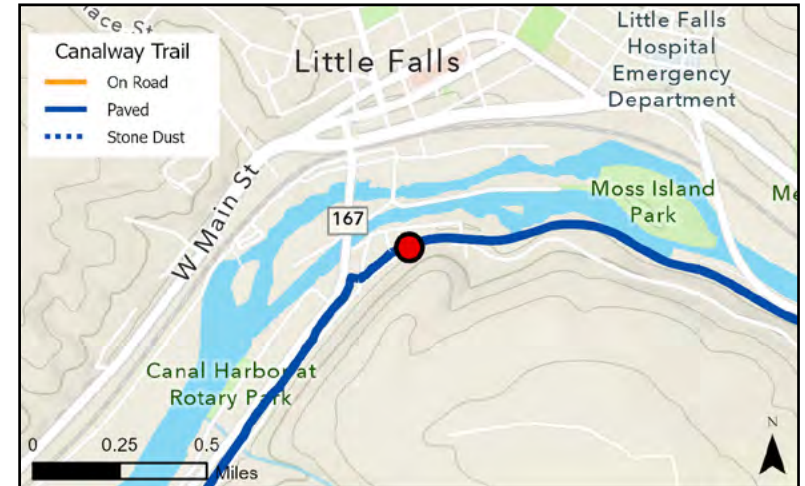


**Estimated
Annual Use**

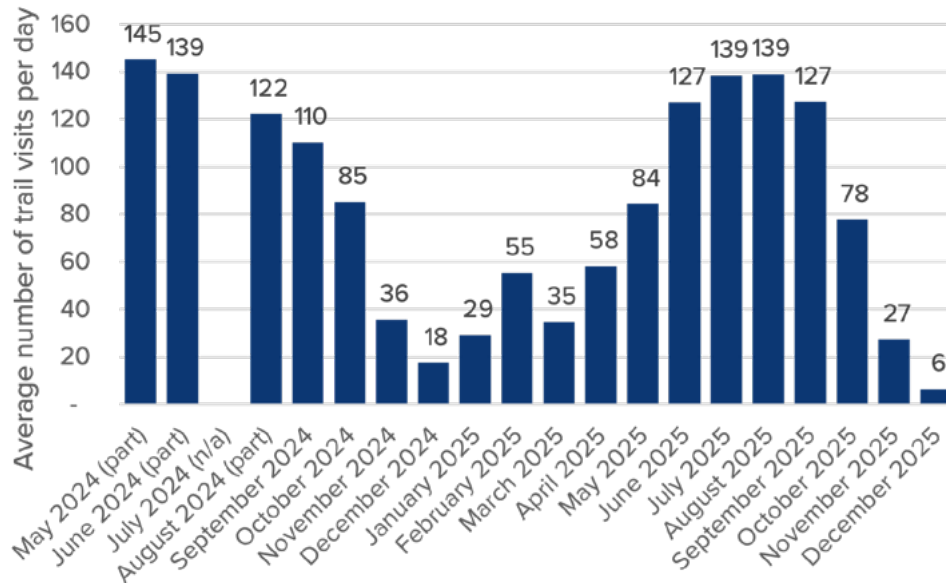
27,874

Daily Average Use

76



**Daily Average Use by Month
(May 2024 - December 2025)**



Month	Monthly Use	Daily Average
May 2024 (part)	1,597	145
June 2024 (part)	3,760	139
July 2024 (n/a)		
August 2024 (part)	1,956	122
September 2024	3,308	110
October 2024	2,644	85
November 2024	1,073	36
December 2024	544	18
January 2025	905	29
February 2025	1,550	55
March 2025	1,075	35
April 2025	1,744	58
May 2025	2,615	84
June 2025	3,813	127
July 2025	4,294	139
August 2025	4,312	139
September 2025	3,822	127
October 2025	2,414	78
November 2025	818	27
December 2025	200	6
Recorded	42,444	78

Canajoharie

Montgomery County

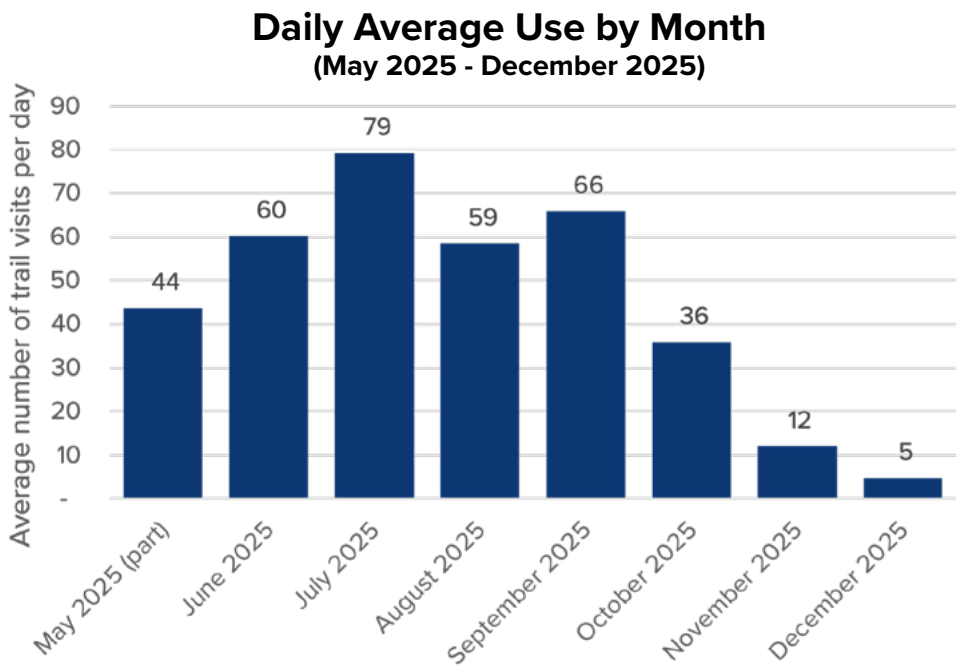
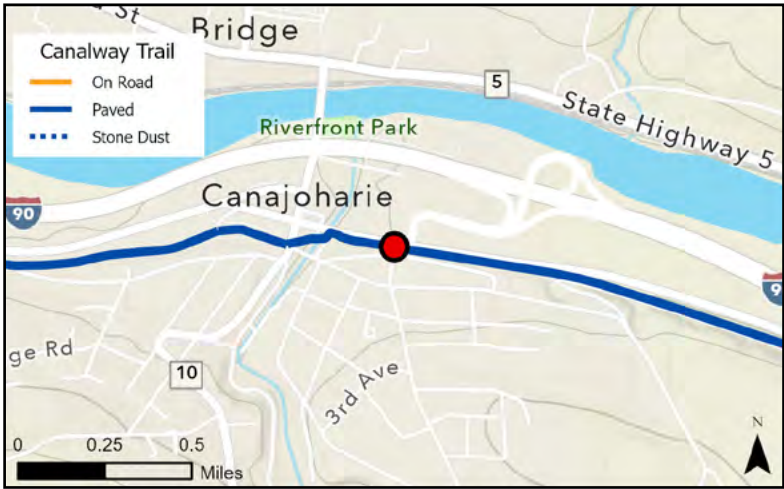
Installed May 15, 2025 - December 31, 2025

The counter was installed on the east side of the village of Canajoharie as part of the 2025 Empire State Trail Town program, on the trail running parallel to East Main Street/NYS Route 5S, east of Mitchell Street. The trail is continuous in this location between Fort Plain and Schenectady, with only minor on-road segments as part of a larger 70-mile stretch from Frankfort to Schenectady.



Estimated
Annual Use
13,821

Daily Average Use
38



Month	Monthly Use	Daily Average
May 2025 (part)	743	44
June 2025	1,808	60
July 2025	2,457	79
August 2025	1,814	59
September 2025	1,977	66
October 2025	1,114	36
November 2025	363	12
December 2025	149	5
Recorded	10,425	45

Schenectady

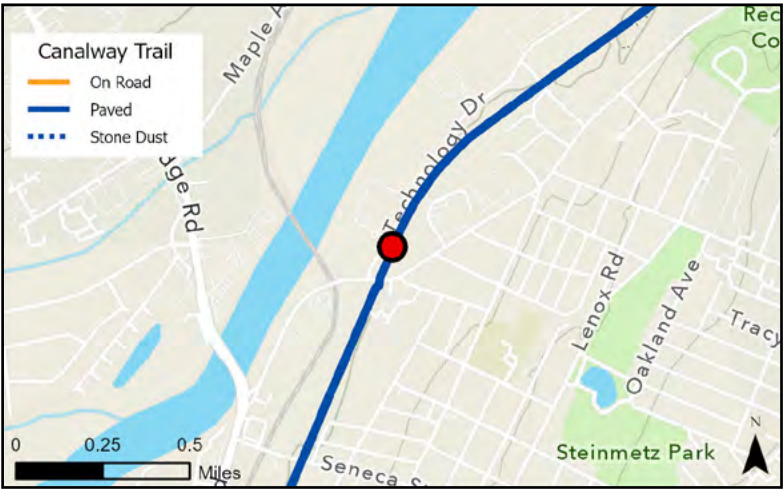
Schenectady County

Installed August 20, 2024 - December 31, 2025

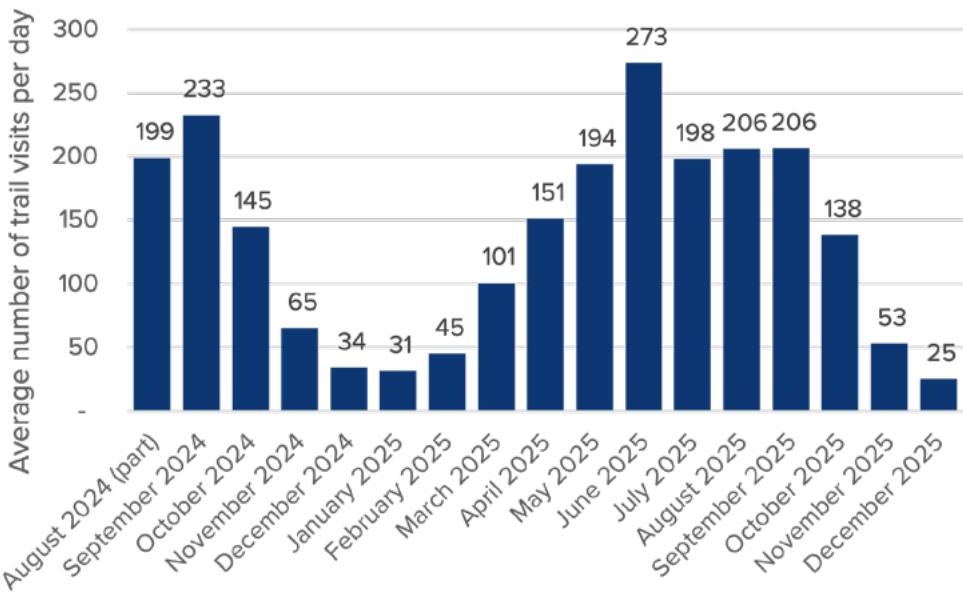
The counter was installed just east of the crossing of Maxon Road in the city of Schenectady. The trail in this location is east of the spot where the ALCO Heritage Trail intersects the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail (the local name for the Erie Canalway/Empire State Trail). The trail in this location is paved and runs east from Schenectady continuously off-road to the town of Colonie.



Estimated
Annual Use
48,438
Daily Average Use
133



Daily Average Use by Month
(August 2024 - December 2025)



Month	Monthly Use	Daily Average
August 2024 (part)	2,387	199
September 2024	6,980	233
October 2024	4,490	145
November 2024	1,952	65
December 2024	1,042	34
January 2025	974	31
February 2025	1,257	45
March 2025	3,117	101
April 2025	4,537	151
May 2025	6,011	194
June 2025	8,204	273
July 2025	6,147	198
August 2025	6,385	206
September 2025	6,191	206
October 2025	4,291	138
November 2025	1,586	53
December 2025	775	25
Recorded	66,326	133

Albany

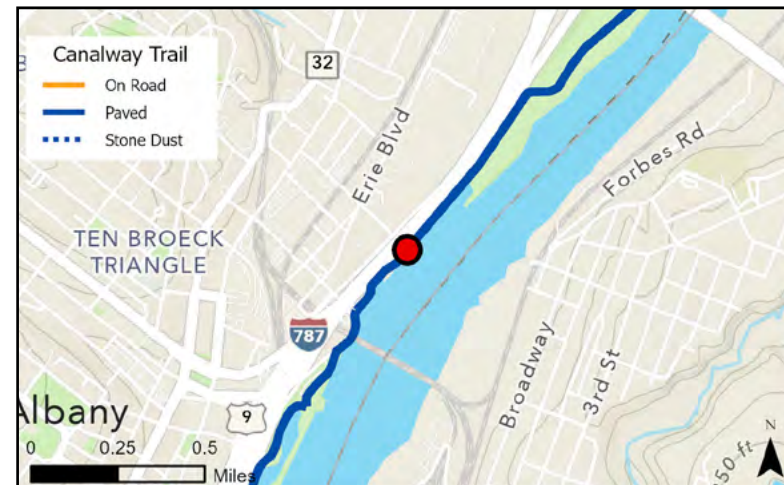
Albany County

Installed August 9, 2023 to April 28, 2025

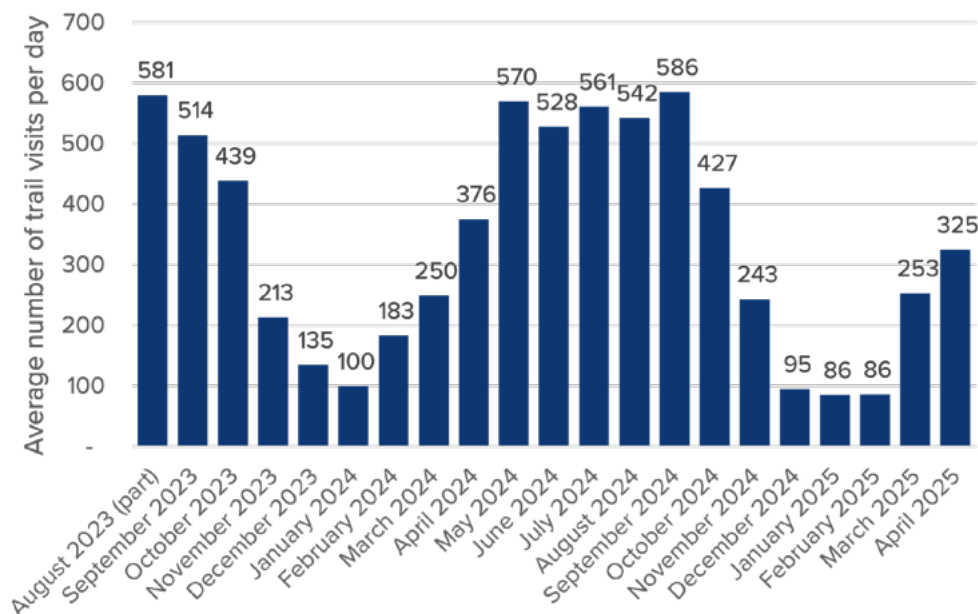
The counter was installed just east of the crossing of Maxon Road in the city of Schenectady. The trail in this location is east of the spot where the ALCO Heritage Trail intersects the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail (the local name for the Erie Canalway/Empire State Trail). The trail in this location is paved and runs east from Schenectady continuously off-road to the town of Colonie.



Estimated
Annual Use
131,237
Daily Average Use
554



Daily Average Use by Month
(August 2023 - December 2025)



Month	Monthly Use	Daily Average
August 2023 (part)	13,352	581
September 2023	15,417	514
October 2023	13,610	439
November 2023	6,392	213
December 2023	4,177	135
January 2024	3,104	100
February 2024	5,300	183
March 2024	7,737	250
April 2024	11,273	376
May 2024	17,673	570
June 2024	15,853	528
July 2024	17,404	561
August 2024	16,816	542
September 2024	17,570	586
October 2024	13,238	427
November 2024	7,291	243
December 2024	2,938	95
January 2025	2,652	86
February 2025	2,420	86
March 2025	7,851	253
April 2025	8,765	325
Recorded	210,833	336

Waterford

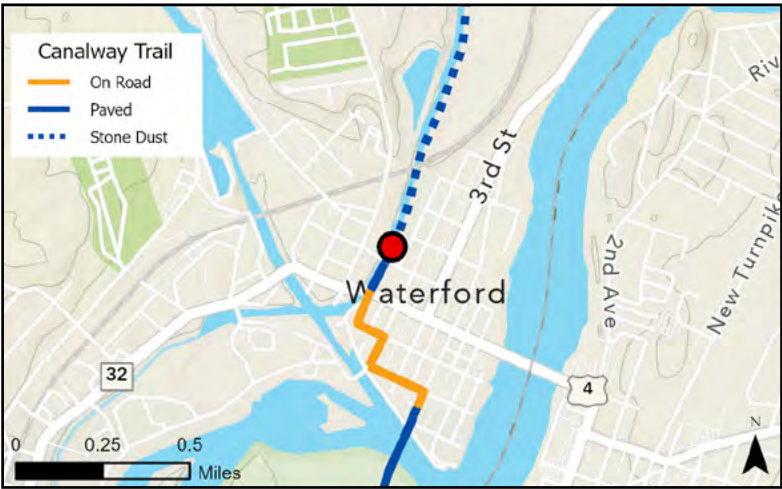
Saratoga County

Installed May 13, 2025 - November 19, 2025

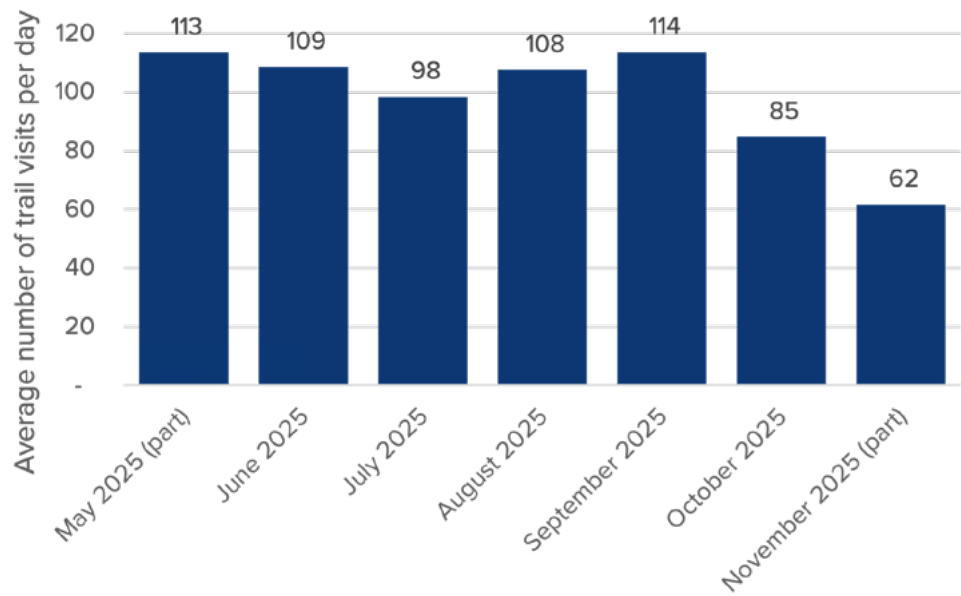
The counter was installed just east of the crossing of Maxon Road in the city of Schenectady. The trail in this location is east of the spot where the ALCO Heritage Trail intersects the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail (the local name for the Erie Canalway/Empire State Trail). The trail in this location is paved and runs east from Schenectady continuously off-road to the town of Colonie.



Estimated
Annual Use
26,897
Daily Average Use
74



Daily Average Use by Month
(May 2025 - November 2025)



Month	Monthly Use	Daily Average
May 2025 (part)	2,155	113
June 2025	3,258	109
July 2025	3,048	98
August 2025	3,335	108
September 2025	3,406	114
October 2025	2,627	85
November 2025 (part)	1,170	62
Recorded	18,999	99

Schuylerville

Saratoga County

Installed November 2, 2023 - May 13, 2025

The counter was installed just east of the crossing of Maxon Road in the city of Schenectady. The trail in this location is east of the spot where the ALCO Heritage Trail intersects the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail (the local name for the Erie Canalway/Empire State Trail). The trail in this location is paved and runs east from Schenectady continuously off-road to the town of Colonie.

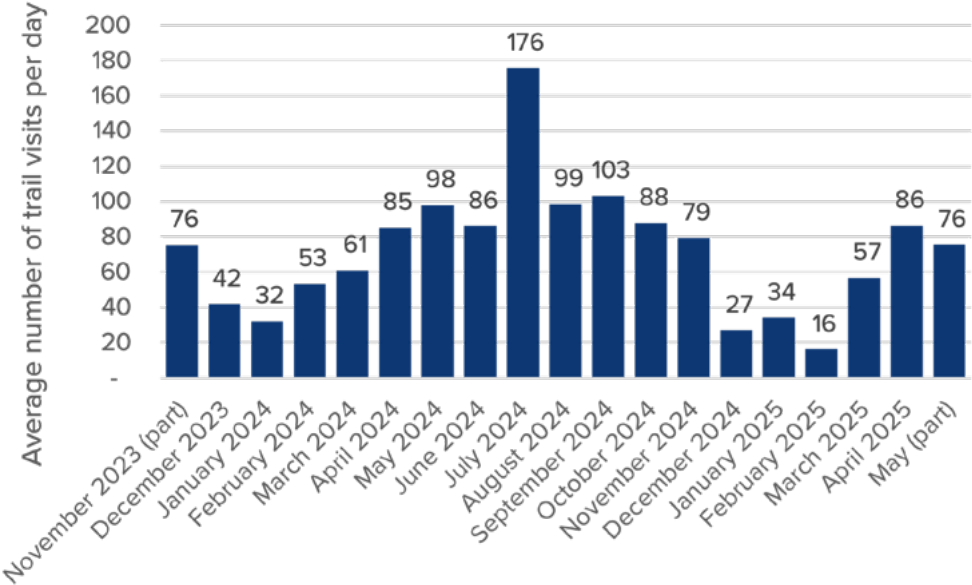


Estimated
Annual Use
30,330

Daily Average Use
83



Daily Average Use by Month
(November 2023 - May 2025)

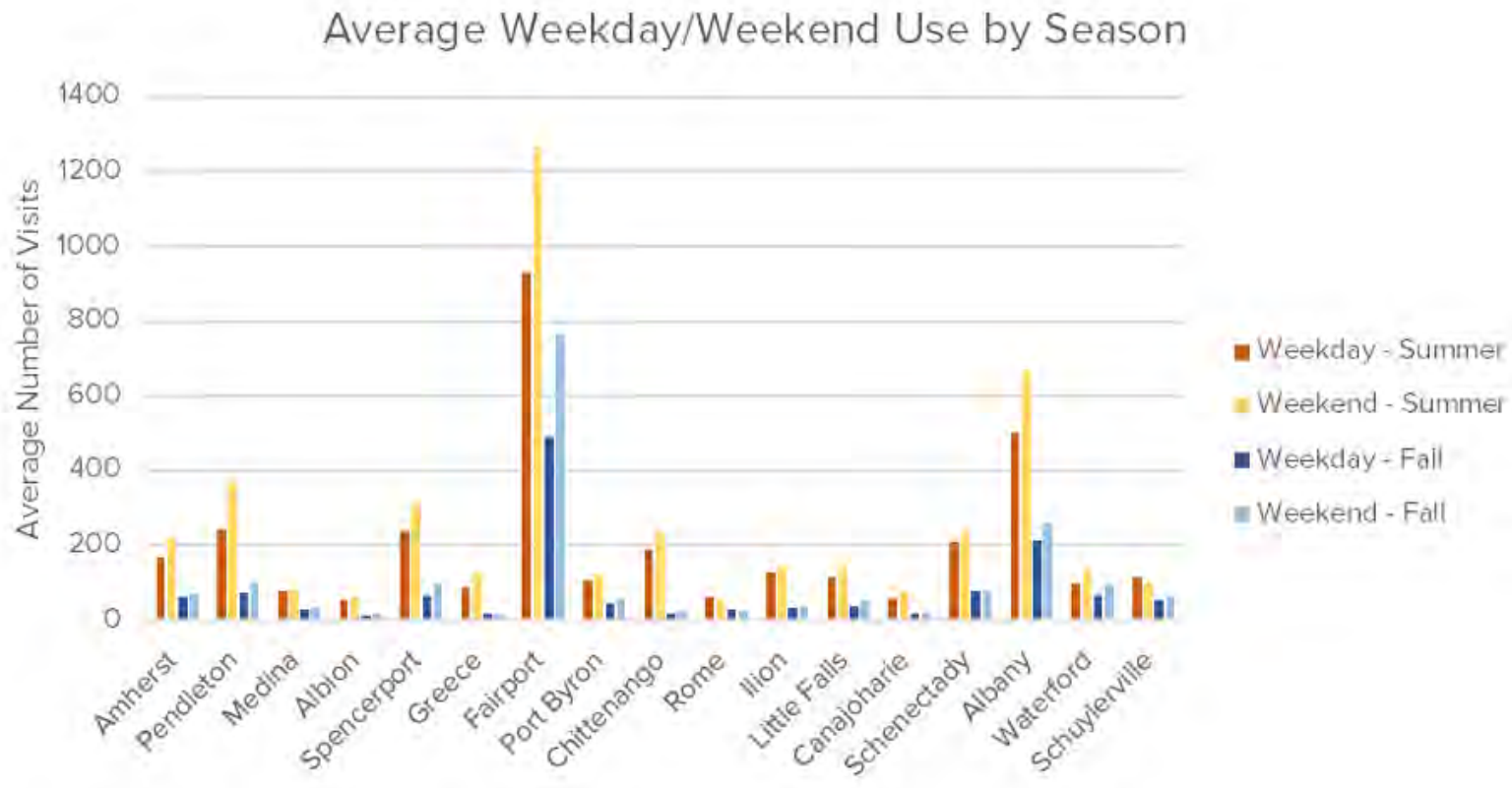


Month	Monthly Use	Daily Average
November 2023 (part)	2,190	76
December 2023	1,298	42
January 2024	999	32
February 2024	1,543	53
March 2024	1,896	61
April 2024	2,559	85
May 2024	3,033	98
June 2024	2,586	86
July 2024	5,451	176
August 2024	3,056	99
September 2024	3,100	103
October 2024	2,720	88
November 2024	2,378	79
December 2024	840	27
January 2025	1,058	34
February 2025	455	16
March 2025	1,762	57
April 2025	2,591	86
May 2025	983	76
Recorded	40,498	72

Trend Analysis

Seasonal Use

All 17 counters recorded similar seasonal trail use patterns, with use during the summer months being much higher than use during the spring, fall, and winter. This pattern is to be expected with the cold and snowy winters in New York State. In most count locations, the average daily use in the summer was more than twice that during other seasons. In the majority of locations, average daily weekend use in summer was higher than weekday use, with the only exceptions being Rome and Schuylerville, which each saw more use on weekdays than weekends in the summer. This pattern continued through the rest of the year as well, as only Greece and Rome saw weekday use exceed weekend use in the non-summer months.



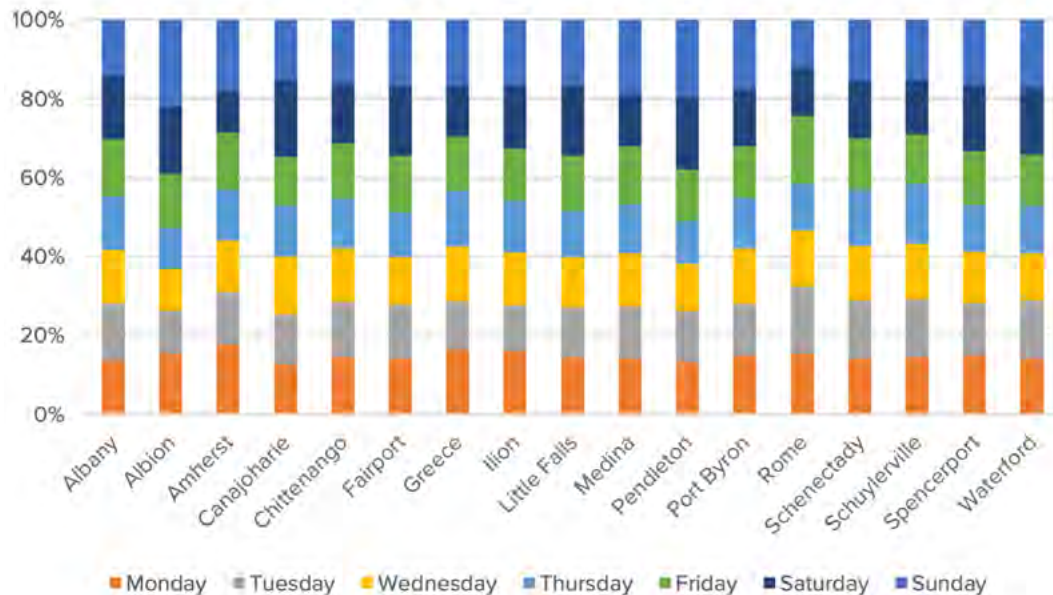
Daily Use

Across all counter locations, 67% of total visits occurred on weekdays (Monday through Friday), while 33% of total visits occurred on weekends (Saturday and Sunday). Albion (39%) and Pendleton (38%) received the highest percentage of weekend visits, while Rome (76%) received the highest percentage of weekday visits.

Compared to 2024 (see Who's on the Trail 2024 for specific detail), count sites in 2025 saw higher weekend use, as the overall average increased from 29% in 2024 to 33% in 2025. This is likely primarily a result of different use patterns at different count sites. Indeed, no clear trends can be seen when looking at 2024 data vs. 2025 data by site, as some sites saw a relative increase in weekend use while saw lower weekend use.

The graph below shows the full breakdown of visits by day of the week for all counter locations. One factor that may influence the daily usage patterns is the trail's accessibility and proximity to workplaces and residences. A more easily accessible trail segment may allow for increased usage during the weekday, whereas a less accessible trail segment may see primarily weekend usage when visitors may be willing to travel further for recreation. Events that draw people to the trail, such as a weekly concert series or run club, may also affect the daily use patterns. Other factors unique to each count location may also influence these patterns.

Percent of Visits by Day of the Week



Location	Mon-Fri	Sat-Sun
Albany	70%	30%
Albion	61%	39%
Amherst	71%	29%
Canajoharie	65%	35%
Chittenango	69%	31%
Fairport	66%	34%
Greece	70%	30%
Ilion	67%	33%
Little Falls	66%	34%
Medina	68%	32%
Pendleton	62%	38%
Port Byron	68%	32%
Rome	76%	24%
Schenectady	70%	30%
Schuylerville	71%	29%
Spencerport	67%	33%
Waterford	66%	34%
Average	67%	33%

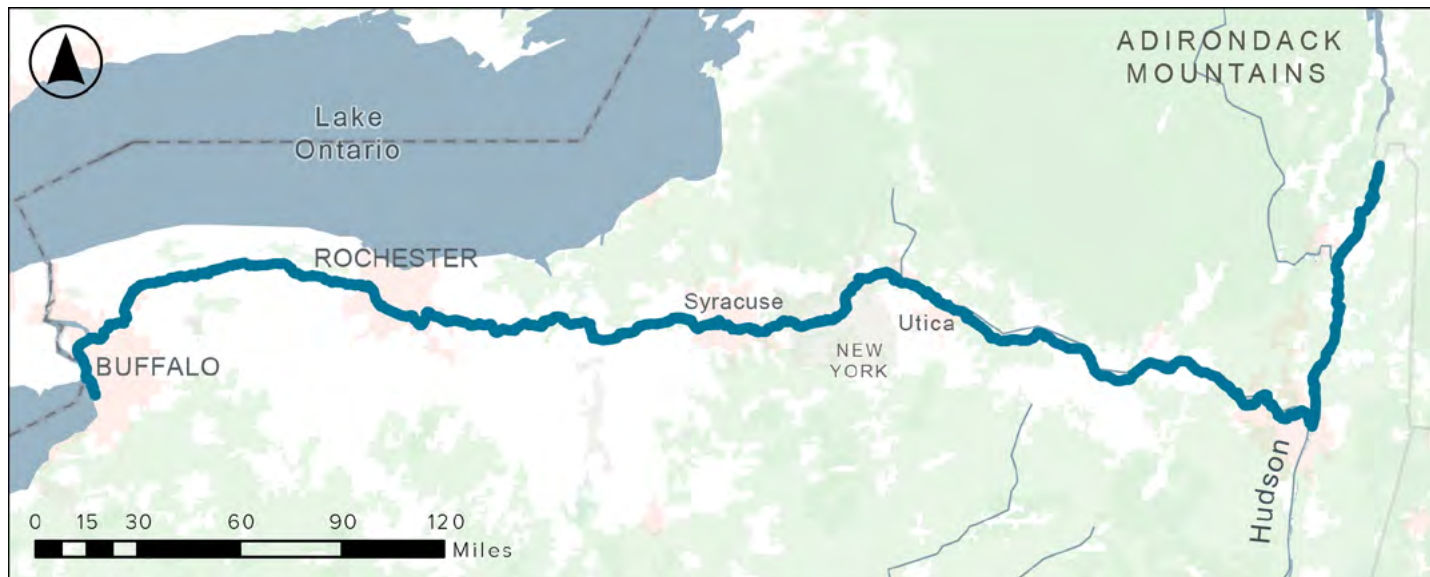
Annual Trail Use Estimate: 4.1 million

Total trail use was calculated slightly differently in 2026 than had been done in previous years' reports, as the trail use estimate that was calculated for use in the upcoming Empire State Trail Economic Impact Study was used for this report. That study examined trail use for the entire Empire State Trail, but provided data broken by trail components, including the Erie and Champlain Canalway Trails.

The study included trail data collected by PTNY at 36 total locations, including 1,844,190 visits on the Erie Canalway Trail and 232,785 visits on the Champlain Canalway Trail. The data affirms a correlation between trail use and the population density of the surrounding area, which can be used to estimate trail uses at locations where counts have not yet been performed. Using figures from these additional locations, an estimated annual Canalway Trail visitation figure of 4,109,698 can be calculated, including 3,664,100 visits along the Erie Canalway Trail and 445,598 along the Champlain Canalway Trail. This figure is a rough estimate and does not represent the use for any specific year. Rather, the figure is an estimated average use figure for annual visitation based on the last five years of data.

For more information on the methodology used to calculate this annual trail use estimate, please see the Methodology Appendix available on PTNY's website at www.ptny.org/whos-on-the-trail-canalway-trail.

These annual visitation estimates were used to inform economic impact metrics, as published in the Empire State Trail Economic Impact Study (2026). Of the 4 million visits per year to the Erie and Champlain Canalway Trails, about 420,000 of these visits are 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 and support nearly 4,000 jobs. For more information, visit <https://www.ptny.org/reports/the-economic-impact-of-the-empire-state-trail>.



ANNUAL VISITS

4.1 MILLION

ECONOMIC OUTPUT

\$767,248,100

JOBS SUPPORTED

3,970

Canalway Challenge Finisher Statistics

Since 2019, the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor has encouraged New Yorkers and visitors to explore the Canalway Trail and state Canal Waterways through the Canalway Challenge. Challenge options include 1, 15, 90, 180, and 360-mile goals, and special for the Bicentennial year, a 200-mile Challenge. To complete the 360 mile “end-to-end” challenge, the participant must walk, ride, or paddle their miles in each Erie Canal region. Since 2019, it is estimated that finishers have walked, ran, cycled, and paddled over 400,000 miles along the Canalway land and water trail system, with an economic impact of over \$6 million on canalside communities ([Canalway Challenge 2025 Report](#)).

In 2025, over 1,000 challenges were completed, with 45% of finishers submitting a “finisher survey.” This survey—which gathered information on where finishers are from, what types of destinations they visited, if they stayed overnight and where, and how much they spent while completing their challenge—augments the numerical data included in the rest of this report, providing a more comprehensive picture of who is using the trail and how.

Origins

Canalway Challenge finishers hailed from 41 U.S. states, with 19% of finishers coming from outside of New York State.

41

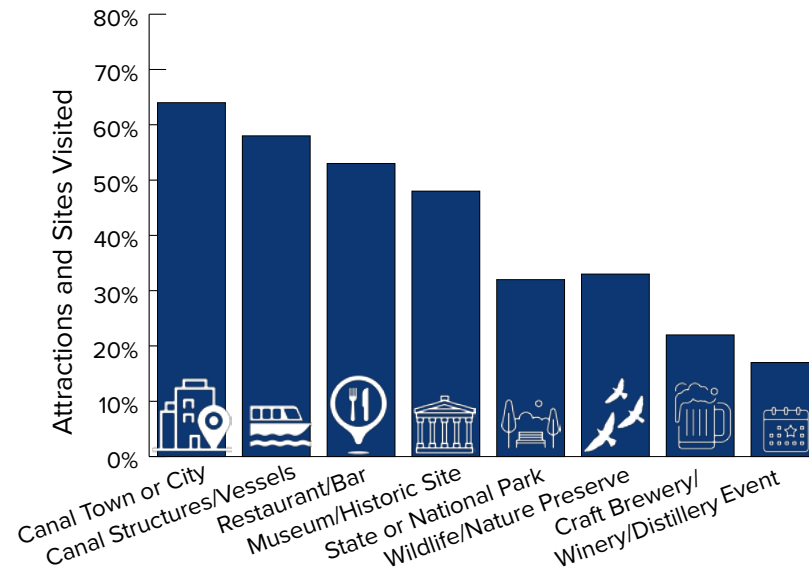
US STATES REPRESENTED
BY FINISHERS

19%

OF FINISHERS FROM
OUTSIDE NYS

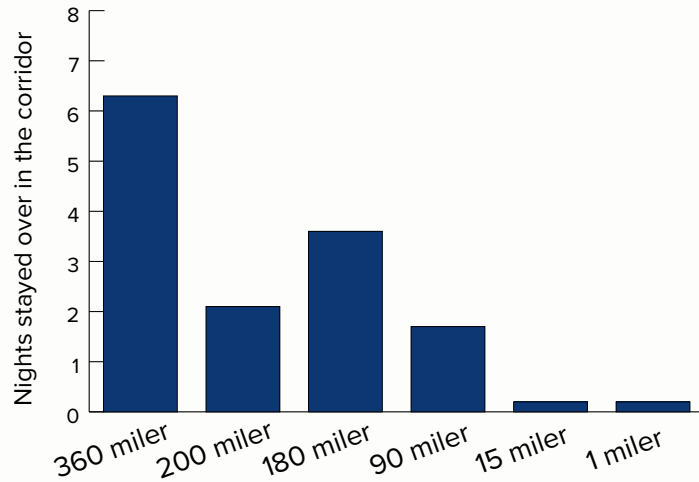
Attractions & Sites Visited

Canal Towns and Cities were cited as the most visited destinations, followed by canal structures and vessels like locks and historic canal boats. Next were restaurants and bars. Visiting local eateries is a very popular way to add a destination to an out-and-back trip on the trail, and for long-distance travelers these establishments are essential places to refuel during and after a long day out on the trail. Museums and historic sites were also popular attractions, demonstrating that trail travelers place importance on learning about the history and heritage of the waterway and region.



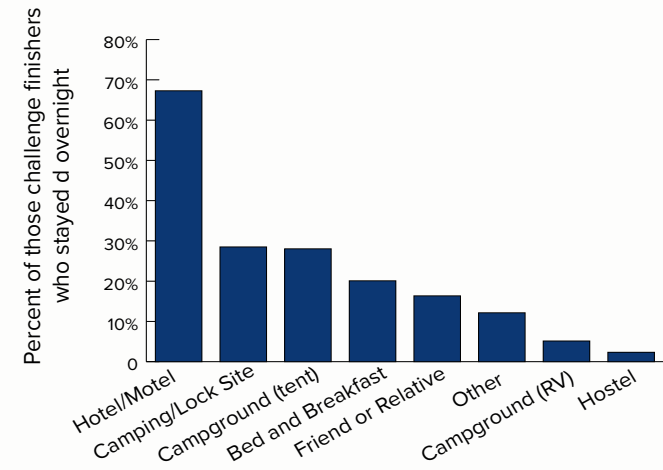
Nights Stayed Over

Those completing longer mileage challenges stayed overnight more evenings while working toward their goal. End-to-enders spent the greatest number of nights on the trail, averaging just over five overnight stays. Other challenges did not require cross-region exploration, and thus reflected fewer overnight stays. On average, Canalway Challengers stayed overnight three times while working toward their mileage goal.



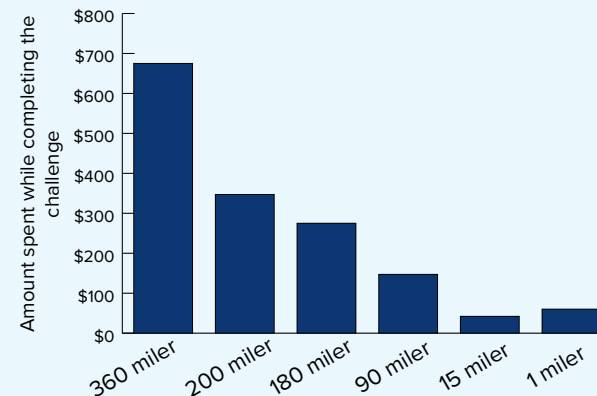
Accommodations

Of the finishers who completed the survey, 43% indicated they stayed over at least one night while completing their challenge. Of those who stayed overnight, 67% chose to stay in a hotel or motel for at least one of their nights. Camping at a lock site or campground was the next most popular way to spend the night, showcasing the diverse needs of trail travelers.



Average Spending

On average, challenge finishers spent \$314 while completing their challenge. As might be expected, challengers who took on the most miles spent the most money, with 360-mile end-to-enders spending \$675 across the corridor during the course of completing their challenge.



Conclusion

The 2025 Who's on the Trail report marks the conclusion of a full two decades of annual trail counting along the Canalway Trail — a milestone that reflects not just institutional persistence, but the genuine value of longitudinal data in understanding how people use and benefit from trail infrastructure. The picture that twenty years of counts have assembled is a compelling one: the Canalway Trail system receives an estimated 4.1 million visits per year, including approximately 3.66 million along the Erie Canalway Trail and 446,000 along the Champlain Canalway Trail. That figure is not a snapshot of a single season, but an averaged annual estimate grounded in five years of electronic counter data from 36 locations across the corridor — one of the most comprehensive trail use datasets assembled for any trail system in the country.

The depth of that dataset is now directly informing work beyond this report. The trail use data collected through the Who's on the Trail series forms a core input into PTNY's Economic Impact Study of the Empire State Trail. That study provides a rigorous, quantified accounting of the economic returns generated by the trail — returns that flow to canal communities, regional economies, and the state as a whole. The Canalway Challenge data reinforces that picture at an individual scale: in 2025, over 1,000 challenges were completed by participants traveling from 41 states, with finishers spending an average of \$314 along the corridor and end-to-end finishers spending \$675 and averaging more than five overnight stays. These figures speak to a trail that functions not just as local recreation infrastructure, but as a genuine tourism and economic driver.

The 2025 data also surfaces trends worth noting as the trail system continues to evolve. The correlation between trail use and surrounding population density, documented through this year's expanded counter network, provides a tool for estimating visitation in segments where counts have not yet been conducted — a resource that will grow more valuable as new counters are installed and the dataset deepens. The seasonal and daily use patterns documented here — peak summer use, strong weekend draw, and the consistent recreational character of trail visitation across the corridor — continue to affirm the trail's role as a warm-weather community and visitor asset, while also pointing to the potential upside of investments that could extend the trail's utility across more of the year.

Perhaps most importantly, the count data continues to document the relationship between trail investment and trail use. Counter locations installed in recently improved segments consistently show the draw that quality infrastructure creates. Gaps in the trail network — whether in surface quality, continuity, or wayfinding — remain the most direct constraint on the system's full potential. The data collected each year through this report has historically informed the case for closing those gaps, helping advocates, planners, and agencies make evidence-based decisions about where investment will have the greatest impact. That role is unlikely to diminish. With significant gaps remaining across both the Erie and Champlain corridors, and with the Economic Impact Study poised to add a new dimension to the evidence base, the findings documented here carry real weight for the investment conversations ahead.

The Canalway Trail system has demonstrated, across two decades of measurement, that it is one of New York's most-used and most-valued trails. The work of counting, analyzing, and reporting that use is itself an investment — one that continues to pay dividends in the form of better decisions, stronger advocacy, and a clearer picture of what the trail means to the people and communities it serves.