

## Appendix E - 2008 General Public Trails Workshops - Comment Summary

New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) held a series of five public workshops across the state to gather information regarding trail efforts in communities and to provide an opportunity for discussion amongst user groups and levels of government regarding the development of a statewide trails network. The public meetings were held in conjunction with Parks & Trails New York, a statewide non-profit organization whose mission it is to expand, protect and promote a network of parks, trails, and open spaces throughout the state. These workshops were held to provide the public, regional planning organizations and public officials with an opportunity to review the inventory and mapping work completed by the agency; offer information on new opportunities to create connections between communities, parks, and ecological communities and express a vision for trails in their area. In particular, goals of the meetings were to:

- Formulate a vision for a trail system in each region.
- Identify multi-use trails which have not been identified in the existing inventory.
- Identify linkages which are under discussion in each region.
- Identify obstacles and opportunities to achieving a regional trail network.

A team from the OPRHP Planning Bureau conducted the workshops along with staff from Parks and Trails New York. The meetings were held on/at:

Monday, April 14, 2008 - SUNY Geneseo  
Tuesday, April 15, 2008 - Woodlawn Beach State Park  
Monday, April 21, 2008 - Bear Mountain State Park  
Tuesday, April 22, 2008 - Saratoga Spa State Park  
Monday, April 28, 2008 - Green Lakes State Park

The comments received during the workshops, as well as some that were mailed and emailed in soon thereafter, are provided by categories below. The information gathered at these workshops provided guidance for development of the updated Statewide Trails Plan and will continue to guide future policy for development of trails and a trails network throughout New York State.

## **General Trail Issues**

### Comments, Requests, and Needs

- Geocaching on trails brings people from other areas
- Trails that lead to valuable ecological areas are a way to get people out
- State should provide a letter for groups to use with landowners explaining the larger State Trails vision in hopes of persuading more landowners to offer land use for trails
- A listing and map of inactive and abandoned rails throughout the state would be helpful to provide to communities (referred to Surface Transportation Board website as good resource: [www.stb.dot.gov/](http://www.stb.dot.gov/))
- Several requests for more information and/or clarification regarding ‘inactive rail lines,’ how to access or develop them into trails and how to proceed in dealing with multiple private landowners of the railroad corridor
- OPRHP should hold a public trails workshop north of the Thruway; preference of Black River area (Lowville)
- Provide Adopt-a-Trail options – formal or informal agreements
- Noted a “real need” for the State to motivate local planners and designers and to provide goals and a vision
- A number of comments noted about the need for local trails (within 50 miles of home) and smaller networks of trails for family use: systems of looped trails and systems of linked trails to larger networks
- Better parking access to greenway trails and better publicizing of access points (possibly on a web site)
- Need buildings for interpretive opportunities along rail trails
- Need buildings on waterfronts for public use (ex. War of 1812 commemoration in 2012 – to invite large ships to visit – need facilities)
- Need preservation of green spaces and natural habitats; need black-top alternatives
- Need literature on working with utilities (ex. power corridors) to negotiate access and easements, design guidelines, best practices, success stories, etc.
- Request that the Statewide Trails Plan should include trail use by Teenagers; need narrow dirt trails and footpaths
- Need a central repository for all trails data

### Statewide trail connections

- Need a State Standardized marking system for trails - need to designate primary and secondary trails, i.e. categorizing network of trails like the US interstate system
- Existing Statewide system of power corridors – should incorporate them into trails systems (under the Public Service Commission); example cited: snowmobiles along NIMO system – must renew contract each year and must have insurance
- Counties have Right of Ways (ROW) along tracks (inactive) and utility corridors; these should be included in inventories; trail systems could piggy back on ROWs; ex. Interstate 86 (DOT) has 8 foot shoulder – could create trail along side.
- New York State needs some major trails to connect
- Would like a system of hiking/biking trails along rivers – “River Trails”
- Comment that there is a large amount of trails data ‘on the ground’ (in the communities); interest in sharing with State/Region (ex. residents logged Westchester County walking trails)

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- Concern about how these connections will be implemented when Towns are lacking money; suggested to apply for grant opportunities from various organizations
- Noted that the Thruway is a barrier to North-South trail connections

### Multi and Single use trails

- Noted the importance of a quiet place to walk – important to maintain these single use trails; people appreciate foot paths for families with kids; less stress – not worried about bikers, horses, etc.
- Multi-use has the same goal as single-use: “staying off the roads.”
- Concern regarding trail sponsors and liability on multi-use trails

### Maintenance of Trails

- Maintenance was noted as an issue on multi-use trails
- Noted the importance of maintaining existing trails and expanding what is already there
- ADK member noted importance of money for trail upkeep and maintenance; maintenance of trails should be a focus; requested better funding for Park Rangers who are “key people on trails.”
- Useful tool for trail development and maintenance - Minnesota Department of Natural Resources published Trail Planning, Design & Development Guidelines, 2007
- Requested a heavy duty trail crew that can move around the state to clear major obstructions on trails in state parks as well as popular trails; suggested that in planning for NY trails, provision needs to be made for maintaining trails, even those accessible only on foot
- Noted that many horse groups do volunteer maintenance; put forth the idea of more partnerships; friends groups/coalitions of user groups for maintenance of trails

### Surveys

- Concerns were expressed about the Trail User Survey suggesting that it doesn't include all 11 user groups in target trail users; suggestion was made to post surveys on internet for larger group (all users) to provide feedback
- Concerns were expressed that the Trail User Survey will have skewed results because of the limited number of surveys; commenter noted that there are 15 million residents in New York therefore the survey distribution did not provide a representative sample; concerned that it was not fair and will have inaccurate survey results
- Noted that ATV users were not included in the survey; should provide one specifically for their use
- Noted that Equestrians were not included in the survey; “survey boxes are not at a rider level; hard to hold a survey/envelope while riding a horse.”
- Suggestion to survey local officials regarding local open space issues

### Grant Opportunities

- Requested State to create “Linkage Grants” as trail connection incentives
- Requested State to change percentage on 50% State matching grants. Noted that it is very hard for small rural communities to come up with matching money amounts
- Cattaraugus County built a multi-use trail by leveraging the value of the trail corridor to be developed against the required 20% match for OPRHP's RTP funding program

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- Commenter doesn't believe roller bladers should be included in uses of ISTEA funds; "not what funds were intended for"
- Requests that State change grants guidelines to incorporate different user issues; specifically include Equestrians in grant applications so they have the opportunity to be involved; too many trails are paved over therefore not equine friendly

### Liability

- Request for State to better publicize the General Obligations Law (GOL) (under the State's Recreational Use Statute) so people better understand it; landowners are concerned about liability for trails on their land
- Request for State to be more involved in the GOL; need more protection by the State and more education for landowners; liability affects ALL trails
- Request State to address liability issues (risk factors) for Trail Sponsors
- Noted the use of pesticides is a liability issue for farmers, therefore some only allow snowmobile access in winter

### Safety on trails

- Mention of safety concerns on trails (ex. Bike Trail Rapist). Suggested that safety concerns on trails are generally due to people's perceptions and not necessarily based on reality; noted specifically 1-2 mile trail from Woodlawn south to Hoover Beach in Niagara County
- Orchard Park safety concerns and success story – public opposition to trail derailed plans; so conducted a community survey to address the issue; results showed overall community support for the trail and project continued
- Idea that trail users could get Sheriff and State Police involved in patrolling sections of trail
- Safety issue remedy:
  - Cattaraugus County developed volunteer patrols on the trail for public safety and stewardship - McGee patrol. 13-mile Pat McGee Trail in Western New York is patrolled by the McGee Patrol - ATVs and Golf Carts with large white flags. The vehicles belong to volunteers of the McGee Trail Patrol. The program is so successful that the Pat McGee Trail Patrol now has 17 vehicles at its service.

### Partnerships

- Parks should work with local municipalities on Statewide Trails Plan
- Town of Evans received great support from local officials (good partnerships)
- Noted desire and importance of partnerships with other groups
- Pat McGee Trail received grants; helped by great partnerships from many different groups
- Adopt-a-Resource options (DEC) - Partnerships of different user groups for stewardship
- All user groups need to unite visions and work together
- Regional workshops are a great opportunity to bring all groups together which have mutual interests
- All NYS Agencies, locals and counties should work together
- Need to strengthen communication between locals and State to be able to exchange information
- Wappinger Greenway representative noted that they had made presentations to each Planning Board involved to gain support and they received very positive feedback – noted the importance of communication.
- Inquired whether DEC and OPRHP work together

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- Inquired whether Canal Corp had attended any of the workshops

### Website

- Many people expressed interest in a Trails website
- Requested a publicly accessible database to share all information on trails
- Requested education component on website regarding different uses and why non-motorized uses are preferred in some areas
- Put “Comments/Feedback” section on new website so can continue input from residents regarding possible linkages of trails and to provide input on the Statewide Trails Plan
- Requested downloadable GPS information on trails for public use

### Positive Feedback

- Attendee gave very positive feedback regarding OPRHP efforts on providing meetings and information
- Attendee grateful to DEC for Usher State Forest Trails
- Accessibility to trails for disabled people is appreciated by community
- Staff member of Hudson River Valley Greenway commented that he appreciated the opportunity to work with State Parks on the Trail system.

## Uses

### ATVs

- Lack of places to ride

### Bikes

- The need to unite bicycle on and off road groups
- NYS Bicycle Organizations – May is Bicycle Month
- Importance of National connections for ALL types of trails

### Equestrians

- Would like more Equestrian options on the Erie Canalway
- Idea of Wildlife Management Areas (DEC) for possible horse trails
- Equestrians are increasing trail use therefore should involve equestrians in planning process
- Average rail corridor width is 66 feet wide – concern about why they are paved through the middle of the pathway; doesn't allow space for equestrian use
- A need to strengthen definition of “multi-use” trail; felt that equestrians were left out
- Multi-use trails don't tend to accommodate Equestrians
- Would like improved access to trails especially for horse trailers (they need more space)

### Snowmobiles

- Snowmobiler group requested State to strengthen General Obligations Laws
- Would like snowmobile trails along canal ROWs throughout state
- WNY snowmobiling club would like guidance on how to access inactive rails

## **OPRHP Region-specific comments**

### Niagara

#### - Niagara Gorge

- Would like new trails along Gorge (Niagara Falls to Lewiston); issue of four lane commuter route; asked State Parks to move on the Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU)
- Comment on how stewardship can fit into connecting biological communities (ex. old growth forests in Niagara Gorge) with rail trails; suggested for Niagara Greenway area regarding trails and connectivity/sustainability; get funds to obtain land; take care of re-vegetation issues, drainage issues, ecological restoration; then do monitoring projects – important; can use trails in this process (to access areas)

#### - Interest in rail banking south of Buffalo (Buffalo-Pittsburgh RR)

#### - Interest in connection from Old Fort Niagara to Erie, PA

#### - Lewiston area has great opportunity for shoreline trail development

#### - Small Boat Harbor to Woodlawn Beach State Park: bicycle paths needed; noted that some residents at Bay View Beach Club are against development of a trail

#### - Requested that State keep North Buffalo Rail Line Project on radar screen; working to make a Greenway

#### - Orchard Park rail is inactive

#### - Noted that the Erie County Master Plan (2002-3) is supportive of trails

#### - Robert Moses Parkway – paved by DOT; Niagara Falls was cut off

#### - Robert Moses Parkway is a great place for connectivity

#### - Interest in consultation with OPRHP Planning Bureau regarding Amherst Nature View Town Park trails plan to discuss how it fits in to the State Plan

### Allegany

None

### Genesee

#### - Letchworth State Park

- Would like an Equestrian trail system – have staging area like Otter Creek Assembly Area
- Formalize trails (including snowmobiles) as a greenway south out of the Park
- Requested trail south out of the Park (State-owned section)

#### - Connect 3 mile missing link in Alexander area – track up for abandonment (State has interest)

#### - Genesee County: Looking for funding to establish and develop a trail (Byron/Bergen/Riga Trail)

#### - Snowmobile clubs want east/west trail; trails lacking south of Rochester

#### - West Shore Trail grooming for snowmobiles – new section in Monroe and Genesee Counties - development plans not making trails wide enough for grooming

#### - Mentioned Genesee Transportation Council – [www.gtcmpo.org](http://www.gtcmpo.org); public can attend meetings

#### - Proposed connection from the Groveland Secondary Trail to the Genesee Valley Greenway through the hamlets of Greigsville and Retsof in the Town of York; Group has applied for a Healthy Trails Grant from Parks and Trails New York

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### Finger Lakes

- Yates County: Need to connect Ontario Pathways and Keuka Outlet (Finger Lakes Railroad which has already been abandoned)
- Elmira to Corning (rail) trail – horses aren't on agenda yet, just walking; would like horses to be included (this is one of PTNY Healthy Trails projects)
- Request a trail from Wigant Road to Horseheads (extension of the Catharine Valley Trail)
- Need money for small rural areas to finish making connections (ex. bridges); please finish the Canal Trail in Wayne County
- Trail Works, Inc. submitted a Wayne County Recreationway Plan map with the addition of a "Proposed Future Trail" from the Wayne County B. Forman Park in Pultneyville to the village of Marion. They envision the connection using the Williamson Bicentennial Trail and the Williamson Town Loop Trail. The Wayne County and Town Loop trails are available in electronic form on the website: [www.trailworks.org](http://www.trailworks.org)

### Central

- North Country Trail Association would like to locate a practical and safe route to connect Delta Lake to the Black River Canal Trail and south to Rome
- Onondaga Bikeway Trail is still not connected to other trails; would like connections made
- Old Erie Canal in Fayetteville area – there's a bridge that is used to access snowmobile trails but no longer meets regulations; will try for RTP grant to build a better bridge; will work with Parks
- Region 7 Open Space Advisory Committee member noted there are canals along Oswego, Oneida and Seneca rivers and a large amount of 'free' open land; request that OPRHP look at acquiring lands; suggested that municipalities could help the State
- Issue of erosion along the Old Tow Path (Oswego River Canal) and the need for help to deal with
- Manlius Greenspace Coalition would like to involve public and promote initiative; currently working on doing inventory
- Onondaga County Snowmobile Association is trying to use existing roads to make connections between hamlets in the Adirondack Park; in this area landowners only want snowmobile use because it is over the snow and therefore no impact on land; looking for help to establish multi-use trails; noted example of Clay/Cicero area - having success with snowmobile trails used for other use types; noted National Grid may allow multiple uses on utility corridors

### Adirondacks

- Need snowmobile connectors (ex. Hamilton County/Boonville/Piseco Lake – would like large loop trail); was noted that most of this area is located within the Blue Line and were referred to Snowmobile Assoc. and DEC (UMPs); Adirondack (Rail) Trail could be incorporated into this loop
- Letter submitted acknowledged that OPRHP 'has many pressing capital needs, including the need to develop and maintain recreational trails in the state park system.' But that New York 'also needs to invest additional resources in developing and maintaining recreational trails in its largest parks, the Adirondack and Catskill parks, and other lands managed by the state DEC'; commends OPRHP's attention to front country trails but states that 'the backlog maintenance of the DEC backcountry trails in the Forest Preserve requires the immediate attention of policy makers'



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- Need for signage in Black Brook along canal trail; noted that could apply for RTP funding for recreational signage

### Taconic

- Franklin D. Roosevelt State Park

- Would like hiking trail between FDR SP and Fahnestock SP; currently trail stops at the county line along the Parkway; request State to follow up (Parks and DOT) and work on this issue
- Interest in a trail east from FDR park (approx. 2 miles long); Town owned land

- Interest in Putnam County near Town of Kent (near Putnam County Trailway); there is a separated double track main line/possibility of using one set for a trail

### Palisades

- Kingston Point Linear Park (Trolley Project from Broadway to Kingston Point): Project Committee submitted maps and information about the project and funding

- Goosepond Mountain State Park: noted a parking issue and a safety issue at the 17M road crossing; requesting signage and/or other mitigation measures as soon as possible

- Orange County has many rail beds that are up for sale; suggested State could acquire them; ex: Campbell Hall (Route 207) has a rail bed that goes through a wildlife area and county park

### Long Island

None

### Thousand Islands

- Macomb Reservation State Park – would like development of dedicated x-country skiing and mountain biking trails; noted the increasing number of people who attempt to ski in the park despite there being no real trails. People end up skiing on snowmobile trails which can be quite dangerous; would be a great way to expand the use of the park

- Black River Canal Trail organization (Lewis County) supports connectivity and would like to help in State trail connectivity efforts

- Noted that locks in Lyons Falls have erosion issues (Locks 107,108,109) and concern over whose jurisdiction (Canal Corp or OPRHP)

- Thousand Islands Snowmobile Club – trails were deeded back to landowners (Chemoe to Cape Vincent); need guidance on how to deal with numerous landowners; suggested a coalition of different user groups to work together on meeting with landowners; also suggested the Guide to Working with Landowners on PTNY website

### Saratoga – Capital District

Ballston Veterans Bike Path

- Would like connection of Bike Path south to Schenectady; with enough land for equestrian use; currently area is dealing with issues of encroachment

- Locals working on connection between Bike Path and Zim Smith Trail to connect to Ballston Spa; landowner issue preventing progress at moment

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### Champlain Canal

- Suggested connection of the proposed Washington County Grasslands Area (DEC project in Towns of Fort Edward, Argyle and Kingsbury) to the Champlain Canal; this is an Important Bird Area and must be protected from development pressures
- Would like connection from Waterford to Whitehall and Fort Edward along Champlain Canalway Trail
- Just north of Moreau Lake State Park (Hudson River) would like to connect to Champlain Canal at Fort Edward; suggest opening river in this area for more recreational use; develop trails along trolley beds to make this connection to Champlain Canal

### D&H Rail Trail – Washington County

- Would like connection north of Granville; trail south of Granville is being worked on currently
- Some interest by the Town of Granville to take over additional section of trail from OPRHP

### Gloversville area

- Would like connection from Gloversville to Hales Mills
- Would like connection from Gloversville south to Erie Canalway; noted the Fonda, Johnstown and Gloversville (FJ&G) Rail Trail makes this connection

### Grafton Lakes State Park to Cherry Plains State Park

- Would like to establish connection between two State Parks; has been a long time vision; user groups are working together regarding the Rensselaer Plateau – protecting the wildlife habitat is important; focused on protection of large land areas and trails system; meeting with landowners regarding easements

### Halfmoon/ Clifton Park

- Town of Halfmoon (Route 9): trail starts at Crescent Bridge (section going west is being worked on currently); missing link is east of Crescent Bridge – would like to connect to Waterford and Mechanicville (Towns of Halfmoon and Clifton Park are working together on trail along the canal (Mohawk River))

### Moreau Lake State Park

- Letter mentioned fallen trees in Park that need an experienced crew and heavy duty chainsaws to remove them (otherwise trails are rerouted around trees formally or informally)

### Round Lake

- Trustee of Round Lake Library submitted handout and mentioned interest in working with Parks and local officials to establish a free-standing library along railway trails in Round Lake; noted 1873 RR station as possible location

### Saratoga County

- Was provided a one-page summary of potential trail connections in Saratoga County. Plan is available at [www.BehanPlanning.com](http://www.BehanPlanning.com) (under Projects then Saratoga County Green Infrastructure Plan)

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- Would like to connect Saratoga to Corinth; suggestion to develop trails along RR bed which would be good for snowmobiles and walking trails
- Interest in trolley bed maps around Saratoga and idea of developing the trolley beds

### Saratoga Spa State Park

- Requested a bike path through the Park along the water line corridor as a possibility; need pedestrian light to cross Route 50 at Y junction with West Avenue to connect bike trail to northern section of the Park or possibly have an overpass through SPAC to accommodate trail users

### Towpath Trail

- Noted the need for a bike and pedestrian trail running from the Towpath Trail north along the I-87 Northway corridor at least as far north as Kinns Road providing access to Kinns Road Park and the Longkill Preserve
- Sees the need to continue this trail west to Rexford and connect up with the Mohawk Hudson Bike Hike Trail as it passes through Niskayuna
- Along with the Mohawk Towpath Byway (one of America's Byways), commenter would like to see the Towpath Trail become a National Historic Trail (Rte 9 in Crescent to Power Dam west of the hamlet of Vischer Ferry)

### Zim Smith Trail

- Desire to establish a rail trail from Route 67 (Mechanicville) east across to connect to Route 29 to Greenwich and west to make larger connection (possible inactive RR) and southern connection to Zim Smith Trail (possible inactive RR)
- Equestrians: would like to see Luther Forest Tech Park connect to Saratoga Battlefield (multi-use trail) (possible inactive RR); could be the southern connection to Zim Smith noted above.
- Trail ends at Coons Crossing; would like to connect to Mechanicville (along Gilford & Canadian Pacific RR) and to Champlain Canal Trail
- Would like Trail to connect north to Saratoga Spa State Park (possible inactive RR)