

TOWN OF NISKAYUNA
Complete Streets Committee

A G E N D A

December 10, 2021

2:30 P.M.

IN THE TOWN BOARD ROOM

Hybrid Attendance Available

- I. CALL TO ORDER**
- II. ROLL CALL**
- III. MINUTES**
 - 1. October 29, 2021**
- IV. OLD BUSINESS**
- V. NEW BUSINESS**
 - 1. 2022 Calendar (attached)**
- VI. DISCUSSION ITEMS**
 - 1. Planning Department Updates**
 - i. School Outreach**
 - ii. Schenectady County Projects**
 - iii. 1356 Balltown Road**
 - 2. Chairman Discussion Items (attached)**
 - i. Empire State Trail Signage**
 - ii. CDTC**
 - iii. Utility Companies Trails**
- VII. REPORTS**
- VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

NEXT MEETING

January 28, 2021

At 2:30 pm

**TOWN OF NISKAYUNA
COMPLETE STREETS COMMITTEE
Hybrid Meeting
Meeting Minutes
October 29, 2021**

Members Present: William Chapman, Chairman
Jim Levy
Tess Healey
Paulina Manzo
Karla Duggal
Catherine Kuzman
Andrew Millsbaugh
Elise Corbin, Student Committee Member

Also Present: Laura Robertson, Planner
Jean Foti, Planning Clerk

I. CALL TO ORDER

The Chairman called the meeting to order at 2:30pm.

II. ROLL CALL

Dart Strayer was absent from the meeting.

III. MINUTES

1. September 24, 2021

The 9/24/2021 minutes were approved unanimously.

IV. PUBLIC CONCERNS

V. OLD BUSINESS

a) 1356 Balltown Road

The Complete Streets Committee (CSC) discussed the proposed upcoming project and how to add pedestrian travel access to the project. They discussed adding pedestrian paths and connecting to WRGB driveway for road access to the development. Ms. Robertson stated she will reach out to WRGB for a meeting. The Committee discussed the accuracy of the trip counter and the possibility of connecting VA Village Apartments sidewalk with the proposed new

project sidewalk. Mr. Levy explained to the Committee how a traffic analysis factors in Townhomes and single homes differently. He stated that this traffic analysis seems on point.

b) Harmon Grove Apartments

The Committee discussed the proposed new project. Mr. Levy stated that now is the time to implement the comprehensive plan while the development plan is still early. The Committee looked through the plans and discussed adding multi-use paths through and around the development. They discussed that there is a path through the powerlines now and could be paved easily. The Committee suggested creating a connection to Providence Ave. This would allow an easier route to the Town Pool/Aqueduct Park. The Committee discussed other Towns that have bike paths that are under powerlines. Ms. Robertson stated it is possible to petition National Grid for usage.

c) 2147 Eastern Parkway

Ms. Robertson discussed the progress of this project and informed the Committee that the sidewalk was extended per the CSC request.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

No new business tonight.

VII. DISCUSSION

Chairman Chapman discussed with the Committee traffic calming ideas for Dean Street and other streets in Niskayuna. They discussed street diets, adding bike lanes, speed detectors and the addition of sidewalks. The Committee discussed the importance of sidewalks for safe pedestrian travel and how to advocate for it.

VIII. REPORTS

1. Planning Department Report

Ms. Robertson updated the committee on the sidewalk project on Plum Street and where the School Board is with the letter the CSC sent to them. They asked Ms. Robertson about the bike path pedestrian signs. She stated they need to take Ms. Manzo's design and have them made by highway. Chairman Chapman asked Ms. Robertson if a meeting can be set up with the DOT. Ms. Robertson stated she could try and arrange it. Chairman Chapman expressed the need to finish the pedestrian survey results and put them on the website.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business the meeting was adjourned at 4:00 pm.

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 Planning	 Zoning	 CAC	 TB Agenda	 Town Board
 EDHPEC	 Tree	 NCSC	 HOLIDAYS	 Early Voting

Town of Niskayuna

Complete Streets Committee

2022 Meeting Schedule

January	28
February	18
March	25
April	29
May	27
June	24
July	29
August	26
September	30
October	28
December	9

OPINION

EDITORIAL

Share ideas on Empire State Trail signage

A quick glance through the Schenectady Trails Comprehensive Wayfinding Plan looks like they thought of everything when it comes to sharing information with users of the Empire State Trail through Schenectady County.

But maybe they *didn't* think of everything. Maybe the plan for trail signage doesn't include something you want to see. Maybe it includes too much of something you don't want to see. Maybe there are better ways to take advantage of technology to direct riders around.

That's why it's important that if you're one of those people who use the trail or have special knowledge about downtown or technology or have experiences with other trails, you should consider giving your input.

Start first by looking over the report, which is available at <https://schenectadycounty.com/sites/default/files/2021-11/Schenectady%20Empire%20State%20Trail%20Plan.pdf>.

The report, although 22 pages long, isn't a very heavy read. It's easy to follow, with lots of photos of the trail interspersed with the ideas and recommendations.

The first half of the report is dedicated to eight priorities, which include informational kiosks directing riders to downtown Schenectady attractions, amenities and businesses; directional signs; safety signs and even "selfie spots," picturesque locations where riders would be encouraged to stop and upload photos to help promote the trail and share the best views.

The logic behind each priority is explained briefly in the report, and each priority contains a list of suggested locations and content for the signs.

This is where riders familiar with the trail can offer their ideas on the locations, what information they'd like to see included on the signs and offer tips on how they would like to receive and share information.

The report also includes a digital plan for using technology to promote and inform people about the trail.

Art Clayman, president of Cycle Schenectady and former editorial page editor at The Gazette, recently wrote a letter to the editor in strong support of the report, encouraging users to share their ideas before the Dec. 31 deadline.

Even if you don't bike or hike the trail, you still can contribute to the report.

If you're a business owner, or if you see a possible connection to attractions or a theme that's gone unaddressed, include your opinions in your comments.

If you're a computer person and you see better uses for technology to convey information, offer your thoughts. If you're deeply familiar with the neighborhoods and city traffic patterns, offer your ideas for bringing people in, as well as share your special knowledge about a particular area that the plan doesn't take into account.

This trail has the potential to be a vital community resource for not only exercise, but for tourism, business development and historic and cultural vitality.

Take a look at the report, think it over, then share your ideas at info@schenectadymetropex.org.

Gazette 11-30-2021



2k Design

.....
PROJECT:

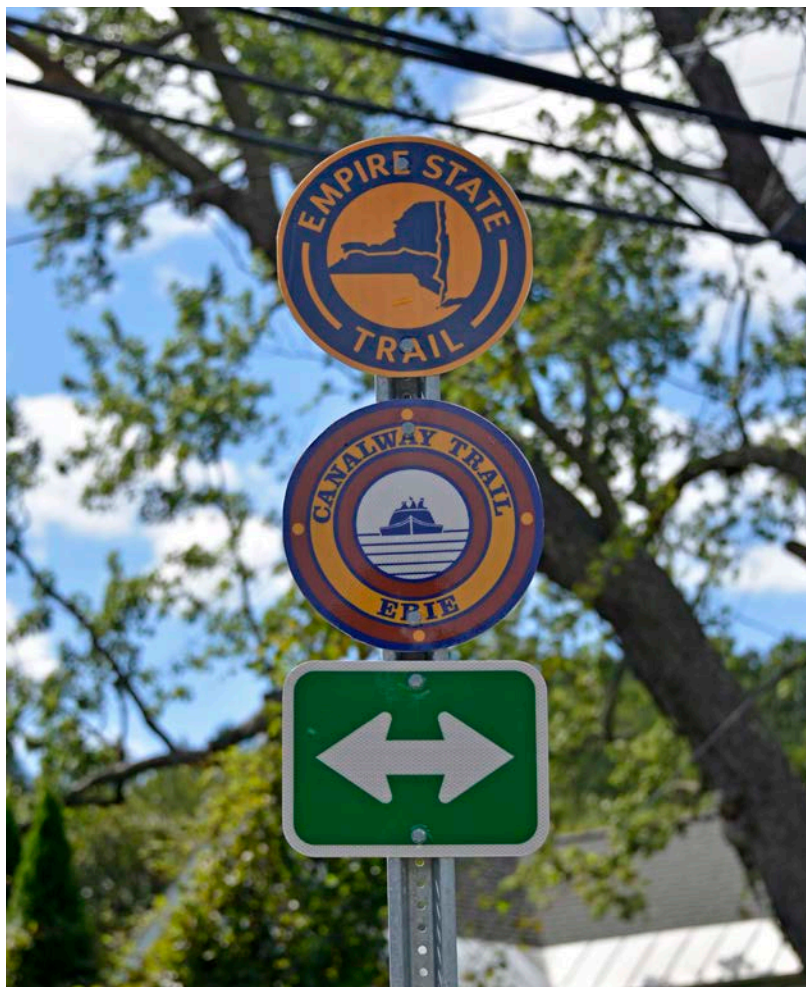
Schenectady Trails
Comprehensive
Wayfinding Plan

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PREPARED FOR:

Schenectady County
Metroplex Development Authority

.....
PRESENTED:

November 5, 2021



Schenectady Trails Comprehensive Wayfinding Plan

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INTRODUCTION

The launch of New York State's Empire State Trail creates an exciting, valuable opportunity for Schenectady County to better showcase the rich history, unique sites, and many attractions along its trail segment, while also creating a safer and more enjoyable experience for visitors.

Developing a comprehensive wayfinding plan for Schenectady County's trails, integrated with New York State's Empire State Trail branding, will bolster both county and state efforts to enhance the trail experience. Better wayfinding will also drive visitors to local businesses, benefiting the Schenectady County economy.

While wayfinding can be completed in phases, it should be rooted in a comprehensive plan that identifies specific needs for trail etiquette, directional, wayfinding and interpretive signage, as well as digital (online map) and print (map/brochure) wayfinding elements.

To create this plan, we spent many hours biking the actual trail, observing trail visitors and traffic patterns. This “real time” experience informed recommendations about location, type and content of signs for each trail segment. Drawing on extensive experience developing maps for the Erie Canalway and Empire State Trail, we were also able to make recommendations that integrate with existing state efforts, to ensure efficiency and longevity of the signage investment.

This plan is designed to guide a coordinated and cost-effective effort that ensures all components maintain consistency while seamlessly integrating with the Discover Schenectady and Empire State Trail brands.

Types of signs were prioritized by wayfinding value, should the project be completed in stages. We recognize there may be additional factors or funding that could alter this order, so the plan was designed to maximize flexibility of implementation.

PLEASE REFER TO SIGNAGE LOCATION GUIDE FOR PLACEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS.



1

PRIORITY #1:**“Welcome to Schenectady County” Signs****LOGIC:**

Visitors should know they have crossed into Schenectady County before any additional signage is added. Currently, no signage exists at the east and west entry points. A “first handshake,” these two signs are critical in helping visitors establish their location, while also welcoming them and providing helpful information.

LOCATIONS:

1. **Western entrance to county;** opposite side of the trail from current “Welcome to Montgomery County” sign
2. **Eastern entrance to county** at Colonie line

CONTENT:

- “Welcome to Schenectady County”
- Co-branding of “Discovery Schenectady” and “Empire State Trail”
- QR code, driving to digital map, to show what is nearby



2

PRIORITY #2:**Empire State Trail Etiquette Signs****LOGIC:**

Given the uptick in trail usage during the pandemic, combined with increased efforts by both the county and state to promote the trail, it is critical that users are boldly and consistently reminded of the “rules of the road.”

TIER ONE LOCATIONS:

Every major entry point to trail (parking areas and major neighborhoods), including:

1. Pattersonville Trailhead Parking Area
2. Scrafford Lane/Rail overpass
3. Kiwanis International Parking Area
4. Erie Canal Lock 8
5. Mohawk Hudson Bikeway Parking
6. Gateway Landing Park
7. Washington Avenue and State Street (westbound)
8. River Street (Alco Trail entrance)
9. Trail entrance at Jay Street
10. Trail entrance at Nott Street
11. Parking Lot East of Balltown Road
12. River Road Parking Lot
13. Blatnick Park Parking Lot (two signs)
14. Lock 7 Road Parking Lot
15. Ferry Road Trail Entrance
16. Lions Park
17. Eastern Schenectady County Line

TIER TWO LOCATIONS:

Long stretches without much signage or high-usage areas, including:

- Washington Avenue at crosswalk
- Before rail underpass and Widewaters, along Thruway, heading east
- Between Kiwanis Park and Historic Lock 23
- Between Maxon Road and GE Circle
- Between Lock 7 and Lions Park

CONTENT:

Possible rules for inclusion:

- Dial 9-1-1 for any emergency
- Trail Is Open dawn to dusk
- No motorized vehicles (except approved mobility devices)
- No smoking
- Stay on trail—Respect private property
- Maintain a safe speed
- Keep right
- Pass on left
- Give audible warning when passing
- Stop at all intersections to check for oncoming traffic before crossing
- Pets **MUST** be kept on leash and in control at all times
- Dispose of trash and animal waste in designated bins or take it with you (or Clean up after your pet)
- Ride with traffic on road trail segments





3

PRIORITY #3:**Kiosks for Downtown Schenectady****LOGIC:**

As visitors are entering downtown Schenectady, a large sign showing the trail's path through busier areas is an important safety element. Further, kiosk-style signs physically direct visitors to key attractions and amenities. Because of the concentration of activity, a large "entryway" sign can help guide visitors safely and efficiently to desired locations on and off the trail.

LOCATIONS:

1. **SUNY Schenectady**—across the street, before Washington Ave. (replace existing sign; one-sided)
2. **Corner of Union Street and Broadway**, near Centre Street Pub (double-sided). *NOTE: This is the recommended "gateway" to downtown from the trail. While Jay Street is the preferred location, because it connects directly to the city center and Jay Street pedestrian corridor, it is currently a one-way street, moving away from downtown.

NOTE: Discovery Schenectady will be placing new digital kiosks in several locations (Frog Alley; Proctors, Jay Street, SCCC, etc.)

CONTENT:

Each kiosk should include a map and listing of major categories. A QR code will allow smartphones to link to the digital wayfinding map to find a list of categories, where users can find specific businesses in each category.

In addition, a limited number of major attractions should also be included. Given the scale of the physical kiosk map, too much information diminishes effectiveness. The QR code format also makes it easy to update and for visitors to easily find what they are looking for.

Sample categories:

Parking, public restrooms, dining, shopping, lodging, Historic Stockade, Mohawk Harbor

Sample locations:

Rivers Casino, Amtrak Station, Ale Trail sites, hospital/urgent care, Central Park, etc.



4

PRIORITY #4:**Directional Signage****LOGIC:**

Main entry points to the trail, such as sanctioned parking areas, should have prominent signage directing visitors to major attractions and amenities in the vicinity, with mileage. These locations enjoy high traffic volume, are where visits often begin/end, and often have desired amenities.

Tier Two locations would be located at main junctions, guiding visitors to a smaller list of nearby attractions.

TIER ONE LOCATIONS:

1. Pattersonville Parking
2. Kiwanis International Parking
3. Lock 8
4. Lock 7
5. Lions Park

TIER TWO LOCATIONS:

1. Nott Street
2. Union Street, at Stockade Inn
3. River Road (bottom of hill, below GE Research Circle)
4. Jay Street (Little Italy)

CONTENT:

In addition to the locations listed below, a QR code on each sign will quickly connect visitors to the digital map, showing their specific location on the trail, with nearby attractions and amenities.

Potential locations to be listed, with relevant mileage:

- Buffalo (limited number of signs)
- Albany (limited number of signs)
- Amsterdam (west of Schenectady)
- Lock 8 (Schenectady and west)
- The Stockade (closer to Schenectady)
- Mohawk Harbor/Rivers Casino (All)
- Downtown Schenectady (All)
- Lock 7 (Schenectady and east)
- Blatnick Park (Schenectady and east)
- Lions Park (Schenectady and east)
- Hospital/urgent care locations added to signs with closest proximity:
 - Ellis Hospital
 - Mohawk Harbor—Ellis Urgent Care
 - Community Care Physicians Urgent Care—River Road Health Park
 - Surya Immediate Medical Care (Troy-Schenectady Road, near Lions Park)



5

PRIORITY #5:**Interpretive Signs****LOGIC:**

While etiquette and directional signage provide functional wayfinding, interpretive signage is equally important in establishing a sense of place for trail visitors. These signs should be positioned on the trail at significant locations, or more general topic signs can be used to break up long stretches of trail.

Tier Two locations include sites that are off the trail and also target signs that are worn or require updated branding/content.

National Register locations on or shortly off the trail should be a priority: www.nationalregisterofhistoricplaces.com/NY/Schenectady/state.html

TIER ONE LOCATIONS:

1. Widewaters, Rotterdam Junction (Leggerio Lane)
2. Old aqueduct at Kiwanis Park (feeds Mohawk from Plotter Kill); there is currently a historic marker
3. Lock 8—Canal history, enlarged Barge Canal
4. Enlarged double Lock 23, Old Erie Canal (National Register of Historic Places)
5. General Electric main plant (old HQ) (National Register of Historic Places) along I-890, where headquarters is visible
6. SUNY Schenectady, the former Hotel Van Curler, on path near kiosk, across the street from college main building

7. Stockade District (National Register of Historic Places. Described by the National Park Service as “the highest concentration of historic period homes in the country”)
 - One at west entry (near kiosk and Van Curler sign)
 - One at east entry (Union Street and Erie Boulevard right side of street in front of granite kiosk/bushes)
8. Nott Memorial (National Register of Historic Places)—position on trail, near soccer fields, facing Union College
9. Rexford Aqueduct Ruins (along trail, on Route 146 overpass)
10. GE Global Research (at top of hill, near main entrance on River Road)
11. Knolls Atomic Power Labs (at stop sign, near main entrance)
12. Lock 7
13. Niskayuna Rail Station, Lions Park (National Register of Historic Places); near actual station building

TIER TWO LOCATIONS:

1. Historic Lock 25 (Rotterdam)
2. Proctors Theater (National Register of Historic Places)
3. Schenectady City Hall and Post Office, Jay Street (National Register of Historic Places)

CONTENT:

Image-driven design, including historical information and any connection to current use.





6

PRIORITY #6:

Additional Safety Signage

LOGIC:

Every trail segment has unique topography, intersections and historic locations that should include specific safety signage to warn and protect riders.

LOCATIONS:

Steep Grade Signs

(Use steep grade sign near rail pass at Widewaters as design template)

- Before and after hill into Mohawk River State Park
- Before and after hill near Niskayuna soccer fields and GE Research Center, near Mohawk River State Park (also include sharp turn arrow)
- Before and after hill at GE Research Center entrance
- Before and after hill behind Blatnick Park, River Road

Stop Signs

- Every intersection with a roadway

Light-up Crossing signs

(mirror the flashing sign on Aqueduct Road, near Rexford Bridge roundabout as design template)

- Maxon Road intersection, due to speed and size of vehicles (tractor trailer route)
- Seneca Street intersection, because nearby hill obstructs driver view of trail

7

PRIORITY #7:

Jay Street/Little Italy Trail Entrance

OBSERVATIONS:

Current concrete barricade on Jay Street is a major eyesore, conveying an unsafe environment. It is not bicycle-friendly and upon approach, appears to indicate the trail is closed, with no clear signage.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Barricade should be replaced with neon pylons, like those at Maxon Rd. and Seneca St. trail intersections. These can be removed once the full street connection is complete.
- The current sign at the trail entrance is in the wrong location to benefit trail users. It should be moved or replaced with a kiosk or interpretive sign on the opposite side of the trail entrance.



8

PRIORITY #8:**Selfie Spots****LOGIC:**

Posting photos on social media is a popular and desired activity along trails. Creating “selfie spots” encourages visitors to stop in key locations with specific hashtags that connect images to county-run social media channels.

While there is obvious cross-promotional value with the Empire State Trail, the images also support wayfinding. By building a digital footprint of locations along the trail, they help potential and real-time visitors identify specific locations and show the full trail experience (pastoral vs. urban; riverfront vs. wooded areas).

Further, permission can be requested so the County can repurpose photos for trail promotion, website content, future social media posts and other marketing efforts.

LOCATIONS:

Locations directly on the trail:

1. Widewaters (replace current concrete barrier with railing for better view and add sign)
2. Lock 8
3. Lookout/Landing, past Lock 8
4. Gateway Landing Park
5. Dutch Reformed Church, Stockade
6. Mohawk Harbor
7. Aqueduct Park or Rexford Aqueduct Ruins
8. Top of hill opposite shelter, at the back of Blatnick Park, overlooking river
9. Lock 7
10. Lions Park

CONTENT:

- Consistent design, placed at convenient height for visitors to snap selfies.
- Branded with “Discover Schenectady,” including QR code that links directly to Discover Schenectady’s social media channels.





OFF THE TRAIL

Directional signage on the trail would drive visitors to important landmarks and attractions nearby, including approximate mileage.

Examples:

- Plotter Kill
- Via Aquarium
- Great Flats Nature Preserve
- Mabee Farm
- Schenectady County Historical Society

ALE TRAIL SIGNS

Each location should have a sign with the Ale Trail logo prominently displayed.

- Wolf Hollow Brewing Company
- Frog Alley
- Mad Jack Brewing/Historic Van Dyck
- Great Flats Brewing
- Druthers Brewing
- Back Barn Brewing (no directional sign)

ELKAY BOTTLE RE-FILLING STATIONS

Consistent branding and signage would identify key locations for water refilling stations.

- Lock 8
- Kiosk at Broadway
- Mohawk Harbor
- Blatnick Park
- Lock 7
- Lions Park

FAST FACTS/DID YOU KNOW

Comprised of local trivia or interesting facts that don't warrant a full interpretive sign, they help build interest about off-trail locations and illustrate the history, diversity and environmental features of Schenectady County.

Examples:

- History of railroad mileage markers/rail bridge history
- Perreca's—oven going for 100 years
- Originally land of the Mohawk Tribe of the Iroquois Nation
- Pat Riley, Hall of Fame basketball coach, was born and raised in Schenectady.
- General Electric plant has the Zip Code 12345.
- Schenectady introduced the first commercial television station with the creation of WRGB in 1940.

***Note:** We have compiled a more extensive list of both locations and topics, should you wish to pursue this additional level of signage.

EMPIRE STATE TRAIL PARKING SIGNS

Replicate sign at Patterson parking area for all Empire State Trail sanctioned parking to establish consistency across the trail segment.

"BIKE ROUTE" SIGNS

Because Schenectady County has an abundance of trail options, existing "Bike Route" signs should identify specific trail names. It will help ensure trail users are following their intended route.





EMPIRE STATE TRAIL MARKERS

There are some points on the trail that need EST markers for directional purposes. These have been noted in the Signage Location Guide. Additionally, EST trail markers should be located at every roadway intersection with the trail to ensure riders they are on the correct trail and to alert motorists of cyclists' presence and raise awareness. In our research and rides, we compiled a more comprehensive list, including signage inconsistencies along the trail. Should you wish to pursue this part of the plan, we can provide locations and recommended adjustments.

Recommended style guidelines:

Currently, the color and design of EST trail markers is inconsistent. Background color of directional arrows varies (green, brown and dark blue). Some locations have a trail marker, some do not. Some are round, others are square. When updated, they should follow the state/federal MUTCD guidelines.

- **Off road:** Circular trail marker; any arrows should have a dark blue background with white arrows
- **On road:** Square, green road sign with circular trail marker; white arrows on green background
- **Placement:** Empire State Trail marker should be positioned above the Erie Canalway Trail Marker

Background: ECT/EST Signage

- For decades, the NYS Canal Corp installed 18" round signs marking the Erie Canalway Trail route (on and off road); brown/white arrow signs were used to match the Canalway Trail logo.

- When the Empire State Trail was created, NYSDOT informed the trail team that state/federal MUTCD guidelines required that any trail sign installed on the shoulder of public roads must be the square version with the green background, using green/white arrow. The 18" Empire State Trail marker was acceptable for off-road sections.
- As a general rule, this has been followed: round EST signs on off-road trails, and square on on-road sections. In Schenectady, like other locations, a number of round on-road Canalway Trail signs were already posted, so round EST signs were installed to maintain consistency with those signs. These should be updated.

PROTECTING INVESTMENT/TRAIL MAINTENANCE

Upkeep by Schenectady County, Town of Rotterdam, Town of Niskayuna and the city of Schenectady is vital to ensure a consistent trail user experience and protect the investment in new signage. Recommended actions include:

- Regular foliage trimming to keep trail markers and other signage visible
- Monitoring for and cleaning of graffiti on signs
- Repainting chipping pylons and gates
- Work with "Friends of Mohawk Hudson Bike Hike Trail" ambassadors to continue monitoring trail, communicating issues and handing out business cards that promote the digital map, once created



Today, an essential companion to wayfinding signage is a real-time, interactive map, designed for mobile phone use. We recommend a map be designed specifically for the trail segment and live on the Discover Schenectady website.

The map currently under development by Discover Schenectady will serve as a “comprehensive directory” of everything available to all visitors. The trail map would complement these efforts and could be offered to visitors seeking more robust travel information, off the trail.

The Visually-Driven Digital Wayfinding Map would be developed specifically for trail users, to assist at every stage of their journey:

- 1. Planning:** Before they arrive, determining which section(s) of the trail to cover, knowing distance, terrain, etc., and connections with nearby, off-trail destinations.
- 2. Arrival:** Assisting the rider in getting to the best location to begin their journey (parking; nearby highway, etc.).
- 3. Throughout:** Using geo-targeting, allowing visitors to see their exact location, gauge the distance/time it will take to reach destinations, and follow more specific wayfinding direction that augments what they see on the trail.

DIGITAL MAP DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

For efficiency and ease of use, we recommend using Google Maps as the map base. It enjoys a high level of user familiarity and offers an existing package of robust features. A custom map should then be designed that operates at two levels:

- 1. TRAIL SECTIONS:** Separating the map into zones, this higher map level will provide an overview of each trail section, including whether it is more rural/natural; urban; etc.

Zones may include:

- Rotterdam to SCCC
- Downtown Schenectady
- The Stockade
- Mohawk Harbor/Glenville Loop
- Niskayuna/Mohawk River

- 2. SPECIFIC WAYFINDING:** The map should also operate as an interactive wayfinding map. By echoing and augmenting key signage and elements along the trail, it can provide constant direction to riders. Amenities, such as water fountains and restrooms, as well as bike shops and food, will be included.



ADDITIONAL MAP ELEMENTS, continued**QR CODES**

- QR codes will be created to drive users to the online map.
- When added to physical trail signs, kiosks and the recommended physical map, QR codes instantly enhance the wayfinding experience with real-time information and solutions during the visitor trip on the trail. They can be offered in two ways:
 1. **Geotargeting:** By placing QR codes on the on-trail signage, the map would instantly know a visitor's location (without requesting their GPS). Multiple codes on a specific sign could point them in various directions. For example, a code could say "Find a Nearby Brewery" and the map would pull up their location (at the sign), displaying all of the breweries nearby and/or route them directly to the nearest one.
 2. **Categories:** Alternately, a single (larger) QR code could bring up a list of key selections (e.g. "Breweries", "Restaurants", "Parking", etc.). From there, the user could select the category of interest, with the site still being aware of their location and routing them accordingly. This approach broadens visitors' exposure to potential opportunities they may not be considering.
- **IMPORTANT:** Because QR codes point to specific URLs, a given QR code's functionality could be changed at a future time, without having to replace the code itself on the sign, saving time and money.

PHOTOGRAPHY

- The map should be image driven, so it shows the rider what the trail looks like—both in advance as well as in real time.
- Similar to the Erie Canalway map design (<https://nycanalmap.com/>), the "drawer feature" should include photography of key features and attractions on that part of the trail.
- These images become visual markers that can be used to plan a trip and gauge location while riding.
- While specific photos should be captured at shoots, using a professional photographer, attractions such as restaurants or lodging can supply photos that can be easily uploaded to fill out the map.

MAP MANAGEMENT

- Once the map is developed, Schenectady County would enjoy complete management of all points on the map.
- This includes adding new points of interest, temporarily opening seasonal venues, removing closed shops or restaurants, or changing them should they become something new.
- The map management provides an additional level of wayfinding, by allowing the map manager to specify the exact location of where the map point should appear.
- Typically, Google adds its marker to the center of a location, when pointing visitors to a parking area may be preferred. This level of granular control of map markers significantly enhances the user experience.



ADDITIONAL MAP ELEMENTS, continued

DATA GATHERING CAPABILITY

- The digital map system would automatically gather every interaction and store it for future analysis.
- Questions such as: “How many people used that QR code?” or “How many visitors clicked on Proctors Theatre on the map?” could easily be answered, with robust data available for presentations or grant requests.
- Regular reporting each season could inform continual improvement to optimize the trail experience.

EMPIRE STATE TRAIL LINK

- Ultimately, the Visually-Driven Wayfinding Map can be linked to the Empire State Trail website and map, providing a richer wayfinding experience for visitors considering the Schenectady portion of the trail.



A physical, printed map of the Schenectady segment of the Empire State Trail is an essential component in a comprehensive wayfinding plan. While many visitors today rely on smartphone technology for real-time navigation, the phone or even computer screen may not satisfy all wayfinding needs.

From serious cyclists to casual day visitors, a physical companion map is a valuable resource for trip planning, on-the-trail troubleshooting and as a visual “snapshot” in reference to the surrounding areas. Many visitors use information on a physical map to research further online.

MAP DESIGN

As its name indicates, the printed map should be developed as a companion to the digital version, which offers more capacity for detail and updates. Mirroring the design and branding of both the digital map and kiosk maps, it would showcase the actual trail segment, highlighting towns, key attractions, and amenities, similar to a traditional map.

However, it would also include the same main categories that appear on the digital map. Using consistent QR codes, it would allow the reader instant access to more information online.

Just like the digital map, consistent co-branding with Empire State Trail visually signals that Schenectady is part of a larger trail effort in New York. Because Schenectady will be one of the earlier communities creating this level of trail wayfinding, the region will benefit from supplying more extensive information to visitors.

INTRODUCING THE TRAIL

Because both the Schenectady segment and the full Empire State Trail are still new, the physical map also plays a crucial role in introducing the trail to potential users. It makes accessing the trail simple for those who may not necessarily be seeking its adventures.

A printed map should include beautiful images that capture the range of scenery, activities, and attractions along the trail. This serves a more intrinsic wayfinding role—helping visitors envision themselves using the trail.

From Schenectady’s Amtrak station to a large conference at Mohawk Harbor, this piece can easily be used in concert with other marketing materials. We strongly recommend the map be distributed further, via rack holders across the Capital Region and relevant Thruway rest areas.

SIZE AND FORMAT

The general size of this piece should be approximately 24”x 9” and would accordion fold into six 4” wide by 17” tall panels and then fold in half to 4” x 9” to allow for distribution in rack brochure holders.



PHOTOGRAPHY

A critical supporting element to both the online and printed map is the procurement of photography. Planned, professional images will provide the appropriate visual cues for trail users to guide them through their travels and to the services, amenities and attractions they seek.

CARTOGRAPHY

While the online version of the map will be generated through Google Maps, that format is not usable in print. For this reason, it will be necessary to create a vector-illustrated map that will be used as artwork on the kiosks and in the printed wayfinding map.





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COVER STORY

The road ahead

Misiewicz plans to build better area transportation routes



Paul Buckowski / Times Union

Sandy Misiewicz, executive director of the Capital District Transportation Committee — and the first woman in that position — rides along the Albany South End Multi-use Trail on Thursday, Oct. 21, 2021, in Albany.

By Leigh Hornbeck

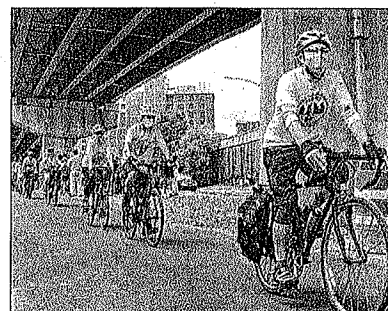
Sandy Misiewicz is a transportation planning lifer. First intrigued by roads as a kid who questioned why her family in New Jersey had sidewalks but there were none back home in Clifton Park, she joined the Capital District Transportation Committee as a graduate student at the University at Albany 23 years ago and never left.

In August, Misiewicz was named executive director of the CDTC, the first woman to lead it. The CDTC is a federally-mandated metropolitan planning organization tasked with directing federal transportation money throughout Albany, Rensselaer, Saratoga and Schenectady counties.

This is an important time for the CDTC as the region is now poised to receive an infusion of money thanks to a new federal infrastructure package. It's an opportunity to address social inequities exacerbated by existing road design and improve bicycle and pedestrian safety, Misiewicz said.

Land use and transportation are linked and both influence residents' quality of life, she said. Think of the difference between a neighborhood that has no safe passage for a cyclist or pedestrian to get from a residential block to the town center, versus a walkable neighborhood where you don't need a car to run to the store for bread.

The multi-modal nature of the Capital Region sets it apart as a unique transportation challenge. Unlike New York City, Atlanta or Los Angeles where commuters are all headed to more or less the same place every day for work and fun, there are eight cities



Lori Van Buren / Albany Times Union

Members of the Albany Bicycle Coalition take off for the inaugural ride on part of the South End Connector on Tuesday, July 7, 2020.

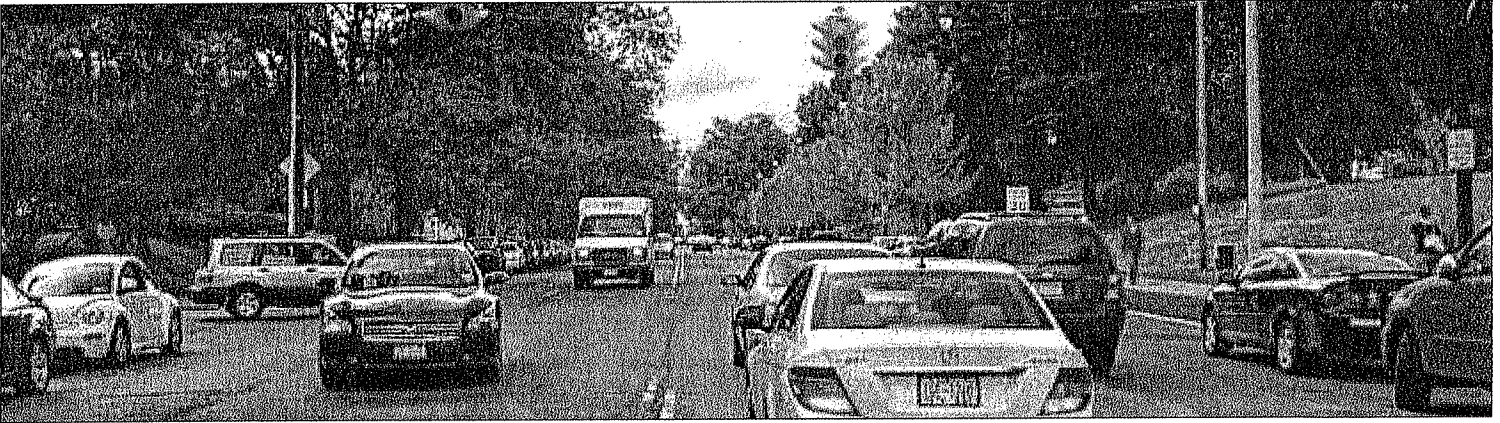
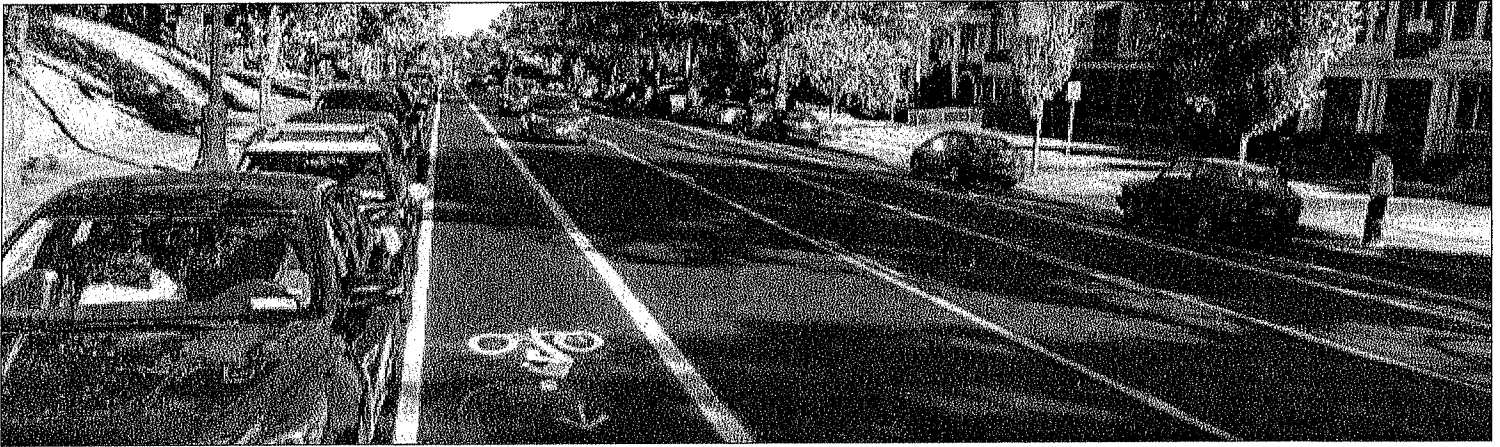
ON THE COVER

Paul Buckowski / Albany Times Union

Sandy Misiewicz, executive director of the Capital District Transportation Committee, on the Albany South End Multi-use Trail.

in our region. In a place like New York City, major roads and public transportation run into it like spokes to the center of a wheel. But that approach doesn't work here.

Misiewicz pointed to the South End bikeway in Albany as a recent success. The 1.5 mile trail connects Albany County's Helderberg-Hudson Rail Trail, which runs from Voorheesville to South Pearl Street,



Provided photos

Madison Avenue before a "road diet" transformation (bottom) and after (top).

with the Mohawk Hudson Hike-Bike trail, which begins in the Corning Preserve. She also mentioned the Madison Avenue road diet, which redirected traffic and added bike lanes.

A planned face-lift for Craig Street in Schenectady addresses what Misiewicz means when she refers to the influence of transportation planning on social equity.

The nearly mile-long stretch will see major streetscape improvements as part of the Craig-Main Connector project, including bicycle lanes, new sidewalks with buffer zones to safeguard against traffic, and rows of trees. Right now, cracked sidewalks define the area that joins Hamilton Hill to Mont Pleasant. The \$4.4 mil-

lion estimated investment is designed to spur further, private investment in the area.

"This work elevates pride in the neighborhood," Misiewicz said.

As a transportation planner, Misiewicz sees the world from the wheel of her car and the seat of her bicycle differently than the rest of us do. Sometimes just resetting the timing on a traffic light will improve an intersection, she has noticed, and she learns from her travels. The removal of the Embarcadero freeway in San Francisco in the early 1990s (prompted by earthquake damage) reunited the city with its waterfront. If Interstate 787 is to be moved or buried, there are lessons to be learned there.



Lori Van Buren / Albany Times Union

View of Craig St. on July 7, 2021 in Schenectady. A city project to reshape Craig Street in the city's Hamilton Hill neighborhood will receive \$2.7 million in federal funding, a major milestone for the \$4.37 million project.

Taters and Trains: The Great Big Baked Potato • 2021 Rail-Trail Hall of Fame • Louisiana Bootlace Trail Network

RAILSTO→TRAILS

INSPIRING MOVEMENT

FALL 2021 FROM RAILS-TO-TRAILS CONSERVANCY

New Power Generation

In Southeast Wisconsin and Across the United States, Trail Developers and Utility Companies Are Creating Dynamic Partnerships



rails-to-trails
conservancy

Powerful Partnerships: Utility Companies + Trails

BY ZAHNI KHIN

Working alongside utility companies across the country, trail entities have often used utility corridors to help build safe and accessible trails for local communities. Some of these most visible trails span miles under large power lines, but utility corridors refer to any passages built below or above ground that carry utility lines, such as electricity, water or natural gas. The benefits of these types of partnerships can include a reduction in the costs associated with trail development and the maximization of the available land to meet transportation and connectivity needs. They also provide ways for utility companies to reach out and connect with the local communities they serve. Here are a few examples from across the United States.

Florida

DUKE ENERGY TRAIL



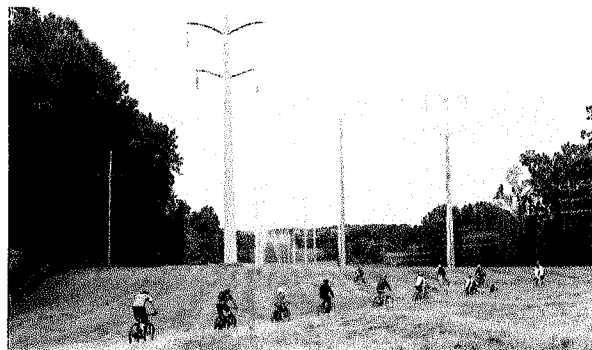
Western Florida's Duke Energy Trail is a part of the Pinellas Trail Loop, a developing 75-mile route that spans from St. Petersburg to Tarpon Springs. Currently, 4.1 miles of the Duke Energy Trail are paved and open, and it is projected that the trail will total 22.5 miles once complete. Running underneath large power lines, the trail utilizes several Duke Energy rights-of-way. With minimal shade, you have a direct view of everything surrounding the trail.

In 2017, a 1.2-mile trail extension was made to the trail, funded by the "Penny for Pinellas" 1% sales tax. As funding opportunities are made available, future additions will be made to the Duke Energy Trail. Eventually, it will connect on its northern end to the East Lake/Tarpon Springs section of the 50-mile Fred Marquis Pinellas Trail (pinellascounty.org)—a Hall of Fame Rail-Trail—and on its southern end to the planned Weedon Island Trail.◦

Learn more: rtc.li/duke-energy-trail-fla

Maryland

POWERLINE TRAIL



FOR MORE
INFORMATION
ON THESE TYPES
OF CORRIDORS,
VISIT RTC'S
TRAIL-BUILDING
TOOLBOX:
rtc.li/tool-box-utilities.

Get a detailed
look at
trail-utility
partnerships in
our cover story
on the Route
of the Badger
on p. 8.

Flanked by trees and bookended by two popular parks in Montgomery County, Maryland, the Powerline Trail serves as an important east-west connector to recreational amenities and outdoor spaces. Stretching 6 miles from South Germantown Recreational Park to North Potomac's Muddy Branch Stream Park, the pathway was the first public trail built within a power corridor in the county. With its natural surface, the trail is not currently accessible to all types of trail use, but it offers an enticing experience for runners, hikers, mountain bikers and equestrians.

The trail is a collaboration between Montgomery Parks and Pepco, a public utility company that supplies Washington, D.C., and the surrounding Maryland communities. In April 2021, the state of Maryland pledged \$10 million to expand the trail in a project that will more than double its mileage. When complete, the 13-mile route will extend to Bethesda's Cabin John Regional Park and include a paved segment.◦

Learn more: rtc.li/power-line-trail

California LAFAYETTE-MORAGA REGIONAL TRAIL



The Lafayette-Moraga Regional Trail connects its two namesake communities via a paved 7.65-mile pathway. A key community connector, it provides access to several schools (including St. Mary's College), parks, neighborhoods, commercial areas and the Briones to Las Trampas Regional Trail (rtc.li/b-to-lt-regional). One of the first rail-trails in California, the corridor was originally used to carry lumber by train. It later served as a utility easement, and the route was eventually converted into a multiuse trail through the cooperation of utility companies, the local communities and the East Bay Regional Park District. •

Learn more: rtc.li/lafayette-moraga-trail

Michigan MUSKETAWA TRAIL



The Musketawa Trail offers a 25-mile route through the farmland and woods of Western Michigan. The pathway travels through Conklin and Ravenna, crossing several trestle bridges along the way, and ends on the outskirts of Muskegon. It follows a route first used by the Muskegon, Grand Rapids and Indiana Railroad in 1886. Rail service ended in the corridor by 1978, and a vision for a rail-trail emerged in the 1990s. Today, the corridor also hosts several electrical lines, instituted through granted easements between the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and utility companies. •

Learn more: musketawatrail.com

Texas CENTERPOINT ENERGY TRAIL



Opened in 2019, the CenterPoint Energy Trail marks the first hike-and-bike trail constructed along a CenterPoint Energy easement in Houston. Beginning just north of Sims Bayou Greenway, the 1.5-mile pathway heads north, paralleling Hiram Clarke Road to West Airport Boulevard. For residents in the city's southwestern neighborhoods, the trail offers an important link into the Bayou Greenways (rtc.li/bayou-greenways), a developing 150-mile network of connected parks and trails along Houston's major waterways being spearheaded by the Houston Parks Board. •

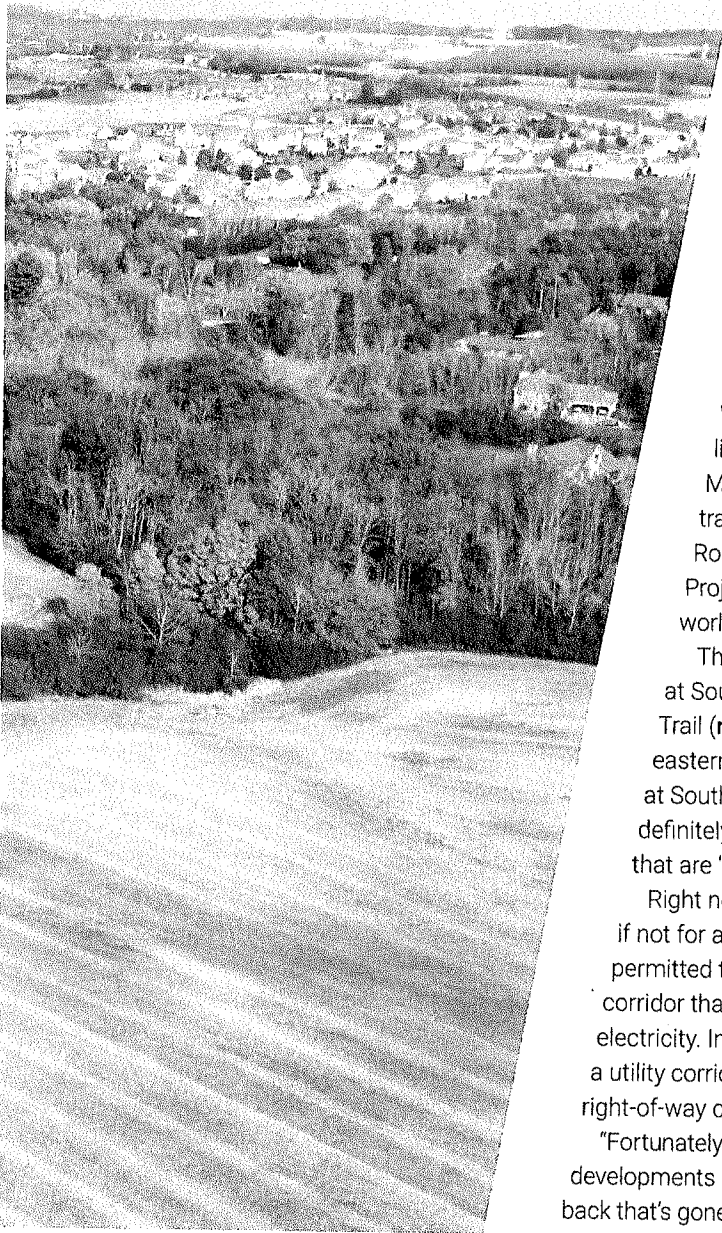
Learn more: rtc.li/centerpoint-energy-trails

NEW POWER GENERATION

In Wisconsin along the Route of the Badger, and around the nation, trail developers are finding willing partners in utility companies to lay down some miles.

BY CORY MATTESON

PHOTO: Along the Ozaukee Interurban Trail in Grafton, Wisconsin; the trail was created in part through a partnership with WE Energies.



Mike Amsden grew up in Greenfield, Wisconsin, and lived about a half block from a row of sky-high transmission towers whose power lines split a set of suburban Milwaukee backyards and woodlands. Back in the late '80s and early '90s, that corridor served as an unofficial neighborhood playground of sorts, Amsden, now 39, said.

"You know, my childhood memories are filled with spending time on that right-of-way, whether it be hiking or riding our bikes or playing baseball or football," said Amsden, who grew up to become the multimodal transportation manager for the City of Milwaukee.

He and his buddies played capture the flag and shanked golf balls in the woods off the corridor, whipped around on BMX bikes beneath the power lines, and sledged down a nearby hill he's come to realize in adulthood was not nearly as steep and terrifying as he thought it was. Back then, the area was treated like an "unpaved trail," he said.

Soon, part of the corridor will lose the "un" part of that description.

The first phase of the aptly named Powerline Trail (powerlinetrail.org) will utilize the utility corridor, which is owned by WE Energies and carries a set of American Transmission Co. power lines, to create about a 3-mile east-west pathway for Greenfield and Milwaukee county residents (a second planned phase will extend the trail 2 more miles). It's one of the latest funded projects linked to the Route of the Badger, a Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC) TrailNation™ Project, which is bringing partners together to build a 700-miles-plus world-class trail system that connects all corners of Southeast Wisconsin.

The western end of the Powerline Trail links up near Kulwicki Park at South 108th Street with Milwaukee County's 135-miles-plus Oak Leaf Trail (rtc.li/oak-leaf-wis). And Amsden can envision a connection from the eastern edge of the trail's first phase, which will stop near Armour Park at South 60th Street, the rest of the way to the Milwaukee lakefront. "That's definitely something that's on our radar," he said, adding that talks about that are "pre-preliminary."

Right now, he's focused on another trail project that wouldn't be possible if not for a key partner in the region, WE Energies. The utility company has permitted the city to build 1.3 off-street miles of trail on a north-side Milwaukee corridor that once featured an interurban rail line but for now transports only electricity. In Southeastern Wisconsin, and in municipalities around the country, a utility corridor is not a roadblock for trail developers; in fact, this type of public right-of-way can offer a path forward.

"Fortunately, here in Milwaukee, WE Energies has been very open to allowing trail developments along their power line corridors," Amsden said. "I don't know how far back that's gone or when that willingness to cooperate started, but it's great."

Electric Origins

About a decade after Thomas Edison patented the light bulb, North America's first power lines rose alongside the eastern shoreline of the Willamette River near the western terminus of the Oregon Trail. These were humble beginnings. The lines were built to transmit hydroelectric power from an Oregon City generating station about 14 miles up the river to downtown Portland, where it would illuminate a string of 55 street lights. A power line system that runs about half the length of a marathon is nothing compared to today's vast network of nearly 160,000 miles of high-voltage power lines, but it was a successful start. The lights first fired up in the summer of 1889, and a *Portland Morning Oregonian* story raved that "it worked magnificently, and conclusively demonstrated that our city can be lighted successfully from the falls." While those original transmission lines were likely of the inferior direct current variety, the first North American power lines provided something of a blueprint for all the alternating current systems to follow, by running along a straight-as-possible shot from point A to point B, adjacent to a navigable geographical path. Kind of like a railroad line does.

Now the roots of Wisconsin's largest electricity and natural gas provider, WE Energies, are linked to the rails. According to the digital Encyclopedia of Milwaukee, the company's origins date back to the founding of the city's first electric streetcar company, the Milwaukee Street Railway Company. In April of 1890, the first electrified trolley took off on Wells Street, and a *Milwaukee Daily Journal* reporter wrote that a Cream City traveler could now "slide through the city like a greased pig through a lasso." A few years later, the company became known as The Milwaukee Electric Railway and Light Company. The company has been known as WE Energies since 2002, and it is now part of the WEC Energy Group.

The company that would become We Energies traces its trail support back to the 1970s, said Dawn Neuy, WE Energies real estate services manager.

"I wasn't around in the 1970s, but that's really when this discussion started happening with my predecessors ... and by the late 1970s is when we actually started to have some trail agreements in place," Neuy said.

Among the first projects were segments on what is now the Ozaukee Interurban Trail (rtc.li/ozaukee-interurban), which runs mostly along land leased from WE Energies. The 30-mile trail follows the route of the old Milwaukee-Sheboygan interurban railway, which closed

PHOTOS: Before (above) and after (below) visuals of the developing Powerline Trail corridor in Greenfield along the developing Route of the Badger trail network

Read about the Oak Leaf Trail, part of the developing Route of the Badger, in the Winter 2020 issue of *Rails to Trails*: rtc.li/oak-leaf-mag.



400

No. of multiuse trails in America that coexist within electric utility corridors

17%

Portion of rail-trails in the U.S. at least partially shared with a utility corridor

700+

Mileage of the developing Route of the Badger in Southeast Wisconsin

in 1948. It now connects to the Oak Leaf Trail (rtc.li/oak-leaf-wis) at its southern terminus and runs from the northern Milwaukee County line village of Brown Deer up through Mequon, Thiensville, Cedarburg, Grafton, Port Washington and Belgium before linking up in Oostburg with the 14-mile Sheboygan Interurban Trail (rtc.li/sheboygan-interurban), which is also on the old electric railcar path that was acquired by Wisconsin Electric (now WE Energies). The railway once carried Delta blues legends like Charley Patton, Skip James and the Mississippi Sheiks to their final destination in Grafton, where they recorded at the Paramount Records studio. Now it's one of several Southeastern Wisconsin trail stretches known for cyclist-friendly breweries and cafés.

Though the first inroads were made in 1975, it took until 1998 before the state provided funding to county and community groups to fill in the remaining gaps. In the early days, Neuy said, trail projects were one-off decisions. Now, she said, there is an overall mission of building up the Route of the Badger in places where WE Energies corridors can contribute.



PHOTOS: In Oostburg, the 17.7-mile Sheboygan Interurban Trail connects with the Ozaukee Interurban Trail, providing 30 miles of connectivity south to the 125-mile Oak Leaf Trail. All three are part of the developing 700-mile Route of the Badger.

There are currently 98 miles of Wisconsin trails on WE Energies corridors, with another 37 in the works. She credited RTC Route of the Badger Project Manager Willie Karidis with matchmaking on many of the latest projects.

"He's really been that conductor of sorts, where he marries the municipality or the county with the utility company and identifies the route," Neuy said. "Then we, with our internal group, both our electric and gas operations groups, make sure that we can accommodate those trails and make sure that we're not going to impede any of our facilities. And we'll also coordinate with other utility companies such as American Transmission Company, because they do have a lot of transmission on our fee-owned corridors."

Karidis said that working with WE Energies has been a vital part of the gap-filling strategy along the Route of the Badger, adding that the partnership can serve as a model for other trail developers who have considered working with utility companies to build up trail networks across the country. And it doesn't hurt, he said, that there are several avid trail users on the WE Energies leadership team.

"Why do we do it? Environmental stewardship, community access, healthy communities," said Tom Metcalfe, president of WE Energies and Wisconsin Public Service. "It just ticks so many boxes for us."

An avid cyclist and former board member of the Friends of Hank Aaron State Trail (hankaaronstatetrail.org), Metcalfe said he has marveled at how that trail has contributed to the revitalization of Milwaukee's Menomonee Valley.

"Working closely with the city and community groups, we were able to, I think, design a system of both green space and industrial-commercial space that is, I'm sure, the envy of many cities across the country now," Metcalfe said. "If you go down through the Menomonee Valley, even if you didn't know what it looked like before, just seeing it the first time you'd be impressed."

Metcalfe said the WE Energies team has developed a culture of supporting trail projects in his time there.

"It's all about trying to connect these corridors so that

we can have not just a trail that runs for 3 miles and then you have to get back on the streets again and figure out how to get to the next section," he said. "If we can ride from Milwaukee to Madison, you know, that's when things really start to get exciting."

The Missing Link

Visit the Powerline Trail website (powerlinetrail.org), and you'll be greeted by an image that shows two rows of Greenfield homes divided by the WE Energies corridor. Visit the Phase 1 section of the site, and you'll find a version of this image that lets you slide back and forth from before to after, with the after image revealing what a mixed-use trail will look like once the aptly named trail is built.

That "after" part has been on a City of Greenfield wish list for quite some time, said city engineer Jeff Katz, whose son Matt created the before-after sliding graphic.

"This corridor has been on the City of Greenfield's radar as a location for a bicycle trail for, I think, 25 years or more, probably," Katz said.

"Why do we do it? Environmental stewardship, community access, healthy communities. It just ticks so many boxes for us."

Tom Metcalfe,
President, WE
Energies and
Wisconsin Public
Service

ROUTE OF THE BADGER



The Route of the Badger is a developing 700-miles-plus regional trail network that aims to create equitable connections to critical destinations and premier cultural attractions throughout Southeast Wisconsin. When complete, the network, an RTC TrailNation™ project, will stretch from Milwaukee to Dousman, and from Sheboygan to Kenosha. Further links could even be made to Chicago, Madison and, eventually, Minneapolis. Learn more at railstotrails.org/badger.

