

Countywide Trails Initiative Notes

Tuesday, April 14, 2026, 4:00 pm

50 W. High Street, Ballston Spa, NY 12020

Old Business

Zim Smith (Jason Kemper): Environmental assessment (EA) is underway for the entire segment from Oak Street to Saratoga Spa Park. Public comment on alternative trail alignments should begin later this year. Funding is fully in place for EA and design for the entire route, plus construction funding for phases 1 and 2 (of probably 5).

Erie - Zim Smith connection (Scott Miller/Kelly Jasinski): A vendor for the feasibility study has been selected (Verity). Board approval in Clifton Park has been obtained. Board approval in Ballston is expected shortly. The study area is from Freemans Bridge (in Glenville) to Ballston Lake (NYS route 146a). The scope has been amended to include a connection to Rexford. Appendix B

County Route 109 Study (Halfmoon – Clifton Park) (Bill Herman): Comments can still be left on the project website. Study expected to wrap up this summer. Map – Appendix C

National Grid (Bill Herman/Scott Miller): CRTC and PTNY organized a webinar with NG using the same presentation material used at the fall 2025 CRTC ATAC meeting. Pam Aspinall (Real estate third party requests manager – all of NY) presented with assistance from Kim Ireland (Director of External and Community Affairs – Eastern NY). The recorded session is viewable at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JrevSd4yoC4>. PPT content was unchanged, but verbal commentary indicated that NG would provide a letter of support for grant applications so that engineering and construction funding was not a condition of initial review. Generally, NG conveyed that they would be reasonable partners and were flexible on the execution of the written process requirements. Full PPT slide deck is available from Ethan Townsend at CRTC etownsend@capitalmpo.org, or Scott Miller (CWT).

CWT end of year report (Bill Herman): On March 3, Bill Herman delivered the CWT Chairman's Annual Report to the Board of Supervisor's Trails and Open Space Committee along with a short presentation. He highlighted the priority of three regional trail – Zim Smith, Champlain Canal and EZ Trails, plus pitched an increase funding for the County Trail Grant Program back to the \$150,000 level from the current \$100,000. Appendix D.

CHPE (Scott Miller): Clarity on the CHPE access road proposal has been obtained in a meeting with Steve Rutkey and Andrew Rush of CHPE. This is a possible CHPE proposal to NYS DEC to not return some of the temporary access roads to pre- construction condition in exchange for funding stormwater and/or wetlands mitigation projects within the general corridor. CHPE has not committed to this proposal at this time. It does not involve the CPKC railroad and offers no opportunity to gain leverage for trails with CPKC.

New Business

Ballston Spa Veterans trail north extension (Kelly Jasinski): The town of Ballston has applied for a TAP grant of \$4.3 million for the construction of a 10' wide paved bike path extending north from Outlet Road to the Village of Ballston Spa and connecting to the Zim Smith Trail at Zepko lane. (Appendix E). The town will contribute \$1.1 million. They have submitted letters of intent to National Grid. They have a letter of support from CPKC railroad for the crossing at Zepko lane.

Final route determination, easements and engineering will occur under execution of the grant. Resident surveys show 90% support for this project. Indicative of the regional importance and support for this trail link, the town obtained letters of support from BHBL schools, BS schools, BLIA (Ballston Lake Improvement Association), Ballston Rotary, Saratoga PLAN, Albany Bicycle coalition, and the Saratoga County board of supervisors. This segment is a critical complement to the EZ connector trail south of Ballston Lake.

If all goes well, construction could begin in 2028.

Veterans trail reopening (Kelly Jasinski): CHPE expects to begin post construction cleanup of the Ballston Veterans trail this spring with possible reopening sometime in July.

County Trail Grant Program (Joe Grasso/Jason Kemper): The 2026 County trail grant program will be funded at \$100k, with \$80k devoted to municipal grants of up to \$10k with 25% municipal match required. \$20k of the grant program will be used along with a separate County appropriation of \$20k to fund an update of the County trail plan.

Trail Counting (Jason Kemper, Scott Miller): The County has permanent trail counters on the Zim Smith trail. CRTC will be offering trail counters to any municipality in its jurisdiction, contact Ethan Townsend at CRTC (etownsend@capitalmpo.org) to arrange. CRTC will apply their standard sampling extrapolation protocols to estimate total annual use from smaller sample periods.

Champlain Canal Trail (Bill Herman): On March 31, a Zoom meeting was held by Mona Caron (Director of Trails & Stewardship on the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor with the Erie Canalway Heritage Fund). Mona has the lead in a partnership with NYS Canal Corporation along with Colliers Engineering & Design to inventory amenities, assess existing amenity conditions, conduct a needs and gap analyses for recreational users of the Champlain Canal and the trail. Think blue and green trails.

A similar effort was completed in 2025 of the Erie Canal, the NYS Canalway Water Trail, and Erie Canalway Trail. The 2025 study recognized the valued recreational assets that link history, community, culture, and recreation across New York State. It noted that the trails are widely used for walking, running, bicycling, paddling, and boating. This study offers a comprehensive conditions evaluation and long-term plan for recreational amenities, like rest rooms, water, charging stations, and storage facilities. Stakeholder meetings will be organizing by affinity

groups: Tourism, Bicycling, Boating and Paddling. More information can be found at: <https://eriecanalway.org/resources/recreational-amenities>

Trails in NYS Budget (Bill Herman): The governor's proposed budget includes a proposal to adjust SEQRA classifications to exempt certain specific criteria. Key details for trails include:

- *Categorical Exemption*: Public parks and recreational bike/pedestrian paths would be fast-tracked to skip the lengthy review process usually required for large construction.
- *Location Requirement*: To qualify for this exemption, projects must be located on previously disturbed land. This is intended to protect undisturbed natural resources and lands while strengthening existing neighborhoods.
- *Goal*: The aim is to make the delivery of these projects speedier and cheaper by cutting through "red tape" that currently leads to unpredictable timelines and high costs.

Unauthorized trail use (Bill Herman): Bill Herman was requested, by an anonymous party, to explore ways of eliminating use of trails by unauthorized motor vehicles. He will give a report on his findings at the next CWT meeting.

Snowmobile trails (Bill Cook, Morgan Hamilton): Lincoln Mountain club operating area extends from the Tahawus rail line in Corinth to the Hudson River at Dix Bridge. In this area, the club is active in setting the state trail route. Maintaining this connection in the face of land fragmentation is of increasing importance. Collaborative effort with PLAN is desired where conservation values intersect with trail routing. A more formalized exchange of information is planned.

Town of Moreau (Joshua Westfall): Phase 1 loop (about 1 mile) on the lowlands is complete. Phase 2 is in design for construction in 2027-2028, funded by a Hudson River Valley greenway grant and a Saratoga County trails grant. A mix of paved and stone dust. In conjunction with State Parks, design has begun on the Betar Park to Route 32 trail segment. This will connect multiple residential developments with the park, have a road access point and be about 1+ mile. Most likely it will be stone dust surface. See Appendix F.

NY State Parks (Phil Corney):

Capital projects underway:

- Avenue of Pines Paved Pathway in Saratoga Spa State Park will be moved further away from the Avenue of the Pines Road and accommodate a larger buffer with trees in between the road and the new paved pathway. Construction is planned for 2027.
- Grant Cottage: An ADA compliant trail from the visitor center to the overlook is under construction and is on track to be complete to be finished in Summer 2026.

Regional NYS Parks Trail Team Projects in Saratoga County:

- Lake Bonita trail head and trail realignment to Lake Bonita area. This project is a master plan consistency project and will be first State Parks segment of the Sarah B Foulkes trail. Construction is planned to start in Summer 2026 and be complete in Fall 2026.
- Moreau Lake State Park's "Moreau Overlook Trail" Trailhead is getting a re-orientation and improvement project. Construction is underway, and planned to be complete by May 2026
- Moreau Lake State Park's "Nature Trail" from the beach parking lot to the viewing platform on back pond is being improved for accessibility; barrier removals, softening grades and some trail tread improvements. Currently underway and planned to be finished by May 2026.

Planning initiatives

- Moreau Lake State Park trail connection from Mud Pond trail to the County forest in Town of Moreau is being planned this year, for Construction in 2027.
- Peebles Island State Park's northeastern segments of the perimeter trail are undergoing planning for resurfacing improvements, Construction is being planned for 2027 May 2, 2026 I Love My Park Day. Volunteer opportunities: <https://parks.ny.gov/get-involved/i-love-my-park-day>

NY State Parks (Dana McClure):

- Introduction of OPRHP's new Regional Grant Administrator for the Capital District/Saratoga Region dana.mcclure@parks.ny.gov
- Offered to come back to discuss potential funding opportunities and how to create a competitive application.
- More information about OPRHP grants can be found here: <https://parks.ny.gov/grants>

CRTC Active Transportation Committee (ATAC) (Scott Miller): At both the January and April meetings, the issue of e-bike use and misuse has been raised by participants. The Transportation Council will place more of a focus on e-bikes in 2026 and plans to develop e-bike educational materials for municipalities in its 2026 planning work program. Additional ATAC meetings this year: July 8, 2026 & October 21, 2026.

E-Bikes/Albany Biking Coalition (ABC) (Scott Miller, Dana McClure): On May 3rd, 2026, Ed Brennan (ABC) will be presenting on e-bike law & safety at the Clifton Park Library "Bike Day". Time TBD. ABC offers seminars on E-bike law, use and enforcement to interested parties. ABC has pointed out that for bike paths that cross municipal boundaries, local e-bike regulations can vary along the trail.

May 13 | 1:00 pm ET: **Webinar – E-bikes, E-motos and Safety: What Belongs on Trails?**
Join Rails to Trails Conservancy on May 13 for an informative session on e-bike and e-moto policies. Leaders from RTC's Policy Team will share RTC's updated micromobility policy

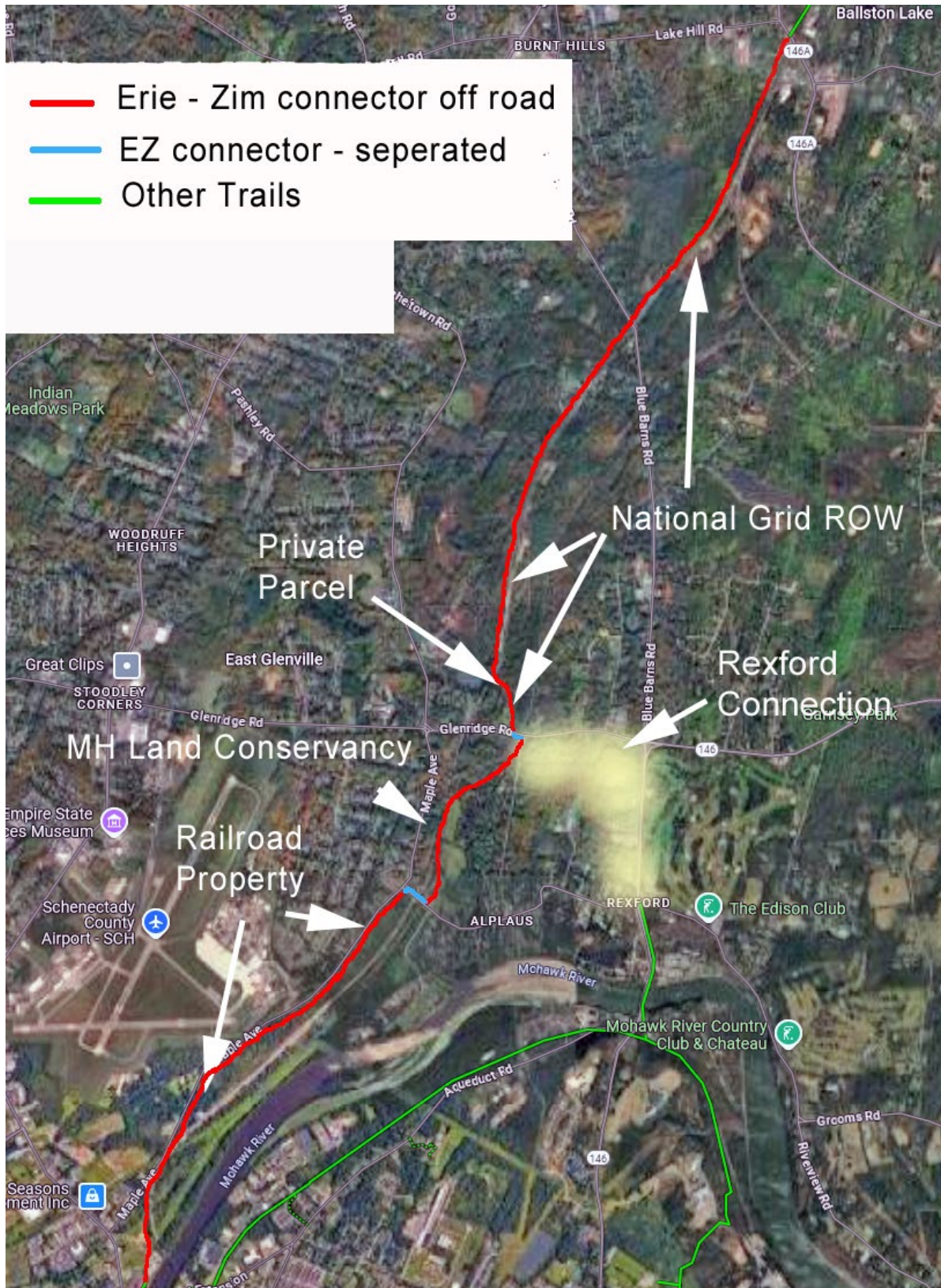
and highlight several innovative state policies that ensure trail safety while maintaining a strong user experience. [Register here](#)

STA (Jennifer Hunt Dempsey): Jennifer is the new executive director of Saratoga Trails Alliance.

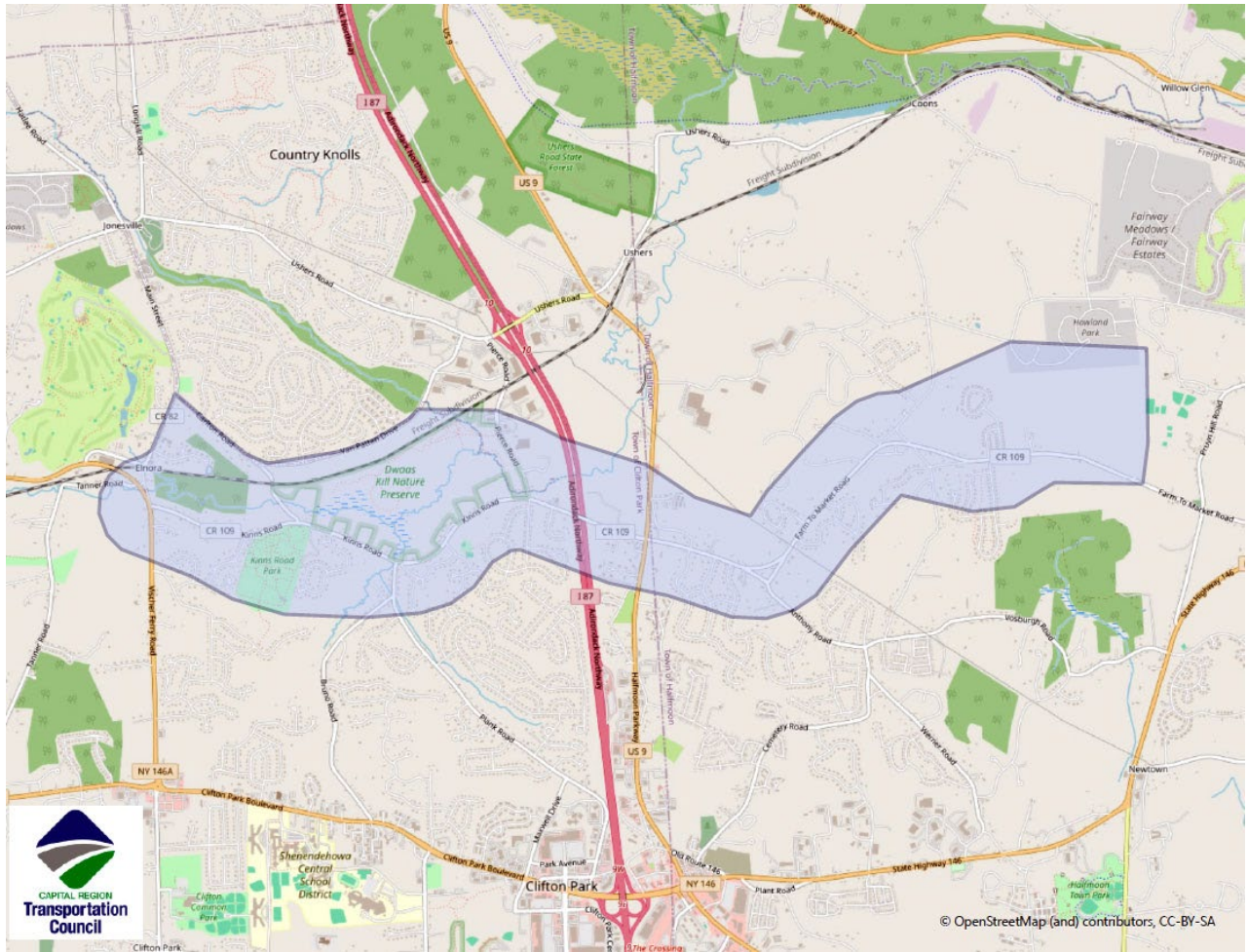
Saratoga PLAN – Northern Gateway: (Scott Miller/PLAN): A parking lot, trail, and trailhead to connect the existing Graphite Range Community Forest with the Northern Gateway property on Wilton Road in the Town of Greenfield is proposed. PLAN will be conducting public outreach for community input.

Saratoga Springs DPW (Scott Miller): Scott requested a meeting with the new DPW commissioner (BK Keramati) to discuss how the city is central to the regional trail network, but that its internal greenbelt trail plan does not strongly recognize these connections. Wilton and SS are collaborating on the Exit 15 area, but other connections require attention. Appendix G shows the overview slide of the presentation - contact Scott Miller to get the full PPT. Attendees: Michael Dutre (admin – open space, parks...), Tad Roemer (deputy commissioner), James Salaway (city engineer), Michael Veitch (DPW business manager), Susan Barden (admin OPED – Plan, Econ Dev)

Appendix B: EZ connector



Appendix C: CR 109 study area



Appendix D: CWT 2025 annual report

CWT Annual Report 12.16.2025

This is the first report to the Board of Commissioners by the Saratoga Countywide Trails Committee since before COVID. The Committee provides a forum, led by Saratoga PLAN, to gather insight from planning professionals, advocates and others, about trail development and use in the Saratoga County area. The Committee provides this information to governmental and independent trail advocates to improve decision-making regarding the allocation of existing resources, pursue additional funding and to foster an interconnected community in the region.

This report is a concise statement of what happened in 2025 and provides recommendations for trail projects in 2026.

Activities in 2025

In 2025 the Committee witnessed a post-Covid return to normal with solid input and regular attendance at its quarterly meetings by NYSDOT, NYSOPRHP, Saratoga County Planning, Saratoga Trail Alliance, Wilton Wildlife Preserve & Park and frequent attendance by others representing the larger towns in Saratoga County, New York New Jersey Trail Conference, Schenectady Metroplex, Adirondack Mountain Club, Friends of Saratoga Horse Trails, and many others.

Guidance, input, updates, recommendations, conference information and similar matters were shared and discussed at every Committee meeting. The most recent meeting notes are available on the [Saratoga PLAN website](#). The Committee adopted a Charter that includes Purpose, Vision, Mission and Process Statements and can be found on the [Saratoga PLAN website](#).

Recommendations for 2026

The following recommendations have been inspired from quarterly Committee discussions as well as various meetings and forums attended by Committee stakeholders throughout 2025.

1. Acquire property rights, design and build the Zim Smith extension to Saratoga Springs.
2. Update the off-road feasibility options to extend the Champlain Canal Trail from Upper Newtown Road in Halfmoon to the Mechanicville City line, including how best to manage NYSDEC wetland crossings and identification of possible off-road segments after crossing Rt. 4 at the County sewer plant and continuing north to the Mechanicville city line. This effort should occur concurrently with the Zim Smith activities (Item 1) so that the County will be in a good position to quickly advance design of the off-road Trail extension.

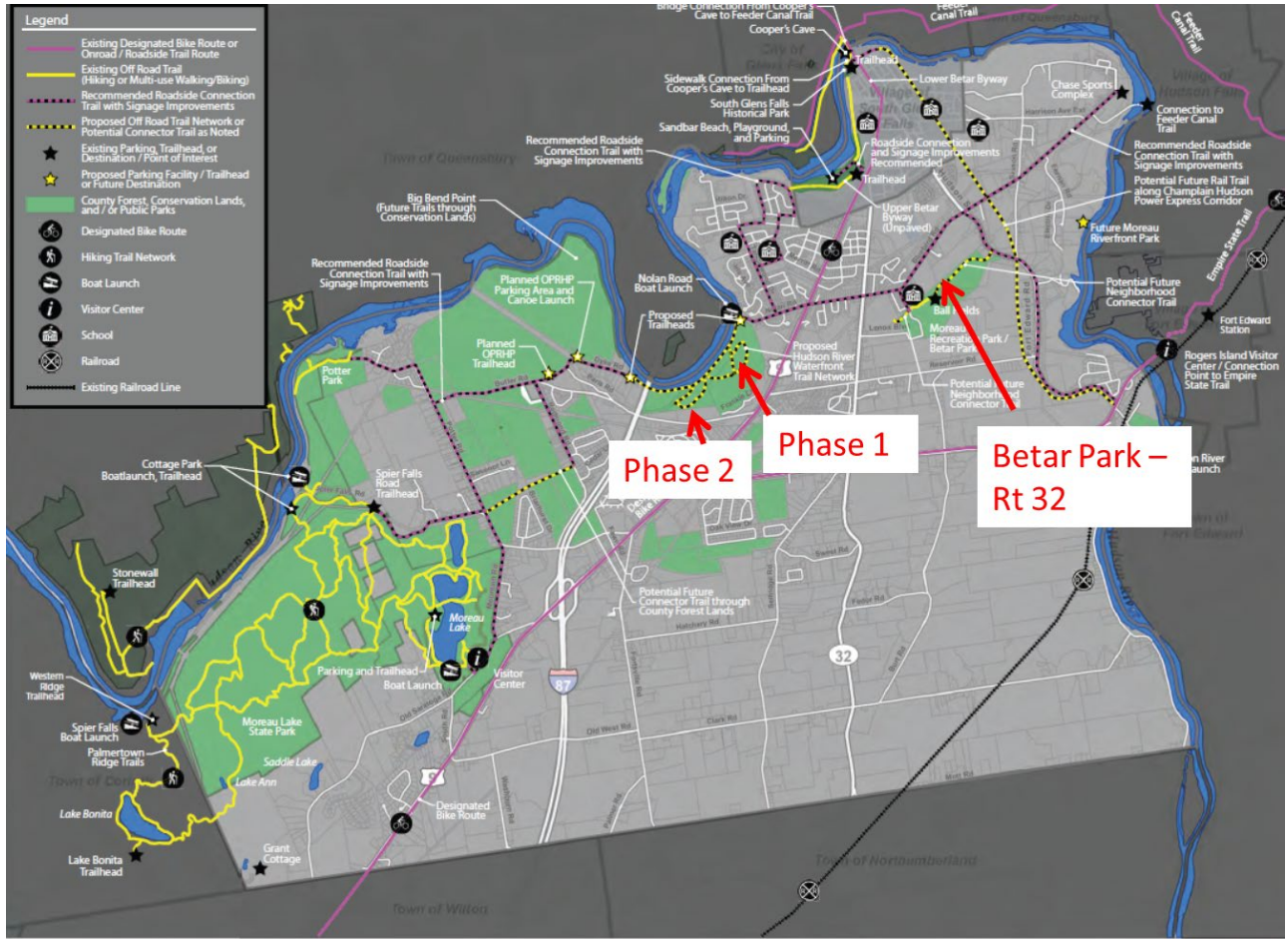
3. Support the EZ Trail (Empire State Trail to Zim Smith) feasibility effort through Clifton Park and Ballston. Depending upon the route chosen within the Town of Ballston, the County may need to take the lead in discussions with National Grid regarding paralleling and/or sharing use of the utility's right-of-way. Similarly, depending upon route chosen within the Town of Ballston, the County may need to lead the review of seasonal water on portions of the old trolley route and act as the lead agency to obtain State permits if they become necessary.

4. It is recommended that trail funding be increased, including the County's Trail Grant program funding return to the \$150,000 level with award priority given to (a) County trunk line trails (e.g., Zim Smith, Champlain Canal, Empire State to Zim Smith (EZ) and Palmertown Range) and (b) trails that will connect to the trunk line trails as well as (c) trails that connect with or are planned to connect with trails of abutting municipalities. A few years ago, County Trail Grant funding was reduced to \$100,000 and has remained there as costs have increased. Today, towns have been submitting quality trail projects that are outpacing the level of support by the County. Over the past twelve years the County's population has increased approximately 8.5 percent. Land development has outpaced land conservation by almost two to one. Residents consistently cite the speed of development and the need to preserve open space/develop recreational opportunities including the development of walking/bicycling trails as major concerns. County finances will always be stretched to cover varied program costs but as development occurs, there will be a constant shrinking window of opportunity to develop trails where the population centers argue the loudest for them.

Appendix E: Veterans trail north extension proposed route

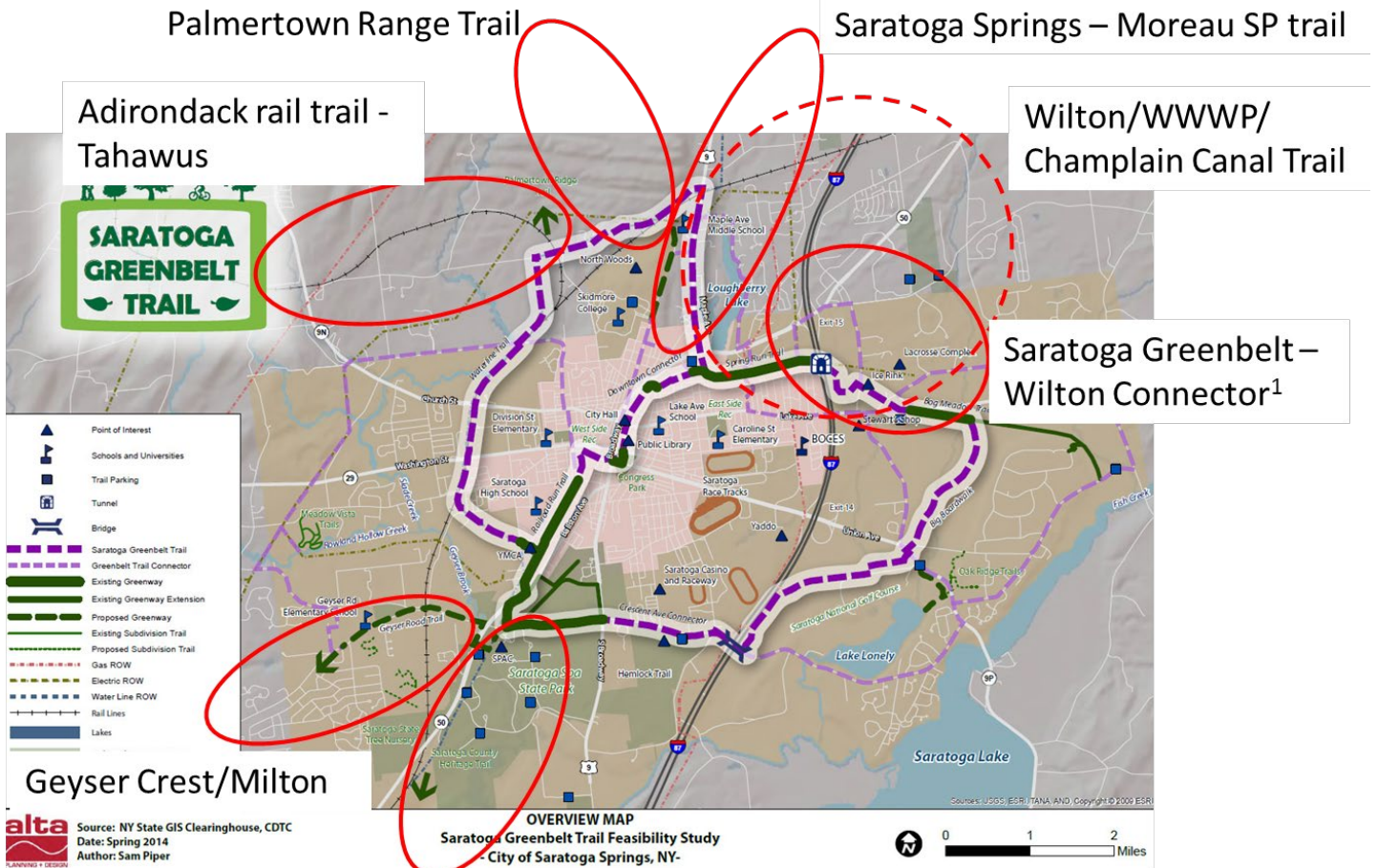


Appendix F: Moreau trail activity



Appendix G: Saratoga Springs trail hub

SS Green belt trail (2014) – interconnect opportunities



Zim Smith North

4/15/2026

1) 2022 Greenbelt – Wilton Study: CDTC/CDRPC 3