

# Along the Trail

THE NEWSLETTER FOR THE FRIENDS OF THE MOHAWK-HUDSON BIKE-HIKE TRAIL

## A fresh start for Schenectady

### City's section of Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail refurbished

The long-awaited resurfacing of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail in the city of Schenectady was completed last fall.

Work began on March 1 of last year to rehabilitate four miles of trail in Schenectady. The project stretched from Balltown Road in Niskayuna to Washington Avenue in the city of Schenectady.

Federal stimulus funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act paid for the \$1.2 million project. In addition to milling the existing asphalt surface and constructing a new 10-foot wide trail, the project also included drainage improvements, safer barriers and the installation of new signage to help trail users navigate the on-road portion of the trail (from Jay Street to Washington Avenue).

The trail's completion was announced in October 2010. Schenectady mayor Brian Stratton (now director of the Canal Corporation) said, "The Canalway Trail was just a dream in Schenectady back in the 1960s, but that didn't stop local citizens from striving for its creation. Today, the New York State Canal Corporation's investment to upgrade our local section ensures that this cross-state trail system continues to provide recreation, tourism, and economic development opportunities for residents of Schenectady and our visitors."



Photos by  
Howard Halstead

Above, a new barrier on the Anthony Street crossing. At right, the newly paved trail is flanked by fresh fencing.

### Get in touch

Write to Friends of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail at 141 Willowcreek Ave., Schenectady, NY 12304 or e-mail [mhbway@yahoo.com](mailto:mhbway@yahoo.com).

We're online at <http://www.mhbht.org>. You can now also find us on Facebook.

facebook

### Friends celebrate 10th anniversary

The Friends of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail celebrates its 10th year this year. Among our accomplishments:

- Established first Ambassador Trail Program along Canalway Trail
- Assisted Schenectady Chapter, ADK with National Trails Day project
- Assisting Union College professor with restoration of historic lock 23
- Established partnership with Eastern Mountain Sports
- Advocate for trail with trail owners

- Influence those own maintain the trail to use standard bollards
- Held position on steering committee for City of Schenectady's 2001 Urban Bike Route Master Plan
- Lead volunteer effort to gather trail usage statistics for 2009 Canalway Trail User Count prepared by PTNY and NYS Canal Corporation.
- Member of Canalway Trail Association

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## Anniversary

(Continued from page 1)  
of New York

- Respond to inquiries from website / email
- One member, Howard Halstead, received the Trail Tender Award
- Assist with Cycling the Erie Canal bicycle tour by coordinating tour in the Schenectady-Albany area with volunteers doing route planning, route marking, directions, etc.
- One member, Fred Thompson, joined the 5S Traffic Study to bring focus to safety issues dealing with the road crossing of the bike-hike trail.
- Publish six years of our annual newsletter "Along the Trail"

New members are welcome — join us for our next 10 years!

## Canalway Trail Ambassadors ride on

The Canalway Trail Ambassadors program kicked off in 2008 with a two-month pilot in the Town of Niskayuna. Ten ambassadors rode 58 patrols, providing directions, mechanical advice and other assistance to trail users.

In 2009, the program grew to cover the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail in the City of Schenectady, the Town of Rotterdam and the Town of Colonie. Eighteen ambassadors reported 260 patrols, providing direct assistance to 24 trail users.

In 2010, 21 ambassadors reported 314 patrols. The program has now expanded into Albany County, with several ambassadors patrolling on the section of trail that runs from Waterford to the Corning Preserve.

Many thanks to the ambassadors for all their hard work!

### How to help

If you'd like to help fund the Canalway Trail Ambassadors program, donations are gladly and gratefully accepted. It costs approximately \$20 to get each new ambassador ready. Checks, made payable to Parks and Trails NY, can be mailed to:

**Friends of the Mohawk-Hudson  
Bike-Hike Trail  
141 Willowcreek Ave.  
Schenectady, NY 12304**

Write "Canalway Trail  
Ambassadors" on the memo line.

## Snowmobiles on the trail? It's up to you!

In January, the New York State Canal Corporation revised its regulations to allow snowmobilers to use the Canalway Trail.

According to the Canal Corp., snowmobile organizations will now be able to get permits for trail use after getting a resolution of support from the municipality where the trail is located. The rule change applies only to lands under the jurisdiction of the Canal Corporation and municipalities have the right to continue the prohibition.

What does this mean for the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail? In reality, very little.

Only a mile or two of the 40-mile trail (from Rotterdam Junction to Albany) is owned by the Canal Corp. The remaining sections are owned by nine other entities including the state Thruway Authority and local towns and counties. In addition, six municipal entities have maintenance agreements for the trail and would presumably have to agree to snowmobile use as well.

However, local snowmobile clubs have indicated in letters to the editor of the Daily Gazette that they intend to push

### What can you do?

- Contact your local city or town and let them know how you feel about possible snowmobile use on the trail.
- If you see snowmobiles or other motorized vehicles using the trail illegally, call the police to report it and follow up later with the municipality. Make sure your voice is heard!
- Support your local trail advocacy group.

to open some parts of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail to snowmobile use.

The board of the Friends of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail voted this spring to oppose snowmobile use of the trail.

Sections of the Canalway Trail system in Fulton and Montgomery counties that are currently being used by snowmobiles are in largely rural areas.

The Mohawk-Hudson trail, in con-

trast, while rural in small sections, is suburban in larger chunks and urban in others. The trail literally runs just feet from the back doors of many homes and businesses that would almost certainly not welcome the noise and smell associated with snowmobiles.

The proximity to population centers also means the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail gets a large number of users. A survey conducted by Parks & Trails NY in 2009 determined that the trail receives more than 430,000 visitors each year. There is daily traffic on many sections of the trail even in the winter months. In fact, some popular sections of the trail are being plowed to facilitate their wintertime use.

Any discussion of snowmobile use would have to address: speed limit (currently posted at 15 mph); enforcement; how to ensure that more passive users (walkers, snowshoers, skiers, etc) would not be discouraged from using the trail by the presence of motorized vehicles; potential damage to the trail; and the risk that allowing snowmobiles would encourage ATV riders to use the trail as well.

## Purchase of land brings trail system closer to completion

In July 2010, the state paid \$710,000 for five miles of land along Route 5S between Rotterdam Junction and the town of Florida. The land, which contains an old railroad bed, will be used in the future to close a long-time gap in the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail. The section links the 41-mile Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail to a 42-mile section of trail between Amsterdam and Little Falls. Currently, cyclists have to ride along Route 5S between the two sections. Dan Keefe, a state Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation spokesman, called the land “a critical link for the planned 524-mile trail across the state.”

At this time, there is no money in the state budget to surface the rail bed or to renovate two bridges along the way, and there is no timeline for when the project might be started. (Times Union, July 25, 2010)

### Other local news:

- Work to replace the bridge to Niska Isle off Rosendale Road in Niskayuna is continuing. State DOT crews constructed a new bridge next to the old one, then demolished the old one. The project cost about \$4.9 million. Please use caution near the construction zone as work is still being completed at the site this spring.

- According to Stephen Feeney, Schenectady County Department of Economic Development and Planning, work on a multi-use path through Vale Cemetery in Schenectady will begin this spring. There will be extensive drainage work, paving and security features. The trail is part of a larger plan to link the city’s Central Park area to its downtown.

- Mohawk River Community Partners, a Colonie advocacy group dedicated to protecting and promoting the town’s waterfront area, received a free bike rack through CDTA’s local bike rack program. It will be installed next to the benches near the trail’s intersection with Forts Ferry Road, where there is a great view of the river. MRCP is in the process of merging with the Mohawk-Hudson Land Conservancy ([www.mohawkhudson.org](http://www.mohawkhudson.org)).



The new Niska Isle bridge was completed this winter and is now open to traffic. Construction continues in the area, however, so trail users should still use caution when traveling between Lock 7 Road and Lions Park.

Photo by Gillian Scott

### Regional trails news:

- The Zim-Smith Trail in Saratoga County officially opened its newest section — two miles of trail from Underpass Road in Ballston to Oak Street. The Zim-Smith now stretches 9 miles from Oak Street to Coons Crossing in Halfmoon. (Daily Gazette, Oct. 27, 2010)

- Additionally, The Business Review reports the Zim-Smith Trail will be expanded this year with a mile-long link from where the trail passes under the Northway near Exit 11 to the new tech park in Malta. The \$1.3 million project will be paid for with money leftover from a state grant used to build roads within the tech park. Most of the land for the new section — the right-of-way for an old trolley line — is already owned by Saratoga PLAN, but according to Julie Stokes, chair of the board of PLAN’s board of directors, negotiations for use of private land along the route are continuing. (The Business Review, March 9, 2011).

- The town of Clifton Park will construct a paved trail on Crescent Road from Okte Elementary School to the intersection of Dunsbach Road. The 1.5 mile path will cost \$1 million; federal funding makes up most of the cost (\$632,000), with the state providing \$49,000, and the town of Clifton Park contributing \$154,000. The town of Halfmoon also provided some funds; the trail will connect Dunsbach Road to Canal Road, where Halfmoon plans to make improvements to the riverfront.

On the Clifton Park end, the trail will connect to the existing trail at Moe Road. (Daily Gazette, Dec. 7, 2010).

- The Spring Run Trail in Saratoga Springs officially opened in November. The one-mile paved trail starts at East Avenue near the Excelsior Avenue intersection and extends east to the Northway. The project cost nearly \$2 million and took almost 30 years to bring to fruition. It was finally built after being approved for federal stimulus funds. (Daily Gazette, Nov. 18, 2010).

- The town of Saratoga opened a new one-mile trail off Wilbur Road near the Saratoga National Cemetery. The trail is described as handicapped accessible, but it’s not clear if it’s paved. The long-range plan is the create a continuous trail along the Champlain Canal in Saratoga and Washington counties. (The Post-Star, July 21 and Sept. 7, 2010.)

- A 50-page plan released in March calls for completing the Champlain Canalway Trail in one- to three-mile pieces. The plan was created by the LA Group of Saratoga Springs using a \$14,000 federal grant. Only about 17 miles of the trail are currently complete, but another 14 miles are in the planning stages or will be complete within the next few years. When finished, the 62-mile trail will run from Waterford to Whitehall and connect to the Erie Canalway Trail in the Waterford area. (Daily Gazette, March 29, 2011).

Friends of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail  
141 Willowcreek Ave.,  
Schenectady, NY 12304

*Find us online at  
<http://www.mhbht.org>*

## Friends of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail

Our mission: To develop through public education and stewardship the historical, recreational and economic opportunities of the Mohawk-Hudson trail.

The Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail is a multi-use trail located along the Mohawk and Hudson rivers in Albany and Schenectady counties. The trail is part of the NYS Canalway Trail System and the Hudson River Valley Greenway Trail System.

The Friends of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail works to ensure the long-term success of the trail and related trails. This includes integrating the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail as a key-stone, forging a link among three major state trail corridors: the Erie Canalway Trail, the Hudson River Valley Greenway Trail System, and the Champlain Canalway Trail. When completed, the Canalway Trail will span over 500 miles, making it one of the longest multi-use recreational trails in the country.

### WE ARE ALWAYS LOOKING FOR VOLUNTEERS!

We are looking for local people interested in participating in planning for the future of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail and/or in improvement projects along the trail. To become a member of the Friends of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail, complete and return this form to:

**Friends of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail**  
**141 Willowcreek Ave.**  
**Schenectady, NY 12304**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

**To make a contribution to the Friends of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail, write a check payable to Parks and Trails New York (PTNY).** PTNY is the fiscal agent for the Friends of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail, and a non-profit, tax-exempt organization under IRS code 501(c)(3). Gifts may be tax deductible. Donations of \$25 or more made by current or retired GE employees are eligible for matching.