

TOMPKINS PRIORITY TRAILS STRATEGY 2023 UPDATE

December 2023

Contents

Introduction	2
Existing Multi-Use Trails.....	2
New resources/enhancements that complement this Strategy.....	3
Map of Tompkins County Priority Trails	4
Map of Tompkins County Priority Trails – Ithaca Detail	5
Detailed Status of Priority Trails	6
Dryden Rail Trail.....	6
South Hill Recreation Way Extension.....	8
Black Diamond Trail – Extension to Trumansburg.....	9
Black Diamond Trail – Connection between Buttermilk and Robert H Treman State Parks	10
Urban Connectors	11
Finger Lakes Trail.....	13
Public Transportation: TCAT to Trails	15
Sustaining the Network.....	17
Benefits of multi-use trails.....	18
Resources and Associated Plans	18
Acknowledgements.....	19

Introduction

The 2014 Tompkins Priority Trails Strategy painted a picture of a trails network for Tompkins County where parks, natural areas, urban areas, and rural villages are connected via multi-use trails. Is that picture complete? Not quite, but we are well on our way. This document provides updates on accomplishments of the past decade and describes actions needed to complete the priority trails in Tompkins County.

What do we mean by “priority trail?” The 1996 Transportation Trail Corridor Study and the 1995 Greenway Coalition Action Plan identified a countywide network of multi-use trails. The Tompkins County Parks and Trails Network advanced that work in the 2014 Tompkins Priority Trails Strategy. Pulling those resources together, "priority trail" as used in this Strategy is a multi-use trail or trail section that is critical to the vision of a countywide multi-use trail network and should be prioritized for development. Not all trails in the multi-use trail network are considered as priority trails, some are existing, and others will be considered in the future.

This Strategy focuses on building and maintaining multi-use trails that make connections across municipal boundaries. Multi-use means accommodating multiple non-motorized users, including pedestrians, wheelchairs, cyclists, and, in some cases, equestrian users. While not a multi-use trail, the Finger Lakes Trail is foot-traffic-only, however, its regional significance, spanning almost 1,000 miles, warrants its inclusion as a priority trail in Tompkins County.

The priority trails in this Strategy are a subset of the larger trail network in Tompkins County and represent the key components needed to advance implementation of the envisioned countywide multi-use trail network. This document includes descriptions, parties involved, current status/recent accomplishments, action items, and future phases for the following priority trails:

- Dryden Rail Trail
- South Hill Recreation Way Extension
- Black Diamond Trail: Extension to Trumansburg and Connection between Buttermilk and Robert H Treman State Parks
- Urban Connectors
- Finger Lakes Trail

While this Strategy does not list all trails in the county, Ithacatrails.org (described below), is a great resource that provides a comprehensive overview of other trails in the county.

Existing Multi-Use Trails (as of 2023 and identified on the maps below):

- Cayuga Waterfront Trail from Stewart Park to Cass Park
- Black Diamond Trail from Cass Park to Taughannock Falls State Park
- South Hill Recreation Way from the Hudson Street/Coddington Road to Burns Road
- East Ithaca Recreation Way from Tudor Park to Game Farm Road
- Gateway Trail from Stone Quarry Road to west of State Route 13
- Sections of the Dryden Rail Trail (Jim Schug Trail, Village of Freeville to Village of Dryden, Game Farm Road to State Route 13)

New resources/enhancements that complement this Strategy

- IthacaTrails.org was created in 2015 and is currently maintained by Tompkins County with funding from the Tourism Program. The website includes an interactive map and search function that allows users to find trails by activity, difficulty, length, and other features. Each trail's detail page shows allowed activities and features, describes the trail and attributes, provides accessibility features (trailhead coordinates, parking location, bus stops), and where to find more information.
- Gofingerlakes.org was created in 2015 by the Finger Lakes Land Trust (FLLT). The website includes trails in Tompkins County and throughout the Finger Lakes region. The trails in Tompkins County are limited to those on FLLT properties, state forests/wildlife area, select Cornell property, and significant connections to these trails.
- [Cayuga Lake Blueway Trail](#) was launched in 2021 to provide paddlers with trip ideas to explore Cayuga Lake. The trail links 12 publicly owned sites along Cayuga Lake. Trail resources such as the website, signage, and pocket guides include the Blueway Trail launch sites for easy reference and to show connections to trails in the county.
- [TCAT to Trails](#) includes maps and online tools that identify bus stops and routes to access local trails.

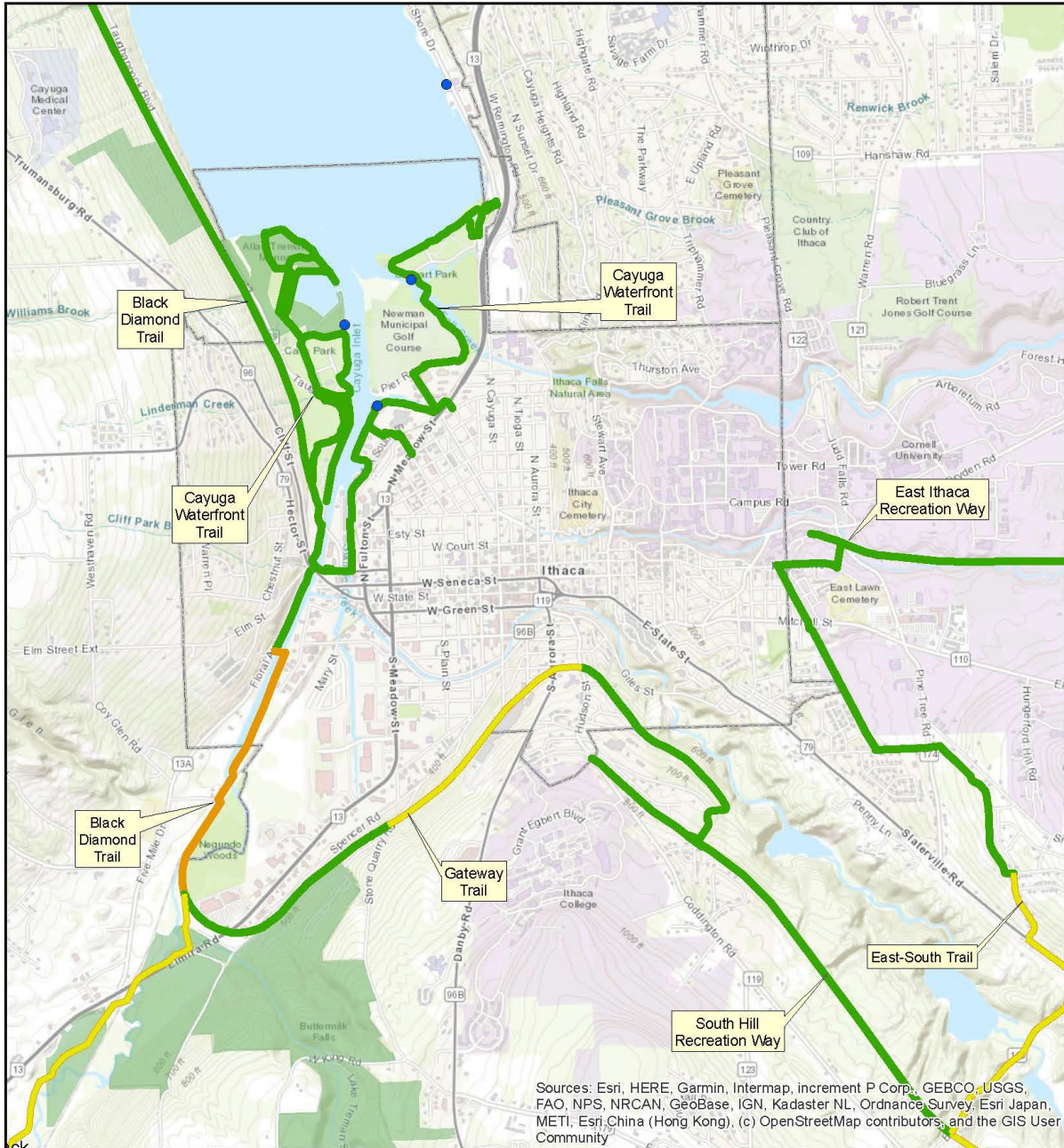
After the detailed status of priority trail sections, there is a detailed project description of the TCAT to Trails initiative, since it is considered a critical component of connectivity between the network and population centers. Finally, this document concludes with actions for sustaining the network, reminders of the benefits of multi-use trails, and resources and associated plans.

Map of Tompkins County Priority Trails



Map of Tompkins County Priority Trails – Ithaca Detail

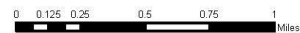
Tompkins County Priority Trails Ithaca Detail



Priority Trails Status

- Existing
- In-progress
- Proposed

- Parks and Natural Areas
- Perennial Streams
- Water
- Municipal Boundaries
- Blueway Trail



Detailed Status of Priority Trails

Dryden Rail Trail

Description

The completed Dryden Rail Trail (DRT), referred to as the Ithaca-Dryden Trail in the 2014 version of this Strategy, will provide a continuous off-street connection from East Ithaca and Cornell University out to Dryden Lake, passing through Varna, Etna, Freeville, and Dryden. It also links up with the Finger Lakes Trail at its eastern end, and the Cayuga Trail near the western terminus. The DRT can be thought about in five sections:

1. Varna section – a continuation of the Town of Ithaca’s East Ithaca Recreation Way at Game Farm Road east to the intersection of State Route 13 (SR-13)
2. Fall Creek Valley Corridor – connecting from SR-13 to Freeville through Etna
3. Freeville section – an existing trail in the Village of Freeville
4. Freeville-Dryden section – an existing section connecting Freeville to the western end of the Jim Schug section of the DRT in the Village of Dryden
5. Jim Schug Trail section – an existing rail-trail connecting the Village of Dryden to Dryden Lake and the Finger Lakes Trail

All sections of the trail are completed or soon to be completed except the Fall Creek Valley Corridor. A trail bridge over SR-13 is funded and slated for construction in 2024, along with an at-grade trail to Pinckney Road. The section proposed for immediate action is Fall Creek Valley Corridor section of the DRT filling the gap between Pinckney Road and the Village of Freeville.

Parties Involved

The Dryden Rail Trail Task Force is a nine-member volunteer group, established by the Dryden Town Board in March 2016, charged with the tasks of securing the trail right-of-way between Ithaca and the Village of Dryden and obtaining grant funding for trail development. The Town of Dryden provides staff and equipment to work on trail sections.

Current Status/Recent Accomplishments

- As of August 2023, over three quarters of the trail right-of-way has been secured, which is an ongoing effort for the Town and trail supporters.
- Over three million dollars have been received from local, state, and federal sources for trail development.
- From Game Farm Rd to Stevenson Rd, the trail is in use after the Town cleared brush, improved the surface, and renovated two timber-trestle railroad bridges.
- The crossing at Game Farm Rd is open after the Towns of Ithaca and Dryden and Tompkins County Highway Department coordinated to secure a safe crossing.
- From Stevenson Rd to Varna to SR-13, the trail is in use after clearing, grading, and applying a stone-dust surface from Stevenson Rd to the Fox Bridge crossing of SR-366 in Varna.
- A trail bridge over SR-13 is scheduled for construction in 2024, including the planned construction of an ADA accessible surface between Monkey Run Road and Pinckney Road.
- The Freeville-Dryden and the Jim Schug Trail sections of the DRT are completed and in use.

Action Items and Overcoming Key Barriers to Progress

- Secure the right of way in the Fall Creek Valley Corridor section
- Install bridges or culverts as needed throughout the corridor
- Coordinate with NYS Department of Transportation and Tompkins County Highway Department for safe at-grade crossings.

Future Phases

The currently planned DRT sections will be essentially complete after construction of the Fall Creek Valley segment. At that time the focus will shift to further improvement of the trail surface, maintenance of the facility, and installation of enhancements for trail users.

Using the historic rail corridors, future sections connecting to the DRT could be considered from Freeville north to Groton and from Freeville east to Cortland County and Lime Hollow Nature Center.

South Hill Recreation Way Extension

Description

The South Hill Recreation Way is a 3.4 mile long non-motorized, multi-use recreation trail that follows the route of a former Delaware, Lackawanna, and Western railway from Hudson St in the City of Ithaca to Burns Rd in the Town of Ithaca. The trail connects neighborhoods in the City and Town of Ithaca as well as Ithaca College and foot paths in the Six Mile Creek natural area. There is an effort underway to extend the trail approximately six miles beyond its current terminus on Burns Road to connect with the Finger Lakes Trail near the Tioga County line in the Town of Caroline. This extension would greatly improve the accessibility of the trail corridor to residents in the hamlet of Brooktondale and other nearby communities, passing from the Town of Ithaca through Danby and Dryden.

Parties Involved

The Town of Ithaca owns the majority of the existing South Hill Recreation Way. New York State Electric and Gas (NYSEG) currently owns the corridor for the extension, which is within the Towns of Ithaca, Danby, Dryden, and Caroline. The extension requires involvement from the four towns and NYSEG.

Current Status/Recent Accomplishments

Town board members from Caroline, Danby, Dryden, and Ithaca have been meeting regularly among themselves and with representatives from NYSEG to discuss the proposed extension of the trail and develop the easement for the trail.

Action Items and Overcoming Key Barriers to Progress

- Complete an easement agreement between NYSEG and the four towns to allow for the development of the trail extension and public access.
- Develop conceptual design and engineering for the trail extension, including a construction cost estimate. The design should address concerns of adjacent landowners relating to privacy as well as long-term trail maintenance.
- Complete an intermunicipal agreement among the four towns to coordinate construction and maintenance of the trail extension.
- Identify and secure funding for the trail.

Future Phases

The trail will be essentially complete after construction of the extension. At that time the focus will shift to maintenance of the facility and installation of enhancements for trail users.

A connection between the SHRW and East Ithaca Recreation Way, shown as the East-South Trail on the Priority Trails Map, will be considered in the future.

Black Diamond Trail – Extension to Trumansburg

Description

The Black Diamond Trail (BDT) is a multi-use trail network designed to connect Taughannock Falls State Park (TFSP), Allan H. Treman State Marine Park (adjacent to Cass Park), Buttermilk Falls State Park, and Robert H. Treman State Park. Between the City of Ithaca and TFSP, the trail is completed and open to the public. There is interest in extending the BDT north from its current terminus at TFSP to the nearby Village of Trumansburg. The extension to Trumansburg would provide a safe, convenient connection from TFSP to its nearest population center and would facilitate access to amenities (restaurants, shops, bike repair) for trail users.

Parties Involved

New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (NYSOPRHP) – Finger Lakes Region is responsible for the Black Diamond Trail. Other stakeholders include the Town of Ulysses and the Village of Trumansburg, and other destinations and organizations along the route. The development and long-term management of the Trumansburg extension will be a collaborative effort between NYSOPRHP, the Town of Ulysses and the Village of Trumansburg.

Current Status/Recent Accomplishments

The Town of Ulysses received funding from the Ithaca-Tompkins County Transportation Council in April 2023 to advance the scoping and planning of the BDT extension to the Village of Trumansburg. A consultant team has been hired for this purpose and began work in the summer of 2023.

The main challenge is reaching agreement in identifying a trail route alignment. Land ownership and development patterns create complications in identifying a route for the trail. Once an alignment is set, the project will be better positioned to address right-of-way consolidation and trail design components.

Action Items and Overcoming Key Barriers to Progress

- Support the ongoing scoping and planning project and the collaborative work of the Town of Ulysses, Village of Trumansburg, and NYSOPRHP.
- Work to secure all necessary right-of-way clearances and/or trail easements identified during the scoping/planning project for the preferred trail alignment.
- Work with responsible parties to identify a funding strategy to advance trail construction.

Future Phases

- Consider trail connections to local businesses (e.g., food and convenience stores, trail related services, and lodging), and nearby points of interest (e.g., Trumansburg Fairgrounds/Grassroots property, and Camp Barton facility).
- Consider completing a feasibility study for the continuation of the Black Diamond trail north to Geneva and potential connections with the Empire State Trail.

Black Diamond Trail – Connection between Buttermilk and Robert H Treman State Parks

Description

As mentioned above, the Black Diamond Trail (BDT) is a multi-use trail network designed to connect Taughannock Falls State Park (TFSP), Allan H. Treman State Marine Park (adjacent to Cass Park), Buttermilk Falls State Park, and Robert H. Treman State Park. This section describes the effort to connect Buttermilk Falls and Robert H. Treman state parks.

Parties Involved

New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (NYSOPRHP) – Finger Lakes Region will be responsible for developing this segment of the BDT. The Town of Ithaca has been actively working on behalf of NYS Parks to acquire the key properties in this section to ensure the future trail corridor and surrounding natural resources within the Cayuga Inlet Valley are protected. The development of the Buttermilk Falls and Robert H. Treman State Parks connection will be a collaborative effort between NYSOPRHP and the Town of Ithaca.

Current Status/Recent Accomplishments

The Town of Ithaca has secured the purchase of the final three properties that were in private ownership. NYSOPRHP will buy the land from the Town and work on design and construction of the trail.

Action Items and Overcoming Key Barriers to Progress

- Support the NYSOPRHP and the Town of Ithaca effort to complete transactions for the transfer of the acquired properties.
- Work with responsible parties to identify a funding strategy to advance trail construction.

Future Phases

Consider trail connections to local businesses (e.g., hotels/motels, boutique retail shops, wineries/breweries, and trail related services) and adjacent points of interest.

Urban Connectors

Description

The City of Ithaca, and its surrounding urban area, is located in the geographic center of Tompkins County. A system of trails across the county requires a clear, understandable system of urban connectors so users can access services and amenities and gain access to other trails within the system. These include on-street bike routes, sidewalks, city foot trails, and key multi-use trail connectors that create convenient, easily found, usable routes across the urban core. Key trail elements of this system are in place, underway, or envisioned as follows:

- Cayuga Waterfront Trail (CWT) is a six-mile paved multi-use trail completed in 2014. The CWT connects waterfront destinations to several neighborhoods and touches on the City of Ithaca sidewalk network at different locations.
- Black Diamond Trail (BDT) connects to the CWT at Cass Park. The BDT section from Cass Park/CWT to Buttermilk Falls State Park is currently funded and in design. This section will connect important recreational park facilities and provide a short-cut access from West Hill to Cecil Malone Drive and multiple employment and shopping opportunities.
- Gateway Trail from Stone Quarry Rd crossing the Kirby Edmunds Bridge to the west side of SR-13. This section of the trail is complete. This section offers access to Buttermilk Falls State Park.
- The proposed Gateway Trail section north of Stone Quarry Rd to the South Hill Recreation Way (Hudson St trailhead) is a priority trail connection. The proposed trail will cross the Southworks multi-use development and will also connect to city sidewalks serving the South Hill neighborhood, before connecting to the South Hill Recreation Way on Hillview and Hudson streets.

The City of Ithaca Trails Master Plan (2004) outlines multi-use and pedestrian trails that currently exist, are in the planning phase, or have been proposed. Additional connections are available, particularly bike routes such as those envisioned in the 2011 ITCTC Ithaca Neighborhood Greenways Study and the 2012 City of Ithaca Bicycle Boulevard Plan. In addition, the City of Ithaca has an extensive sidewalk network and a robust sidewalk maintenance program that facilitates pedestrian access throughout the urban core.

Parties Involved

The Cayuga Waterfront Trail Initiative was built in partnership between the Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce Foundation and the City of Ithaca. The CWT is maintained by the City of Ithaca, NYSOPRHP, and the Friends of Stewart Park. The Gateway Trail is jointly managed by the City and the Town of Ithaca. The Black Diamond Trail is under the jurisdiction of the NYSOPRHP, and under the City of Ithaca in the urban sections. The City of Ithaca and the Town of Ithaca are responsible for all streets and sidewalks within their respective boundaries, and streets and sidewalks within the Cornell campus are the institution's responsibility.

Current Status/Recent Accomplishments

- CWT: With the trail completed the focus shifts to maintenance and enhancements for this valued City of Ithaca facility.
- The BDT/CWT Bridge over the Flood Control Channel adjacent to Floral Avenue is expected to be completed in 2024.

- The City of Ithaca has secured Transportation Alternatives Program funding for the BDT trail section from the Bridge over the Flood Control Channel south to the existing Gateway Trail terminus behind the Home Depot Store. This project is in the planning stages as of 2023.
- An easement for the Gateway Trail has been secured across the Southworks project property north of Stone Quarry Rd.

Action Items and Overcoming Key Barriers to Progress

- CWT
 - Trail complete, and the focus is on trail maintenance and enhancements.
- BDT
 - Support progress from the bridge over the flood control channel to Buttermilk Falls State Park
- Gateway Trail
 - Support continued coordination with the Southworks project management
 - Plan for and support crossing improvements at Stone Quarry Rd
 - Develop a strategic project implementation plan for the trail from Stone Quarry Rd to Hudson St, including a plan for the trail section between Southworks and Hudson St
- Streets and Sidewalks
 - Identify and improve on-street bike and pedestrian networks within the urban area that provide clear connections to trails.

Future Phases

- Lehman Alternative Community School Multi-Use Trail could provide much needed pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure on West Hill and a connection to CWT and BDT.
- West Hill Village to the pedestrian Bridge over the Flood Control Channel: Explore options for a more direct connection.

Finger Lakes Trail

Description

The Finger Lakes Trail (FLT) is a 1000-mile system of hiking trails that includes a 580-mile main trail extending from Allegany State Park to the Catskill Mountains through the Finger Lakes and Southern Tier regions. In Tompkins County, the FLT and associated loop trails traverse the “Emerald Necklace,” a corridor of forested, hilly landscapes south of Cayuga Lake that encompasses 50,000+ acres of public open space and features a diversity of wildlife habitats and landscapes. Two-thirds of the 55 miles of the main FLT in Tompkins County is on public land or non-profit protected properties, 10 miles of trail are hosted by 36 private landowners, and for the remaining 8 miles, no trail corridor is currently available, and the route is along public roads.

Parties Involved

The Finger Lakes Trail Conference (FLTC) is the coordinating group for the Finger Lakes Trail System, and in Tompkins County, the FLT is stewarded by the Cayuga Trails Club, which constructs and maintains the trail, trail bridges, lean-tos, and signage, as well as maintaining relations with private landowners who host the trail. The Finger Lakes Land Trust (FLLT) works to protect the hiking corridor, as well as hosting the FLT on five of its nature preserves. NY State Parks, Forests, and Wildlife Management Areas host the FLT through much of the region and Cornell Botanic Gardens hosts it on two of its Natural Areas. All these organizations work closely together to advance permanent protection of the FLT corridor, trail, and associated amenities.

Current Status/Recent Accomplishments

The FLT hiking sections on private lands are rarely permanently protected; development pressures and other factors have led to some displacement of the trail off private property and onto roads. Over the past decade, the FLTC, FLLT, and NYS DEC have protected new lands that host the trail, such as the following:

- The Bock-Harvey Forest Preserve (FLTC and FLLT) and Rieman Woods (FLTC) in Enfield;
- An FLTC purchase of land on the steep eastern slope of White Church Valley (Town of Caroline); this property will be added to Shindagin Hollow State Forest;
- On the west side of White Church Valley, the new FLLT Eberhard Nature Preserve and other lands for future addition to Danby State Forest provide a permanent FLT corridor across Eastman Hill;
- In the Town of Ithaca, the FLLT Tapan Mitra Preserve has been expanded to include a critical access point and linkage for the FLT as it crosses the Cayuga Inlet valley, with FLT interpretive signage at the parking area on SR-13;
- The FLLT Summerland Farm Preserve hosts a section of the FLT as it leaves Potato Hill State Forest.

Additionally, access to the FLT in Tompkins County has been enhanced by the addition of parking areas at all these newly protected areas, TCAT bus stops have been added where the FLT crosses Rt 13 at Robert H. Treman State Park and the Tapan Mitra Preserve, and TCAT service to Bock-Harvey Forest Preserve and Upper Robert H. Treman State Park has been added for the first Saturday morning bus run to Enfield.

Action Items and Overcoming Key Barriers to Progress

- Secure permanent protection of the entire FLT within Tompkins County. This will require a combination of:
 - acquisition of new protected properties
 - landowner agreements for permanent trail easements across their properties
 - development of new routes to move the current 8 miles of road walk onto a trail corridor.
- Identify a safe crossing for the FLT over the Cayuga Inlet and the railroad tracks adjacent to the Tapan Mitra Nature Preserve.
- Encourage municipalities along the FLT to advance the following:
 - recognize the trail's health and recreational value for residents
 - develop or strengthen land-use planning tools that can be employed to protect the trail and buffer it from nearby development.
- Expand TCAT to Trails information by adding specific FLT hikes that can be accessed via public transportation.
- Encourage associated connecting trails such as the Hammond Hill – Yellow Barn Connector.

Future Phases

Develop two additional FLT gateways in Tompkins County to enhance public access and offer interpretation of nearby natural and cultural resources.

- Town of Danby: a gateway within Jennings Pond section of Buttermilk Falls State Park on Bald Hill Road, a short distance from 96B. A connecting trail between Jennings Pond and the FLT is needed; this requires a permanent trail easement or a property acquisition.
- Town of Caroline: a gateway has also been envisioned where the FLT crosses SR-79. A reroute requiring property acquisitions or a permanent trail easement across private property will be necessary.

Public Transportation: TCAT to Trails

Description

Connecting public transportation to trails increases equity in access to the health and recreational benefits of nature and outdoor activities, as well as supporting sustainable transportation goals. TCAT to Trails is a project encompassing several goals: providing maps and online tools that illustrate and identify bus stops and routes that provide access to trails; adding this information to the website IthacaTrails.org; providing wayfinding signage at bus stops and on trails to illustrate those connections; improving access to trails and parks through additions of bus stops and route extensions; improving access to bus routes by the creation of trails that connect to bus stops; and publicizing TCAT to Trails to both traditional and non-traditional bus ridership.

Parties Involved

TCAT to Trails evolved as a partnership among the Cayuga Trails Club, TCAT (Tompkins Consolidated Area Transit, Inc.), and Cornell Design Connect. Other partners within the Tompkins County Parks and Trails Network have worked to develop trails to bus stops and publicize TCAT access to their parks.

Current Status/Recent Accomplishments

The TCAT to Trails project began in 2020 and has accomplished the following:

- Created a TCAT to Trails Map, available in hard-copy and online as a PDF, that illustrates the bus routes and stops that connect to parks and trails in the region. The hard-copy map is available at TCAT bus stations and on buses, the Visitors Bureau, outdoors-focused retailers, Cornell Outdoor Education, Ithaca College, and many hotels.
- Updated the IthacaTrails.org website to include bus stops that provide access to trailheads, with links taking users to public transit directions on Google Maps, as well as allowing users to filter trails to show those accessible by TCAT.
- Updated the TCAT website (tcatbus.com) to include a TCAT to Trails page with descriptions of the parks and trails reachable by bus, and links to IthacaTrails.org and the TCAT to Trails Map.
- Added new bus stops where the Finger Lakes Trail crosses State Rt 13 at the Robert H. Treman State Park and the FLLT Tapan Mitra Nature Preserve.
- Created a new trail to connect lower Robert H. Treman State to an existing bus stop on State Rt 13.
- Added on-demand service to Upper Robert H Treman State Park and the Bock-Harvey Forest Preserve for the first-run Saturday morning bus route to Enfield.
- Provided additional bus service to Stewart Park (and the Waterfront Trail) on summer weekends.
- Formalized connecting trails from bus stops at the Cayuga Medical Center and Museum of the Earth to the Black Diamond Trail.

Action Items and Overcoming Key Barriers to Progress

- Expand publicity for the recently developed TCAT to Trails Map and bus-trail connector tools available on the TCAT website and IthacaTrails.org. These would include posters at bus stations, community centers, colleges, visitor centers, state and local parks, trailheads, and on buses.
- Identify and develop new side-trails that connect main trails to TCAT routes, e.g., from the Black Diamond Trail at Upper Taughannock State Falls Park to SR-96 south of Trumansburg.

- Expand TCAT to Trails information on the TCAT website by adding descriptions of one-way hiking routes available with the use of bus transport.
- Design and install wayfinding signage at both bus stops and trailheads to illustrate and publicize these connections.

Sustaining the Network

Proper maintenance, promotion, and enhancement of the county-wide trail network is necessary to provide a safe and useful system, protect the financial investment that has been made to construct the trails, and ensure continued future use of the trails for residents and visitors of the County.

The following items and actions should be considered for implementation to support the development of all trails that are part of the county-wide trail network:

1. **Maintenance:** Securing appropriate funding for maintenance is necessary to ensure that trails remain safe and usable all year round. Municipalities should budget appropriately to cover costs and staff time. Some types of maintenance can be performed by citizen volunteers and existing friends' groups.
2. **Support and/or Develop Volunteer Friends of the Trail groups:** Citizen groups play an important role in trail development and success. To better respond to simple trail maintenance issues and to help identify needs for larger improvements, volunteer Friends of the Trail groups should be developed and/or supported.
3. **Accessible Trails:** Accessibility improvements should be proactively pursued and expanded, such as taking measures to allow people with mobility impairments and/or vision restrictions to better use the trails. Such measures include improving connections between sidewalks, bike lanes, and trails that are safe and continuous.
4. **Parking:** Improve and develop adequate parking areas at trailheads.
5. **Wayfinding Signs:** Appropriate, detailed, and uniform signage is necessary to the success of the county-wide trails network, both along the urban connectors as well as those trails connecting to the rural areas of our county. It is also important that the signage provides information such as points of interest along the trail and an overview of the larger trail network.
6. **Marketing of Trails:** Partner with county, regional and statewide tourism promotion agencies to encourage use by both residents and visitors. Ensure accurate trail information is available online.
7. **Parks and Trails Network:** The Tompkins Parks and Trails Network should continue to share information, promote projects for implementation, and identify opportunities for collaboration.
8. **Endorsement:** Encourage participating municipalities to officially recognize this Strategy so that future boards know and understand the intent and benefits of pursuing the trails network project.
9. **Equipment sharing for trail maintenance:** Develop agreements for equipment sharing and mutual collaboration for trail maintenance by those agencies and municipalities with jurisdiction over the countywide multi-use trail network.
10. **Develop on-street, sidewalk, and/or spur trail connections between main trail corridors and attractions, business districts and services.**
11. **Infrastructure Resilience:** Evaluate trail vulnerability to climate change induced severe weather events, including washouts and landslides. Support appropriate actions that promote trail resiliency, such as stormwater management and paving as needed.

Benefits of multi-use trails

- Enhance health, fitness, and recreational opportunities for the community.
- Boost the local economy by increasing the market for recreation-oriented goods and services.
- Increase local employment opportunities for trail planners, designers, local landscaping businesses, and construction crews when new greenways are built.
- Improve the overall appeal of a community to visitors and increase tourism.
- Contribute to the community's quality of life, which is an important factor in retaining and attracting workforce and employers.
- Provide routes for alternative transportation (such as bicycling, horseback riding, and walking) to connect people, communities, and the countryside.
- Preserve scenic beauty and allow access to scenic areas and undeveloped open space.
- Bring neighborhoods and villages together by providing pleasant routes for walking and biking.
- Help communities develop pride and cohesiveness.
- Soften urban and suburban landscapes with ribbons of green to improve quality of life and enhance property values.

Resources and Associated Plans

Tompkins County Multi-Use Map

The Ithaca-Tompkins County Transportation Council maintains an up-to-date Tompkins County Multi-Use Trail Map. It shows the status of the fully planned multi-use trail network for Tompkins County. Trails shown as existing have been built and are open to the public. Trails in progress are those that have been allocated funding and are at some stage in their design or construction. Proposed trails are those that have been identified in plans but have not been funded or advanced in any other way. The Tompkins Priority Trails Strategy is intended to complement this existing planning work by identifying trail segments which are current priorities for development, along with specific short-term key actions. View the map: <https://tompkinscountyny.gov/itctc>

Links to Related Trail Plans and Studies

- Black Diamond Trail Master Plan – New York State Parks, 2008 (<http://blackdiamondtrail.org/the-plan/>)
- Dryden-Freeville Trail Map and Description on the Town of Dryden's website (https://dryden.ny.us/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/DRT_MapFlier-20211015.pdf)
- Finger Lakes Trail System Map – Finger Lakes Trail Conference website (<https://fingerlakestrail.org/plan-hikes-finger-lakes-trail/interactive-trail-map-segmented/>)
- City of Ithaca Bicycle Boulevard Plan, 2012 (<http://www.cityofithaca.org/DocumentCenter/View/331/Bike-Boulevard-Plan-PDF?bidId=>)
- Cayuga Waterfront Trail (<https://www.friendsofstewartpark.org/cwthome>)

- Ithaca Neighborhood Greenways Study and Conceptual Plan, ITCTC, 2011
(<https://tompkinscountyny.gov/files2/itctc/projects/ING%20-%20Full%20Report%20with%20Appendices%20and%20Maps%5B1%5D.pdf>)
- South Hill Recreation Way – Extension Feasibility Study - DesignConnect, 2012
(http://dryden.ny.us/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/South-Hill-Recreation-Way-Feasibility_Study.pdf)
- Transportation Trail/Corridor Study - ITCTC, 1996
- Town of Ithaca Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan(1997) and Transportation Plan (2007):
(<https://www.town.ithaca.ny.us/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/TOI-Full-Open-Space-Report-85pgs.pdf>
and https://www.town.ithaca.ny.us/resource_library/transportation-plan/)

Acknowledgements

Sections updated and edited by:

Robert Beck, Dryden Rail Trail Task Force

Katie Borgella, Tompkins County Department of Planning and Sustainability

Fernando de Aragon, Ithaca-Tompkins County Transportation Council

Nick Helmholdt, Tompkins County Department of Planning and Sustainability

Darby Kiley, Tompkins County Department of Planning and Sustainability

Jay Lambrix, Ithaca-Tompkins County Transportation Council

Tim Logue, City of Ithaca

Megan McDonald, Tompkins County Department of Planning and Sustainability

Marcus Riehl, NYS Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation

Myra Shulman, Cayuga Trails Club

Document review by the Tompkins Parks and Trails Network

Maps prepared by Sharon Heller, Tompkins County GIS Division