

Oneida Rail Trail

Communities that provide trails have the potential to create jobs, grow local businesses, enhance property values and provide positive health, recreational and civic benefits.



Portion of the existing city-owned railbed adjacent to Oneida High School



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ONEIDA IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE
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Benefits of Greenways and Trails

Trails are Economic Development

Trails boost the economy. A major National Park Service study of three rail-trails —an urban trail in California, a suburban trail in Florida, and a rural trail in Iowa — found that **trail use pumped between \$1.2 and \$1.9 million annually** into the economies of nearby communities.

Create spin-off businesses. Bike shops, bed and breakfasts, and ice cream shops are just some of the new businesses that can result from trails. The downtown of Dunedin, Florida (population 35,321) suffered a 35 percent storefront vacancy rate in 1992. Then, an abandoned CSX railroad track became the Pinellas Trail. Now, **storefront occupancy is 100 percent** and there's a waiting list for available space.

Attract tourism. Trails are destinations. Bicyclists, a growing, affluent segment of the tourist market, contribute significantly to local businesses that are well-connected to trails. According to the U.S. Travel Association, **bicycling is now the third most common vacation activity.**

Trails Enhance Quality of Life

Heavily Used. A growing number of Americans view outdoor activities as a way to enjoy **safe, scenic recreation for the entire family.** Opened in 1979, the 11-mile Warren County Bikeway near Glens Falls (population 14,700) was New York State's first rail-trail. The Bikeway continues to grow in popularity with residents and tourists alike; use tripled between 1980 and 1995 to an estimated 104,000 user trips per year.

Desired Asset. Trails, according to a National Association of Homebuilders study are the **number one amenity** potential homeowners cite when they are looking at moving into a new community

A Wise Business Decision. Quality of Life is a **crucial factor in recruiting and keeping good employees.** Many business leaders say quality of life issues, such as the proximity to greenways and trails, are highly important when deciding where to locate a new factory or office.

Increase Property Values. Many studies demonstrate that parks, greenways and trails **increase nearby property values**, thus increasing local tax revenues.

Good for Health

Close-to-Home Recreation. People are more likely to exercise if they can incorporate it into their every-day schedule. Community trails provide an **easy access point for daily exercise.**

Reduces Health Care Costs. A recent report, *Physical Inactivity in NYS, an Economic Cost Analysis*, estimates that physical **inactivity costs New York State \$3 billion a year.** Studies from the national Centers for Disease Control show that providing better access to places for physical activity increases the level of physical activity in a community.

Much of this information comes from the New York Parks & Conservation Association publication entitled *Greenways and Trails Bringing Economic Benefits to New York*. Read it here: http://www.ptny.org/pdfs/greenways/publications/economic_benefits.pdf

Good for Environment

Reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Transportation contributes the largest amount of greenhouse gases of any other sector. Increased walkability lessens driving needs and can lead to a **reduction in these greenhouse gas emissions**.

Protect Open Space. Greenways **protect open space** and provide corridors for wildlife. They can help control flooding and protect water quality and fragile ecosystems.

Make Communities More Livable

Save Money. Trails offer an alternative to driving. Transportation is the second largest expense for American households, costing more than food, clothing, and health care. Yet according to the National Household Travel Survey, 48 percent of all trips are three miles or less and **24 percent of trips are one mile or less**.

Crucial to non-drivers. With a connected trail and sidewalk system, communities can help retain their seniors by keeping them **independent** even when they can no longer drive. Walkable communities also give children and others who do not drive other **options for getting around**.

Preserve Historic Heritage and an Educational Resource

Opportunity to Tell a Story. Greenways and trails also provide opportunities for adults and children to experience and understand the natural world. Through kiosks, informational signs, and other interactive guides, many communities use trails as **educational resources** to teach visitors about history, nature or stewardship.

History Preserved. Railroads played an important part in the development of New York State by facilitating trade and westward expansion. Rail Trails are a way to preserve these railway corridors and offer future generations the chance to experience and **learn about New York history**.

Enhance Civic Engagement

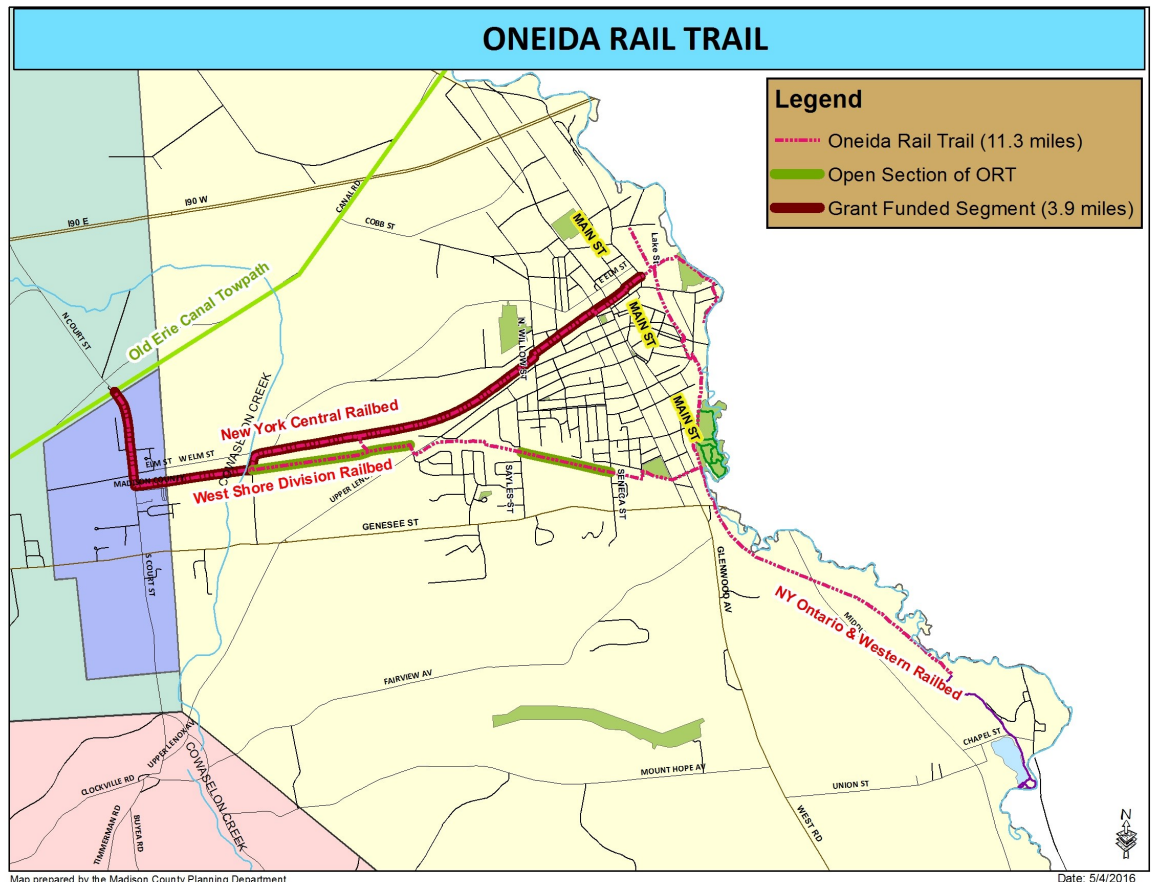
Trails bring People Together. Trails provide a positive **place for social interaction**. A quote from Anne Lusk, Stowe Vermont greenway advocate, may say it best: "People are different on a path. On a town sidewalk strangers may make eye contact but that is all. On a path they smile, say hello and pet one another's dogs. I think every community in America should have a greenway."



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City of Oneida Rail Trail

- ◆ Approximately 11.3 miles of trail exists – mostly along existing railbeds, but in some places connecting roadways must be used
- ◆ In most places, the trail is already being maintained and used by the public
- ◆ The ORT will connect to the Old Erie Canal State Historic Park and the 363 mile Erie Canalway Trail across the state. The ORT will also connects to Maxwell Field, DuRoss Conservancy, and Oneida Community Mansion House trails which means access to an additional 3 miles worth of local trails
- ◆ The trail links the City of Oneida and villages of Wampsville (with easy access to Old Erie Canal Towpath) and Sherrill
- ◆ The majority of the trail segments are already owned by the City of Oneida, some are owned by utilities and a few are held by private landowners
- ◆ Creating the Rail Trail is a current goal of the Oneida Comprehensive Plan. *From the City of Oneida Comprehensive Plan (adopted September 2005) goal section: "Formerly designate rail-road right-of-ways as greenways and initiate implementation of trail system."*



Map prepared by the Madison County Planning Department

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FAQs

What exactly are greenways and community trails?

According to Parks and Trails New York, greenways and community trails come in many shapes and sizes. They can be urban or rural, busy or quiet, paved or grassy. They connect neighborhoods, businesses, schools, libraries, parks, and other local attractions. Many greenways and community trails use transportation corridors, such as abandoned rail lines and historic canals. Others follow natural features, such as rivers and lakeshores. Community trails are often local projects, created by neighborhood and civic associations, chambers of commerce, and local trail user groups. The most successful ones are supported by a broad partnership of community interests.

Who is already using the Oneida Rail Trail and what is the intended use in the future?

Walkers, bicyclists, joggers, cross-country skiers, dog walkers, bird watchers, and parents with strollers are already enjoying many portions of the Rail Trail. In some places along the trail, such as near Oneida Creek, anglers use the trails. Snowmobile use is allowed only per local ordinance. The organizers of this project have no authority to expand or detract from where snowmobiling is currently allowed; the intent of this project is to create non-motorized, passive use trails only.

If the trail already exists then why is this project necessary?

While a majority of the sections are currently maintained and passable, some connections still need to be made. For instance, some portions of the trail that are currently and historically used by the community lie along parcels owned by the utility company National Grid and a few are owned by private land owners. Negotiations will be necessary to incorporate these sections. Signage and promotional materials such as maps and brochures also need to be developed to make potential users aware of the trail.

Who is involved to make this project happen?

The Oneida Parks and Recreation Department is the lead on the project. The Oneida Recreation Commission, comprised of the Parks Department and community members, are actively seeking funding and advising the Department on phases of the project. Additional funding for the project is also being sought by the Oneida Improvement Committee, Inc, a 501-3C whose mission is to improve the City of Oneida. The City has also partnered with the Madison County Planning Department for technical support such as mapping.

How can I get involved?

Volunteers are crucial to maintaining all of Oneida's treasured parks and trails. From trail clean-up to making promotional materials, there are volunteer opportunities that can fit your interest and skills. If you are interested in helping with this or other Parks Department projects please contact Patti Meakin at 315-363-3590 or pmeakin@oneidacity.com

"If there's one essential ingredient to creating trails and trail systems, it's people. All the land and financing in the world won't blaze a trail if there aren't people championing the project."

—BAY AREA RIDGE TRAIL COUNCIL





A trail user out on a walk in the winter



On the trail along Oneida Creek



Walkers enjoying the trail



The raised railbed near Carinci Park



Portion of the existing city-owned railbed headed west to Wampsville



Trail head at Harden Street

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