

# Caution at the Crossroads

Evaluating, Planning, and Promoting Road and Trail Intersection Safety in New York

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# Motivation - Opportunities for exposure to risk are growing

- More multi-use trails built throughout the state
- More people of all ages and abilities using trails
- New Yorkers not accustomed to obey crosswalk laws

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# Goal

- Learn more about the status of road and trail intersection design and safety in New York
- Increase awareness of road and trail intersection safety for trail users and motorists
- Suggest ways to further optimize the safety of road and trail intersections

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# Methodology

- **Review existing studies and design guidelines**
  
- **Survey practitioners**
  - Phase One – 1896 individuals
    - Trail managers
    - Local elected officials
    - County planners
    - County highway superintendents
    - Bicycle pedestrian coordinators – NYSDOT, MPO
    - NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) and NYS Parks regional personnel
  
  - Phase Two – 108 individuals
    - Bicycle pedestrian coordinators – NYSDOT, MPO
    - NYSDEC and NYS Parks regional personnel
    - County Traffic Safety Board chairpersons

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# Surveys - Information sought

- Type of trail and classification of road crossed
- Road and trail intersection design
- Occurrence and nature of crashes
- Nature and number of safety complaints
- Suggestions for improving road and trail intersection safety

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# Who responded

## Phase One

- 9% response rate
  - 212 surveys
  - 194 trails, 174 individuals
  - 56 of New York's 62 counties represented
  - 50% highway superintendents and public works departments (44% local, 6% county)

## Phase Two

- 18.5% response rate
  - 20 surveys

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# What we learned – Complaints

## Previous safety complaints

- 39 (20%) – Phase One survey
  - 8 (35%) – Phase Two survey
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- Speeding vehicles
  - Poor sight distance
  - 60% Phase One and 65% Phase Two - little or no idea of design guidelines used



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# What we learned - Crashes

## ■ Limited information

- 41 unknown (21%)
- 42 no answer (22%)

## ■ 7 crashes reported

- 2 – bicyclists; 1 – pedestrian
- 3 – OHVs (dirt bikes, ATVs, 4-wheelers); 1-snowmobile

## ■ 3 fatal

- cyclist – alignment issues, well signed
- ATV rider – illegal use, no on-road signs
- ATV rider – legal use, user error, well signed



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# What we learned – Suggestions to improve safety

## ■ Design

- Signage for road and trails – focus on alerting motorist to trail (14)
- Crosswalks (12)



## ■ Maintenance – sight distance and crosswalks

## ■ Enforcement - speed limits, crosswalk laws

## ■ Education

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# Recommendations

- Policy changes
- Design suggestions to supplement current guidelines and standards, keyed to road and trail traffic volume
- Public education

# Suggested Policy changes

- Refine or clarify existing laws to account for trails as a transportation corridor and address the unique needs of road and trail intersections
  - E.g., Are trails equivalent to sidewalks in the definition of an unmarked crosswalk? (V&T 110 (a))
- Crash reporting
  - Add category for road and trail intersection crashes to existing forms to aid information collection and retrieval
- Maintenance
  - Funding assistance
  - Improve communication among involved parties

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# Design suggestions

Trail Users - Slow down and be alert



**Harlem Valley Rail Trail**

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# Design suggestions

## Motorists - Slow down and be alert

- Crosswalks - Marked, textured, raised
- Trail name signs



**Harlem Valley Rail Trail**

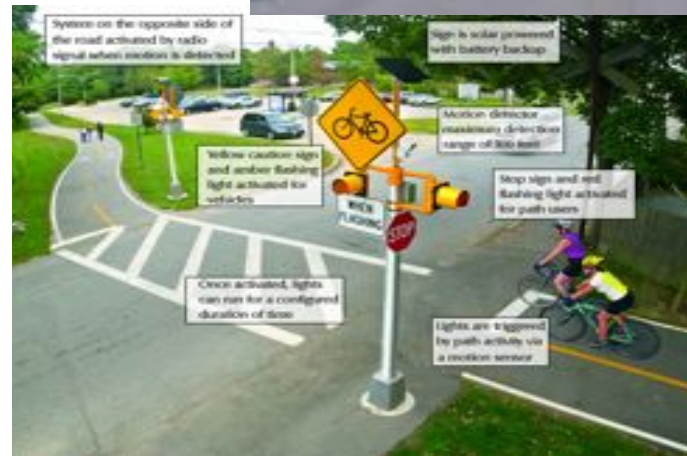
# Design suggestions

## Motorists - Slow down and be alert

- Refuge islands
- Speed humps



- Flashing signals





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# Public Education Campaign

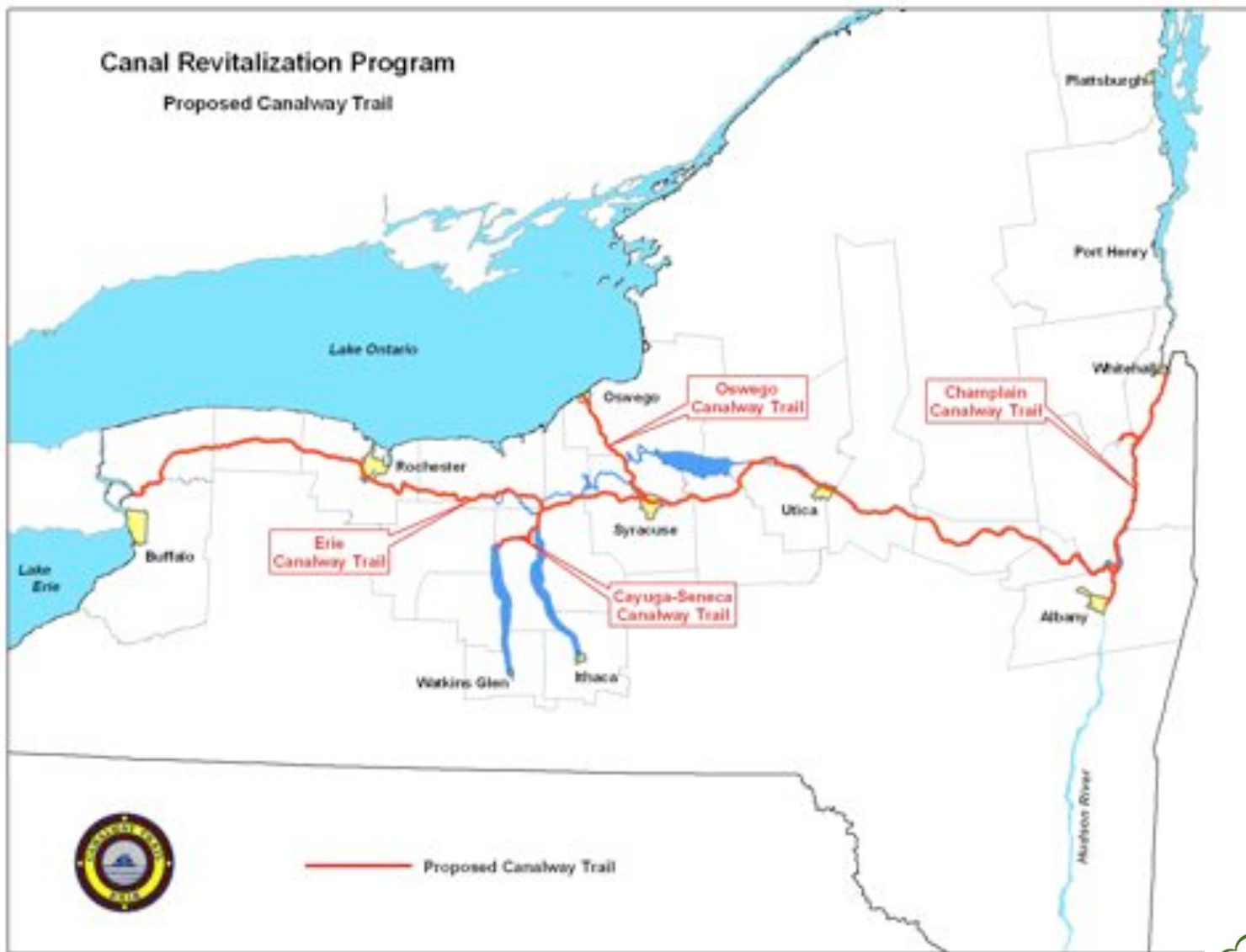
## Stop, Watch, Walk!

### Initial Focus – Erie Canalway Trail

- Name recognition and visibility
- Large number of users
- Many intersections with striped crosswalks







# Public education – Message

## Stop, Watch, Walk!

### ■ Motorists


- Slow down
- **Watch** for trail users
- Obey existing crosswalk laws – yield to pedestrians or dismounted cyclists

### ■ Trail users

- **Stop** at road and trail intersections; cyclists dismount
- **Watch** for cars, be sure drivers see you
- **Walk** across

- Collisions between trail users and motorists are not accidents. They are **crashes** that can be prevented.

# Public education campaign



**STOP WATCH**  
**WALK**

Let's work together to make trails safer!

△ **Trail users:** Stop at road and trail intersections. Dismount if you are a cyclist. Watch for cars, even if you are in a striped crosswalk. Make sure drivers see you before walking across.

△ **Motorists:** Watch for trail users when approaching a trail intersection. The law requires you to yield to a pedestrian or dismounted cyclist within the crosswalk.

**It's the Law**

*"...the driver of a vehicle shall yield the right of way, slowing down or stopping to yield to a pedestrian crossing the roadway within a crosswalk on the roadway upon which the vehicle is traveling..."*

-Section 1151 of the NYS Vehicle and Traffic Law

*Be alert! Always wear a helmet.  
Use caution at all road and trail crossings.*

**Stop, Watch, Walk!**  
**Be Alert -- Use Caution!**


New trails are opening all over New York State and they're becoming more and more popular. Persons young and old are increasingly using trails for transportation, recreation, and health.

Many trails, especially multi-use trails, cross roads at some point. These road and trail intersections are potential trouble spots for crashes. Trail users and motorists can work together to prevent crashes.


**Use caution at road and trail crossings.**

By enjoying a trail responsibly, you can make an important contribution to the safety of other trail users. As a motorist, being alert and watching for trail intersections can help save lives in your community.

**Collisions between trail users and motorists are not accidents. They're crashes that can be prevented!**



Parks and Trails New York is a not-for-profit statewide membership organization that works to expand, protect and promote a network of parks, trails and open spaces throughout the state for the use and enjoyment of all. For more information call (518) 434-1583 or visit [www.ptny.org](http://www.ptny.org).



The New York State Canal Corporation maintains, operates, and promotes the navigable 524-mile inland waterway that crosses upstate New York. The canal system features numerous parks and recreation areas along the Canaway Trail. For information call 1-800-4-CANAL-4 or visit [www.nyscanals.gov](http://www.nyscanals.gov).

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# Communication Channels

- *Road and Trail Intersection Safety: An examination of present practice, Recommendations for future actions*
- Articles in PTNY, trail group and community newsletters
- Press releases
- Public service announcement contest for high schools
- Workshops with County Traffic Safety Boards, law enforcement officials, planning and bike-ped personnel
- Website - Cornell Local Roads Program for highway superintendents
- Youtube and local television stations
- Conference presentations

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# Rack Card Distribution

- AAA regional offices and existing driver education classes
- NYS Department of Health Injury Prevention Unit - health and safety fairs
- Selected Erie Canalway Trail kiosks
- Chambers of Commerce

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# Rack Card Distribution

- PTNY Cycling the Erie Canal guidebook purchasers
  - PTNY-sponsored event participants
  - PTNY workshops, responses to inquiries
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**Let's work together to make trails safer!**



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[www.ptny.org](http://www.ptny.org)