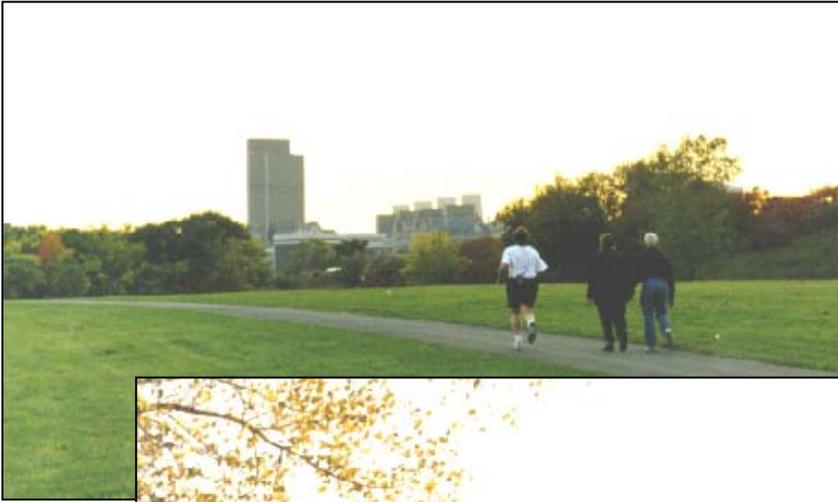


# THE MOHAWK-HUDSON BIKE-HIKE TRAIL & ITS IMPACT ON ADJOINING RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES

A Survey of Residential  
Property Owners' Perspectives  
Regarding an Adjacent  
Multi-Use Recreational Trail's  
Impact on Their Lives  
and Property



PREPARED BY THE  
SCHENECTADY COUNTY  
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING

NOVEMBER 1997





THE MOHAWK-HUDSON BIKE-HIKE TRAIL  
&  
ITS IMPACT ON ADJOINING RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES

*A Survey of Residential Property Owners' Perspectives Regarding a Multi-Use Recreational Trail's Impact on Their Lives and Property*

BY

Schenectady County Department of Planning

November 1997

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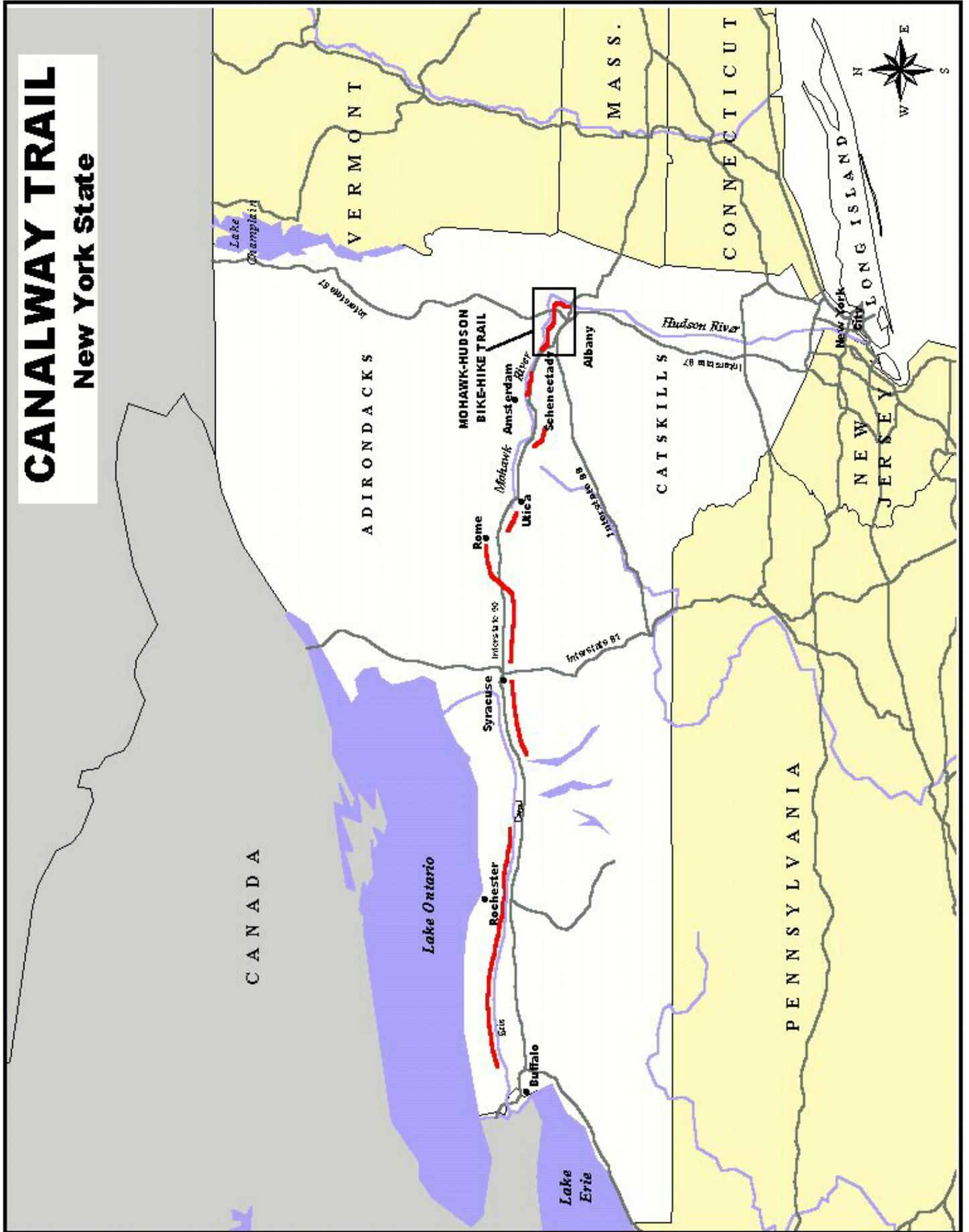
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# CANALWAY TRAIL

New York State





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## INTRODUCTION

This report documents the results of a survey mailed to all owners of residential property located along the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail—a 35 mile long multi-use trail that travels along the shores of the Mohawk and Hudson Rivers through the Counties of Schenectady and Albany, N.Y. In addition to recording pertinent characteristics of landowners and their properties adjoining the trail, the survey gave landowners an opportunity to express their opinions regarding the impact the trail has on their lives and property. This landowner survey is part of a larger regional effort underway to document the extent and type of use occurring on the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail, and user attitudes toward the trail. While the companion trail user survey is still ongoing, preliminary data are included herein with the results of the landowner survey to give a brief profile of current trail use.

Trails and greenways are recreation resources that are receiving increasing attention. These linear systems not only provide diverse trail-related opportunities within themselves, but provide a mechanism that connects parks, historic sites, natural areas, and communities together. The Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail is one such linear park that serves the recreation and transportation needs of many area residents. The increasing use of the trail for recreation, special events, and education has created a tremendous need to maintain the integrity of this regional resource, address any recognized deficiencies, and explore opportunities for enhancement.

The popularity of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail, and similar trails throughout the state, has focused attention on the benefits that could be realized by establishing a continuous statewide trail along the Mohawk River and the associated State Canal System. The Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail is representative of localized efforts across the state to establish trails along the River and Canal. Located partially along the route of the old Erie Canal, the trail is an integral part of a recent effort to establish a 350 mile statewide "Canalway Trail." Through the cooperative efforts of volunteers and local, county, state, and federal governments, more than 130 miles of the "Canalway Trail" are already constructed. However, as in Schenectady County, there are critical segments of trail that need to be completed throughout the state if this trail is to become a reality.

While the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail is generally perceived as a benefit to the region, as most similar recreational trails are, attempts to construct and/or extend these trails are often met with fervent opposition from nearby landowners. The typical issues cited by landowners include increased crime, noise, loss of privacy, and decreased property values. Trail planners' contentions that these fears are overstated and not supported by experience with other trails tend to be questioned by decision makers in the face of vociferous opposition by landowners. Furthermore, the local economic benefits and important quality of life issues related to increased recreational opportunities and transportation alternatives made available by such trails typically get overshadowed during such confrontations. Consequently, reliable and relevant information is essential so that proposals for new trails, or extensions of existing ones, can be evaluated fairly and landowners' concerns can be effectively addressed.



## STUDY OBJECTIVES

This study is an attempt to gather information to assist in planning, developing, and managing multi-use trails to maximize benefits and mitigate negative impacts. The principal objective is to examine effects the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail has on adjacent residential property, including the types and extent of trail-related problems and benefits experienced by trail neighbors. Hopefully, the information gathered will foster ideas for improving the trail as a neighbor and also heighten awareness of this tremendous regional recreational and economic asset.

While many anecdotal observations have been made regarding use of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail and its impacts, little credible data is available regarding the benefits and problems associated with the trail. Although data have recently been gathered in other places around the country, data specific to the upstate New York area regarding adjacent landowner perceptions of similar trails is unavailable. Reliable information regarding the benefits and problems associated with such trails is essential so that proposals for similar trails can be evaluated objectively. Consequently, this study focuses on revealing the perceptions of neighboring residential property owners who live in close proximity to the trail. It is felt that since such homeowners play a major role in the debate about locating trails, their feelings about the existing Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail are most relevant.

## TRAIL DESCRIPTION

The Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail extends from the Erastus Corning Riverfront Preserve in downtown Albany west to Scrafford Lane in the Town of Rotterdam. The trail was constructed in the late 1970s and early 1980s and is built directly upon the old Erie Canal towpath and former railroad grades of the area's first transportation routes. Constructed between 1817 and 1825, the Erie Canal was 363 miles long with 83 locks built to overcome the differences in water height along its route from Albany to Buffalo. When the Erie Canal opened in the City of Schenectady in 1822, it flowed through the center of the City, along what is now Erie Boulevard. Currently, there are remnants of the Canal along the entire trail and throughout the region.

Over its approximate 35 mile length, the trail traverses four towns and four cities. Management responsibilities are disjointed and generally change as the trail crosses municipal boundaries. Law enforcement and emergency response is the responsibility of each separate municipal jurisdiction.<sup>1</sup> All nonmotorized uses such as walking/running, bicycling, and in-line skating are permitted with the exception of horseback riding. Motorized use is confined to snowmobiling along a short, rural section at the western end of the trail. There is no permit system or fee for users.

The trail runs through a wide range of settings including rural, sparsely developed areas; heavily developed urban settings; and, suburban single family home developments. The trail passes

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<sup>1</sup> On August 26, 1997 (after the landowner survey was completed), the N.Y. State Police, Troop T, announced that they will institute permanent patrols along 25 miles of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail from Cohoes to Rotterdam. The patrols will coincide with the NY State Thruway Authority's canal season of May 1 to mid November.



through various municipal parks and there are many access points. It crosses a number of local, county, and state roads, and long sections are located along or near the rear property lines of numerous single family homes. The trail is generally flat with an 8 to 10 foot wide paved asphalt surface. A one-mile stonedust segment in the Town of Colonie from Schermerhorn Road to the Cohoes City line is the only unpaved section of the trail. While the trail stretches approximately 35 miles, predominantly along the shores of the Mohawk and Hudson Rivers, it becomes a bike route in places within the Cities of Schenectady and Watervliet, and the Town/Village of Green Island, traversing local streets for short distances.

**The trail provides many scenic vistas of the historic Mohawk River Valley**



### **Trail Use**

Data from the ongoing user survey shows that the trail is truly a multi-use facility. While the profile of use varies depending upon the trail section, cyclists account for approximately 44 percent of user trips followed by walkers at 31 percent, runners at 18 percent, and in-line skaters at nearly 7 percent.

Since the opening of the trail in the late 1970s, use has increased significantly reflecting the national trend of an increasing number of Americans bicycling and walking. While no earlier user data are available, a conservative estimate based on the recent user survey puts current total trail use at approximately 90,000 user trips per year. A recent study by the Warren County Parks and Recreation Department indicates that use of their County Bikeway, located in the Lake George area of upstate N.Y., tripled between 1980 and 1995 to an estimated 104,000 user trips per year.

While the trail attracts users from relatively long distances, according to preliminary user survey results most trail users (69 percent) travel 5 miles or less to get to the trail. Approximately 22 percent of users travel between 5 and 10 miles, 5 percent travel between 10 and 20 miles, and 3 percent travel more than 20 miles to get to the trail. User survey response suggests that the



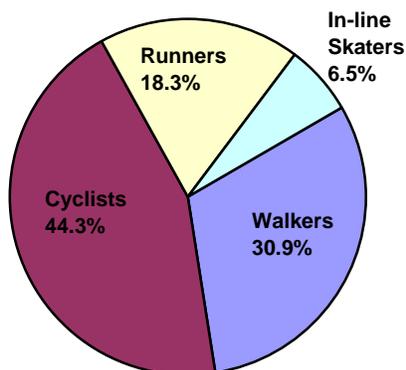
"capture area" of the trail, defined by miles traveled to reach the trail, expands on weekends with approximately 16 percent of weekend users travelling more than 10 miles to get to the trail versus 4 percent on weekdays.

**Today more adults than children ride bicycles for transportation and recreation.**

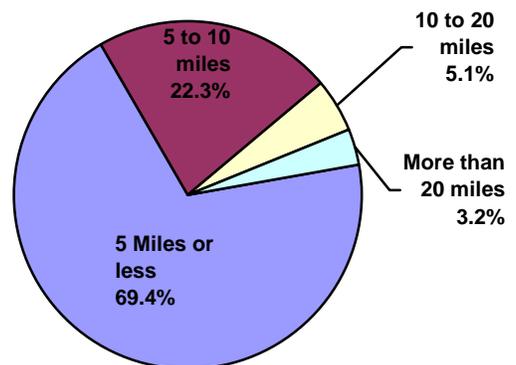


The vast majority (91 percent) of users reported that their primary purpose for using the trail is for recreation/exercise. The average duration of trail use is approximately 60 minutes on weekdays and 80 minutes on weekends. Averages vary significantly by mode, with cyclists tending to spend the longest amount of time on the trail and runners the shortest.

**Figure 1. Trail Use by Mode**



**Figure 2. Distance Traveled to Use Trail**



During weekdays, use tends to peak between 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. Peak use varies more on weekends with a morning peak around 11:00 a.m. and an afternoon peak around 2:00 p.m. While a small percentage of respondents reported using the trail one to four times a year (15 percent), a large number of users (47 percent) appear to be dedicated repeat users, reporting use at once a week or more.



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## **RESIDENTIAL LANDOWNER SURVEY METHODOLOGY**

### **Survey Instrument**

The residential landowner data contained in this report were collected through the use of a self-administered questionnaire distributed and returned through the mail. The survey instrument was 8 pages long and included a cover letter from the Commissioner of the Schenectady County Planning Department along with a generalized map of the trail, and contained 21 multiple choice questions. No open-ended questions were included except to provide opportunities for additional comments if desired. An effort was made to avoid questions about which the respondents were not likely to be knowledgeable, and to keep respondent burden to a minimum. A copy of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix A.

Questionnaires developed by others were reviewed and many of the questions, although modified to fit our situation, were borrowed from previous surveys. Much of the process was replicated from a study of three rail-trails conducted in 1992 by the U.S. Department of the Interior National Park Service Conservation Program.

### **Survey Pre-Test**

Prior to distribution, the questionnaire was pre-tested on a few landowners with homes along another existing trail. After completing the questionnaire, the participants were interviewed to discover ambiguity or bias in questions, problems with the layout, confusing questions, etc. Participants were also asked how much time it took to complete the questionnaire. As a result, several questions were removed and others were modified.

### **Survey Population**

Since a relatively small number of homes are located along the trail, the decision was made to mail questionnaires to all of them instead of a sample. Surveys were mailed in March of 1997 to a total of 315 residential property owners immediately adjacent to the trail. Only owners of properties immediately adjacent to the trail were sent questionnaires since the intent of the study is to get opinions from the people most impacted by the trail. Potential properties were first identified through the use of tax maps and aerial photos. Then the area was driven and the trail walked/biked in certain locations to confirm the physical relationship of the trail to the house. Questionnaires were not sent to adjacent property owners where the trail becomes a bike route and traverses local streets.



## Survey Distribution and Returns

A stamped, addressed envelope was included in the mailing to facilitate returns. All of the surveys were coded for mailing and data sorting purposes. This allowed data to be sorted by municipality and ensured that once a survey is returned, no follow-up mailings encouraging a response would be sent to that address. Originally, the intent was to mail a post card reminder approximately two weeks after the initial mailing, followed by an additional mailing of the survey approximately two weeks after the postcard. However, due to the excellent initial response, the postcard reminder was not mailed and the original mailing was instead followed by a second mailing of the survey in May of 1997, approximately three weeks after the first mailing. A total of 156 surveys (nearly 50 percent of the total mailing) was received after the first mailing. The second mailing elicited another 59 responses for a total response of 215, or 68.3 percent.

Table 1 presents response rate by county and municipality. The lower response rate for the two cities may be a reflection of the fact that the property owner does not live at the address and the unit may either be rented or unoccupied. Furthermore, the lower response rate for the two cities may reflect the degree of physical separation from the trail. If there is less of a direct relationship between the residence and the trail, neighbors may not be cognizant of the trail enough to motivate a response.

**Table 1. Residential Landowner Response Rates by County & Municipality**

MUNICIPALITY	SCHENECTADY COUNTY	ALBANY COUNTY		SCHENECTADY (CITY)*	NISKAYUNA	COLONIE	COHOES (CITY)	COMBINED
Surveys Mailed	135	180		75	60	18	162	315
Usable Responses**	96	119		45	51	15	104	215
Response Rate	71.1%	66.1%		60.0%	85.0%	83.3%	64.2%	68.3%

\*Includes five landowner responses from the Town of Rotterdam

\*\*Excludes undeliverable questionnaires

## DATA LIMITATIONS

For citizen surveys such as the landowner survey examined herein, reasonably high response rates are needed to make responses representative and credible. Generally, response rates greater than 50 percent and preferably above 60 percent should be sought. Since the landowner survey had a response rate of 68.3 percent, there is a good level of confidence that the respondents are representative of the homeowners along the trail.

As previously mentioned, an effort was made to avoid questions about which the respondents were not likely to be knowledgeable. Since all of the questions had high response rates, and a very small percentage of invalid responses, respondents were seemingly not confused by the questions. The survey questionnaire was also designed to ask residents about their own personal experiences (or experiences of their household) to reduce the likelihood of bias. However, as with all surveys, caution is suggested in interpreting the results.



## DESCRIPTION OF LANDOWNERS AND THEIR PROPERTY

The vast majority of landowners (96 percent) reported that the subject property along the trail is their primary residence. Only three percent of the properties were reported as rented, one percent as second homes, and less than one percent as unoccupied.

Less than 2 percent of landowners reported that the trail runs through their property while 38 percent said the trail is located along the edge of their property. The remaining 60 percent reported that the trail itself is near their property but not touching it.



**The backyards of many homes are adjacent to the trail.**

Table 2 shows the breakdown of the distance from homes to the trail. A significant number of landowners (27.8 percent) reported that the trail is less than 100 feet from their homes. At 32.5 percent, most homes are located between 100 feet and 200 feet from the trail. Only 13.7 percent of homes are located greater than 500 feet from the trail. With most homes being very close to the trail, survey respondents should be very cognizant of the trail's presence.

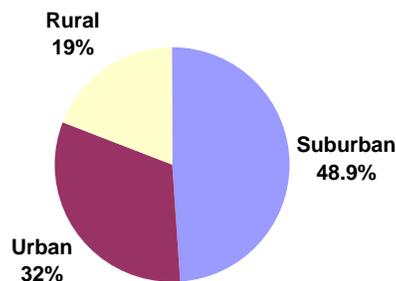
**Table 2. Distance of Homes from Trail**

DISTANCE	LESS THAN 100 FT.	100 FT. TO 200 FT.	201 FT. TO 500 FT.	GREATER THAN 500 FT.
Valid Responses	59	69	55	29
Percent	27.8 %	32.5 %	25.9 %	13.7 %



The average size of the adjoining properties is two acres, while the median size reported is .75 acres. The spread of property sizes is relatively even, with 23 percent less than .25 acres, 22 percent from .25 acres to .5 acres, 30 percent .6 acres to 1 acre, 18 percent 1.1 acres to 5 acres, and 7 percent 5.1 or more acres. These acreage figures appear consistent with the respondents reported description of their homes as urban, suburban, or rural. A total of 31.8 percent of properties were reported as urban, 48.9 percent suburban, and 19.2 percent rural.

**Figure 3. Reported land Use Character of Houses near the Trail**



The reported value of homes is reflective of the geographic area as a whole. A total of 50.0 percent of the respondents reported their homes worth \$99,000 or less, 32.9 percent between \$100,000 and \$149,999, and 9.5 percent between \$150,000 and \$199,999. Of the higher priced homes, only 1.0 percent are between \$200,000 and \$249,999 while 6.7 percent are valued by respondents at \$250,000 or more. According to the 1990 Census, the reported median values of homes for Schenectady, Niskayuna, Colonie, and Cohoes are \$82,100, \$137,400, \$112,000 and \$89,300, respectively.

The landowners are nearly equally split with regard to whether their home was acquired after or before the trail was built. A total of 47.4 percent reported that they acquired their home after the trail was built and 52.6 percent before. Since the trail was built in the early 1970s, a majority of the respondents have lived in the home for over 20 years. Such long-term residents should have ample experience with the trail to provide insightful and credible comments.

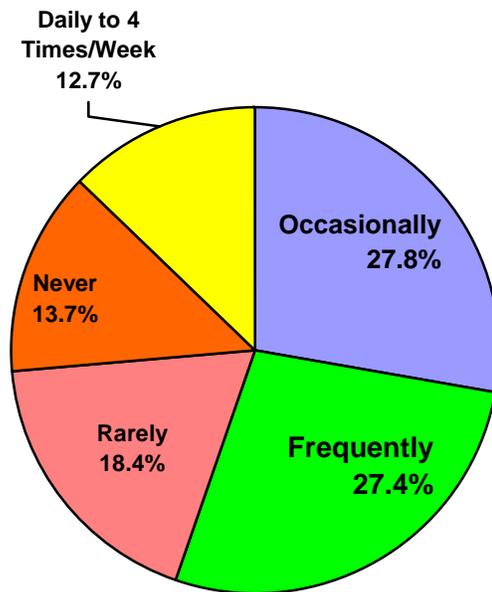
The median age of survey respondents is 51 years. The ages of respondents appears to be reflective of the area with the 40 to 49 year age group and the 50 to 59 year age group comprising 23.4 and 23.9 percent of responses, respectively. At 19.0 percent, the 70 and over age group has the next highest representation followed by 30 to 39 (18.5 percent), 60 to 69 (11.7 percent), and less than 30 years old (3.4 percent). By gender, representation is somewhat uneven with 58.7 percent of the respondents being male and 39.0 percent female. A total of five questionnaires were returned that indicated they were completed by both a male and female.



## LANDOWNERS' ATTITUDES TOWARD THE TRAIL

A total of 86.3 percent of property owners responded that their household uses the trail, while only 13.7 percent of property owners said their household never uses the trail. Of the households using the trail, 12.7 percent classified their use as daily to 4 times a week, 27.4 percent as frequently (once or twice a week), 27.8 percent as occasionally (once or twice a month), and 18.4 percent as rarely (once or twice a year).

**Figure 4. Trail Use Level by Adjoining Households**



Landowners were asked to recall their initial reaction to the idea of living near the trail and whether living near the trail is better or worse than they expected it to be. As shown in Table 3, five possible responses were presented from *Much Better Than I Expected* to *Much Worse Than I Expected*. Most people reported that living near the trail was the same as they expected it to be (56.3 percent), with 17.6 percent reporting it was better, and 10.1 percent reporting that it was much better. A total of 10.6 percent reported that it was worse than they expected it to be, and only 5.5 percent said it was much worse. Overall, respondents reported that living near the trail is somewhat better than they had expected it to be with an average response of 2.8, slightly better than the scales midpoint (3) which indicates they feel the same. Landowners in Schenectady County were somewhat more "positive" than those in Albany County with an average response of 2.7 in Schenectady vs. an average response of 3.0 in Albany County.

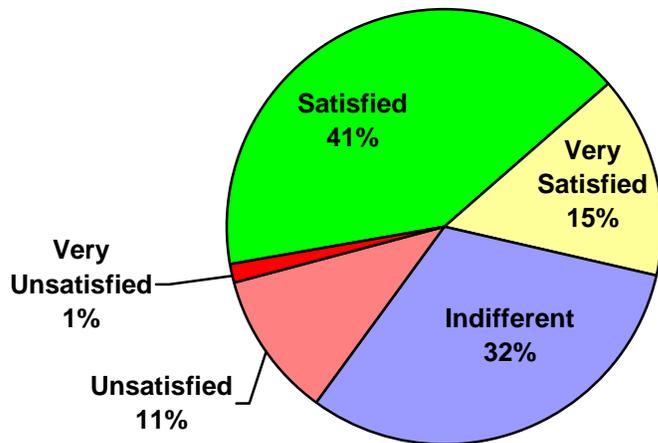


**Table 3. Opinions on Whether Living Near the Trail is Better or Worse Than Expected**

Possible Responses	RATING	FREQ.	PCT.
Much Better Than I Expected	<b>1</b>	20	10.1%
Better	<b>2</b>	35	17.6%
Same	<b>3</b>	112	56.3%
Worse	<b>4</b>	21	10.6%
Much Worse Than I Expected	<b>5</b>	11	5.5%
Total Valid Responses		199	
Average (Mean) Response		<b>2.8</b>	

When asked how satisfied they are with having the trail as a neighbor, 87.8 percent felt indifferent or expressed satisfaction with the trail. Landowner response tends to be "positive" with an overall average response of 2.4, significantly better than the scales midpoint (3) which indicates indifference. A total of 41.3 percent reported that they were satisfied, 15.0 percent reported that they were very satisfied, and 31.5 percent reported they were indifferent. Only 10.8 percent reported that they were unsatisfied and just 1.4 percent reported that they were very unsatisfied.

**Figure 5. Satisfaction Level With Trail as a Neighbor**

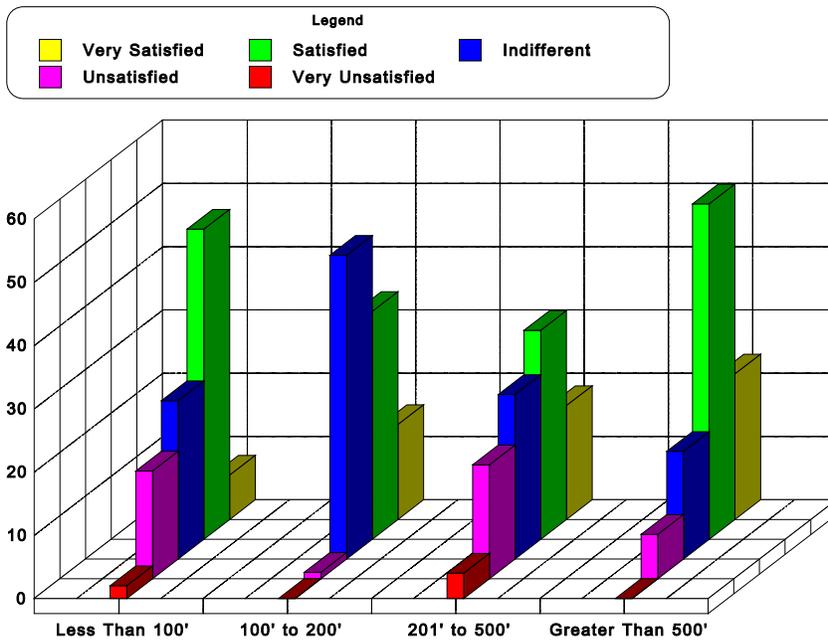






In general, there is no apparent trend in landowner attitudes toward the trail based on the distance of their home from the trail. The chart below shows the satisfaction levels with the trail by distance of home from the trail.

**Figure 6. Satisfaction Level (Percent) With Trail as a Neighbor**  
 (Sorted by Distance of Home from Trail)



When asked how the trail has affected the quality of their neighborhood, landowner response tends to be somewhat positive with 24.5 percent of respondents reporting that the trail improved their neighborhood and 5.3 percent reporting that it much improved their neighborhood. Most (51.4 percent) landowners reported that the trail had no impact while 17.3 percent said it worsened the neighborhood and only 1.4 percent said it much worsened the neighborhood.

#### EFFECTS ON PROPERTY VALUES AND ABILITY TO SELL PROPERTY

Trail neighbors were asked how they thought the trail had affected the value of their property and whether they thought it made their property harder or easier to sell. The majority (53.8 percent) of landowners reported that the trail has no effect on the value of their property. Those who feel the trail has either increased or lowered the value are divided evenly at 7.1 percent, respectively. A significant number (32.1 percent) of respondents indicate that they have not formed an opinion on the trail's impact on the value of their property.

A total of 85.8 percent of landowners feel that the trail has no effect or increased their ability to sell their houses. Most landowners (64.9 percent) feel that the trail has no influence on the ability to sell their house while 18.5 percent feel that the trail would make it easier to sell and 2.4 percent much easier. Of the remaining respondents, 12.8 percent feel that the trail would make it harder to sell their home and 1.4 percent much harder to sell their property.



**Table 5. Opinions about Whether Presence of Trail Has Made it Harder or Easier to Sell Home (Sorted by Municipality)**

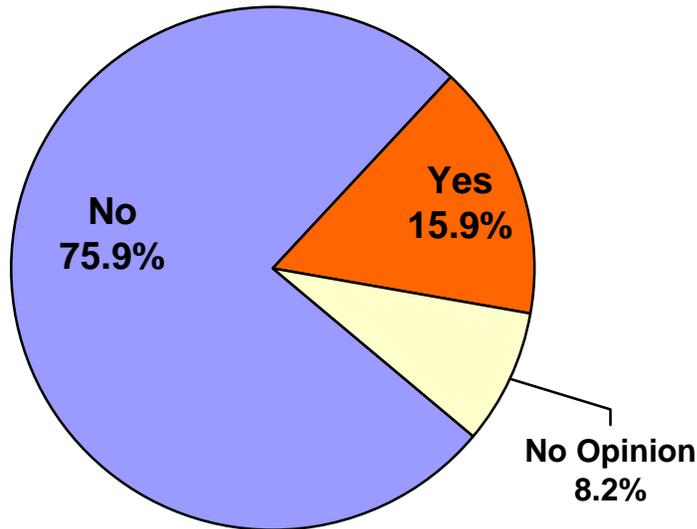
Possible Responses	Rating	Niskayuna		Schenectady		Cohoes		Colonie		Combined	
		Freq.	Pcnt.	Freq.	Pcnt.	Freq.	Pcnt.	Freq.	Pcnt.	Freq.	Pcnt.
Much Easier	1	1	2.0	2	4.8	0	0	2	13.3	5	2.4
Easier	2	20	40.0	10	23.8	5	4.8	4	26.7	39	18.5
Same	3	20	40.0	25	59.5	85	81.7	7	46.7	137	64.9
Harder	4	6	12.0	5	11.9	14	13.5	2	13.3	27	12.8
Much Harder	5	3	6.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	1.4
Total Responses		50		42		104		15		211	
Mean		2.80		2.79		3.09		2.60		2.92	

**SAFETY & OTHER POSSIBLE PROBLEMS RELATED TO THE TRAIL AND ITS USERS**

When asked whether the trail poses a risk to their personal or family's safety due to the activities of trail users, the overwhelming number (75.9 percent) of respondents said no. A total of 15.9 percent said yes and 8.2 percent had no opinion.

**Figure 7. Perceived Risk to Personal & Family Safety Due to Trail Users**

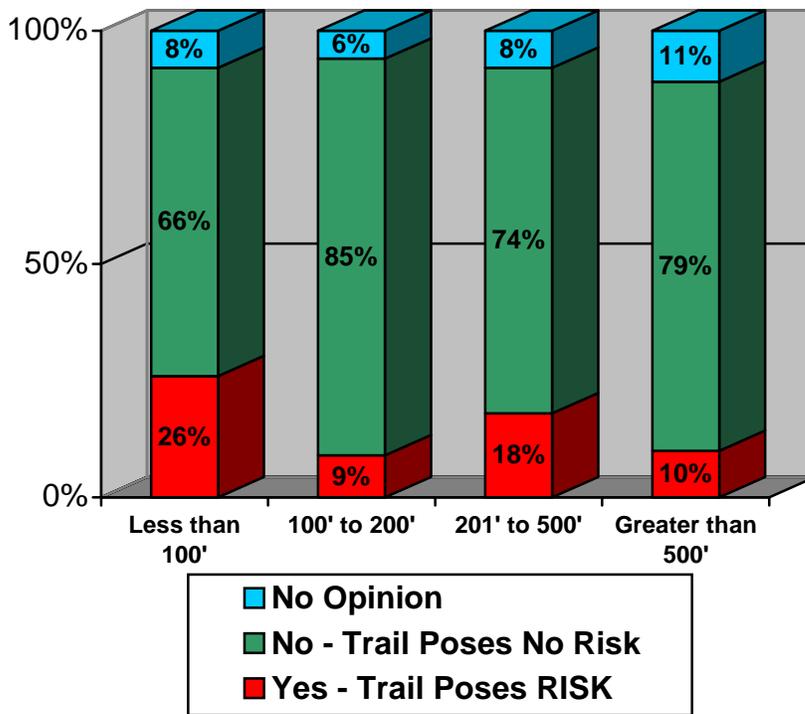
*Do you feel the trail poses a risk to your own or your family's safety due to the activities of trail users?*





As with satisfaction levels, there is no readily apparent relationship between distance of home from the trail and landowner perceptions of safety. Intuitively one would assume that as homes' distances from the trail decreased, landowners would perceive trail users as more of a safety concern. While this holds true somewhat for respondents with homes within 100 feet of the trail, respondents with homes between 100 and 200 feet from the trail felt that trail users posed less of a risk to their safety than did respondents with homes between 201 feet and 500 feet from the trail. These responses could be due to a variety of reasons such as the homes physical relationship to the trail. However, it is another indication that landowners' perception of the trail does not vary a great deal based on the trail's distance from the home, and under most circumstances, the data herein seemingly can be looked at in aggregate.

**Figure 8. Perceived Risk to Personal & Family Safety Due to Trail Users (Sorted by Distance of Home from Trail)**



Landowners were presented with a list of items that could possibly be problems for them due to the trail and its users. Trail neighbors were asked to respond by circling the number that best indicates how they feel about each item. Numbering was on a scale from 1 to 5 with 1 representing "Not At All A Problem" and 5 representing "A Major Problem." An opportunity was also given for respondents to indicate they have no opinion. Table 6 presents a summary of the responses from landowners with the items listed from biggest perceived problem to smallest. Generally, none of the listed items are perceived as a major problem by a large number of respondents. None of the listed items have a mean score above 2.36 registered for "Litter on/near my property." A total of five of the listed items had means above two and seven items had means below two. Even for the "worst" perceived problem item (Litter on/near my property), 41 percent of the respondents reported that it is "Not At All A Problem" while only 14 percent reported that it is a "Major Problem."



Landowners were also given the opportunity to write in specific items not indicated on the list. A total of 45 respondents (21 percent) provided additional items/comments. Most of the comments were reinforcements of an item from the list. Of these, illegal motor vehicle use was listed the most as a problem, followed by teenagers partying at night in the summer, and loss of privacy. A total of two respondents considered hunting and the discharge of firearms near the path a problem. Additionally, one of these respondents also mentioned that trapping should not be allowed near the trail.

Survey respondents were also given an opportunity at the end of the questionnaire to provide any other comments they might have about the trail or its management. (These responses can be found in Appendix B.) A significant number of these respondents mentioned that they would like more police patrols of the trail. As noted previously, the landowner survey was done prior to the announcement by the New York State Police that they will institute permanent patrols along the trail. These patrols should complement local police enforcement efforts along the trail.



**On-bike police patrols offer new possibilities for enforcement.**



**Table 6. Perceptions of Potential Problems as a Result of the Trail and Its Users**

**(Items listed from biggest perceived problem to smallest)**

POTENTIAL PROBLEM	MEAN	NOT AT ALL A PROBLEM				MAJOR PROBLEM
		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Litter on/near my property	<b>2.36</b>	41%				14%
Illegal motor vehicle use	<b>2.35</b>	44%				12%
Disruptive noise from the trail	<b>2.25</b>	45%				12%
Loitering on/near my property	<b>2.22</b>	45%				10%
Trespassing onto my property	<b>2.12</b>	51%				9%
Unleashed and roaming pets	<b>1.94</b>	60%				10%
Discourteous, rude users	<b>1.86</b>	58%				6%
Dog manure on/near my property	<b>1.71</b>	68%				8%
Vandalism of my property	<b>1.66</b>	68%				5%
Cars parking on/near my property	<b>1.58</b>	73%				6%
Burglary of my property	<b>1.48</b>	76%				3%
Users harass my pets	<b>1.47</b>	78%				4%
<b>NUMBER OF RESPONSES</b>		1,390				198

Means calculated on a 5-point scale with 1 representing "Not At All A Problem" and 5 representing "Major Problem."

## **BENEFITS TO THE SURROUNDING COMMUNITY**

Overall, landowners feel that the trail provides some important benefits to the surrounding community. They also feel overwhelmingly that development and management of trails such as the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail is a good use of public funds. When asked whether the development and management of this type of trail is a good use of public funds, 81.7 percent responded yes while only 5.3 percent responded no. The remaining 13.0 percent had no opinion.

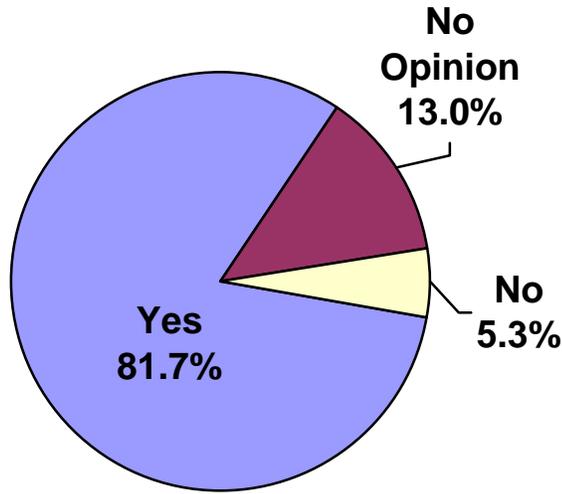
**The trail is used for many special community events.**





**Figure 9. Attitudes toward Use of Public Funds for Development & Management of Trails**

*Do you feel that the development and management of trails such as the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail is a good use of public funds?*



Safe opportunities for both public recreation and health and fitness are felt to be the greatest benefits. Providing tourism and related economic benefits is considered the least important benefit. The trail is also not considered much of a transportation alternative by landowners. While the trail does connect some residential areas to business and commercial areas, its location and route is not that conducive to providing a significant amount of commuting opportunities. Table 7 provides a summary of the responses regarding benefits to the surrounding community provided by the trail.

**Table 7. Perceptions of Potential Benefits the Trail Provides to the Surrounding Community**

**(Items Listed from Highest Perceived Benefit to Smallest)**

POTENTIAL BENEFITS	MEAN RESPONSE	EXTREMELY IMPORTANT					NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT				
		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Safe opportunities for public recreation	<b>1.88</b>	46%									3%
Safe opportunities for health and fitness	<b>1.88</b>	44%									2%
Open space conservation	<b>2.08</b>	37%									3%
Riverfront access/revitalization	<b>2.33</b>	34%									12%
Environmental education opportunities	<b>2.35</b>	32%									7%
Location for special events	<b>2.82</b>	19%									16%
Transportation alternatives	<b>2.90</b>	20%									22%
Tourism and related economic benefits	<b>3.03</b>	20%									21%

Means calculated on a 5-point scale with 1 representing "Extremely Important" and 5 representing "Not At All Important."



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## CONCLUSIONS

As noted earlier, caution is suggested in interpreting the results of this survey. As with all such surveys, conclusions are inherently subjective. Nonetheless, the results of the survey of homeowners shows several important tendencies in neighboring landowner attitudes toward the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail. While acknowledging that there are disadvantages expressed by some adjacent homeowners, most reported being satisfied with the trail as a neighbor and experiencing relatively low rates of trail-related problems. Only 12.2 percent of respondents reported being unsatisfied with the trail as a neighbor and 75.9 percent reported that trail users do not pose a risk to their household members safety.

The majority of landowners feel that the trail has no effect on or increased their ability to sell their homes. Similarly, most landowners feel the trail has no effect on or actually increased the value of their property. Overall, respondents also reported that living near the trail is somewhat better than they had expected it to be and improved the quality of their neighborhood modestly.

Overall, landowners reported that the trail provides some important benefits to the surrounding community. The benefits considered most important by landowners were safe opportunities for recreation, safe opportunities for health and fitness, and open space conservation. They also reported overwhelmingly that development and management of trails such as the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail is a good use of public funds.

Preliminary results from the user survey suggest that the demographics of trail users is largely a reflection of the community through which the trail passes. Although lengthy regional trails such as the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail attract users from long distances, the majority of users (69 percent) travel less than 5 miles to get to the trail. Furthermore, a significant percentage of users appear to be dedicated repeat users, reporting use at once a week or more. Most landowners reported that members of their household use the trail often.

Obviously, the trail does not just provide benefits to a particular special interest group. The trail serves many needs and provides a diverse array of benefits ranging from open space conservation to providing a safe location for numerous special events involving cycling and walking. Persons from all age groups are represented on the trail with Seniors (65 and over) representing approximately 6 percent of users on weekends and 18 percent during the week.

These findings should be encouraging for communities planning similar trails and landowners living along proposed trail routes. Undoubtedly, the impacts a proposed trail will have on adjacent property depend on the particular circumstances. However, the typical fears associated with proposed trails such as increased crime, noise, loss of privacy, and decreased property values are not supported by this study. In many instances where landowners reported problems, they still reported being satisfied with the trail as a neighbor and enjoyed using the facility. Furthermore, many of the most often cited problems, such as litter, can be readily addressed by the communities and trail managers.

While the trail is being capitalized upon to varying degrees by each community through which it passes, there appears to be a great deal of untapped potential. As discussed by survey respondents, management and maintenance of the trail is clearly not uniform across municipal boundaries. Such discrepancies will hamper attempts to further capitalize on this regional asset. Upgrading the trail to a common standard, providing safe readily definable linkages of separate



sections, and extending the trail to reach our neighboring Canalway Trail to the north and west would significantly improve the facility. In addition to making numerous recreational and cultural attractions more accessible to residents and visitors, the trail provides an opportunity to rediscover the Erie Canal and the waterfronts as a source of regional identity, provides a foundation for heritage-based tourism, and a resource for improving the quality of life in the region.



**The Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail is an integral component of the 350 mile statewide Canalway Trail.**



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## ADDITIONAL TABLES



**Table 8. Opinions on Whether Living near the Trail is Better or Worse Than Expected**  
**(Sorted by County & Purchase Date of Home)**

Possible Responses	Rating	Schenectady County				Albany County			
		After Trail Built		Before Trail Built		After Trail Built		Before Trail Built	
		Freq.	Pcnt.	Freq.	Pcnt.	Freq.	Pcnt.	Freq.	Pcnt.
Much Better Than I Expected	1	6	13.9	7	14.6	2	3.8	5	9.1
Better	2	10	23.3	9	18.8	8	15.1	8	14.6
Same	3	24	55.8	22	45.8	34	64.2	32	58.2
Worse	4	2	4.7	8	16.7	5	9.4	6	10.9
Much Worse Than I Expected	5	1	2.33	2	4.2	4	7.6	4	7.3
Total Responses		43		48		53		55	
<b>Mean Response</b>		<b>2.58</b>		<b>2.77</b>		<b>3.01</b>		<b>2.92</b>	
<b>Mean (Combined)</b>		<b>2.82</b>				<b>2.85</b>			

**Table 9. Opinions about How Presence of Trail Affects the Resale Value of Property**  
**(Sorted by County)**

Possible Responses	Schenectady County		Albany County		Combined	
	Freq.	Pcnt.	Freq.	Pcnt.	Freq.	Pcnt.
Lowered	6	6.4	9	7.6	15	7.1
Increased	11	11.7	4	3.4	15	7.1
No Effect	51	54.3	63	53.4	114	53.8
No Opinion	26	27.7	42	35.6	68	32.1
Total Responses	94		118		212	



**Table 10. Opinions about How Presence of Trail Affects the Resale Value of Property**  
**(Sorted by Municipality)**

Possible Responses	Niskayuna		Schenectady		Cohoes		Colonie	
	Freq.	Pcnt.	Freq.	Pcnt.	Freq.	Pcnt.	Freq.	Pcnt.
Lowered	6	12.0	0	0.0	9	8.6	0	0.0
Increased	5	10.0	6	14.0	2	1.9	2	15.4
No Effect	26	52.0	24	55.8	58	55.2	5	38.5
No Opinion	13	26.0	13	30.2	36	34.3	6	46.2
Total Responses	50		43		105		13	

**Table 11. Opinions about Whether Presence of Trail Has Made It Harder or Easier to Sell Home**  
**(Sorted by Distance of Home from Trail)**

Possible Responses	Rating	Less Than 100'		100' to 200'		201' to 500'		Greater Than 500'		Combined	
		Freq.	Pcnt.	Freq.	Pcnt.	Freq.	Pcnt.	Freq.	Pcnt.	Freq.	Pcnt.
Much Easier	1	1	2	2	4.8	0	0	2	13.3	5	2.4
Easier	2	20	40	10	23.8	5	4.8	4	26.7	39	18.5
Same	3	20	40	25	59.5	85	81.7	7	46.7	137	64.9
Harder	4	6	12	5	11.9	14	13.5	2	13.3	27	12.8
Much Harder	5	3	6.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	1.4
Total Responses		50		42		104		15		211	
Mean		2.80		2.79		3.09		2.60		2.92	

**Table 12. Perceived Risk to Personal & Family Safety Due to Trail**

Possible Responses	Niskayuna		Schenectady		Cohoes		Colonie		Combined	
	Freq.	Pcnt.	Freq.	Pcnt.	Freq.	Pcnt.	Freq.	Pcnt.	Freq.	Pcnt.
YES - Trail Poses Safety Risk	6	12.8	8	18.2	16	15.8	3	21.4	33	16.0
NO – Trail Poses No Safety Risk	38	80.9	34	77.3	74	73.3	10	71.4	156	75.7
No Opinion	3	6.4	2	4.6	11	10.9	1	7.2	17	8.3
Total Responses	47		44		101		14		206	



**Table 13. Landowners' Satisfaction Level With Trail as a Neighbor**  
**(Sorted by Distance of Home from Trail)**

Possible Responses	Rating	Less Than 100'		100' to 200'		201' to 500'		Greater Than 500'	
		Freq.	Pcnt.	Freq.	Pcnt.	Freq.	Pcnt.	Freq.	Pcnt.
Very Satisfied	<b>1</b>	4	6.8	10	14.9	10	18.5	7	24.1
Satisfied	<b>2</b>	29	49.2	24	35.8	18	33.3	15	51.7
Indifferent	<b>3</b>	15	25.4	32	47.8	14	25.9	5	17.2
Unsatisfied	<b>4</b>	10	16.9	1	1.5	10	18.5	2	6.9
Very Unsatisfied	<b>5</b>	1	1.7	0	0	2	3.7	0	0
Total Responses		59		67		54		29	
Mean		<b>2.58</b>		<b>2.36</b>		<b>2.56</b>		<b>2.07</b>	

**Table 14. Landowners' Opinions About How Presence of Trail Affects Quality of Neighborhood (Sorted by Municipality)**

Possible Responses	Rating	Niskayuna		Schenectady		Cohoes		Colonie		Combined	
		Freq.	Pcnt.								
Much Improved Quality of Neighborhood	<b>1</b>	3	6.3	4	9.1	1	0.98	3	21.4	11	5.3
Improved	<b>2</b>	11	22.9	13	29.6	25	24.5	2	14.1	51	24.5
No Impact	<b>3</b>	25	52.1	20	45.5	56	54.9	6	42.9	107	51.4
Worsened	<b>4</b>	7	14.6	7	15.9	19	18.6	3	21.4	36	17.3
Much Worsened Quality of Neighborhood	<b>5</b>	2	4.2	0	0.0	1	0.98	0	0.0	3	1.4
Total Responses		48		44		102		14		208	
Mean Response		<b>2.88</b>		<b>2.68</b>		<b>2.94</b>		<b>2.64</b>		<b>2.85</b>	



## MAPS

The maps are intentionally excluded from this PDF version because they are printed on “11X17” paper. It was felt that including the maps would make printing the document difficult. If this document was emailed to you, you may request the two maps that constitute this section. If you are downloading it from a webpage the maps are available as a separate document.





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**APPENDIX A**  
**SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE**





*County of Schenectady*  
NEW YORK

**David R. Atkins**  
Commissioner

**DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING**  
(518) 386-2225 FAX (518) 382-5539  
Schaffer Heights, 107 Nott Terrace, Suite 303  
Schenectady, New York 12308

March 25, 1997

Dear Neighbor of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail,

The Schenectady County Planning Department is conducting a survey of property owners within the vicinity of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail to find out how the trail affects nearby residents and their property. You were selected to participate in this important survey since your property is near the trail. The results of the survey will be used to help improve the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail and make any future trails better neighbors.

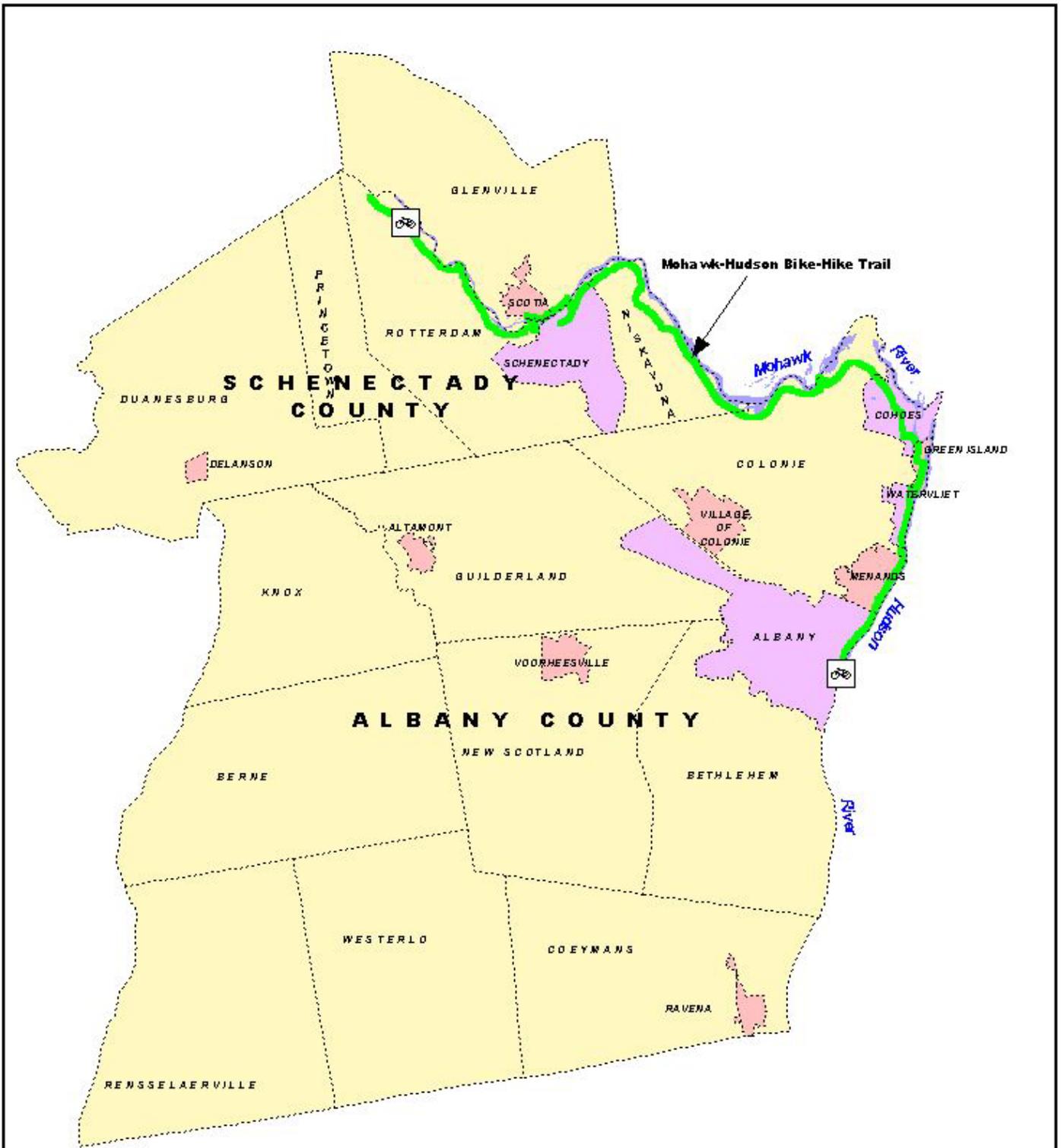
Your opinions of the trail are very important to us. The survey is designed to be completed in less than 10 minutes, so please take the time to answer the enclosed questionnaire. While your participation is strictly voluntary, the results will more accurately represent the opinions of trail neighbors if each survey is completed and returned to us. We have provided a stamped, addressed envelope for your convenience.

All responses are confidential and only statistical totals of answers will ever be published. Each survey has an identification number for mailing purposes only. When a survey is returned, we will use the number to remove the respondent from our mailing list. This will ensure that once a survey is returned, no follow-up mailings encouraging a response will be sent to that address.

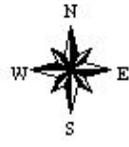
Thank you for your assistance. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact the Schenectady County Planning Department.

Sincerely,

David R. Atkins  
Commissioner



A generalized map showing the 41 mile Mohawk - Hudson Bike - Hike Trail

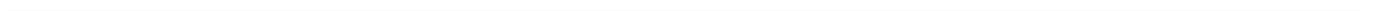
<p><b>Legend</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Municipal Boundaries</li> <li> Mohawk - Hudson Bike - Hike Trail</li> <li> Towns</li> <li> Cities</li> <li> Villages</li> <li> Water Bodies</li> </ul>	 	<h2 style="margin: 0;">MOHAWK-HUDSON BIKE-HIKE TRAIL</h2> <p style="font-size: small; margin-top: 10px;">Prepared by: Schenectady County Planning Department 1997</p>
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No. \_\_\_\_\_

# **1997 MOHAWK-HUDSON BIKE-HIKE TRAIL RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBOR SURVEY**

This survey is part of a study of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail and how it affects nearby residents and their property. Your participation in this survey is voluntary, however, your cooperation is extremely important. All your responses are confidential and all files containing names and addresses will be destroyed when the mailing procedures are complete.

Please refer to your residential property near the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail when answering the following questions.



**1997 MOHAWK-HUDSON BIKE-HIKE TRAIL  
RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBOR SURVEY**

1. Which of the following most accurately describes how you use your house near the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail? (Please check *one*)
  - a. \_\_\_ It is my primary residence
  - b. \_\_\_ I rent to a tenant, and do not occupy the residence
  - c. \_\_\_ It is my second home (If so, when do you reside there? \_\_\_\_\_)
  - d. \_\_\_ It is unoccupied
  - e. \_\_\_ Other (Please describe \_\_\_\_\_)
  
2. Where is the trail in relation to your *property line*?
  - a. \_\_\_ The trail runs *through* my property
  - b. \_\_\_ The trail runs *along the edge* of my property
  - c. \_\_\_ The trail is near my property but not touching it
  - d. \_\_\_ Don't know
  
3. Approximately how far (in feet) is the trail from *your house*?
  - a. \_\_\_ Less than 100 ft.
  - b. \_\_\_ 100 ft. to 200 ft.
  - c. \_\_\_ 201 ft. to 500 ft.
  - d. \_\_\_ Greater than 500 ft.
  
4. Approximately how large is your property?  
\_\_\_ Acres *OR* \_\_\_ Square Feet
  
5. What is the approximate current value of your home?
  - a. \_\_\_ \$ 99,999 or less
  - b. \_\_\_ \$100,000 to \$149,999
  - c. \_\_\_ \$150,000 to \$199,999
  - d. \_\_\_ \$200,000 to \$249,999
  - e. \_\_\_ \$250,000 or more
  
6. How would you describe your house near the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail? (Please check *one*)
  - a. \_\_\_ Urban
  - b. \_\_\_ Suburban
  - c. \_\_\_ Rural

7. When did you acquire your house?

- a. \_\_\_\_ After the trail was built
- b. \_\_\_\_ Before the trail was built

8. Compare your *initial reaction* to the idea of living near the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail to how you feel about living near the trail today. Would you say that living near the trail is better or worse than you *expected* it to be? (Please circle the number that best indicates how you feel.)

Much Better Than I Expected	Better	Same	Worse	Much Worse Than I Expected
1	2	3	4	5

9. On a scale of 1 - 5, to what extent do you feel the following items are problems for your household *as a result of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail and its users*. (Please circle the number that best indicates how you feel about each item, or check no opinion.)

	Not At All A Problem	1	2	3	4	5	Major Problem	No Opinion
a. Illegal motor vehicle use	1	2	3	4	5	9		
b. Litter on/near my property	1	2	3	4	5	9		
c. Loitering on/near my property	1	2	3	4	5	9		
d. Trespassing onto my property	1	2	3	4	5	9		
e. Users harass my pets	1	2	3	4	5	9		
f. Vandalism of my property	1	2	3	4	5	9		
g. Cars parking on/near my property	1	2	3	4	5	9		
h. Dog manure on/near my property	1	2	3	4	5	9		
i. Unleashed and roaming pets	1	2	3	4	5	9		
j. Discourteous, rude users	1	2	3	4	5	9		
k. Burglary of my property	1	2	3	4	5	9		
l. Disruptive noise from trail	1	2	3	4	5	9		
m. Other (please specify below)	1	2	3	4	5	9		

10. Do you feel the trail poses a risk to your own or your family's safety due to the activities of *trail users*?

a. \_\_\_\_ Yes                      b. \_\_\_\_ No                      c. \_\_\_\_ No Opinion

11. If you were to try and sell this property, do you think being near the trail would make it *harder or easier* to sell? (Please circle the number that best indicates how you feel.)

Much Easier to Sell	Easier	Same	Harder	Much Harder to Sell
1	2	3	4	5

12. How do you think being located near the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail has affected the *resale value* of this property? (Please check *one*)

- a. \_\_\_\_ The trail has *lowered* the resale value of this property.
- b. \_\_\_\_ The trail has *increased* the resale value of this property.
- c. \_\_\_\_ The trail has had *no effect* on the resale value of this property.
- d. \_\_\_\_ I have not formed an opinion.

13. Overall, how satisfied are you with having the Mohawk-Hudson Bike Trail as a neighbor? (Please circle the number that best indicates how you feel.)

Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Indifferent	Unsatisfied	Very Unsatisfied
1	2	3	4	5

14. How do you feel the trail has affected the quality of your neighborhood? (Please circle the number that best indicates how you feel.)

Much Improved Quality of Neighborhood	Improved	No Impact	Worsened	Much Worsened Quality of Neighborhood
1	2	3	4	5

15. Do you feel that the development and management of trails such as the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail is a good use of public funds?

a. \_\_\_\_ Yes                      b. \_\_\_\_ No                      c. \_\_\_\_ No Opinion

16. To what extent do you feel that the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail is important in providing the following benefits to the *surrounding community*? (Please circle the number that best indicates how you feel about each item, or check no opinion.)

	<b>Extremely Important</b>				<b>Not At All Important</b>	<b>No Opinion</b>
<b>Potential Benefits:</b>						
a. Safe opportunities for public recreation	1	2	3	4	5	9
b. Safe opportunities for health and fitness	1	2	3	4	5	9
c. Tourism and related economic benefits	1	2	3	4	5	9
d. Riverfront access/revitalization	1	2	3	4	5	9
e. Open space conservation	1	2	3	4	5	9
f. Environmental education opportunities	1	2	3	4	5	9
g. Transportation alternatives	1	2	3	4	5	9
h. Location for special events	1	2	3	4	5	9
i. Other(please specify below)	1	2	3	4	5	

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17. How many people from each of the following age categories are there in your household? (Please *include yourself* and write the *numbers* in the spaces provided.)

- a. \_\_\_\_ 12 years old and under
- b. \_\_\_\_ 13 to 17 years old
- c. \_\_\_\_ 18 to 61 years old
- d. \_\_\_\_ 62 years and over

18. How many members of your household from each of the following age categories have used the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail during the past twelve months? (Please *include yourself* and write the *numbers* in the spaces provided.)

- a. \_\_\_\_ 12 years old and under
- b. \_\_\_\_ 13 to 17 years old
- c. \_\_\_\_ 18 to 61 years old
- d. \_\_\_\_ 62 years and over

19. How would you categorize your household's use of the trail? (Please check *one*)

- a. \_\_\_ Daily to four times a week
- b. \_\_\_ Frequent (once or twice a week)
- c. \_\_\_ Occasional (once or twice a month)
- d. \_\_\_ Rare (once or twice a year)
- e. \_\_\_ Never

20. What is your sex?            a. \_\_\_ Male                            b. \_\_\_ Female

21. What is your age?            \_\_\_\_\_ Years

Please use this space for any other comments you might have about the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail or its management.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION!**

Please send us this completed survey in the stamped, addressed envelope provided.

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## **APPENDIX B**

### **ADDITIONAL WRITTEN COMMENTS PROVIDED BY LANDOWNERS** (Sorted by Respondents' Distance of Home from the Trail and by Municipality)

## **Distance of home from trail less than 100 ft.**

### City of Schenectady

We enjoy the bike trail immensely. We use the trail as a means of walking the dog, as well as an exercising tool. As a family we do a lot of walking to exercise and also do a great deal of bike riding. Occasionally, over the past few years, being the closest home to the trail, we have encountered unpleasant experiences. Just to name a few examples, 3 yrs. ago a person came to our home from the bike trail who had just burglarized a business nearby. Also, we have had our home broken into once over the past 3 yrs. These incidents might be due to the fact, that proximity of the bike trail is about 50 ft. from our home, but really overall our family enjoys the bike trail completely and hopes it is maintained properly and patrolled by police officials on an ongoing basis.

The major problem with the bike trail is the use it gets after dark, and the litter and if there was some way that it could be patrolled at least for a short period of time perhaps the undesirable elements would find else where to linger.

I live at the end of the dead end street,(Stevenson St.). once in awhile people come down to my house, thinking they can get to the bike trail from there. They have to go back up to the beginning of the street, and over to the next street, Anthony St.

Install a privacy fence for the homes adjacent to the trail.

Our family thinks that snowmobiles and ATVs should not be allowed on the bike path. There are signs on some of the path that ban snowmobilers but no one pays attention. From the first snowfall they go all night long. During the day they make it impossible to cross country ski or walk. We also feel that dogs should be able to walk (with leashes) with their owners on the bike path. We understand that the bike path in Rotterdam is the only one who does not allow dogs. Also we feel that there should be some place for jogger's, etc. to go get water during the hot summer weather -- Also some portable johns would help so people wouldn't have to use bushes in front of our house.

### Town of Niskayuna

I think it should be patrolled. It should have emergency availability if someone should get hurt. It is isolated with no place to get help. Very scared of strangers.

### City of Cohoes

During the daytime, we have no problems with the bike trail at all. At night time during the spring and summer months is when we have problems. Kids hold beer parties on the trail which is not the problem. It is that when they leave the trail, they leave intoxicated, very noisy, cars parked in our driveway waiting to pick up people. Broken bottles, we had our picture window broken by a rock as so the people on the opposite side of the trail. These are the bad things about the trail, but there is plenty of things that are good also.

We need more bike trails. We do need increased maintenance (removing broken glass, etc.) need more patrolling to prevent loitering of juveniles.

I think the concept of this trail is very beneficial. But, what it lacks is police patrol especially at night when teens congregate for drinking parties. A concerted effort by municipalities to clean litter from trail, leaving that chore to the homeowner.

The bike trail itself is well kept and in itself is no problem. The problem are with the snowmobiles, dirt bikes, ATV and motorcycles. The gathering of kids at night at various times and the drinking and loud shouting and strong language.

I think more patrolling in the winter would discourage snowmobiles. Their noise, exhaust and size make it impossible to ski in the winter. Also, one trip down the path in a snow-mobile and the snow is gone, making it impossible to ski.

Clean up of the trash is needed very badly along the trail from Lansing Ln. south-there are dead branches, garbage, and weeds. I would appreciate maintenance being done immediately. It's a very real problem.

A number of year's ago I wrote to that town supervisor Fred Fields and asked why is it that from the Cohoes city line to town park is still dirt. It seemed funny that from the other side of the road at the town park all the way to Rotterdam is black top. It may even go farther but that is as far as we went on our bikes, and from the Cohoes/Colonie line south to Albany and further is paved. We use the bike path often and in back of our house and further it is nothing but a mud hole. I sure wish someone would give a good reason for this. If possible would someone get in touch with me over this matter.

Keep the bike trail drug free etc. and have patrolling.

The trail is a great way for kids and adults to exercise without having to deal with motor vehicle traffic. But the litter and especially glass that destroy the safety and beauty need to be attended to.

We find that the parts that are not paved are really hard to ride your bike on. Some parts could also be kept cleaner than they are. We are sometimes riding and it is so nice and then there are large stretches of garbage. We also do not find it safe at night.

Any negative responses would not change if the bike path had not been built. The abandoned railroad bed had easy access for anyone to use.

Major problem on the path seems to fall into early spring and lots of summer activities. Mainly, young people having beer parties etc. Would like to have trail patrolled more often, although I realize it is not anyones top priority.

The trail borders my home in Cohoes paralleling Spring Hollow Dr. The users for the most part are courteous. There is an undesirable element that uses it at night in the spring occasionally, for access to sanctuary on property adjacent to and inaccessible by police vehicles for the purpose of loud drinking parties that go on into the wee hours. Upon breaking up they disturb the peace of the neighborhood and trespass on the way to vehicles parked in this suburban neighborhood. Complaints to the police go unheard for the most part, or we're told it isn't their problem because the property being used for drinking is in the town of Colonie. NOT!! The steambed is the town line

and they party on the Cohoes side. It's a nuisance during these times, otherwise its a great neighborhood.

I have problems with trespassing, litter, noise and cars last summer and the summer before that. I attribute these problems to living on the city limits. The city police do not patrol the area behind my house and high school beer parties are common. I raise the issue here because I expect that many residents attribute the problem to the bike trail. I think the trail is not a problem.

We don't live at this residence now-we rent it out. However when we did live there, my daughters always were afraid of the flasher on the trail. Our property is at the bottom of a very steep hill and a fence along the trail ends at our property line and kids use our property as a short cut. Extending the fence would be helpful for safety reasons as well as Privacy concerns. If you could help with this please contact me.

Needs more security, but otherwise it's a plus.

There is a desperate need for security in Cohoes. I think a foot patrol or bicycle officer assigned to the bike path would increase usage immensely. We presently drive to Colonie to use their bike trail.

In the past 2 yrs. they have replaced the bight with a culvert and the kids don't seem to hang out as much there. The trail is below my property by 40-50 ft., which helps.

I use the trail frequently, I was just wondering if it was ever a reason why there can't be a few benches to rest on here and there. I enjoy it very much.

Outside of city limits it probably is okay, through the city it's primarily used for parties and a quick get away.

Need to put fences up so people don't use property for trash. People walk through my property, mainly kids at night having a party with fires going and drinking, yelling and screaming. Not enough police patrol.

We haven't had many problems, we can plan on the kids being there, on the 4th of July with fire crackers but kids are kids-I try to keep what I can cleaned up bottles etc. I would like some of the big dead trees removed. This week I am going to rake it up.

It's a beautiful path to ride my bike on and just take a nice walk. There is a tunnel in Cohoes on the north side of Columbia St. and there is really a lot of broken glass. This should be checked once a week.

#### Town of Colonie

Increase parking areas.

I think that houses along the bike trail should be protected from the people using the bike trail. I also think that it should be patrolled more to prevent people from allowing their dog to come onto property.

We've had people come into our garage just to get out of the rain, dogs attack our dog when its on a leash. I've had someone drive through my driveway so because of this I had a barricade put up.

The bike trail is fine- I worry about hunters shooting so close to the road and traps. I have grandchildren that walk on the trail from time to time. Also I feel there should be no parking signs posted in front of homes. They not only block the view but they leave trash on my lawn and I have to come home and on occasion find a car parked in my driveway.

### **Distance of home from trail 100 ft.-200 ft.**

#### City of Schenectady

The black top surface needs to be maintained on a more regular basis for roller blade use as it is becoming more popular.

Better gates to stop snowmobiles would improve conditions for X-C skiing.

The "pooper scooper" rules need to be enforced or do not allow dogs on the path at all!

Trimming of overgrowth could provide summer jobs or community projects for youths.

I feel the trail needs to be maintained much better. During the summer the grass and weeds narrows the path to where it becomes dangerous to runners and riders. Perhaps mowing once a month May-Oct. This would make the path safer and nicer for users. Spot repaving needs to be started soon.

Lock 8 to Exit 26. The path is nice, but needs to be maintained!

Compare our path to Colonie, Albany. Except for Niskayuna, Lock 7 area, I think you'll see what I mean!

If your Dept. could keep people from dumping their trash along the bike trail, more people would enjoy the beauty of it. The bike trail is an important part of life to us. It's our place to relax and enjoy nature.

#### Town of Niskayuna

Because our property borders on the Mohawk River, we have access to another trail that runs along the river. We find ourselves using this trail very frequently. However, the trail is not paved, so if we want to bike or roller-blade, we use the bike-hike trail.

We consider ourselves very fortunate to have 2 trails to choose from. I think that all bike and hike trails provide great service to the communities.

I don't think traps should be available/allowed along trails.

Bow hunters are the most confrontational we encounter, facial paint and "attitude". Also, must duck hunters be allowed along trail near residential areas? Guns are off at any movement and we have 3 pets, as well as two children. Generally, we love the bike path, as much to watch the users as to use ourselves.

## City of Cohoes

Although I feel the bike trail is of benefit, where my home is located in Cohoes, the bike trail is used more for a "hang out" for kids during the day and especially the weekend nights (beer, parties etc).

We enjoy walking on the path until rude and disrespectful children come along, cursed at us and had all kinds of dirty remarks to shout at us. In my opinion it may be safe if it was supervised once in a while.

Pedestrians going for a leisurely walk with small children are not compatible with bicyclists speeding by. I've been walking and almost have been hit by bicyclists several times. An asset to elderly who wish to walk 3-4 times a week walking pets. Nice area for mothers with young children, young element use for running, walking, use of bicycles. Some clean up could help because of broken glass on walking areas. The area is being policed at times. An asset welcome by many young and old.

Some of the sections Cohoes, Watervliet are not as well maintained as the Colonie and Niskayuna section. While walking on the Cohoes section, I often find broken bottles, old tires, papers.

It is a safe way to get my exercise in and would like it to be clean. I do enjoy the bike/hiking trail.

The bike path gives me a good opportunity to go on a ride with my son's or grandchildren, short walks. Good use for an idle rail bed well maintained.

The bike trail (approximately 100 ft. from my property) has become a place for the young people to gather in the summer time all hours of the night. A short distance from my house they do a lot of partying late at night making all kinds of noise, hollering, and playing loud music. I'm sure there is alcohol involved and probably drugs. They seem to be able to do this without any interference from the police or other authorities.

Last year a picnic table and four benches were taken from my deck and burned. This furniture was made from redwood and was valued at \$600.00. I will not replace this furniture for fear that the same thing will happen again.

Trails are an excellent use instead of old railroad beds. Illegal vehicle use is the most dangerous aspect of the trail. I've almost been hit twice, once by a motorcycle and the other by a snowmobile.

Dog dropping and litter are the next most serious annoyances. More use of the trail would be good. i.e., more road races or bicycle races.

I feel that someone should clean up the litter that is left by trail users!

For a number of years I have been interested in historical preservation. Over the years, I have watched, as well as been involved in many such projects only to see them fall into neglect and abandonment due to the high cost of maintenance brought about mostly by vandalism. When completed, a portion of our past was preserved and transformed into a usable and beautiful part of the community.

From my window I see many people enjoying the bike trail in all seasons and in all kinds of weather. I also see maintenance crews sweeping up huge amounts of glass and debris along with removal of graffiti.

There is another bike path in Cohoes that follows the old Erie Canal. When completed under the "All American Cities Program", it was truly a sight to behold. A beautiful stone walk lined with trees, shrubs, benches and well cut grass. From one end of the city to the other, people could walk along the old towpath passing many old lock, historical buildings and just enjoying nature. Today many sections are totally unusable, benches broken, trash all over and even portions of the stone walk destroyed and tossed into the canal bed. Amazing to see so much effort gone to waste; Enjoyed by so many and destroyed by so few.

Perhaps one day the money spent needlessly to maintain these areas will be used to deter the vandalism. Thank goodness for groups like yours--who continue in the endeavor to preserve our past and get so little thanks. Many people do appreciate your efforts--please keep up the good work!

Organize some type of town or community day were everyone helps clean up the park. Because if people want a change they have to be willing to do it themselves. Otherwise I love the park.

The trail we use often in Schenectady and Colonie-very clean Cohoes-dirty and unkept Menands- clean.

One thing I would like is that there be benches put along the whole trail. You have some in Schenectady and Colonie but none in Cohoes and Menands.

Riverfront access and revitalization of our areas riverfronts is extremely important to me and for my children's future.

Leave everything natural. Create lighted patrolled paths, create areas that are safe for families to use. This goes for mostly wooded areas that go on for miles.

#### Town of Colonie

I love dogs; I have always owned dogs; I never take my dog on the path! Does not belong on the bike path! People drive to the path, park in the area of the river and walk their dogs and leave the poop behind. The spring thaw is especially disgusting.

Additionally, encounters with dogs are never walking when we take little children for walks.

Finally, we have had unpleasant experiences with dogs who have left the bike path to come into our yard and start trouble with our dog, who is on a run. A speed limit of say 15 mph would be very appropriate. I've had too many close calls with little kids and racing bikers who don't even attempt to slow down when they come up on pedestrians.

I would suggest a security patrol during the heavy used months of June-Sept., also especially on weekends. I would also be open to speaking with someone from your organization as a follow up to this survey.

#### **Distance of home from trail 201 ft.-500 ft.**

#### City of Schenectady

I find it very hard to believe, when we want to use the bike trail, we have to get in the car and drive to Rosendale Rd. to use the trail. The trail there is well maintained, the brush is cut way back eliminating places for groups to congregate and smoke pot. As we have seen in the out section of the trail, near our home. The bush, is left to grow so long that they over hang the trail, and you run into the branches when trying to ride side by side. It seems to me, is where is the money, that is where the money is spent to maintain the trail and other sections are left in disrepair.

I also feel, it would help to reduce the loitering in our section. If occasionally a patrol officer on bike would be seen in the area, maybe community police, then it could be a

wonderful trail if we were all treated equal. My other complaint is, people stopping and allowing their dogs to leave feces on my lawn, which we have to clean 3-4 times a week.

Maintenance of the bike path could be improved. Railing remains unrepaired for long periods of time. A drain pipe under the bike path eroded the edge of the path last year resulting in a deep (dangerous) drop off that was left unprotected and unrepaired for several months.

I have been on a bike on the trail and have seen people (young men) drinking liquor or beer and seen a few derelicts. I have seen teenagers at 1 a.m. coming up the street from the path. I will not use it alone. I don't feel safe.

It would be nice if there were more parking areas near the access points.

I was upset when Niskayuna put up signs saying that all dogs must be leashed. If a dog is under the owner's control, that should be enough. I always make my dog sit on the side when bikes go by so she doesn't get in their way and leash her for roller bladders (which she still will chase) and people are always appreciative. It is a matter of courtesy. Make sure there is no trapping nearby as a danger to pets and children. The bike trail has made living on the edge of the city much more enjoyable.

I've lived here 69 of my years-with a few years of college etc. away. We were worried about the trail but pleasantly surprised at how well and quietly it's used. Even the Reserve uses it and I never even hear them and we're two doors from the truck.

Asked the City of Schenectady to post signs telling owners of dogs to clean up after their pets. We were told by the Dept. of Parks & Rec. that there was no money in the budget for this purpose.

The town of Niskayuna was asked for the same type of sign and they were promptly posted. Because our street is a main access to the bike trail we would like pet clean up signs posted along the street also.

The bike trail is not a problem it's just too many people littering and dogs wondering around up there. It's just a disaster area.

#### Town of Niskayuna

As for transportation alternative, many bikers still use Rosendale Rd. when the bike path is no more than 200 ft. away. This is unsafe for bikers as well as drivers. Can something be done about this?

I feel that dogs are a major problem (unleashed dogs), "so called" verbal control is absolutely worthless in preventing "scares" and other bothers by unleashed dogs. Also a major problem is people invading private property by way of the bike path. A resident or property owner should not have to put up a chain link fence in order to keep people on the bike path.

Users are for the most part friendly and nice people a few young-for vandalism. The town of Niskayuna cares for the bike path(cleans, mows and trims bushes) before doing the same for town roads. A few dog owners let their dogs run through our crops. Many users think it is their right to prevent us from controlling woodchucks and other varmints which destroy our plants and crops.

My home is large and is an ideal family home, obviously an asset for children to have a bike path nearby. Many homes are smaller-more suited to older people with no children in the home so to a potential buyer of that home the trail may be less desirable. I am involved in several areas of the community and would be interested in sitting in on any of the meetings or discussions in regards to the bike path.

The Niskayuna section along the Aqueduct Stretch was long overdue for trimming. However it was finally done a short while ago.

We had many instances of vandalism (cutting down our pines for Christmas trees) shooting our signs, trespassers, theft of property. Also some very strange people frequently around the property from Schenectady to Balltown Rd. thereafter it gets better.

Drinking fountains would be beneficial.

A snack bar at the Train Station or Lock 7 would be nice.

We love the bike trail and use it for jogging , rollerblading, biking and walking frequently.

When purchasing our house in 1985, we were thrilled that the bike path was so accessible. We have since discovered that it is not safe for a woman alone, or a woman and child, at least in this area. I walk 4-5 days per week, but drive to a neighborhood in Niskayuna and walk there.

We do ride bikes as a family and find it enjoyable, but have also noticed that vandalism, trash, etc. are more prevalent in our area then most others.

When I lived in Schenectady I used the railroad to ride my bike to Rexford many times. When it got paved I rode from Seneca to Nott St. and along the riverfront to work at GE (past SCCC and across the pedestrian bridge into GE). I did this for about 5-7 yrs. frequently in the warm weather. It is an asset to Schenectady. What do you have for our youth to do to stay out of trouble. Biking and jogging is often a way for them to get out of the house, get away form t.v. and get exercise (not to mention meet other people).

Keep up the good work.

I feel better communication with the neighboring houses-we need Niskayuna's okay to do any improvement. I feel we should be part of the bike path changes if it depreciates our property.

Over the past 14 yrs. we've enjoyed our access to the bike trail and feel that the management has done a great job in maintaining it.

We do have a request and that is: if possible, we would love to trim some of the trees by the river. Of course, we would reciprocate by providing trees or contributing to other projects on the bike path.

#### City of Cohoes

The trail is dirty, unsightly difficult to control activity on the trail. Unlighted, no security(day or night), many areas have overgrowth and draws dumping from out of towners who ride by, area low lives have a place to hangout. Plus 2 murders have occurred in Cohoes bike trail, and area perverts use the trail to expose themselves to children and can disappear along the trail and repeat there activities often. The concept of the bike trail is wonderful, but the reality of the trail poses more problems and costs that this town and probably most towns cannot afford.

The trail is well maintained except for the Cohoes section where broken glass is found. Also more benches should be placed especially near Cohoes. The bench that used to be there is sorely missed.

The trail would be nicer for us and we would use it more frequently if it was paved from Fonda Rd. or below to the town of Colonie Park (from this point I believe it is paved). We are not able to use it much because it is very bumpy due to water runoff rows and muddy.

Major problem on the path, seems to fall into early spring and lots of summer activities. Mainly, young people having beer parties etc. Would like to have trail patrolled more often, although I realize it is not anyone top priority.

I like the bike trail, and my 24 yr. old daughter likes to either bike ride or roller blade.

Better without bike trail.

Trail seems to encourage illegal dumping and sections (Cohoes) are full with broken bottles, making cycling difficult. Also groups of teenagers have parties on the trail in warmer weather.

As the bike trail passes through Cohoes it is littered with broken bottles and garbage. It should have stopped at the Cohoes city line.

#### **Distance of home from trail greater than 500 ft.**

#### City of Schenectady

Our home is located on the Niskayuna border, but we are Schenectady city residents. I use the bike path from Anthony St. frequently. I am appalled at the amount of litter of the Schenectady side, then crossing over to the Niskayuna side I see much nicer conditions for the most part. I understand it is much more difficult to maintain property

in the city due to vandalism, but more should be done to preserve the natural beauty and keep the trail an asset to our community.(Not a problem in our community).

There needs to be an improvement in clean up efforts, the area behind Reales and north has poor drainage and trash. During the warmer months the bugs from the standing water are bad to the point that we don't go down there.

#### Town of Niskayuna

The Niskayuna part badly needs repaving. Also the town should budget funds for resealing the pavement every year.

I think the trees should be trimmed in the spring/summer months for a better view of the lake for home owners. I believe this use to be done several years back.

Enjoyed bike path/water view much better. From house can never see river unless on 2nd fl. of house.

I believe that the adjoining land to the trail should be eventually used athletically "managed". The most popular and most attractive section of the trail is the open area of the train station or where the river is openly visible. It's a shame to let the nearby former farm land become an overgrown bunch obscuring the beauty of the river.

Schenectady County has done a much better job of keeping the side of the path clear and open so that walkers can take advantage of the side and avoid the skaters, bikers, etc.

Access from our house is very limited and difficult therefore the trail has little or no impact on us.

We have lived in our home for 3 yrs. on Lock 7 Rd. and have thoroughly enjoyed the bike path. We feel it is a wonderful asset to the community.

Problems that we encounter:

Large volumes of traffic in the summer and excessive speeding/alcohol consumption. Many times it is dangerous for us to even cross the road at our home.

\*\*Littering, dumping is terrible. Lock 7 road has been dumped on for years. Despite our calling the town about this no clean-up has been done. There are about 50 tires dumped, tin drums, bottles etc. There is litter in the parking areas, and no garbage cans available.\*\*

In summer months there is more drinking, loitering after dusk and noise production.

We do not want to see any more amenities and parking areas such as concession stands, running bathrooms. Portable pots are okay if cleaned. Because this is a nature bike path, we don't want to see any more development such as camp grounds.

#### City of Cohoes

I think it is a great thing. I sometimes worry about the safety of my family alone on the trail but that's the same everywhere.

Town of Colonie

We just bought this house in 96' and one of the reasons was the bike trail and acces