



**Parks, Recreation
and Historic Preservation**

ANDREW M. CUOMO
Governor

ERIK KULLESEID
Commissioner

**AGENCY DECISION
AND
STATEMENT OF FINDINGS**

Adoption and Implementation of the Statewide Greenway Trails Plan

The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation has prepared a Final Statewide Greenway Trails Plan and Final Generic Environmental Impact Statement (FGEIS) and issued notice of completion on April 7, 2021.

By the authority vested in me by State Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation Law, I do hereby adopt the Final Statewide Greenway Trails Plan/FGEIS.

This decision represents certification of the attached Findings Statement prepared in accordance with the requirements of 6 NYCRR Part 617.11, the regulations implementing Article 8 of Environmental Conservation Law - the State Environmental Quality Review Act. My decision is based on the Findings Statement and the content of the Final Statewide Greenway Trails Plan/FGEIS.

Erik Kulleseid
Commissioner
NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

4.19.21

Date

STATE ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY REVIEW FINDINGS STATEMENT

April 19, 2021

Pursuant to Article 8 (State Environmental Quality Review Act – SEQRA) of the Environmental Conservation Law and 6 NYCRR Part 617, the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP), as the lead agency, makes the following findings. These findings consider the relevant environmental impacts, facts and conclusions disclosed in the Final Generic Environmental Impact Statement (FGEIS); weigh and balance relevant environmental impacts with social, economic and other considerations and provide a rationale for the agency's decision.

Name of Action: Statewide Greenway Trails Plan

Description of Action: Adoption and Implementation of the Statewide Greenway Trails Plan

Location: Statewide

Agency Jurisdiction: Lead Agency under SEQRA
New York State Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation Law

Final Statewide Greenway Trails Plan/Final Generic Environmental Impact Statement (FGEIS)
Filed: April 7, 2021

Findings:

1. The Statewide Greenway Trails Plan (Plan) was subject to a Generic Environmental Impact Statement process including a public scoping meeting (webinar), public hearing (webinar) and public comment periods.
2. Chapter 10 of the Final Statewide Greenway Trails Plan/FGEIS contains the agency's responses to comments received on the Draft Plan/Draft GEIS. This chapter includes clarification of issues raised during the review of the Draft Plan/Draft GEIS.
3. The Final Plan establishes a vision, goals, and recommendations for further developing the state's system of non-motorized, multi-use trails, or greenway trails. The Plan documents the existing greenway trails network in the state, identifies new trail opportunities, and describes planned and proposed trail corridors. The Plan will guide decision-making, assist state and local governments with greenway trail policy development, and provide valuable information to communities, organizations, and individuals engaged in trail development and management. The Plan will become part of the more comprehensive *New York Statewide Trails Plan* update. The Final Plan may be found on the OPRHP website at: <https://parks.ny.gov/inside-our-agency/master-plans.aspx>.
4. Legislation enacted in November 2019 requires that OPRHP prepare a plan to help shape future development of the State's comprehensive statewide system of non-motorized multi-use trails (greenway trails) (see [Bill No. A05035B](#)).
5. For the purposes of this Plan, greenway trails are defined as shared-use paths that are separated from roadways and vehicle traffic. General characteristics of greenway trails include: a minimum tread width of six feet; a relatively flat, graded surface and/or improved tread; and can be used for non-motorized transportation and recreation.

6. Greenway trail types generally include rail trails, waterfront trails, canal trails, and trails on other types of corridors such as adjacent rights-of-way (ROW) along highways and within utility rights-of-way. Greenway trails can accommodate a wide range of user activities including walking, cycling, running, jogging, in-line skating, and horseback riding, in some cases. In areas where snow cover is sufficient, greenway trails can also be utilized for winter activities such as cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and snowmobiling (where permitted). Trails may also be used for transportation purposes. When designed and constructed to established standards, greenway trails are often accessible for people with disabilities and mobility issues.
7. The use of, proximity to, and protection of greenway trails provide a multitude of benefits ranging from physical, emotional and psychological to benefits for the economy, tourism, environment–natural and cultural resources– and community character and resiliency.
8. The statewide greenway trails system inventory consists of existing, planned and proposed trails with over 2,000 miles of existing, over 220 miles of planned, and over 1,100 miles of proposed trails.
9. The environmental setting for the Plan consists of the people and the natural, recreational, scenic, historic and cultural resources of New York State, as well as social and economic characteristics. The setting also includes the general public (residents and non-residents) and park and recreation service providers. Resources potentially affected by the Plan include recreational areas, lakes, rivers, streams, wetlands, coastal and estuarine waters, significant natural habitats, fish and wildlife, rare species of plants and animals as well as common species, forests, agricultural areas, parklands, historic sites, archeological areas, scenic areas, and communities.
10. The no action alternative was examined in the FGEIS. Per recent legislation, OPRHP is required to prepare a statewide non-motorized trails plan, therefore this alternative is not a viable option. Also, not preparing the Plan would mean that there would be no statewide guidance based on current data regarding greenway trail resources. Future implementation of greenway trails within the State would not be responding to changing needs or based on updated goals and recommendations. Further, without proper identification of stakeholder needs, failure to implement the Plan may result in the loss of opportunities to strengthen and develop greenway trails across the State.
11. The Plan utilizes significant public input, through surveys and public meetings, and research in needs and trends to assure the relevance of the direction and content of the Plan. The development of the vision, goals and recommendations for greenway trails is based on public input and the analysis and experience of stakeholders and agency planners.
12. The vision statement for the Plan is: The Statewide Greenway Trails Plan envisions a network of shared use paths that provide all New Yorkers and visitors opportunities for healthy and active recreation, routes for alternative transportation, and the ability to connect to and enrich our communities and natural landscapes in urban, suburban, and rural settings.
13. The seven goals of the Statewide Greenway Trails Plan are as follows:
 - Prioritize the development and expansion of greenway trails in underserved communities;
 - Collect and publish information to aid in the planning, development, and management of greenway trails;
 - Expand the state’s greenway trails system to reach more New Yorkers in more areas;
 - Identify funding opportunities for the acquisition, planning, development, and maintenance of greenway trails;
 - Foster greater collaboration among agencies and stakeholders to advance greenway trails in New York;

- Promote the greenway trails system as a destination for tourism, healthy recreation, and active lifestyles; and
 - Enhance bicycle and pedestrian transportation options by connecting greenway trails and communities.
14. Implementation of the Plan requires involvement by the public and private sector. These entities operate at the national, state, and local levels including agencies, municipalities, land trusts, non-profits, and trail organizations and are expected to support and advance the recommendations of the Plan. Identifying, and coordinating with, partners across the state will be crucial to prioritizing, advancing, and implementing the goals and recommendations of the Plan.
15. Impacts associated with the implementation of the Plan and mitigation measures identified include the following:
- The Plan aims to better serve environmental justice (EJ) communities through enhancing engagement of, and providing more access to, greenway trails for people in underserved communities. Multiple positive benefits will be realized from this such as: increasing access to recreational opportunities and green space; providing safer routes to local goods and services and connecting neighborhoods via non-road options; reducing the need for vehicular use; improving local air quality; encouraging physical activity; increasing health benefits; reducing health care expenses; and creating more areas of green space and better connectivity of natural areas.
 - Greenway trail construction itself may generally have impacts on natural resources regarding clearing and development of treadways and trail corridors. Existing corridors, such as, railroads and utility ROWs, can often be repurposed or additionally used for trail development, reducing the need to impact undisturbed natural areas.
 - Potential adverse environmental impacts associated with trail construction can be addressed in most instances through proper siting, design and construction of trails and trail corridors relative to natural and cultural resources. Use of up-to-date natural resource information and GIS data, a coordinated planning approach, and use of trail development standards and guidelines will help to minimize potential impacts. Resource protection measures include erosion control measures during construction activities, avoidance and protection of wetlands, protection of rare, threatened and endangered species, use of native plantings, and best management practices for invasive species management. Consultation with the New York State Division for Historic Preservation (DHP) is required for projects that may impact cultural resources.
 - Development of greenway trails in EJ communities, often in urban and suburban areas, may mean the potential reduction of hardscape paving and concrete to be replaced with landscaping features along the trail (e.g. vegetated swales to manage stormwater runoff, native tree plantings) and potential for habitat enhancement projects (e.g. wetland restoration, daylighting streams).
 - Collecting and publishing information to aid in the planning, development, and management of greenway trails is expected to improve collaboration and partnerships of various entities and thereby enhance protection of natural and cultural resources by allowing agencies, municipalities and others to analyze data more comprehensively. This will aid in not only statewide but regional and local planning efforts and reaching short- and long-term goals of the Plan.
 - Sustained federal and state funding and programs for greenway trail projects ensures continued development of greenway trails as recreation and alternative transportation routes. Funding enhances trails planning, acquisition of land for trails, trail development, and maintenance, which can preserve and protect natural and cultural resources.

- Providing greenway trail standards and guidelines aids in providing a more uniform and consistent trail system across the state, in terms of wayfinding and signage, design, construction, and maintenance methods. Application of approved standards in these areas can help trail planning entities to avoid, minimize and mitigate adverse environmental impacts of trail development and use.
 - Increased promotion of greenway trails is expected to result in increased use of trails and open spaces by the public. This requires that facilities be developed and maintained to support the increased use.
 - Additionally, in light of the impacts of climate change, facilities need to be designed and adapted to be more resilient. Mitigation measures for planning and design may include: locating trails outside of floodways; installing elevated structures above future projected elevations of sea level rise; maintaining existing vegetation along shorelines to the greatest extent possible; designing for increased levels of stormwater management due to increasingly severe and frequent storms; utilizing green infrastructure; enhancing trail corridors with native plantings; including habitat restoration projects; and increasing overall protection of green space.
16. The cumulative effects of applying the goals and recommendations of the Plan will be substantially beneficial. Existing trail opportunities to the public will be maintained and expanded while at the same time protection of the natural and cultural resources will be ensured. One of the most important cumulative effects of the Plan is also the least tangible. The expansion of the trail system and the commitment of resource protection guidance provided within the Plan will substantially enhance the physical, mental and emotional well-being – the quality of life – of the residents of the State.
 17. The advancing of the quality and extent of trails has substantial beneficial effects on economic activity, as well as open space preservation and recreation opportunities, within affected communities. Development of trails often contributes to the attractiveness of a municipality for investment by businesses and as primary means of non-motorized transportation that provide connections between and within recreation areas, residential areas, businesses, schools, and places of work. Thus, greenway trails are an important adjunct to factors leading to economic recovery and development.
 18. Implementation of the Plan will result in a significant reduction in energy consumption. This will especially be the situation in urban areas where trails function as a non-motorized means of transportation. Therefore, the Plan will foster actions that will help mitigate climate change.
 19. Application of the goals and recommendations for the development and expansion of the greenway trail system requires a commitment of resources. Resources for planning, development, and maintenance are committed through federal, state and municipal programs or projects. The Plan helps determine the priority use of these committed resources. Implementation of actions which are guided by the Plan will result in irreversible and irretrievable commitments of time, funding, and energy resources, but overall the benefits of recreational opportunity, better health, open space protection, and stewardship outweigh these commitments.
 20. The Statewide Greenway Trails Plan was reviewed for consistency with Coastal policies under the New York Coastal Management Program. The Plan advances state coastal policies regarding development, public access, fish and wildlife, wetlands, and historic and scenic resources.
 21. Since the Statewide Greenway Trails Plan is a general plan, identification of program specific or site-specific adverse impacts, including those which are unavoidable, will be accomplished during future planning and environmental review of programs and projects. Although specific adverse impacts associated with the application of the Plan's goals and recommendations cannot be identified, adverse impacts may arise when one or a group of goals and/or recommendations are

given more emphasis over others. Minimization of conflicts and adverse impacts is accomplished through planning, environmental review, public participation, and priority rating systems.

Certification To Approve/Fund/Undertake:

Having considered the Draft and Final Generic Environmental Impact Statement and having considered the preceding written facts and conclusions relied on to meet the requirements of 6 NYCRR Part 617.11, this Statement of Findings certifies that:

- The requirements of 6 NYCRR Part 617 have been met; and
- Consistent with social, economic and other essential considerations from among the reasonable alternatives available, the action is one that avoids or minimizes adverse environmental impacts to the maximum extent practicable, and that adverse environmental impacts will be avoided or minimized to the maximum extent practicable by incorporating as conditions to the decision those mitigative measures that were identified as practicable; and
- Consistent with the applicable policies of Article 42 of the Executive Law, as implemented by 19 NYCRR Part 600.5, this action will achieve a balance between the protection of the environment and the need to accommodate social and economic considerations.

Erik Kulleseid

Commissioner

Print or Type Name of Responsible Officer in Lead Agency

Title of Responsible Officer



Signature of Responsible Officer in Lead Agency

4.19.21

Date