

GENESEE TRANSPORTATION COUNCIL

RESOLUTION

Resolution 13-62 **Accepting the executive summary, *Urban Trail Linkages Eastman and Genesee Riverway Trails Planning and Preliminary Design Study*, as evidence of completion of UPWP Task 6524**

WHEREAS,

1. The *FY 2013-2014 Unified Planning Work Program* includes Task 6524, Urban Trail Linkages Study, for the purpose of the concept-level planning and design of improvements to the Genesee Riverway Trail system on the east side of the Genesee River in the City of Rochester, including improving connectivity, enhancing existing trail sections, providing new linkages, and extending the trails through Eastman Business Park and the Town of Greece;
2. Said Task included the inventory of existing and planned conditions, an assessment of needs and opportunities, the development of alternatives based on public input and advisory committee guidance, and the identification of the preferred alternative following public review of the draft study;
3. Said Task has been completed and has resulted in the report, *Urban Trail Linkages Eastman and Genesee Riverway Trails Planning and Preliminary Design Study*, which includes concept-level planning and design and cost estimates for the preferred project alternative; and
4. Said summary has been reviewed by GTC staff and member agencies through the GTC committee process and has been found to be consistent with the goals, objectives, and recommendations of the Long Range Transportation Plan.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED

1. That the Genesee Transportation Council hereby accepts the report, *Urban Trail Linkages Eastman and Genesee Riverway Trails Planning and Preliminary Design Study*, as evidence of completion of UPWP Task 6524; and
2. That this resolution takes effect immediately.

CERTIFICATION

The undersigned duly qualified Secretary of the Genesee Transportation Council certifies that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of a resolution adopted at a legally convened meeting of the Genesee Transportation Council held on June 20, 2013.

Date

ROBERT A. TRAVER, Secretary
Genesee Transportation Council



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ES.1 PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Urban Trail Linkages Eastman and Genesee Riverway Trails Planning and Preliminary Design Study (hereafter the UTL, Eastman Trail, or Genesee Riverway Trail) is an exploration of the feasibility of two distinct but interrelated trail concepts in the City of Rochester: the Genesee Riverway Trail, which entails an off-road alternative to an existing sidepath trail segment (also sometimes referred to as an on-road trail), and the Eastman Trail, which would link the planned Route 390 Trail extension to the Genesee Riverway Trail through or adjacent to the Eastman Business Park. The City was awarded funds from the Genesee Transportation Council (GTC) to work with a planning consultant and assemble a committee of stakeholders to guide the process and arrive at recommended alignments, design standards, and planning-level cost estimates.

ES.2 COMMUNITY BENEFITS

The Eastman and Genesee Riverway Trails would provide tremendous benefits to adjacent neighborhoods and business districts, as well as the Greater Rochester Region. Below is an overview of how these proposed trails could enhance the quality of life and transportation alternatives for the community.

Public Health

Numerous studies have linked specific health problems (diabetes, cardiovascular disease, chronic depression, etc.) with the lack of physical activity. Part of the solution to these health risks is to make active transportation (walking and/or biking) more appealing and accessible in our communities. Multi-use trails are central to this effort, as are improving sidewalk networks and investing in vibrant, pedestrian-oriented business districts. Trails provide opportunities for recreational walking, hiking, and biking. A well connected trail network can also be utilized by bicycle commuters, incorporating consistent exercise into their daily routine.

While the Greater Rochester Region boasts the most extensive network of multi-use trails of any Upstate New York city, there remain many gaps in the network and several underserved neighborhoods. The City of Rochester intends to fill in all the gaps in the Genesee Riverway Trail (GRT) and transform all on-road segments to off-road trails that are as close to the river as possible. This would ensure greater use of this regional asset, promoting healthier lifestyles. Similarly, the Eastman Trail would connect the Eastman Business Park (EBP), a major employment center, to the GRT, Route 390 Trail, and ultimately the Erie Canalway Trail. This would create greater opportunities for active transportation for EBP employees and nearby residents.

Regional Significance

Both trails examined in this Study have impacts on the regional trail network. Once completed, they would be part of a large-scale trail loop system serving the west side of the City of Rochester and the east side of the Town of Greece. This loop would be formed by the Route 390 Trail, Lake Ontario State Parkway Trail, Genesee Riverway Trail, and Erie Canalway Trail. The Eastman Trail would bisect that loop forming two smaller loops and offering greater access to the interior. From a local perspective, people and businesses near the Eastman or Genesee Riverway Trails would benefit from enhanced non-motorized connectivity to the rest of the Rochester region.

Economic Development

Multi-use trails are economic development engines. Multiple studies of trails in various settings have illustrated how active transportation facilities generate tourism for the region and bring patrons to nearby businesses. In a less tangible sense, they also contribute to the culture of a community—whether or not it is a place known for its recreation, active lifestyles, accessible natural features, and transportation alternatives. Cities like Boulder, Austin, Seattle, Ithaca, Portland, Burlington, and Asheville are examples of places that boast these characteristics, which contributes to various publications consistently ranking them as “best cities” or “emerging destinations”. In addition, proximity to trail corridors is often linked to increased property values, especially if there is direct access to the trail.

Environmental Stewardship

Rochester boasts a tremendous natural asset in the Genesee River and its gorge. Much of the river corridor is isolated due to the steep walls of the gorge. While this isolation aids in preserving the habitat, it also hinders access. Improving low-impact access facilities like multi-use trails give people the opportunity to engage this unique natural environment without significantly compromising its health. The GRT in particular is an ideal means to bring people to the river and its wooded surroundings and can be used for education and fostering stewardship. While the Eastman Trail is proposed to mainly traverse urbanized environments, the western segment along the former Erie Canal bed is a serene wooded setting that offers opportunities for nature hikes and appreciating the history of the canal.

Lively Communities

Trails can foster greater human interaction and a sense of pride in the community. While society has trended towards more private and sedentary lifestyles, multi-use trails and the larger active transportation movement are aimed at bringing people out of their homes, into nature, and engaged with their community. Whether it be chance encounters with neighbors or more frequent patronage to local small businesses, a bicycle and pedestrian friendly environment is a key component in creating vibrant places. In addition, such environments are excellent opportunities for interpretive signage and interactive installations related to the community’s history, natural assets, and, in the case of Eastman Kodak, their unique industrial heritage.

ES.3 PLANNING PROCESS

In 2011, the City of Rochester, in cooperation with GTC and the Genesee Land Trust, formed a Project Advisory Committee (PAC). The City hired the consultant team of Clark Patterson Lee, McCord Snyder Landscape Architecture, and Jane Clark Chermayeff and Associates to work with the PAC on the UTL Study.

The PAC consisted of various local stakeholders such as representatives from the neighborhood, the local bicycle advocacy organization, NYSDOT, Genesee Land Trust, and the Town of Greece. From the onset, there were extensive communications with the larger landowners in the Study Area. EBP in particular was represented on the PAC and attended several meetings and site visits with the project team. The Acknowledgements page after the Table of Contents lists all members of the PAC.

A unique aspect of this multi-use trail study was the exploration of interpretive opportunities, such as stewardship of the natural environment and celebration of Kodak's industrial heritage. One of the early site visits was focused on these interpretive opportunities. The City Historian and representatives from the George Eastman House and the Landmark Society of Western New York attended and lent their expertise and ideas to the project team. The interpretive opportunities are discussed in depth in Appendix A.

The early stages of the project were focused on site visits and data collection. This resulted in a series of detailed maps and associated narrative found in Section 2. Issues explored included sensitive environmental features, land use patterns, land ownership, relevant local plans and projects, and connectivity to other modes in the transportation network. This information, along with a generalized conceptual trail corridor, was presented to the public at a workshop in October 2011.

Through a combination of site visits, stakeholder meetings, and project team meetings, the PAC developed a series of trail alignment alternatives for the Study Area (see Section 4). These alternatives were also influenced by feedback received at the first public workshop. All alternatives were documented, whether feasible or highly unlikely, and examined in terms of pros and cons for each. These alternatives were also presented to the public at a workshop in September 2012 to refine the ideas and progress towards a consensus recommended alignment.

After examining the alternatives in depth, the PAC developed a recommended alignment which has a balanced consideration of cost-effectiveness, land-owner cooperation, direct routing, sensitivity to neighbors, and timely completion. This recommended alignment is a planning-level concept, as is the associated cost estimate in Section 6. A more detailed design will be necessary once funding is secured, and that may result in modifications to the trail's location.

ES.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

Eastman Trail

The recommended alignment for the Eastman Trail connects the planned Route 390 Trail in the west to the GRT in the east. While a primary objective of the City and the PAC was to identify a feasible off-road trail, it was determined that much of EBP is not a feasible location for a multi-use trail at this time. EBP representatives expressed concern that the trail might jeopardize future growth opportunities on key sites slated for redevelopment. They also expressed concerns about liability and the trail's proximity to sensitive infrastructure such as above ground pipe networks.

There are, however, sections at the east and west ends of EBP identified as feasible locations for an off-road trail, but at this time an on-road bike route was identified as the only alternative between these off-road segments. An off-road segment through the heart of EBP was explored and a conceptual alignment developed. This alternative should be retained for future consideration should conditions change.

The recommended alignment consists of:

- An off-road trail along the former Erie Canal bed from the northeast corner of Latona Road and Ridgeway Avenue to the intersection of Weiland Road and Ridgeway Avenue;
- An on-road bike route along Ridgeway Avenue from Weiland Road to Aster Street, then along Aster Street from Ridgeway Avenue to Rand Street;
- An off-road trail along the EBP's buffer area behind the Rand Street residences (former DeNeve Street) from Aster Street to Dewey Avenue;
- An on-road bike route along Dewey Avenue from the former DeNeve Street to Eastman Avenue, then along Eastman Avenue from Dewey Avenue to the EBP Lot 42 access road, then along the EBP Lot 42 access road from Eastman Avenue into the abandoned portion of EBP Lot 42;
- An off-road trail along the western and northern edges of EBP Lot 42 from the access road to Merrill Street; and
- An on-road bike route along Merrill Street from the Lot 42 to Lake Avenue.

Additional recommendations for the Eastman Trail include:

- Interpretive installations at various points along the trail, celebrating the industrial heritage of Eastman Kodak Company and the original alignment of the Erie Canal (see Appendix A for specific ideas);
- A future connection from the Eastman Trail and Route 390 Trail west to the Erie Canalway Trail (see Map 11);
- Landscaping enhancements to the trail in EBP Lot 42, such as a wider landscaped corridor than is typically used for trails and vegetative screening to help beautify the industrial landscape and attract trail users; and
- A trail head with kiosks, seating, parking, landscaping, and other amenities, located at Latona Road and Ridgeway Avenue.

Genesee Riverway Trail

The recommended alignment for the GRT achieves additional off-road segments of the trail, but not for the entire length of the Study Area. While a primary objective was to relocate the entire sidepath segment along Lake Avenue to an off-road location, some segments were not deemed feasible at this time. The segment behind EBP Building 81 and the adjacent residences is hindered by the lack of space on RG&E property with limited or no slope. Also, the proposed segment along the existing cemetery roads in Holy Sepulchre Cemetery is not feasible at this time due to the concerns of the cemetery owners. That option was retained as a future consideration, should conditions change.

There are, however, three off-road segments within the Study Area that are desirable and feasible, but at this time the existing GRT sidepath on Lake Avenue was identified as the only feasible connection between these segments. Additionally, it is recommended that the Eastman and Genesee Riverway Trails form their junction at Merrill Street and Lake Avenue. A trail head is located just north of that intersection, which can provide wayfinding signage and information on each trail.

The recommended alignment consists of:

- An off-road trail through the City-owned King's Landing Cemetery, from the north end of the existing off-road GRT to Lake Avenue;
- Retaining the existing GRT from King's Landing Cemetery to St. Bernard's Park Apartments, which is a sidepath along the east side of Lake Avenue;
- An off-road trail through the St. Bernard's Park Apartments property, connecting at both ends to the sidepath on Lake Avenue and consisting of a new ADA-compliant entrance path at the south end of the property plus enhancements to the non-ADA compliant existing trail behind St. Bernard's;
- Retaining the existing GRT from the north end of St. Bernard's Park Apartments to the entrance to the City-owned Riverside Cemetery, which is a sidepath along the east side of Lake Avenue;
- An off-road trail utilizing the existing cemetery roads in Riverside Cemetery, from Lake Avenue to the eastern edge of the cemetery road network; and
- An off-road trail through Bullock's Woods in Riverside Cemetery, from the eastern edge of the cemetery road network to the existing GRT in Turning Point Park (this may or may not be built in conjunction with the planned cemetery road extension).

Additional recommendations for the Eastman Trail include:

- Interpretive installations at various points along the trail, celebrating the industrial heritage of Eastman Kodak Company, the natural beauty of the Genesee River Gorge, and the history found in the three cemeteries (see Appendix A for specific ideas);
- Widening existing sidewalks and trails to the recommended 10 to 12 feet where feasible; and
- A trail head with kiosks, seating, parking, landscaping, and other amenities, located adjacent to King's Landing Cemetery.

ES.5 TRAIL FUNDING

The cost estimate provided in Section 6 is for planning purposes to allow the City of Rochester to gauge the approximate cost for developing the multi-use trail segments as presented in this Study. The actual location and design of the trail may change once the project reaches the design stage. As well, construction costs are subject to change. Dollar figures included are from 2012; escalation due to inflation or other factors is not included.

The total planning-level cost estimate for the Eastman Trail recommended alignment is \$2,982,551. The total planning-level cost estimate for the GRT recommended alignment is \$1,149,669. The two trails together would cost approximately \$4.1 million. These estimates assume the acquisition of easements on EBP and Unity Health (St. Bernard's) property rather than an outright purchase of the land.

Section 6 also provides a variety of ideas for funding sources. These include grant programs and capital programs at the federal, state, and local level. An overview of each program is provided, but funding levels and requirements for any of the programs could change from year to year. Project advocates from the City and community should be sure to check for updates. Additionally, there may be non-traditional sources that could assist with development of the trail, including community foundations, public health organizations, and corporate sponsors. The development and use of this trail will be most successful if multiple community partners are involved and thus vested in its use and preservation.

Urban Trail Linkages

Genesee Riverway Trail
King's Landing to
Turning Point Park

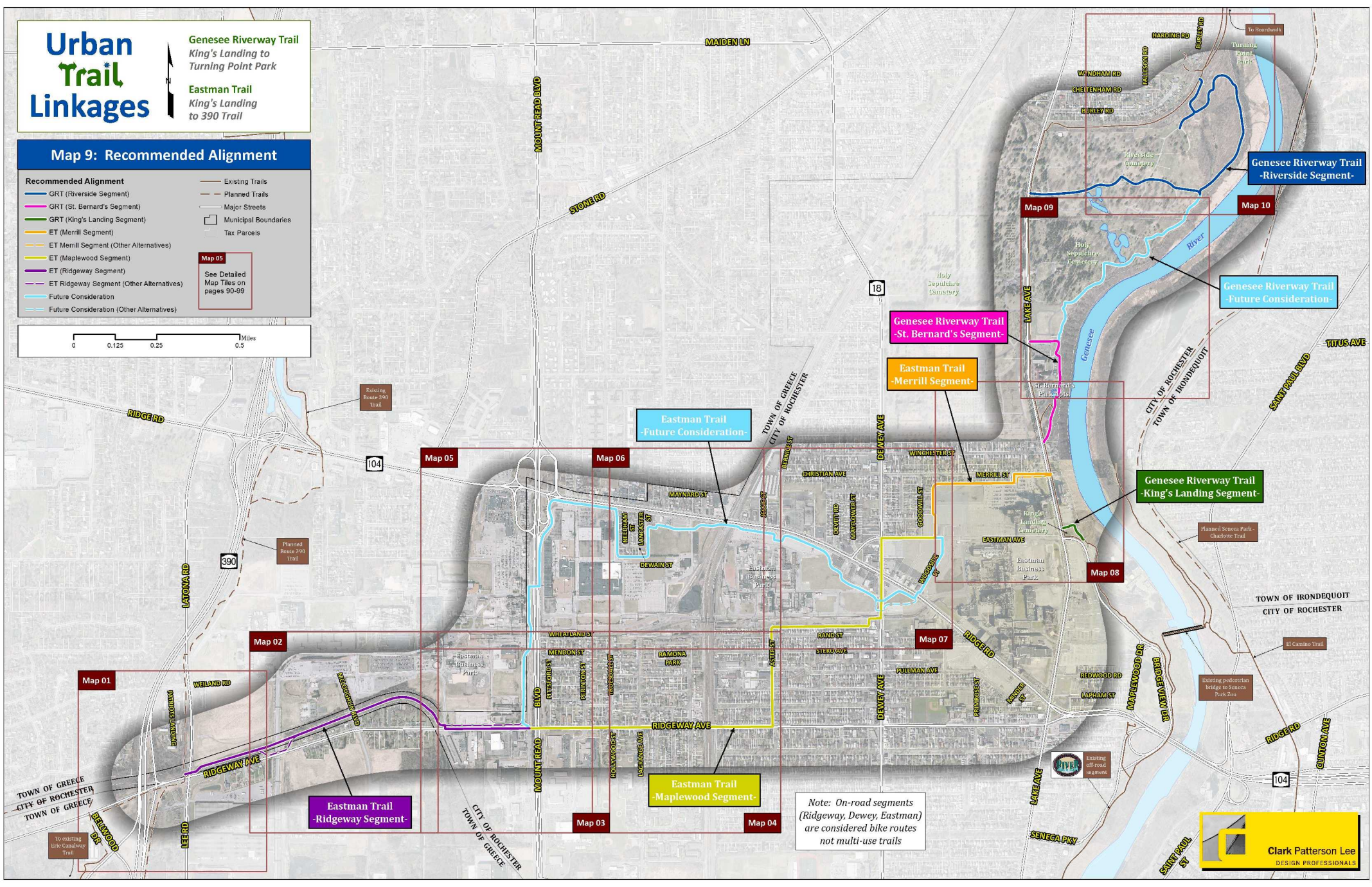
Eastman Trail
King's Landing to
390 Trail

Map 9: Recommended Alignment

Recommended Alignment	Existing Trails
— GRT (Riverside Segment)	— Planned Trails
— GRT (St. Bernard's Segment)	— Major Streets
— GRT (King's Landing Segment)	 Municipal Boundaries
— ET (Merrill Segment)	 Tax Parcels
— ET Merrill Segment (Other Alternatives)	
— ET (Maplewood Segment)	
— ET (Ridgeway Segment)	
— ET Ridgeway Segment (Other Alternatives)	
— Future Consideration	
— Future Consideration (Other Alternatives)	

Map 05
See Detailed
Map Tiles on
pages 90-99

0 0.125 0.25 0.5 Miles



Eastman Trail
Future Consideration

Genesee Riverway Trail
St. Bernard's Segment

Eastman Trail
Merrill Segment

Genesee Riverway Trail
King's Landing Segment

Eastman Trail
Ridgeway Segment

Eastman Trail
Maplewood Segment

Note: On-road segments
(Ridgeway, Dewey, Eastman)
are considered bike routes
not multi-use trails