

Catskill Mountain Rail Trail



“We have a unique opportunity to create a world-class tourism destination, directly impact public health, and improve the overall quality of life in our region.”

-Ulster County Executive Michael P. Hein

Catskill Mountain Rail Trail

Project Vision:

Develop a public recreational trail from Kingston to and along the Ashokan Reservoir that will link the Hudson River and Walkway over the Hudson to the Catskill Park and create a world-class tourism destination.



Project Goals:

- Connect Kingston neighborhoods to Catskill Park & Ashokan Reservoir
- Expand tourism business in Ulster County and Hudson Valley region
- Increase outdoor recreation opportunities and promote healthy lifestyles
- Provide “car-free” transportation options
- Create links to the Hurley/ O&W Rail Trail & Wallkill Valley Rail Trail

Ashokan Reservoir



Catskill Mountain Rail Trail

Background and Brief History:

- Railroad chartered and construction started (1866)
- Line extended from Kingston to Oneonta (1900)
- U&D Railroad carries 676,000 to Catskill resorts (1913)
- Last train leaves Kingston (1976)
- Ulster County purchases 38.6 miles of U&D corridor--
City of Kingston to Delaware County border (1979)
- County signs 25-year lease with Catskill Mountain Railroad
Company (1991) for tourism railroad operations
- Limited local freight service ends (1996)
- Planning Study considers feasibility of rail trail (2006)
- County Executive Michael Hein proposes development of
Catskill Mountain Rail Trail (2012) from City of Kingston
to the Ashokan Reservoir and west into the Catskills
- Governor Andrew Cuomo includes \$2 million for rail trail
in 2013-2014 New York State Budget (2013)



Catskill Mountain Rail Trail

Growing Importance of Regional Rail Trails:

- **Walkway over the Hudson** (opened 2009) attracted more than 780,000 visitors in first year and now adds more than \$24 million annual sales.
- **Hudson Valley Rail Trail** (Highland/Lloyd) receives 670,000 visitors annually and has become New York State's second-most-popular rail trail.
- **Hurley (O&W) Rail Trail** receives estimated 81,000 visitors each year.
- **Wallkill Valley Rail Trail** will soon extend from more than 33 miles from Gardiner to Kingston once the Rosendale Trestle reopens in June.

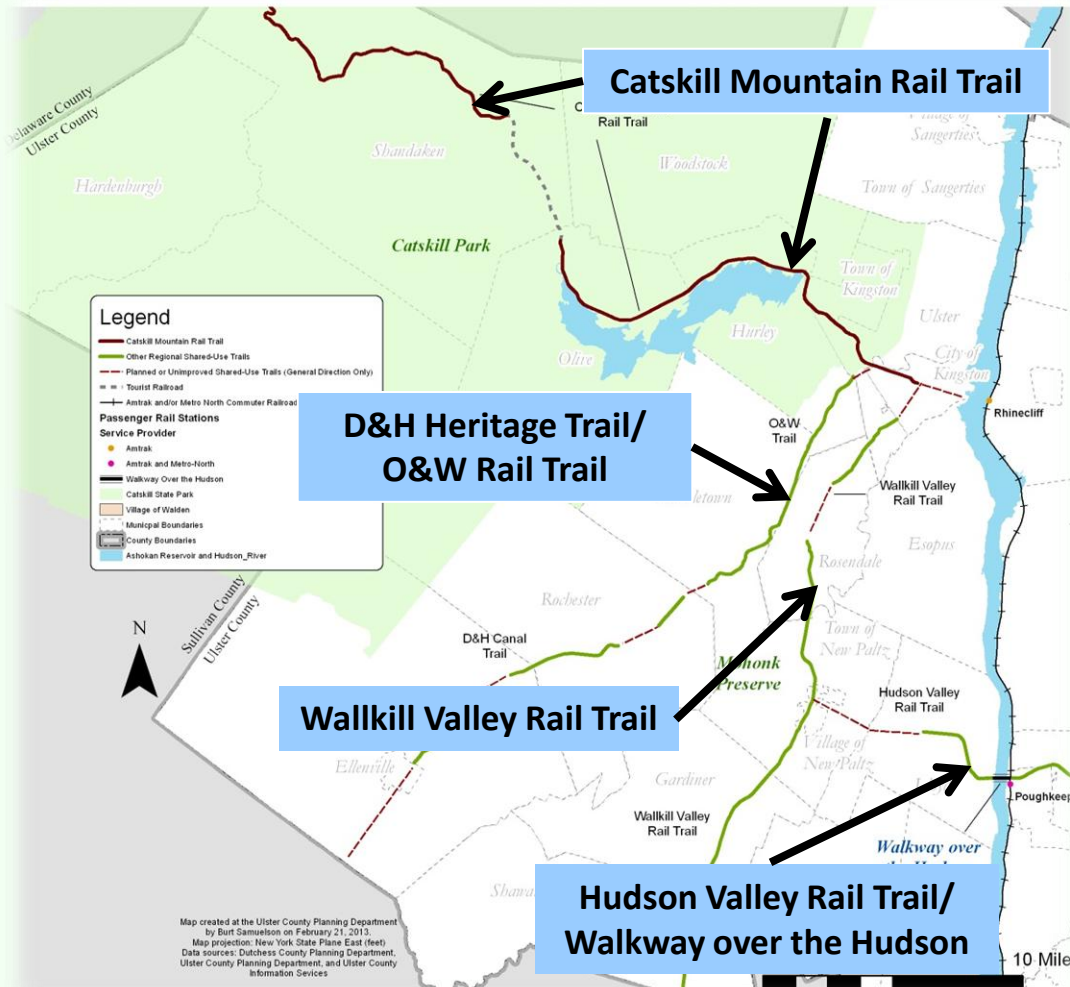
Hudson Valley Rail Trail



Rosendale Trestle



Catskill Mountain Rail Trail



Future Linkages to Regional Trails and Tourism Attractions:

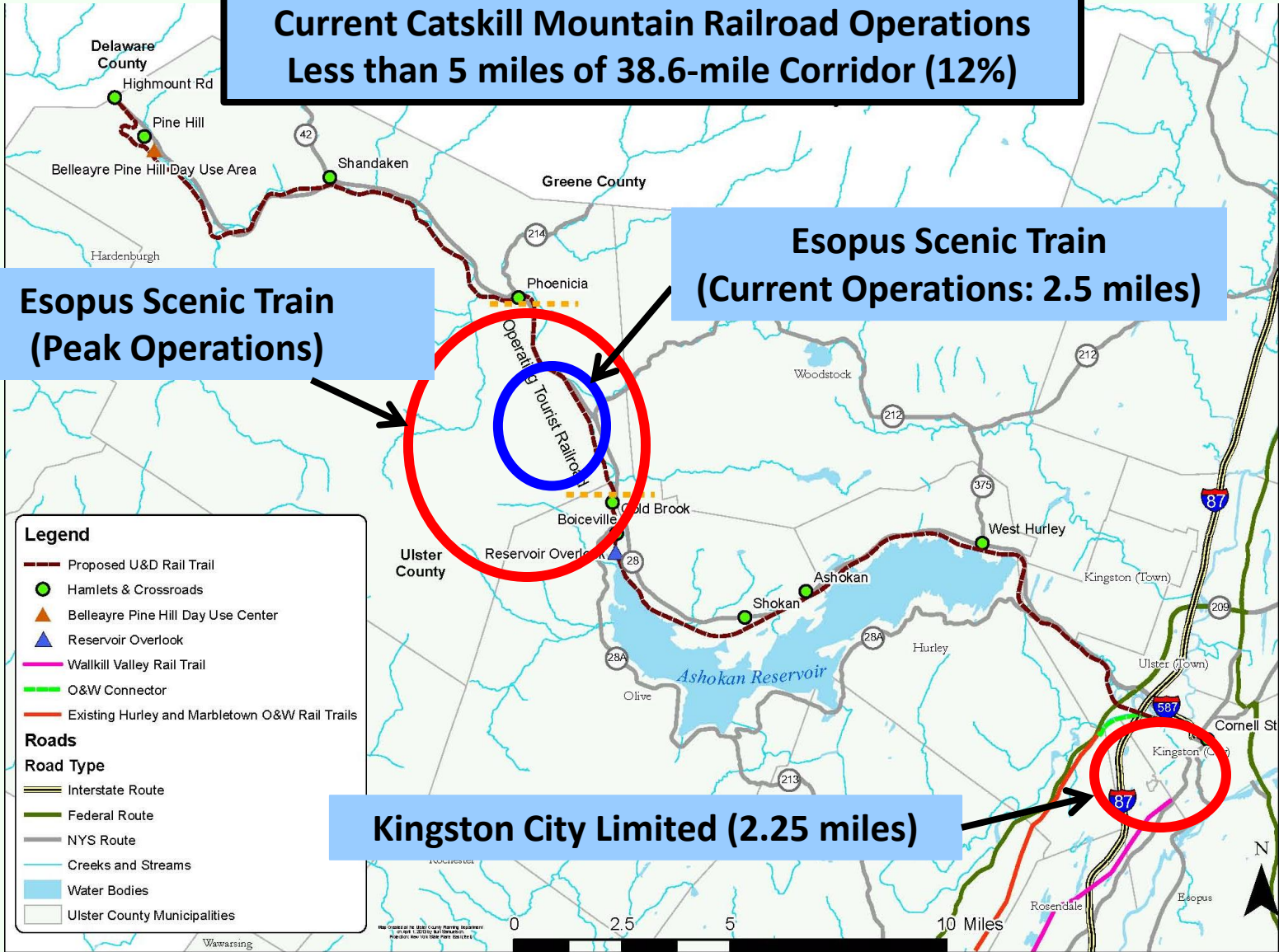
- Historic City of Kingston & Hudson River
- Hurley Rail Trail (O&W)/ D&H Heritage Trail
- Wallkill Valley Rail Trail & Rosendale Trestle
- Belleayre Mountain and NYS DEC Trails
- Pine Hill Lake Day Use Area
- Walkway over the Hudson & Dutchess Co. Trails

**Current Catskill Mountain Railroad Operations
Less than 5 miles of 38.6-mile Corridor (12%)**

**Esopus Scenic Train
(Peak Operations)**

**Esopus Scenic Train
(Current Operations: 2.5 miles)**

Kingston City Limited (2.25 miles)



**Kingston to Boiceville Segment (18 miles)
Rail with Trail Not Feasible**



Boiceville Trestle Destroyed

**State Route 209 Crossing
Requires Costly
Safety Upgrades**

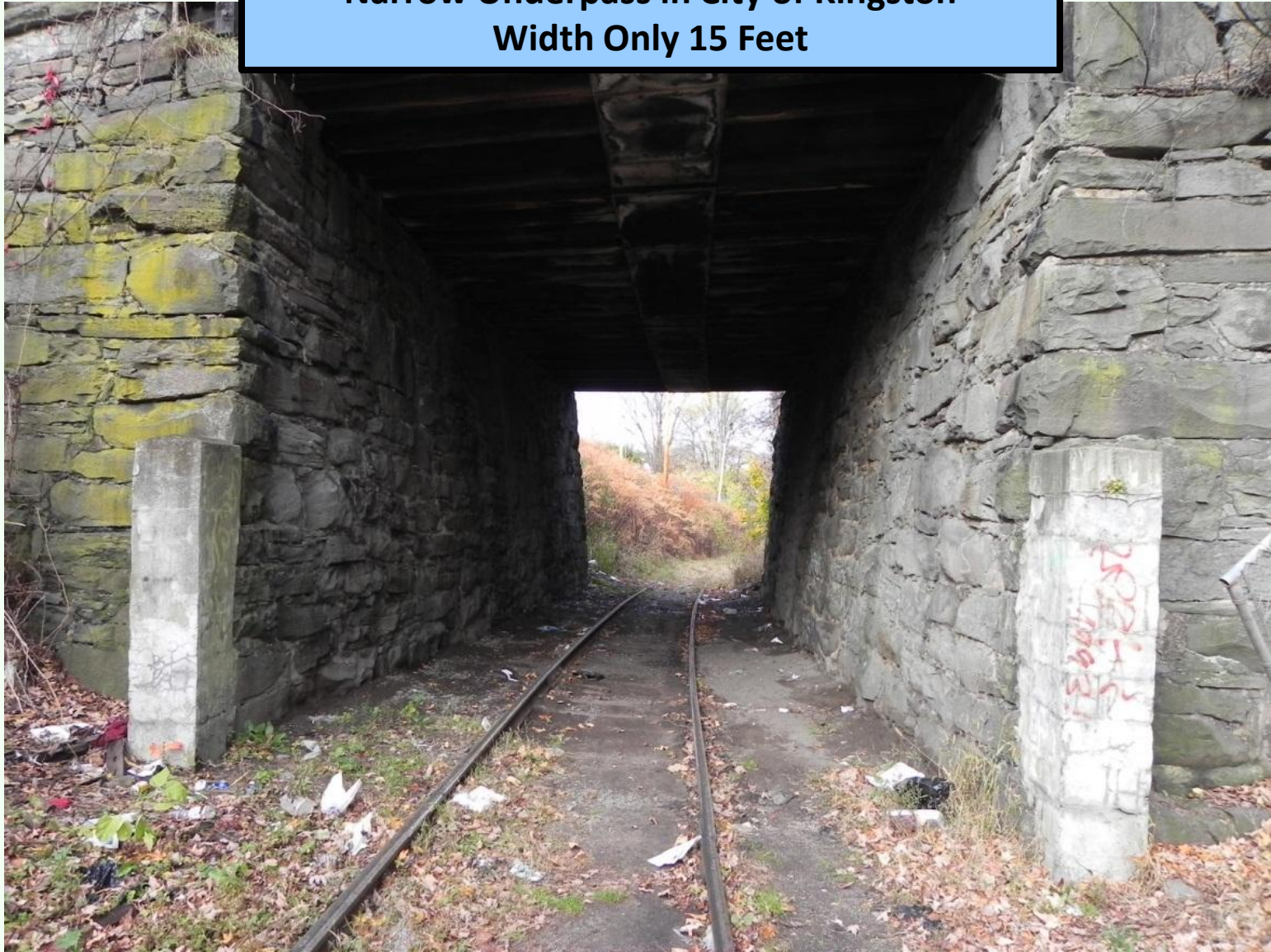
Q: Why not build “rail-with-trail” from Kingston to the Ashokan Reservoir?

- Dramatically increases cost of project and makes trail construction cost-prohibitive
- Creates conflicts with adjacent homes and businesses and poses significant safety and liability issues
- Undermines the quality of the trail & decreases the recreational uses and attractiveness of trail
- Requires extensive engineering and environmental disturbance from construction and clearance
- Jeopardizes needed funding and agreements with outside stakeholders (e.g., NYC DEP)

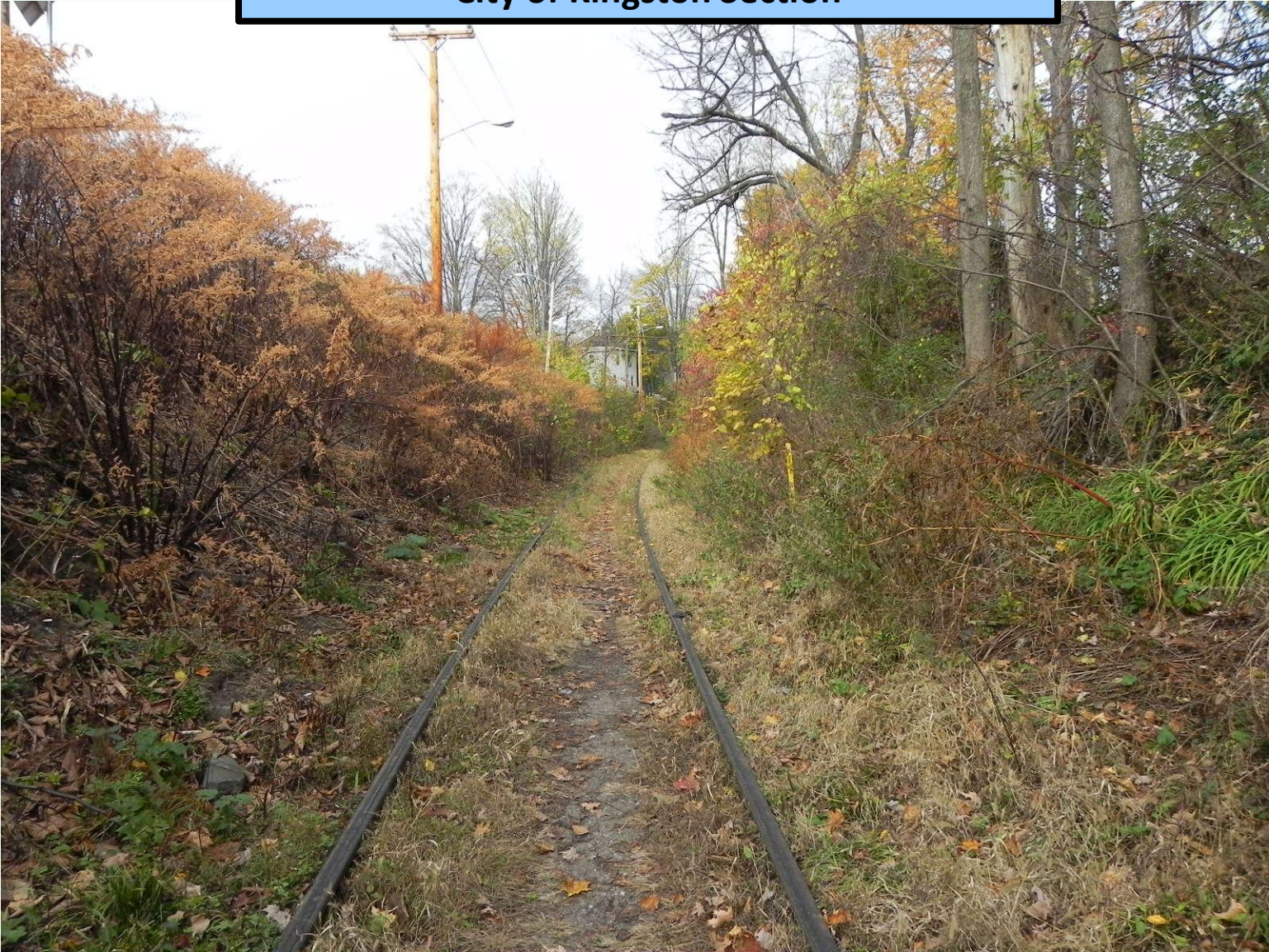
City of Kingston Section



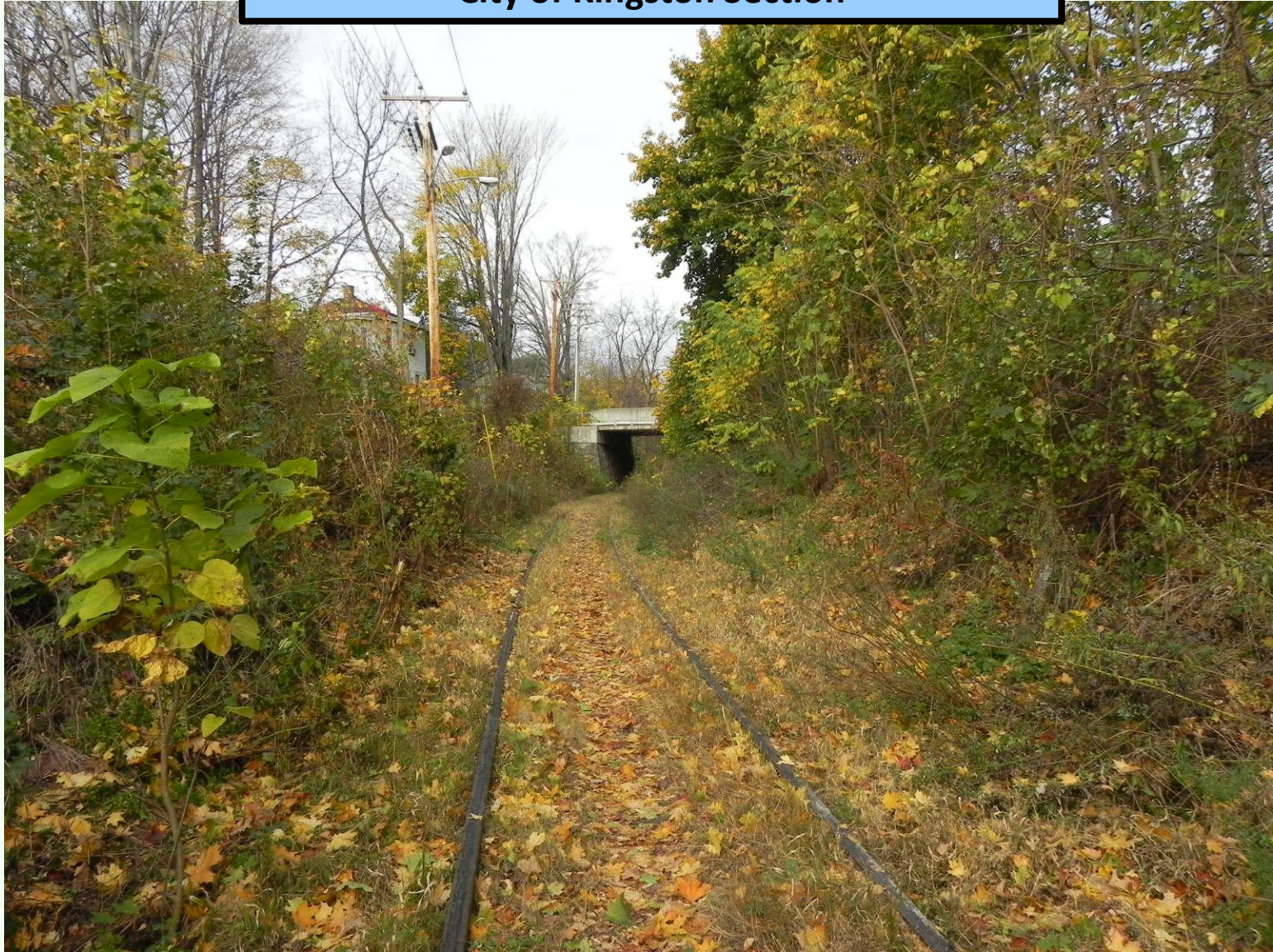
**Narrow Underpass in City of Kingston
Width Only 15 Feet**



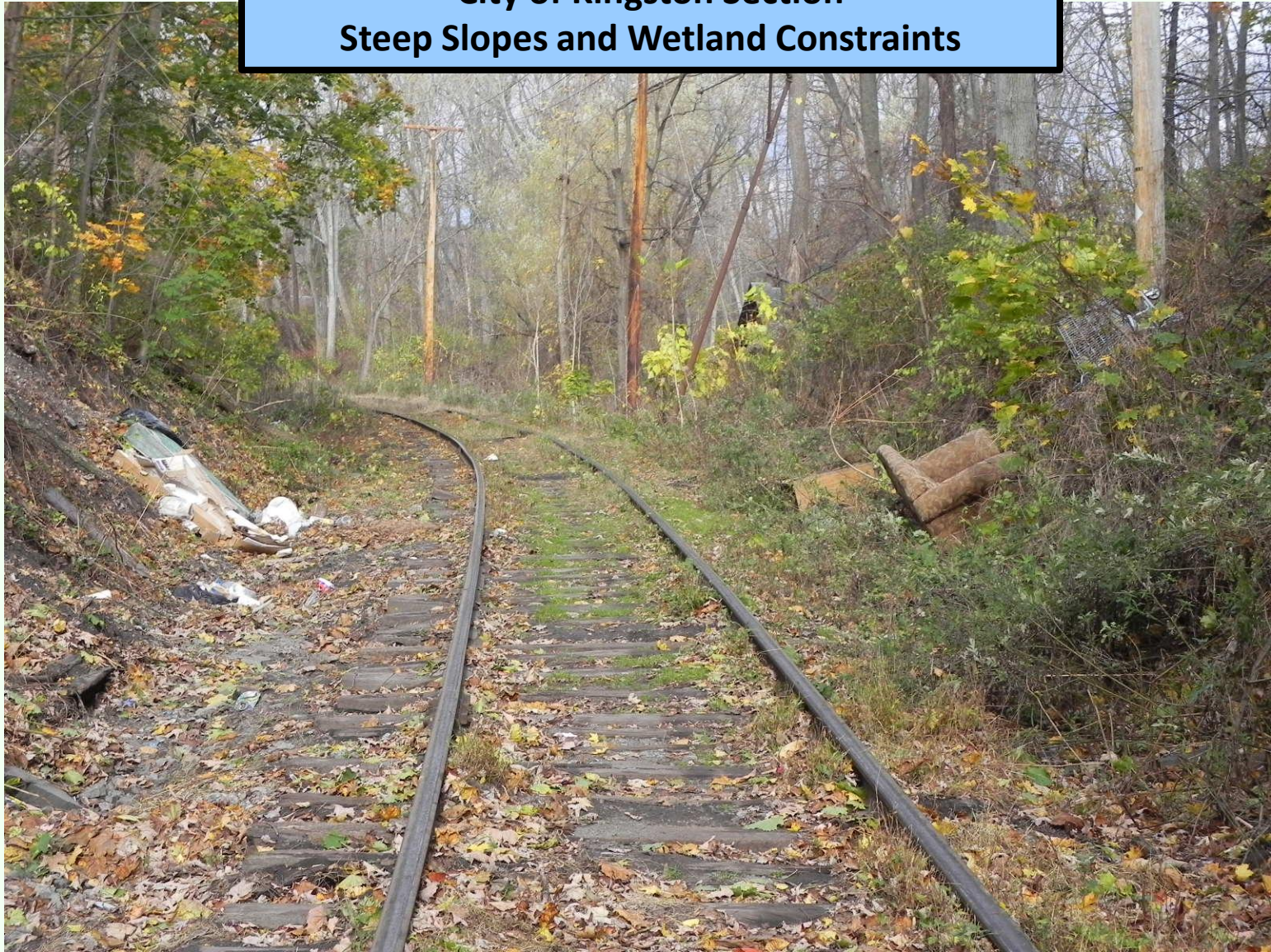
City of Kingston Section



City of Kingston Section



**City of Kingston Section
Steep Slopes and Wetland Constraints**



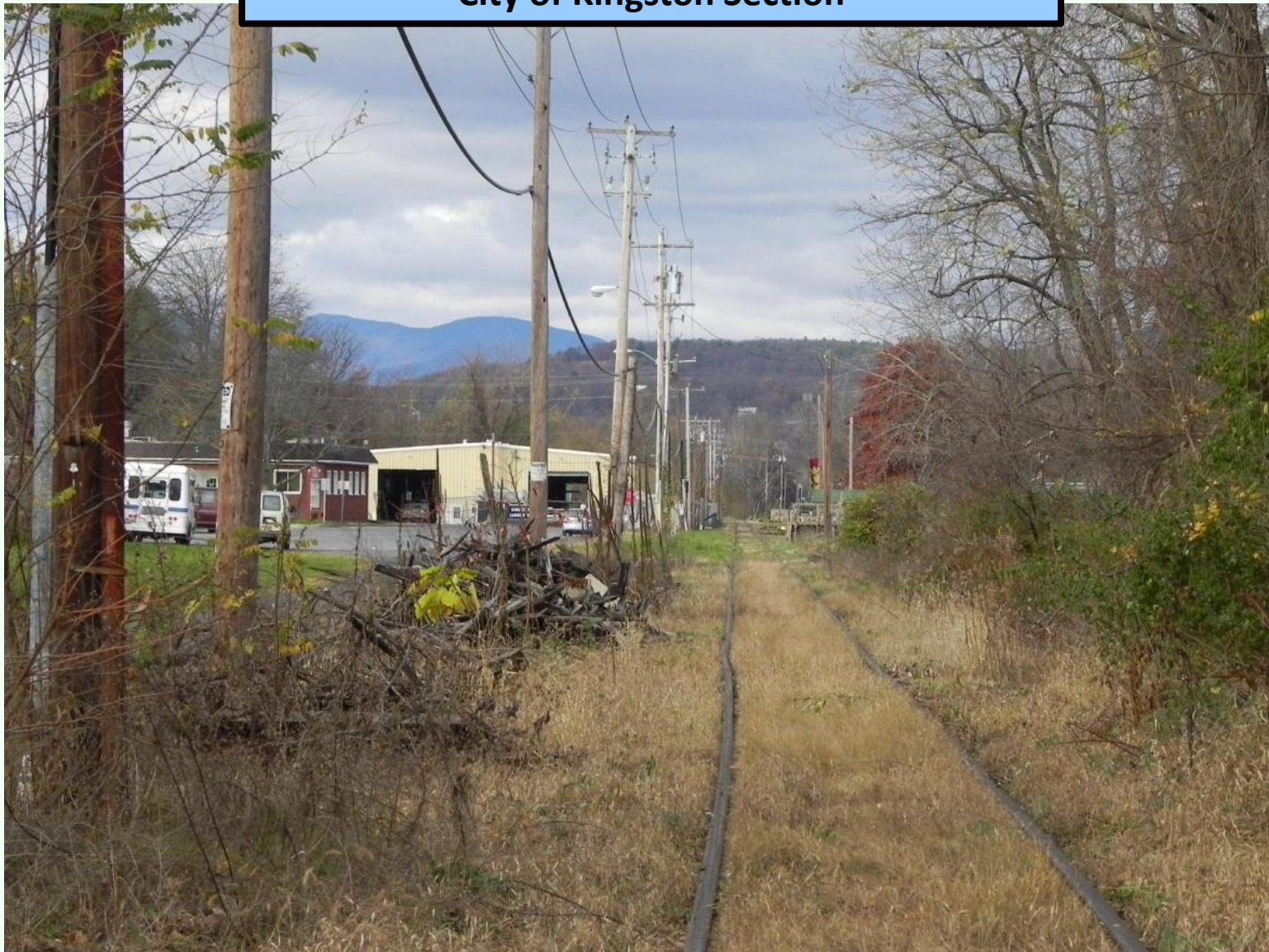
**City of Kingston Section
View from Future Trail**



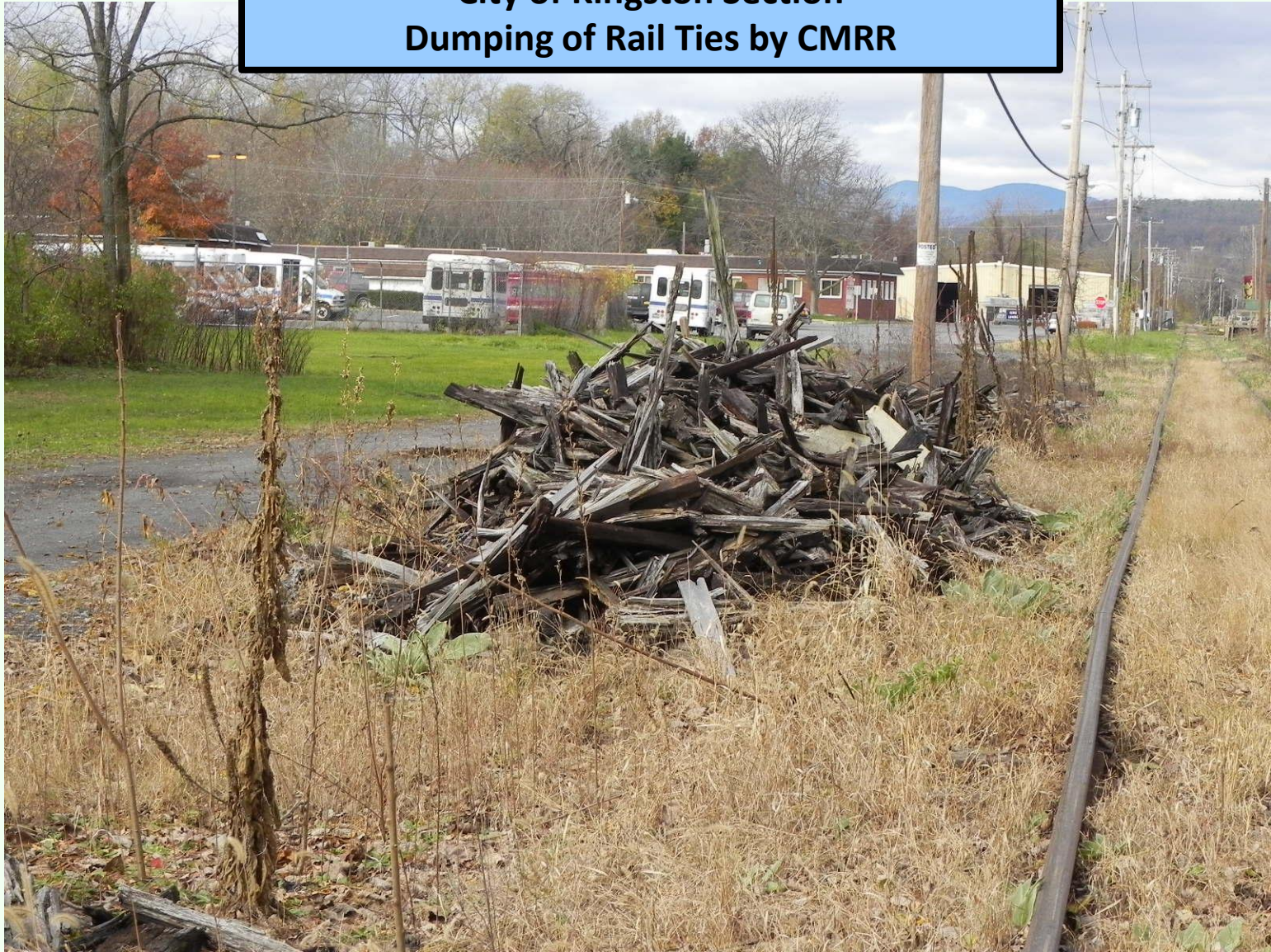
City of Kingston Section



City of Kingston Section



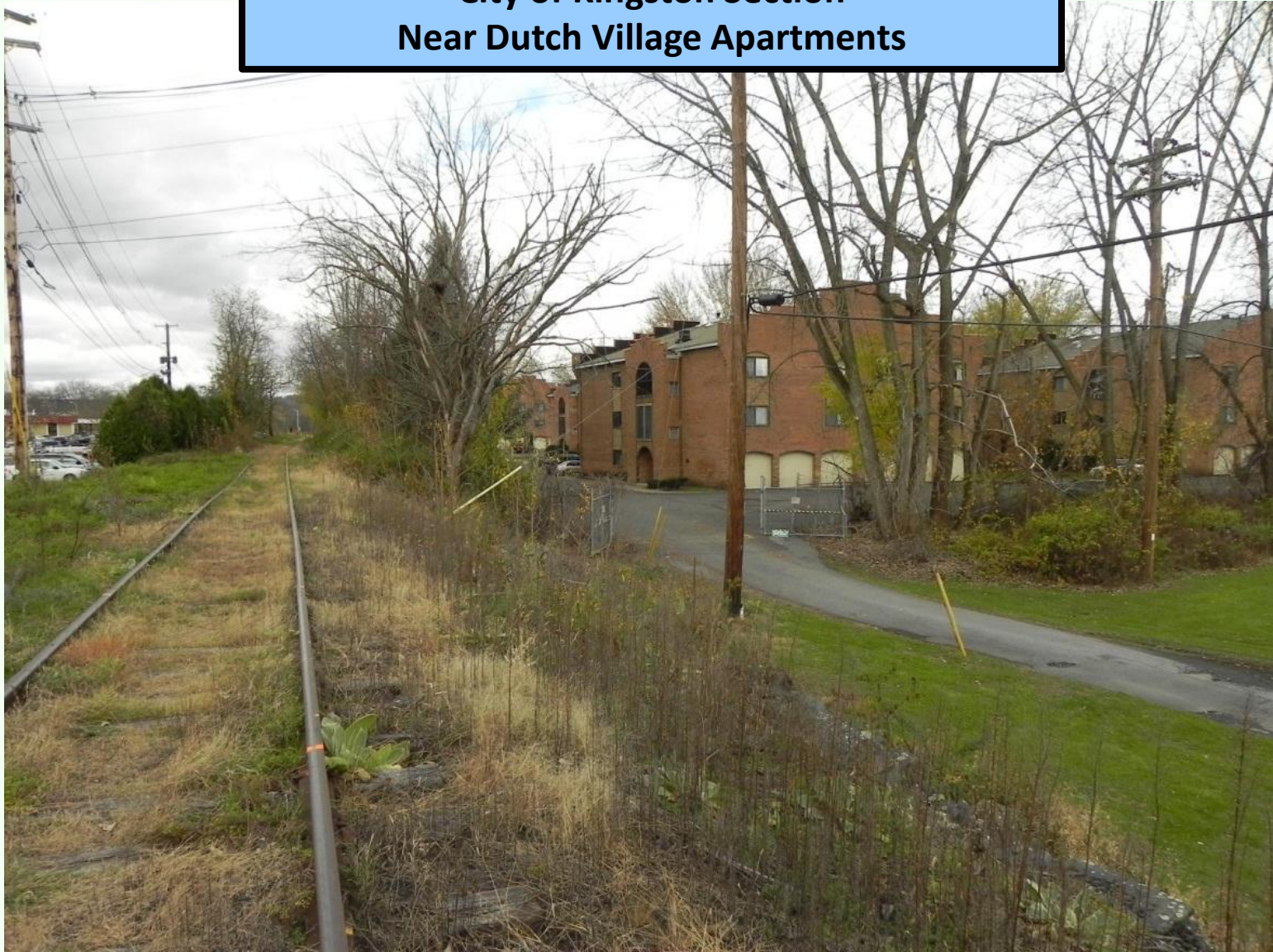
**City of Kingston Section
Dumping of Rail Ties by CMRR**



**City of Kingston Section- Kingston Plaza
Width Constraints Prevent Rail Alongside Trail**



**City of Kingston Section
Near Dutch Village Apartments**



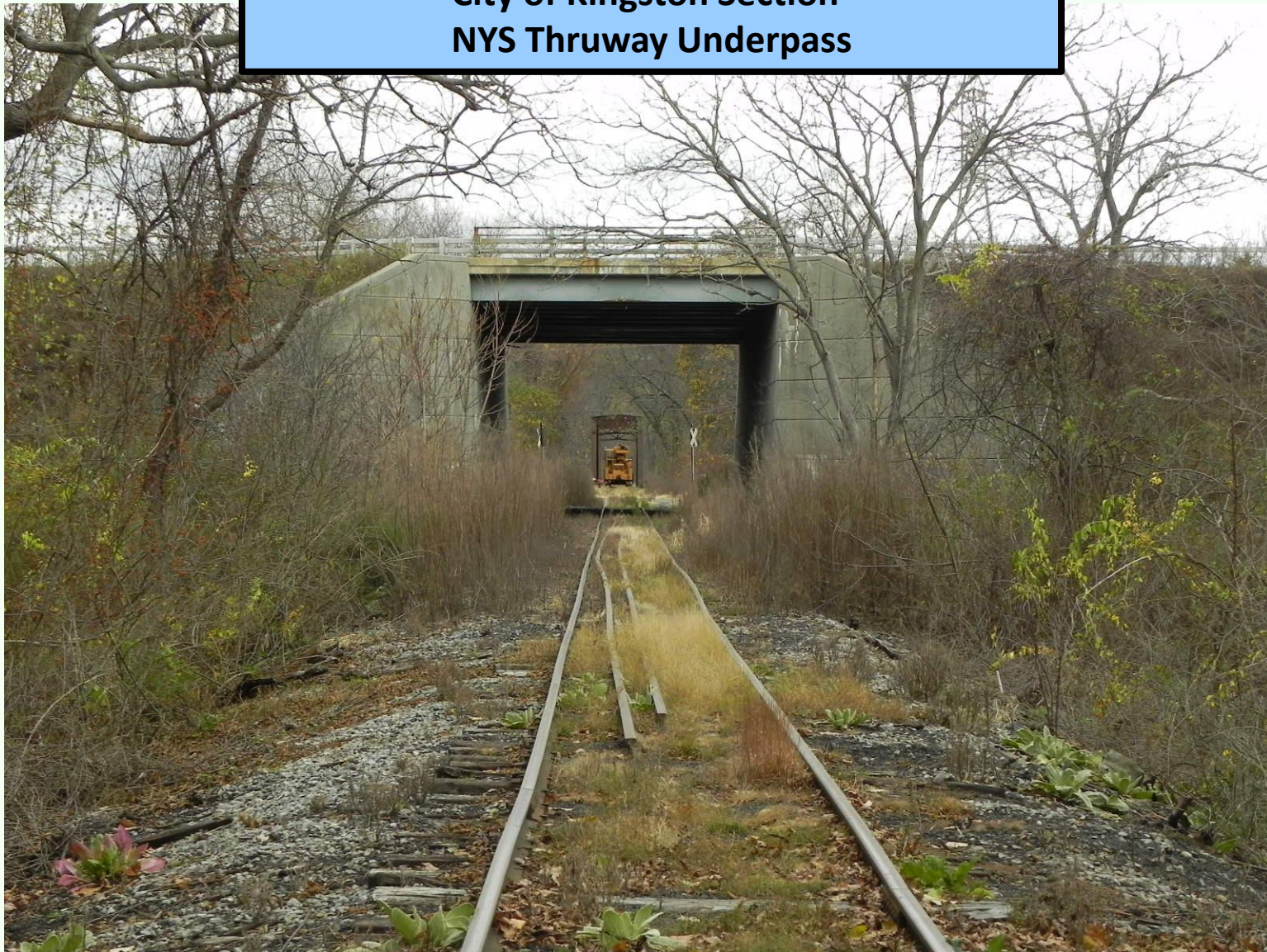
**City of Kingston Section-
Washington Avenue Crossing**



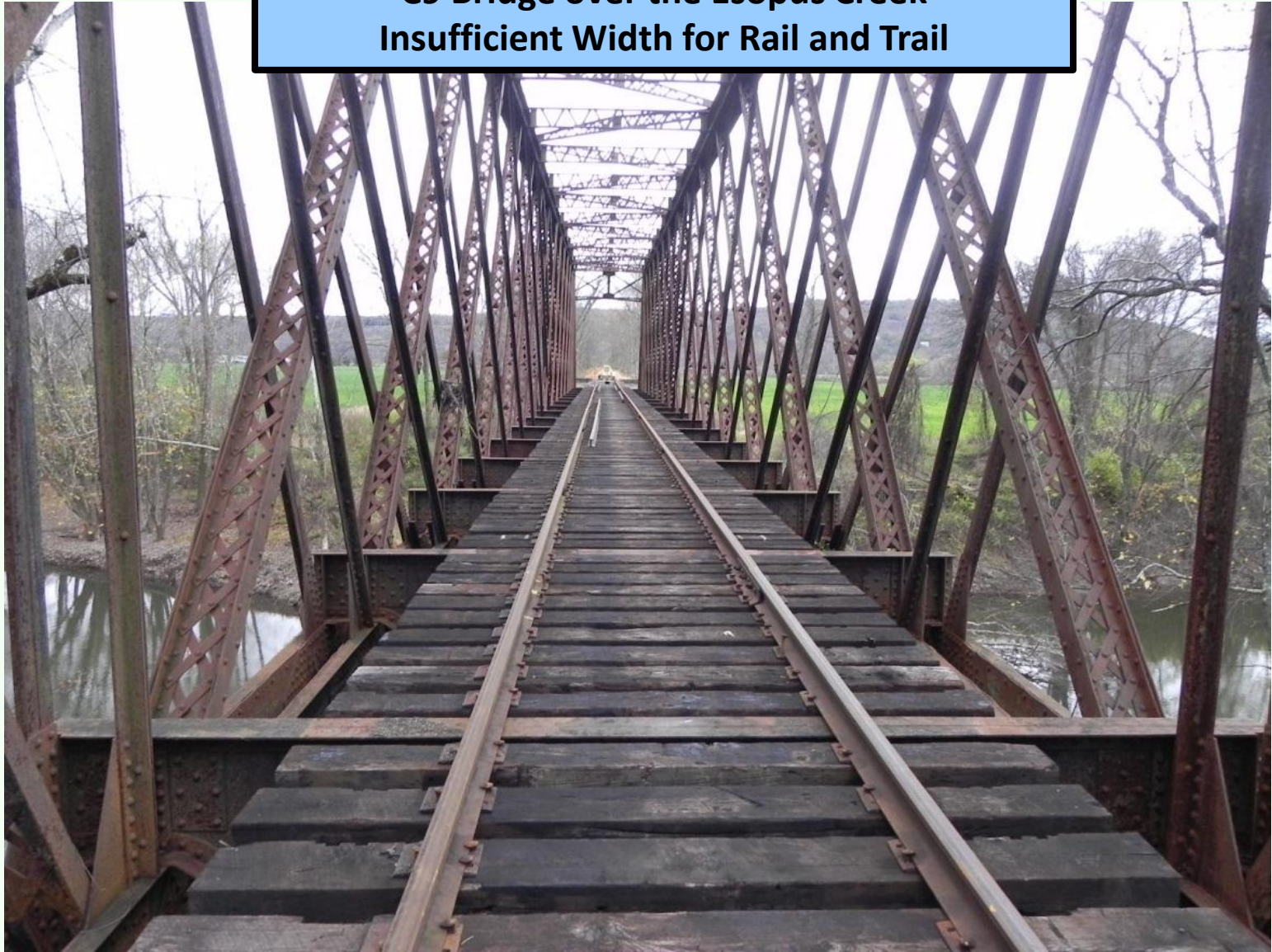
**City of Kingston Section-
Adjacent to Former Holiday Inn (Garden Plaza)**



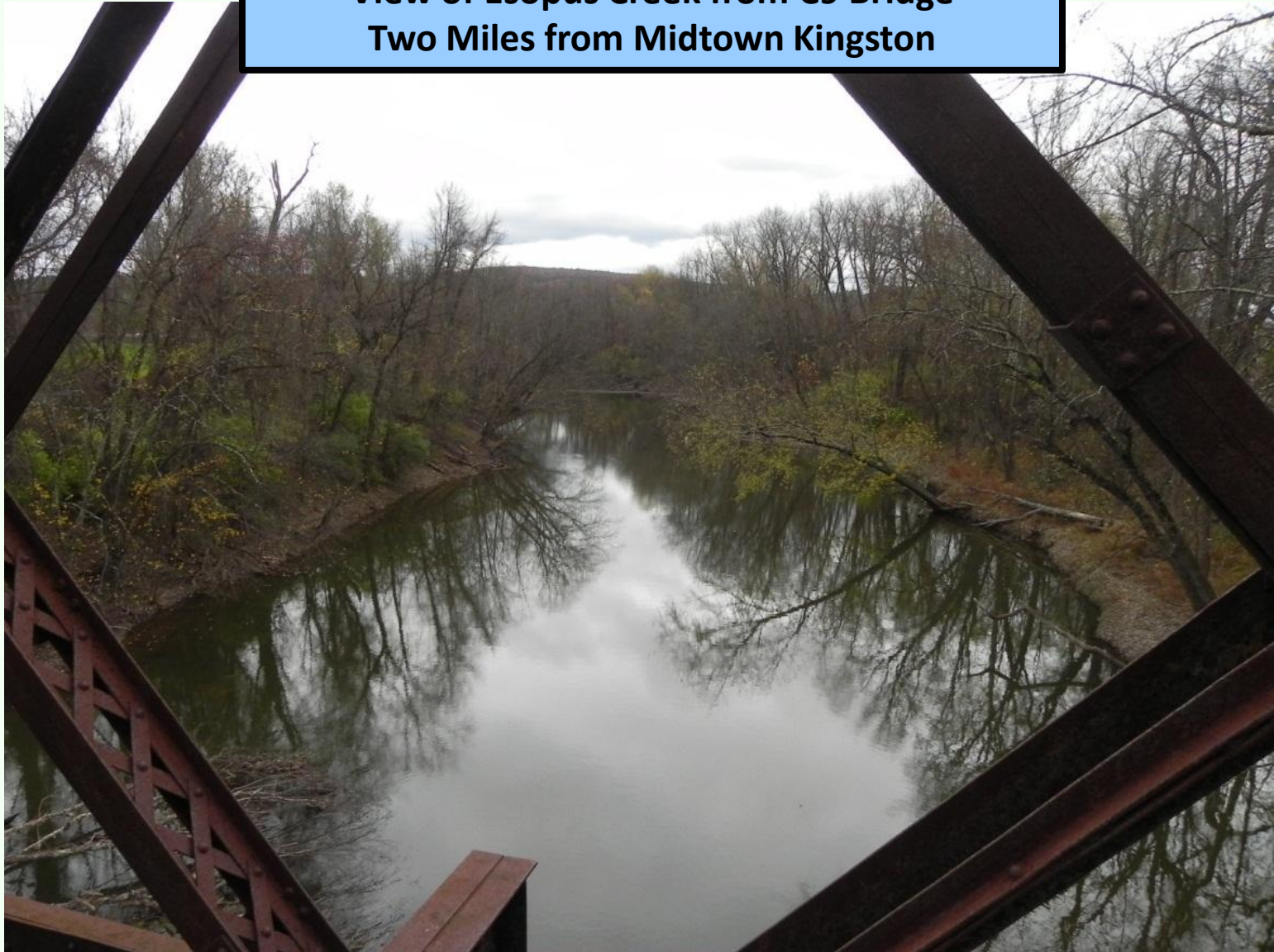
**City of Kingston Section-
NYS Thruway Underpass**



**C9 Bridge over the Esopus Creek
Insufficient Width for Rail and Trail**



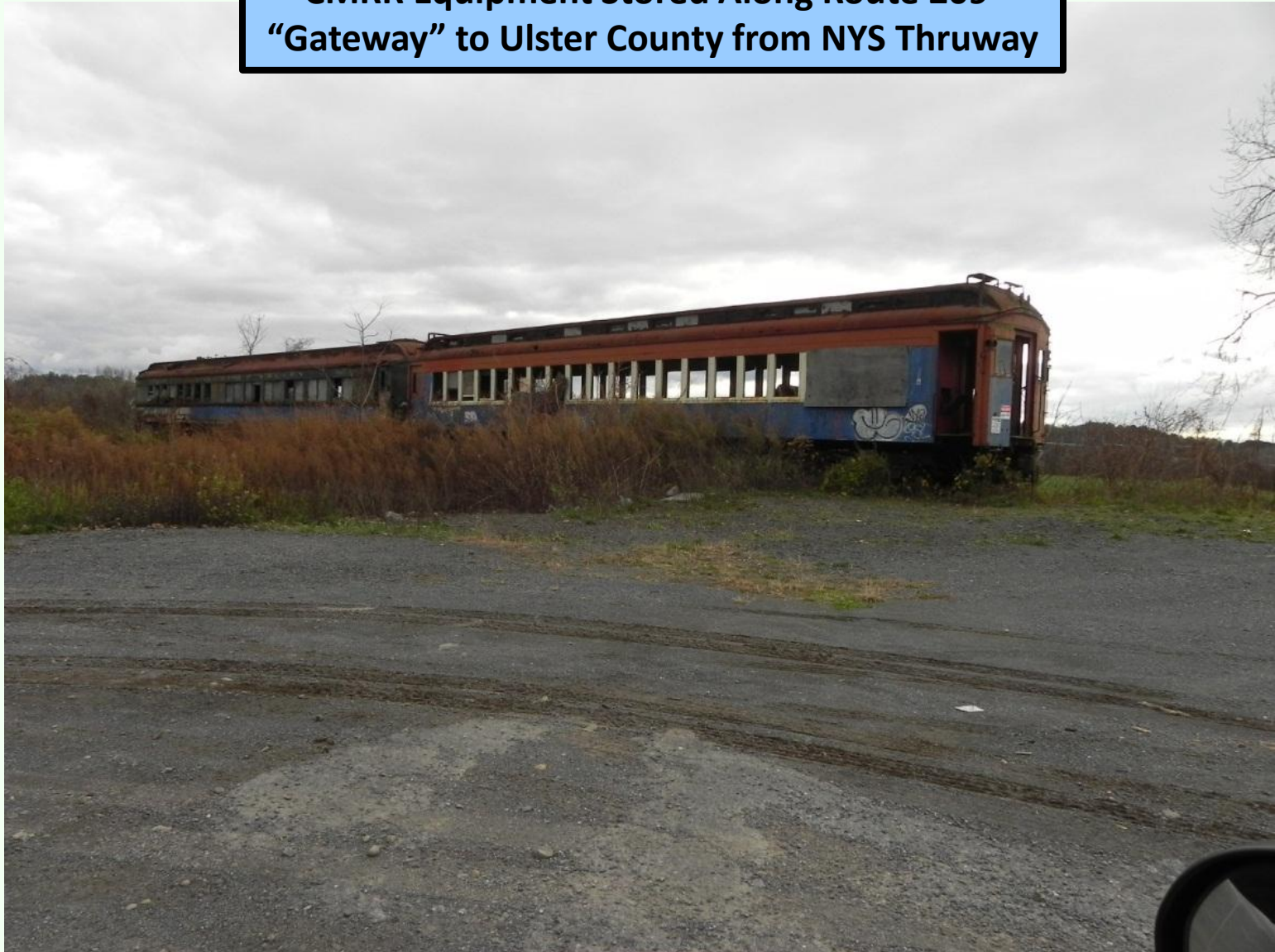
**View of Esopus Creek from C9 Bridge
Two Miles from Midtown Kingston**



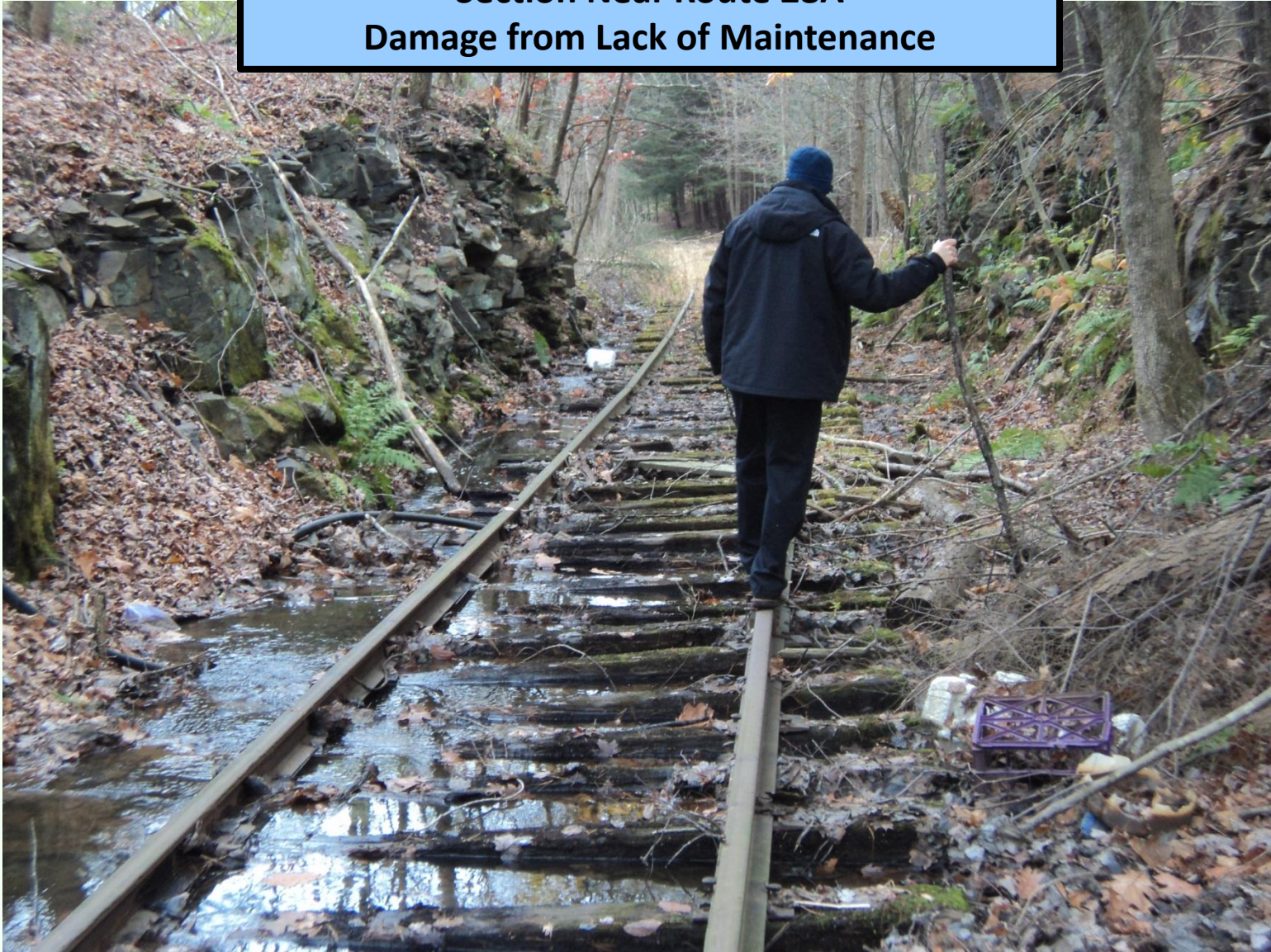
View of Hurley Flats from Future Trail



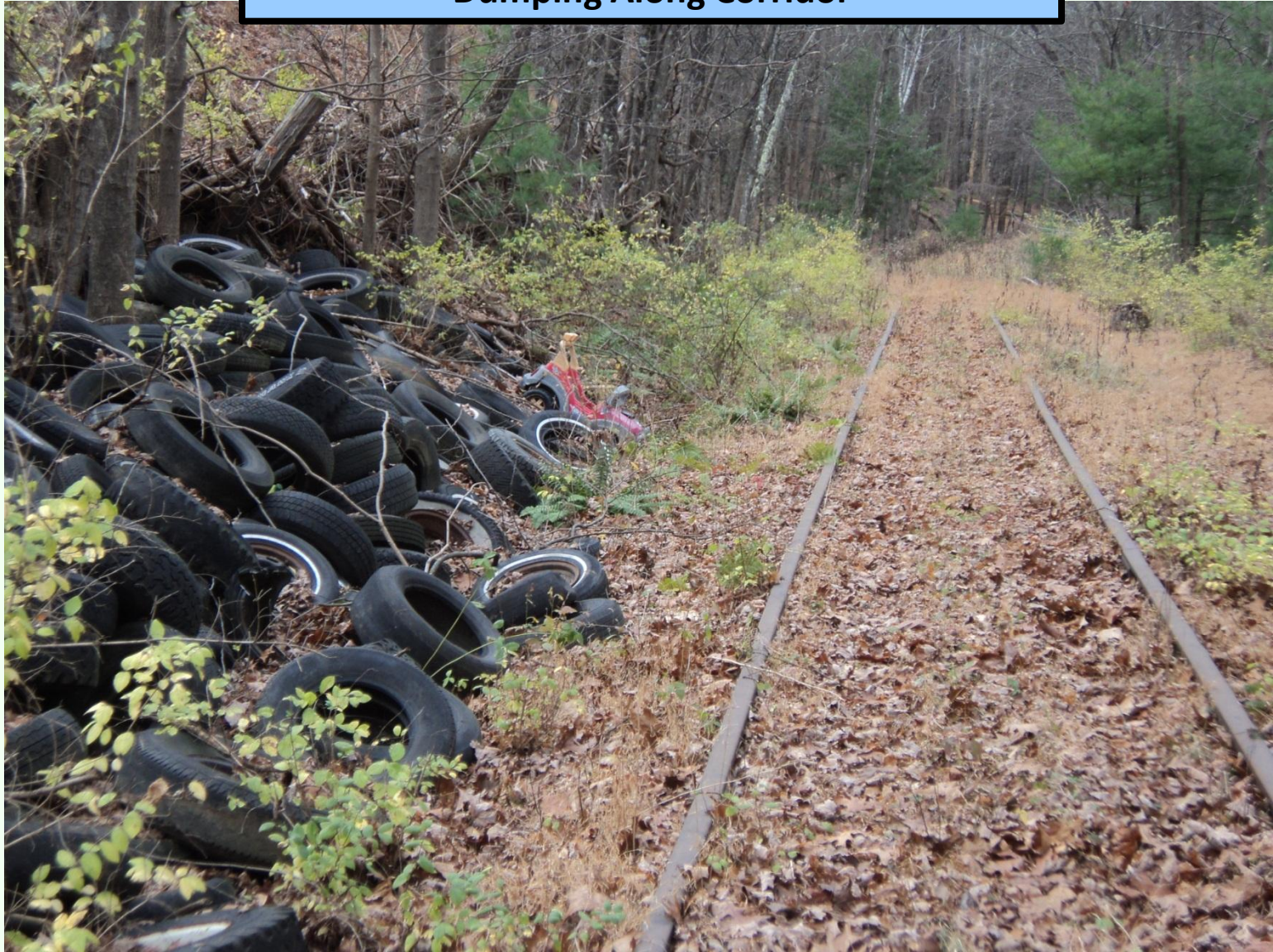
**CMRR Equipment Stored Along Route 209-
“Gateway” to Ulster County from NYS Thruway**



**Section Near Route 28A
Damage from Lack of Maintenance**



Dumping Along Corridor



**Narrow Rock Cuts Heading West to Reservoir-
Rail with Trail Would Require Costly Construction**



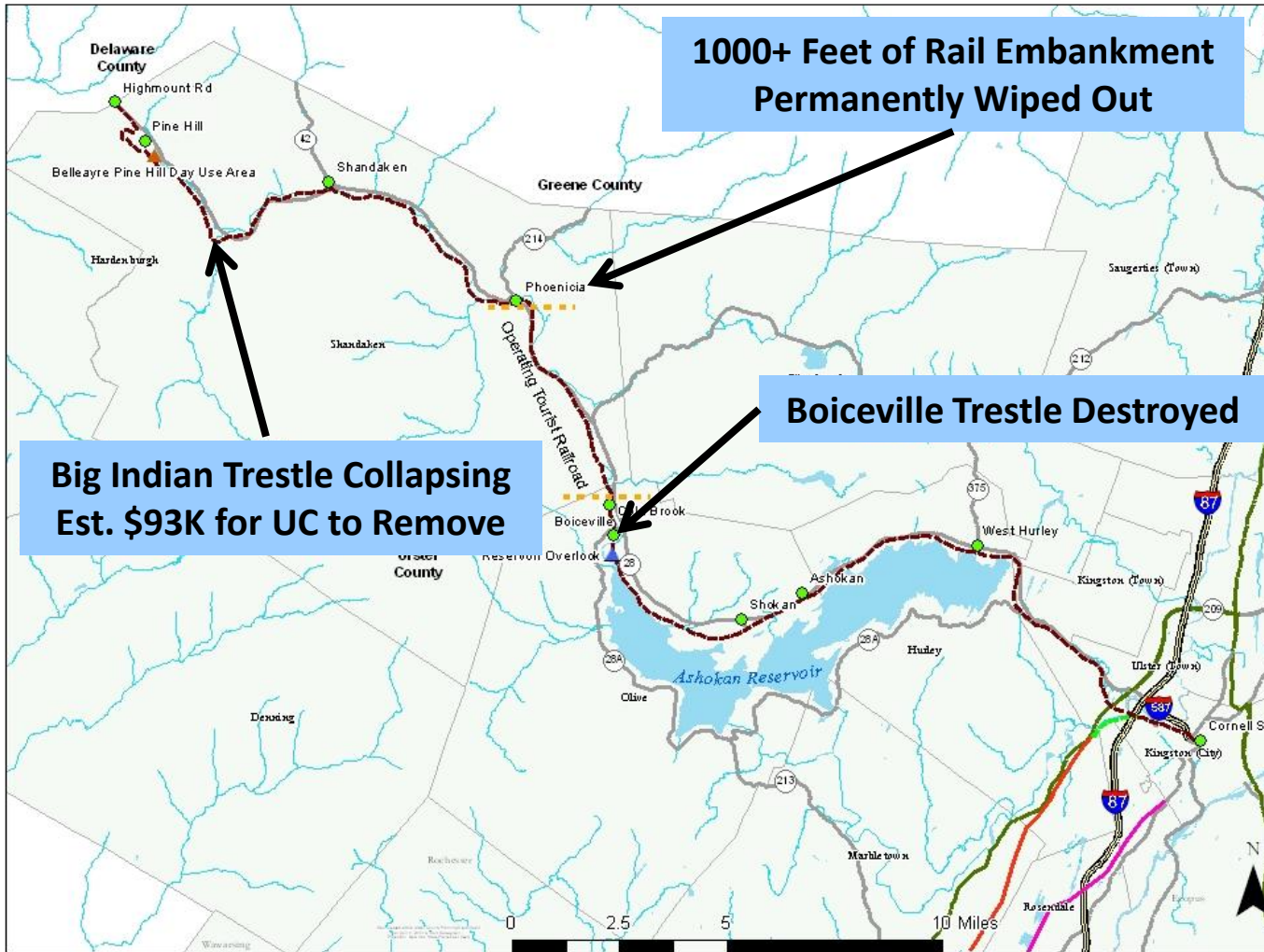
**East Side of Ashokan Reservoir
Route of Future “Catskill Mountain Rail Trail”**



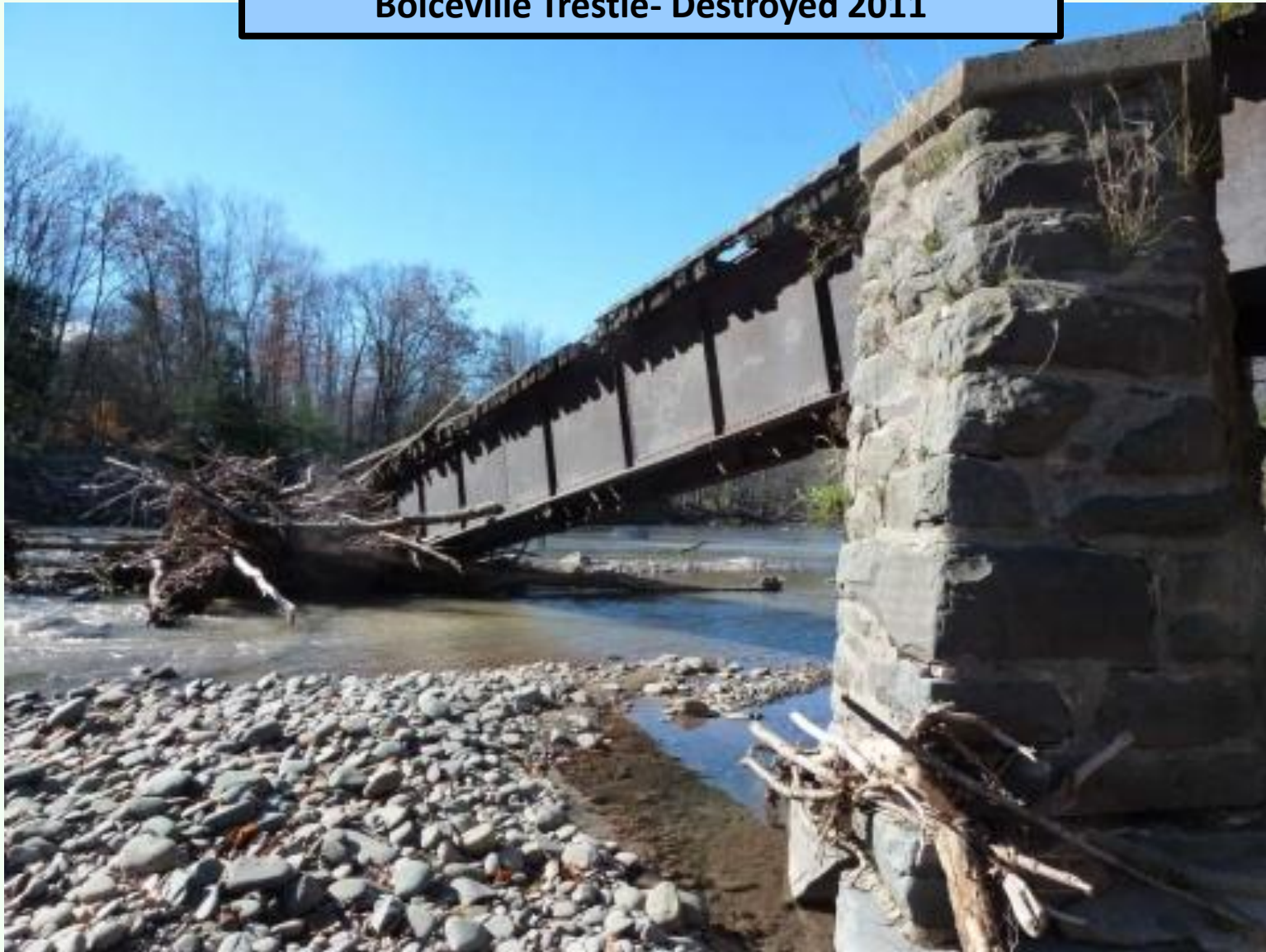
FAQ: If the tracks are removed, wouldn't it prevent railroad service from being restored between Kingston and Belleayre?

- Destruction of bridges and right-of-way have already made restoration of service impossible to achieve
- Damages to the railroad corridor and major structures would cost tens of millions of dollars to repair
- Extensive neglect and deterioration have occurred along the corridor, particularly west of Phoenicia
- There is no funding or revenue source to support the reconstruction and maintenance of railroad throughout the 38.6-mile corridor

Major Obstacles to Restoring Rail Service



Boiceville Trestle- Destroyed 2011



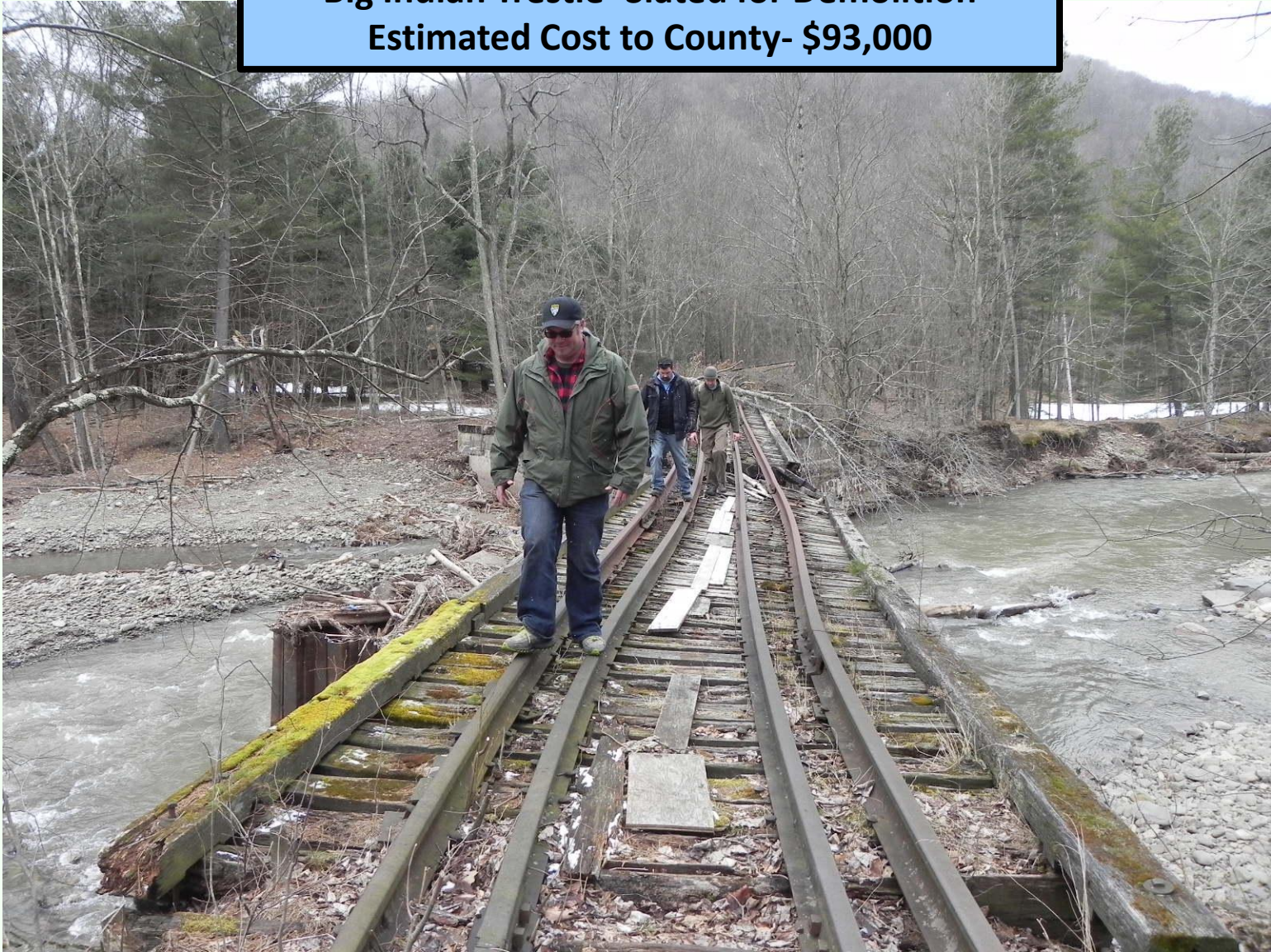
**Destroyed Section near Phoenicia-
1000-feet + of Railbed Wiped Out**

**Former Railbed in
Center of Esopus Creek**

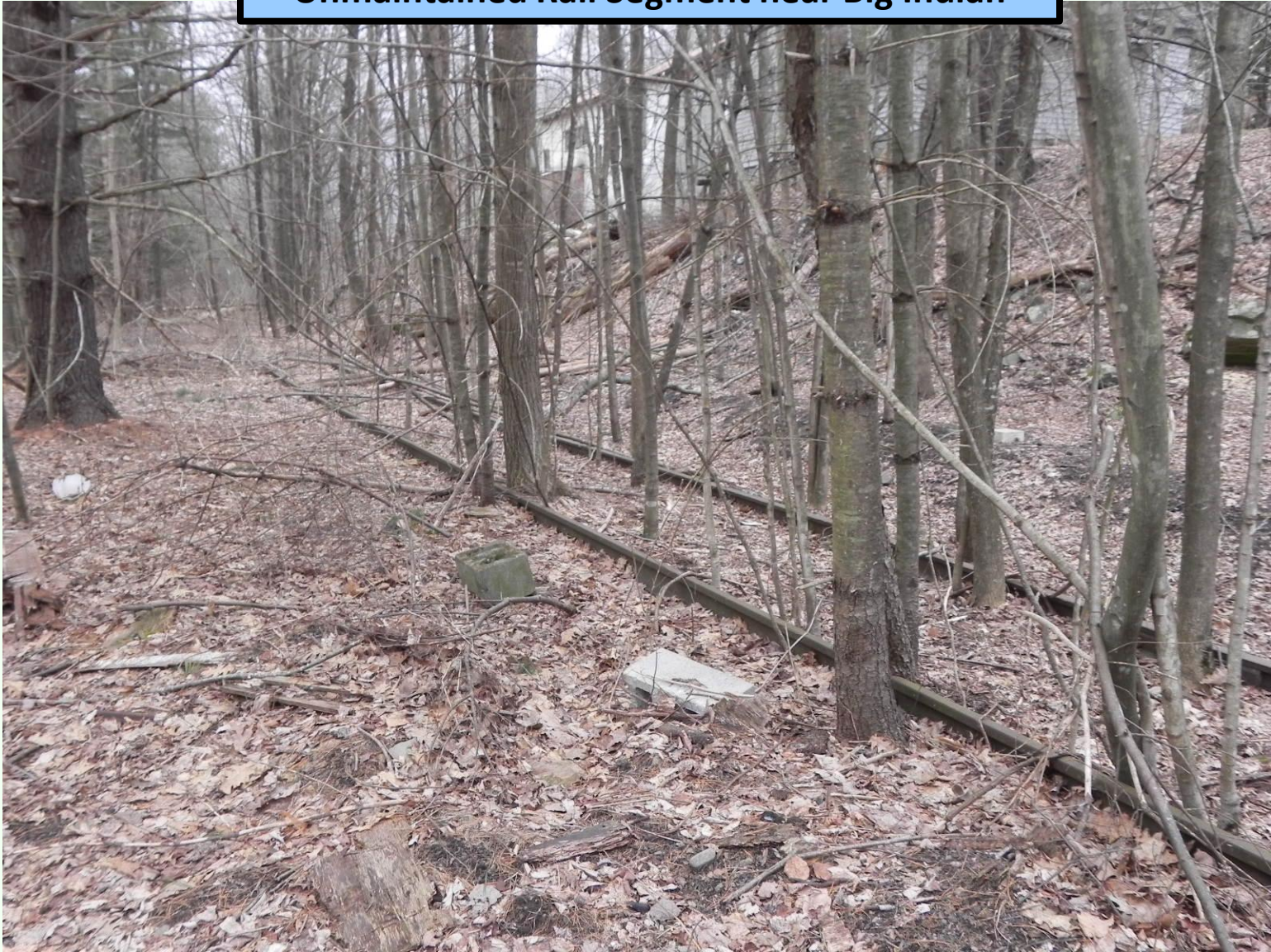
**New Stream Channel
Formed by Severe Flooding**



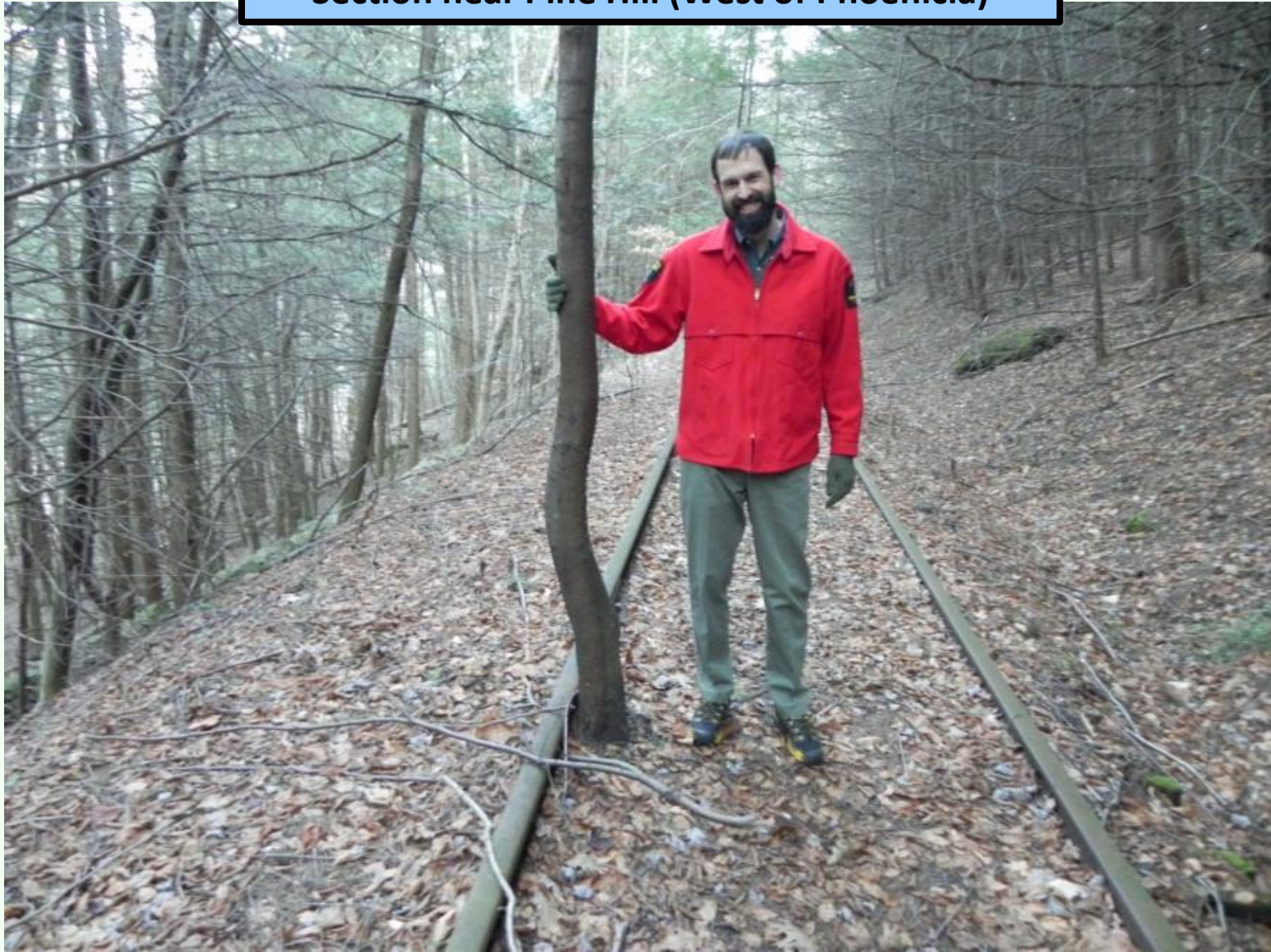
**Big Indian Trestle- Slated for Demolition
Estimated Cost to County- \$93,000**



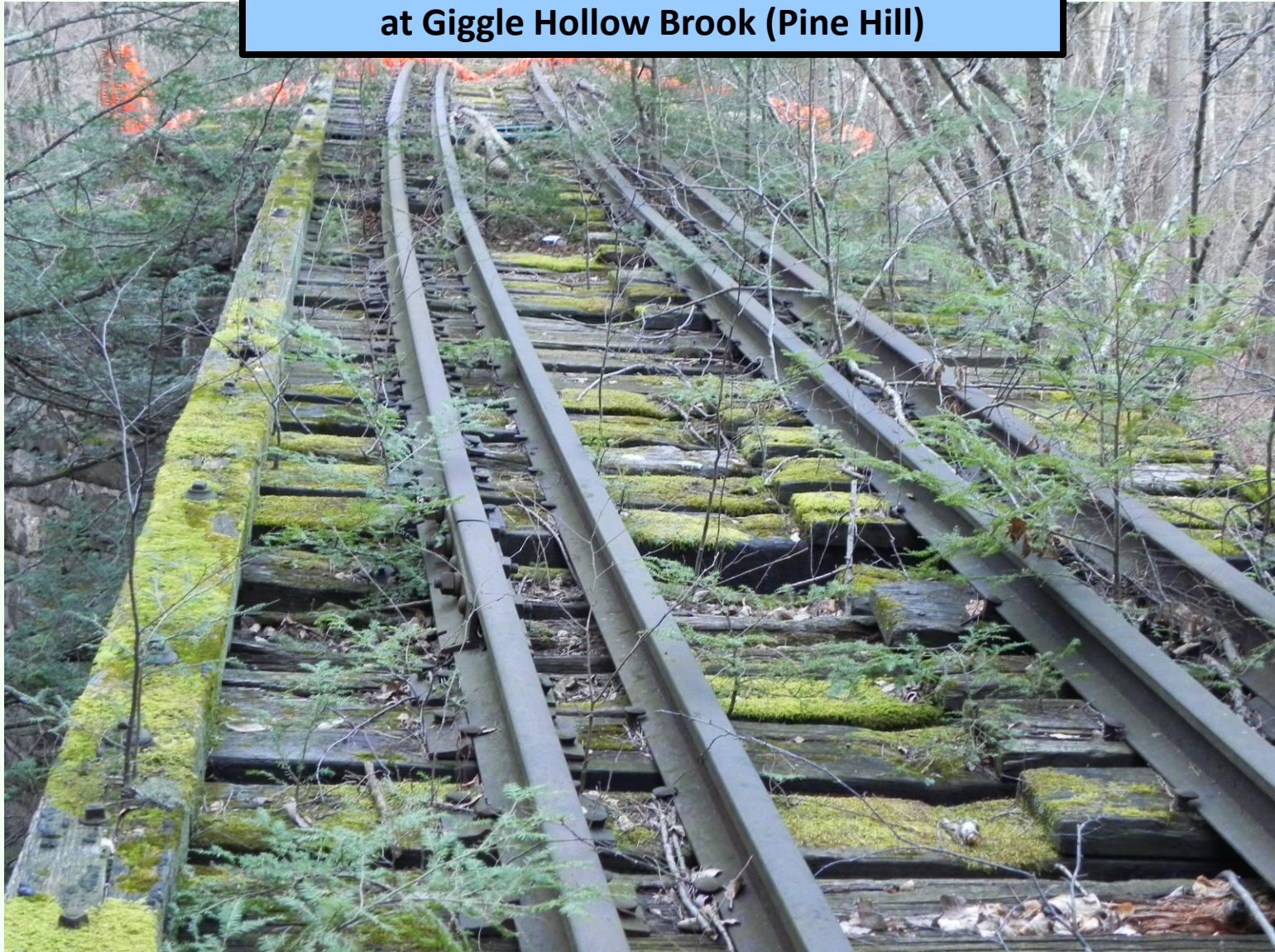
Unmaintained Rail Segment near Big Indian



Section near Pine Hill (West of Phoenicia)



**Deteriorated Rail Trestle
at Giggle Hollow Brook (Pine Hill)**



Unrepaired Damages near Pine Hill



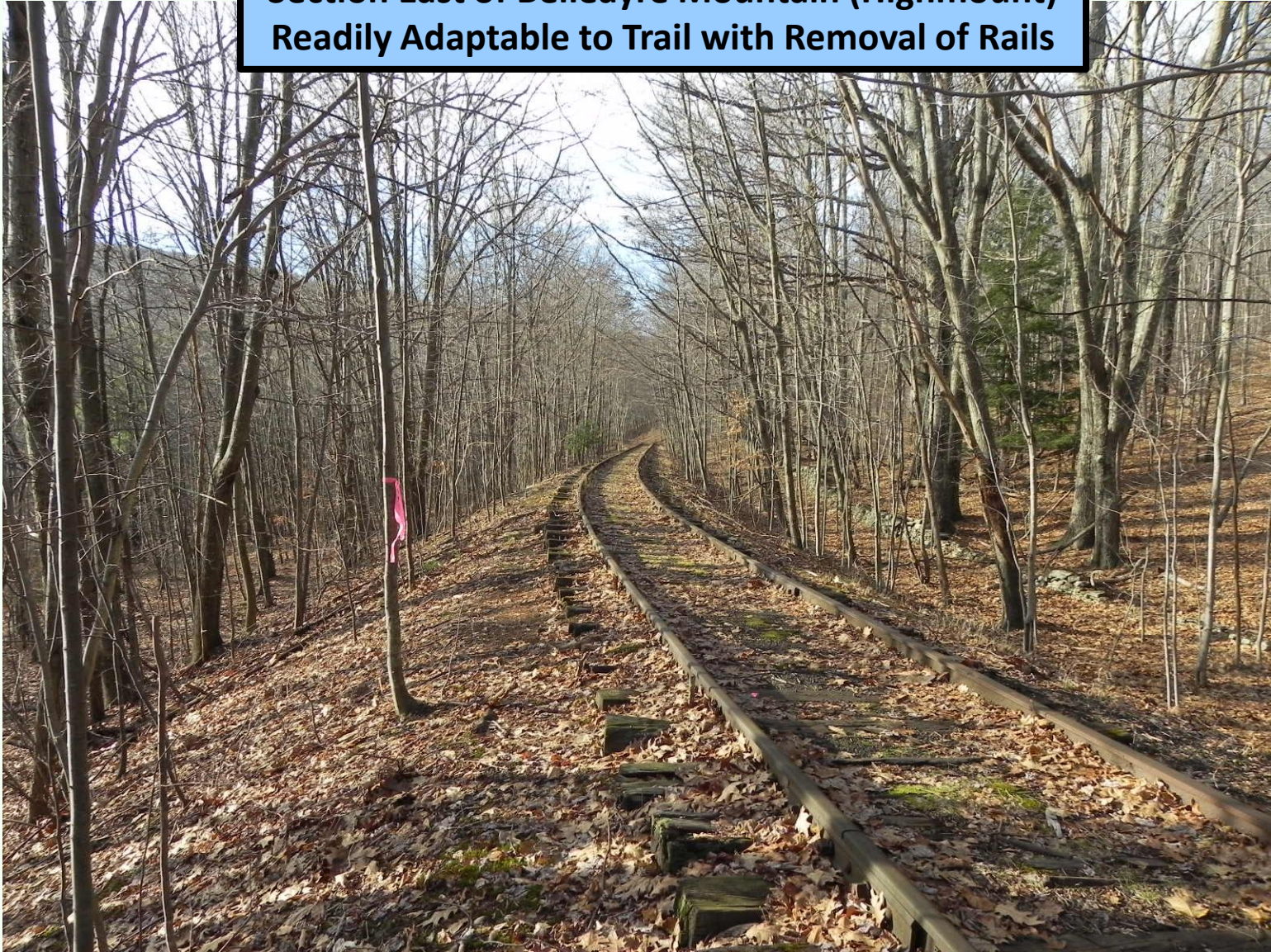
**Section East of Belleayre Mountain (Highmount)
Significant Overgrowth from Lack of Maintenance**



**Section East of Belleayre Mountain (Highmount)
Significant Overgrowth from Lack of Maintenance**



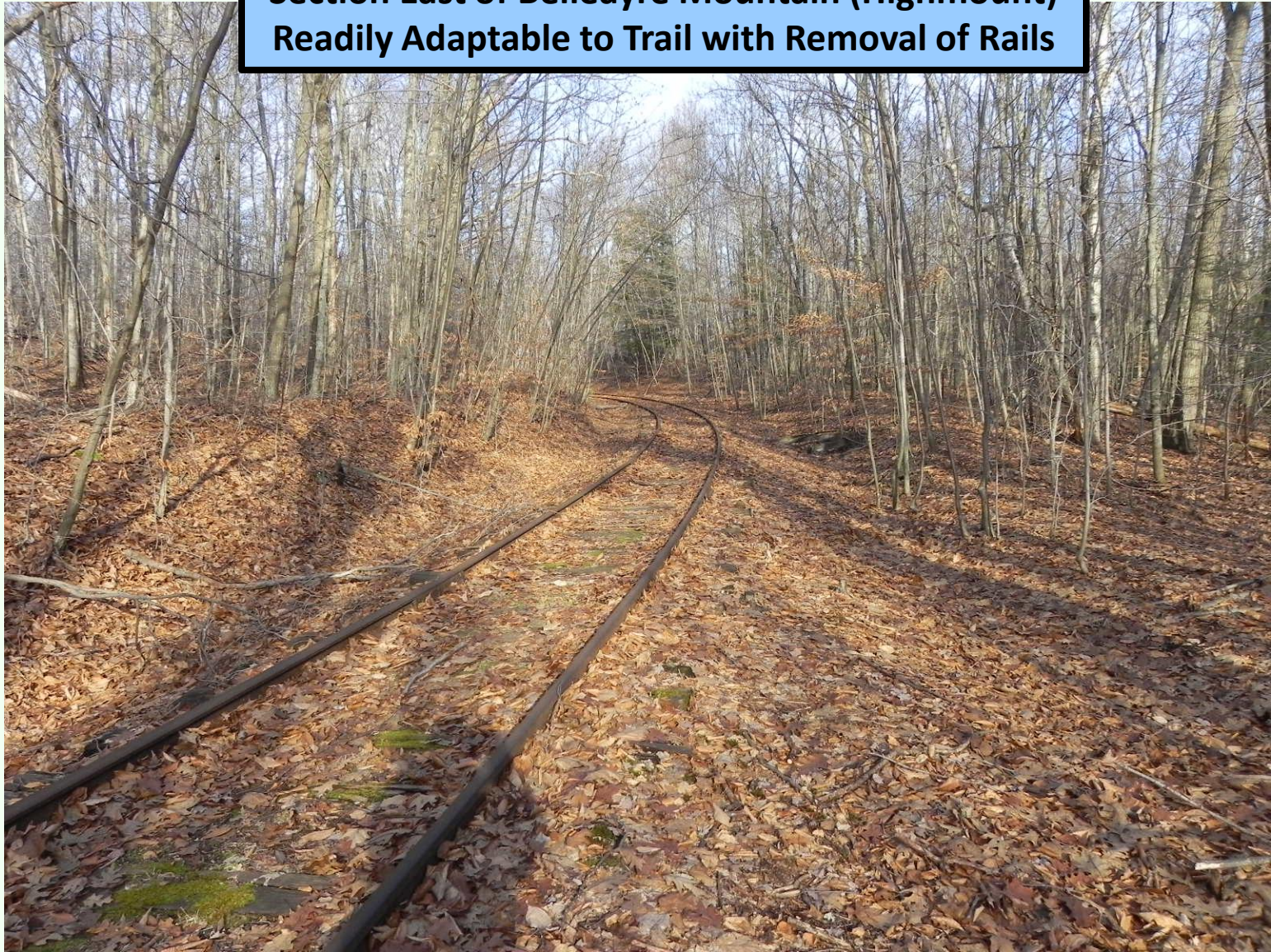
**Section East of Belleayre Mountain (Highmount)
Readily Adaptable to Trail with Removal of Rails**



**Section Near Pine Hill
Readily Adaptable to Trail with Removal of Rails**



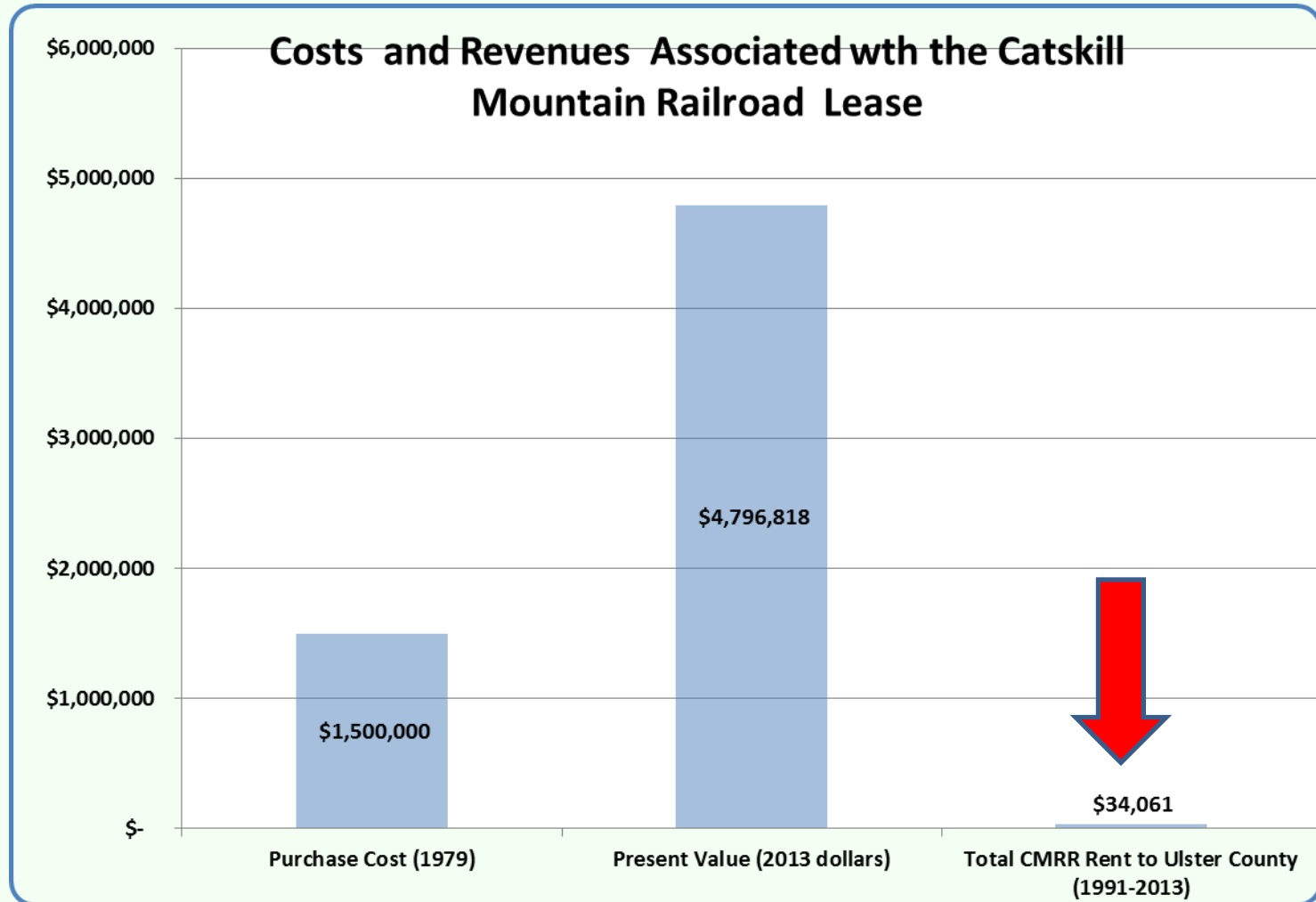
**Section East of Belleayre Mountain (Highmount)
Readily Adaptable to Trail with Removal of Rails**



FAQ: Isn't the Catskill Mountain Railroad an “economic engine” for the County?

- Catskill Mountain Railroad has not delivered promised economic benefits after 30 years of operations
- Annual ridership low-- 12,225 riders in peak year
75% of riders on Esopus Scenic Train (Mt Tremper)
- CMRR Rent to Ulster County for 2013 = \$4,500
Total CMRR rent from 1991-2013 = \$34,000
- Taxpayers invested \$1.5 million in 1979 to buy railroad
Present Value (2013 dollars)= \$4.79 million
Return on Investment to County (2013)= 0.09%
- CMRR trains run only seasonally for an average of
30-40 days per year

Ulster County Taxpayer Investment in Railroad Returns Marginal Revenues from CMRR Rent



FAQ: Is there any way for Ulster County to have both rail and trail?

- Trail development in segments from Kingston to the Ashokan Reservoir and along Reservoir to Boiceville is not feasible to construct as “rail with trail”
- County Executive Hein has met with the Catskill Mountain Railroad (CMRR) to discuss possible options for continued rail service in a section of the corridor
- The most viable segment for continued rail operations is 6 to 7 mile section between Boiceville to Phoenicia, where the CMRR now has $\frac{3}{4}$ of its annual ridership

The Future “Catskill Mountain Rail Trail”
Promoting Healthier and Stronger Communities



The Future “Catskill Mountain Rail Trail”



Accessible to persons with disabilities and the elderly

Open to public use four seasons / 365 days a year

Connecting urban neighborhoods with open spaces

Providing a beautiful and safe linear park for walkers, bicyclists, and all who seek to enjoy the outdoors

Catskill Mountain Rail Trail

Thank You for Your Support!!
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For additional information,
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