Final Feasibility Report

Ulster & Delaware Corridor Revitalization Study -Shandaken Section



Ulster County Transportation Council

244 Fair Street Kingston, New York 12401 Revision 3 July 2021

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Prepared for Ulster County Transportation Council

244 Fair Street Kingston, New York 12401

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Barton and Loguidice, D.P.C. ("B&L") has been retained by the Ulster County Transportation Council to provide an inventory and analysis of the existing railroad infrastructure along the former Ulster & Delaware Railroad corridor ("U&D") from Route 28 in Big Indian to Galli Curci Rd (CR 49A) in Highmount, NY. This study area was delineated for conversion to recreational trail by the Ulster County Legislature pursuant to Resolution No. 488 of 2015.

This report assesses conditions of the existing railroad infrastructure of the U&D corridor, identifies design criteria of the proposed trail, analyzes alternative design considerations, evaluates connections to existing and future trails in the area, and assess the existing environmental conditions of the corridor. This report also makes recommendations to convert the railroad corridor into a trail, including construction access locations, trailhead locations, material selection, pedestrian railing locations, bridge rehabilitation alternatives, project phasing, and estimated cost of the project.

The U&D corridor is bordered to the south by land primarily owned by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation ("NYSDEC") and the Olympic Regional Development Authority ("ORDA"). ORDA also operates the adjacent Belleayre Mountain Ski Center at the western terminus of the project and the Belleayre Beach Day Use Facility at Pine Hill ("DUA"). These recreational facilities offer opportunities such as cross country ("XC") and downhill skiing in the winter, and hiking and mountain biking at Belleayre Mountain Ski Center, and swimming at the beach facility in the summer.



Study Location Map



The U&D study area is approximately five miles in length and consists of railroad infrastructure including steel rails and hardware, wooden railroad ties, ballast, drainage pipes and culverts, and four standing bridge structures. The overall corridor is in poor condition and exhibits tree and vegetation overgrowth, eroded areas, deteriorated wooden ties, dilapidated drainage infrastructure, and extensive tree blowdowns from an extended period of neglect. Two large bridge structures carry the railroad over Giggle Hollow Creek and Woodchuck Hollow Creek and two additional short span structures located near Big Indian. There are also two former bridge structures located near Big Indian that were removed from the corridor, one crossing over lasher Rd and the second crossing the Esopus Creek.

Corridor conditions were evaluated based on the constructability of the proposed trail and trail user safety. There are steep embankments adjacent to the existing tracks that may require fencing to help shield future trail users. The existing drainage system, consisting of drainage swales and concrete or steel drainage culverts, will require varying levels of repair to maintain or restore functionality. The crossing of the Esopus Creek and the structural repairs needed to the Giggle Hollow and Woodchuck Hollow Bridges were identified as significant constraints that will require more costly reconstruction efforts. Other potential constraints and their recommended solutions are provided within this report.

This report includes an existing environmental resources inventory and assessment that includes an existing conditions assessment of the streams, wetlands, threatened and endangered species, hazardous materials, floodplain determinations, and historic and cultural resources. One wetland, eleven streams, and one New York State threatened or endangered species are present within the corridor. The construction of a trail will likely require a Nationwide Section 404, Section 401 Water Quality Certification, an Article 15 stream protection Permit, and a State Pollutant Discharge Elimination System ("SPDES") Permit. Coordination with New York State Historic Preservation Office ("SHPO") is was initiated in December 2020 and is currently ongoing. An official determination from their office should be obtained during the design phase of the project. Please refer to section 3.1.2

This report also includes as assessment of the construction costs associated with the conversion of this railroad corridor into a trail. Anticipated costs include tree removal, track and tie removal and disposal, construction access costs, drainage improvements, bridge construction and rehabilitation, and trail construction. This report also includes costs of the suggested trailheads at Belleayre Mountain in Highmount, the Belleayre Beach DUA, and in Big Indian. The total estimated costs of the project and project phasing options to construct the project incrementally as funds become available, are included in Section 4.0 of this report.

Just recently, Ulster County completed the conversion of 11.5 miles of the same U&D railroad corridor along the Ashokan Reservoir from West Hurley to Boiceville into a world class trail. This feasibility study looks to build upon the success of the Ashokan Rail Trail while also recognizing the identity, unique features, character, and history of this Shandaken section of the U&D Corridor.