

# EMPIRE STATE TRAIL PLAN

FINAL - JUNE 2018







# EMPIRE STATE TRAIL

In January, 2017, Governor Cuomo announced creation of the Empire State Trail, a 750-mile bicycle and walking trail that will span New York State, from Buffalo to Albany, and from New York City through the Hudson and Champlain Valleys to Canada. Some portions of the trail already exist; over the next three years an additional 350 miles will be constructed or improved, with the entire route completed by the end of 2020.

This Plan provides an overview of the Empire State Trail, including maps identifying the entire 750-mile route. During 2017, scoping was completed to identify more than 60 discrete construction projects that are being advanced to complete new off-road trail segments and make improvements to on-road sections along the route. Five state entities – the Hudson River Valley Greenway, NYS Canal Corporation, NYS Department of Transportation, New York State Parks, and Metro-North Railroad – are coordinating with local officials, involved agencies, bicycle and trails groups, transportation planning organizations, and interested members of the public to undertake detailed engineering design and environmental review for each individual construction project.

Organizations and individuals seeking additional information can address questions to:

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c/o Hudson River Valley Greenway Office  
625 Broadway, 4th Floor  
Albany, NY 12207-2995  
hrvg@hudsongreenway.ny.gov  
(518) 473-3835

**Additional information is available on New York State's Empire State Trail website:**

**[www.ny.gov/programs/empire-state-trail](http://www.ny.gov/programs/empire-state-trail)**

Thank you for your interest in the Empire State Trail.



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# THE EMPIRE STATE TRAIL

New York State celebrates boldness and diversity – cultural, physical, social, geographic – and welcomes experiences that weave these qualities together.

The magnitude of the Empire State Trail isn't measured only its unrivaled 750-mile length. On a human level, the Trail connects people to New York's natural beauty, rich cultural heritage, and unparalleled outdoor recreation opportunities.

The Empire State Trail provides New Yorkers and visitors the freedom and opportunity to explore and embrace New York's special places, diverse history, and iconic landscapes. The Trail promotes healthy lifestyles and provides a place for friends and families to experience everything the Empire

State has to offer – connecting urban centers, village main streets, and rural communities spanning the state from New York City through the Hudson River Valley, west to Buffalo along the historic Erie Canal, and north to the Champlain Valley and Adirondacks.

**The Empire State Trail  
connects us all to New  
York's extraordinary  
experiences, people,  
and places.**







# INTRODUCTION

In his January, 2017 State of the State address and Executive Budget proposal, Governor Cuomo announced the Empire State Trail, a new initiative placing New York State at the forefront of national efforts to enhance outdoor recreation, community vitality, and tourism development. The FY2017-18 state budget, enacted in April, 2017 provides \$200 million to fund construction of the Trail. When completed by the end of 2020, the Trail will be a continuous 750-mile route which will span the state from New York City to Canada and Buffalo to Albany, creating the longest multi-use state trail in the nation.

## GOALS & BENEFITS

The Empire State Trail initiative will:

- Connect New Yorkers and visitors to the natural, historic, and cultural splendor of the Empire State – emphasizing we are “one New York.”
  - Link communities across New York, interpreting the history and beauty of the Hudson River Valley, the critical role the Erie Canal played in the nation’s development, and the scenic and cultural history of the Champlain Valley.
  - Promote healthy lifestyles by providing safe and enjoyable outdoor recreational opportunities for New Yorkers of all ages and physical abilities. Studies show that every \$1 invested in recreation trails yields \$3 in direct medical benefit.
- Support regional economic development strategies by promoting recreational- and history-based tourism opportunities, including a sophisticated mobile website to promote and leverage state marketing efforts such as I Love NY, Adventure NY, Path Through History, and Taste NY, along with local and regional destination marketing.
  - Celebrate and promote connections to other regional bicycling and hiking trails – highlighting linkages to the Hudson Greenway Trails, the Appalachian Trail, the Adirondack and Catskill Parks, the St. Lawrence Seaway Trail, the Genesee Valley Greenway, and many others – to extend the Empire State Trail’s physical and economic impact.
  - Contribute to the development of Complete Streets design concepts and the non-motorized transportation network, providing enhanced local and regional transportation choices.





## TRAIL ACTIVITIES

The Empire State Trail will be a multi-use path designed to accommodate shared use by pedestrians and bicyclists.

- Typical trail construction will feature a 10-foot to 12-foot wide hardened surface (asphalt or stonedust) with moderate grades, welcoming walkers, hikers, runners, people pushing strollers, and bicyclists of all abilities, from experienced long-distance cyclists to family groups with children just learning to ride.
- The trail surface and associated improvements will be compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act, providing accessibility to users with mobility challenges and older visitors.
- Wayfinding signage utilizing a distinctive Empire State Trail logo will be installed along the entire 750-mile route, as well as signage directing users to connecting trails. New wayfinding signage will work in concert with local identifying signage.
- A mobile website will be created to direct trail users to nearby local attractions and businesses, such as restaurants and lodging, bike repair shops, farm stands, historic sites, and downtown business districts.
- The Trail will be open to winter uses such as hiking, snowshoeing, and cross-country skiing. Snowmobiling will continue on designated off-road trail segments where appropriate.
- In areas where it's not feasible to create an off-road route, the Empire State Trail will follow public roadways. Where possible, on-road sections will follow low-speed rural roadways and city streets. Spot improvements such as marking crosswalks and paving shoulders will be made at strategic on-road locations.







## EMPIRE STATE TRAIL ROUTE

The maps on the following pages depict the 750-mile Trail route. Criteria for route selection include:

- Approximately 400 miles of the Empire State Trail already exists in discrete, disconnected segments. Empire State Trail funding will be utilized to connect existing trails into a continuous statewide trail. For example, the Erie Canalway Trail between Buffalo and Albany is 80% done – Trail funds will “close the gaps,” such as completing the trail through Camillus, Syracuse, and Dewitt in central New York. The largest amount of new trail construction will occur in the Hudson Valley, where only about 50% of the final trail route exists today.
- Wherever possible, the Trail is “off-road,” utilizing historic railway routes (e.g. rail-trails) and canal tow paths along sections of the Erie and Champlain canals. For the 550 miles from Manhattan to Buffalo, 85% of the Empire State Trail will be off-road.
- For much of its route, the Empire State Trail is an overlay integrating local and regional trails. Local trails will retain their local name and identity, co-branded with the Empire State Trail to provide a cohesive marketing effort to increase public visitation. Examples of trails that will be integrated into the Empire State Trail include: the South and North County Trails in Westchester County; the Putnam Trailway; the Dutchess, Hudson River, and Wallkill Valley Rail-Trails in the mid-Hudson Valley; the Corning Preserve and Mohawk-Hudson Trails in the Capital District; the Erie Canalway Trail; and the Champlain Canalway Trail.
- For on-road segments, the Empire State Trail will follow public roadways, utilizing low-volume local roads wherever available. Long stretches of on-road sections, such as in the Champlain Valley, are appropriate for more experienced bicyclists. A portion of the \$200 million will be allocated to making targeted on-road improvements, such as paving shoulders in critical spots and installing bicycle pavement markings.

**For the 550 miles from Manhattan to Buffalo, 85% of the Empire State Trail will be off-road.**



## TRAIL CONSTRUCTION

Completing a continuous 750-mile Trail will require more than 60 construction projects, to create new off-road trails where none exist, and to eliminate gaps in existing trail segments (gaps often existing due to engineering challenges such as the need for bridges to cross rivers and streams, and facilities to safely cross active railway lines or major state roadways). Five state entities will oversee construction activities:

1. The NYS Canals Corporation, a unit within the New York Power Authority, will construct new trail segments along the Erie and Champlain Canals.
2. The NYS Department of Transportation will oversee on-road improvements where public roadways offer the best opportunity for the Trail route. DOT will coordinate with local governments to develop and oversee construction projects.

3. The Metropolitan Transportation Authority will construct a new trail, the Maybrook Trailway section, along the Beacon Line, a rail line in Putnam and Dutchess Counties.
4. The Hudson River Valley Greenway will construct a new rail-trail, named the Albany-Hudson Electric Trail, linking the City of Rensselaer to the City of Hudson in Rensselaer and Columbia Counties.
5. New York State Parks will oversee construction of several improvements to the Erie Canalway Trail that are under the agency's jurisdiction.

For larger, more complex trail construction projects, the agency overseeing each project will implement public input opportunities. The specific format for public input will be consistent with the type and scale of each project.





## ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

In 2010, the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation adopted the NYS Trails Plan and Generic Environmental Impact Statement (GEIS). The Plan and GEIS provide a statewide framework to guide future trail planning and development, and identify trail related issues and strategies to address them. The Plan designates the three major trunks of the Empire State Trail (EST) – the Hudson River Valley Greenway, Erie Canalway, and Champlain Canalway Trails – as “primary greenway trails,” and identifies proposed new trails that will now be developed through the EST initiative (examples include the Maybrook Trailway section and Albany-Hudson Electric Trail).

The 2010 NYS Trails Plan and GEIS reference that review of site-specific environmental impacts and benefits will be accomplished as individual

trail segments are advanced to the formal design and construction phase. Minimization of potential environmental impacts is accomplished through planning, project-specific environmental review, and public participation.

Under the Governor’s initiative, five state entities along with a number of local governments will undertake more than sixty discrete construction projects to complete the Empire State Trail, ranging from the development of major new rail-trail and canalway trail segments, to minor on-road pedestrian and bicycle improvements. The state or local government entity undertaking each project will be responsible for securing required environmental permits and completing project-specific State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) and historic preservation reviews, consistent with the 2010 NYS Trails Plan and GEIS.

**Gateways and Trailheads will be highly visible trail entrances, often near city and village centers, that advertise and promote the Trail as well as nearby businesses and attractions.**

## **EMPIRE STATE TRAIL GATEWAYS AND TRAILHEADS**

New York State will support development of improved trail entrances and access points – termed Gateways and Trailheads – to promote public awareness and use of the Empire State Trail. Typically located near cities and village centers, designated Gateways and Trailheads will include parking facilities, welcome and orientation signage including maps of the trail route, picnic tables and benches, and bicycle racks and self-service “fix-it” stations. In many cases, Gateways and Trailheads will be integrated into state and local parks along the trail route, taking advantage of existing amenities and trail user services.



## **TRAIL OPERATION & MAINTENANCE**

The Empire State Trail will connect existing trail segments operated by a variety of state entities, local governments, and non-profit organizations. Each segment will retain its existing identity – the “Erie Canalway Trail,” “Dutchess Rail-Trail,” “Wallkill Valley Rail Trail,” etc. – but will be co-branded as a segment of the statewide Empire State Trail. Ongoing trail maintenance activities will continue to be undertaken by the entity that owns and/or operates each distinct local segment of the larger Empire State Trail.





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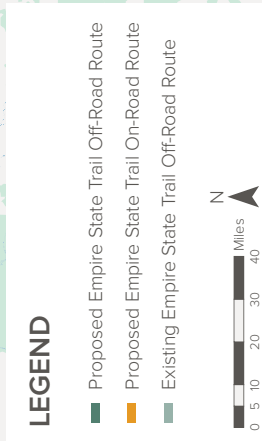


## ROUTE OVERVIEW

The following maps identify the Empire State Trail route, including existing and proposed new paths that the trail will utilize within the:

- Hudson Valley
- Erie Canalway
- Champlain Valley









BRIDGE  
AHEAD  
PROCEED  
WITH  
CAUTION

ALL VEHICLES  
MUST BE  
STOPPED  
HERE





## THE ROUTE: HUDSON VALLEY

The following maps identify the Empire State Trail route within the Hudson Valley, including existing and proposed new trails along the Hudson River Valley Greenway. The trail segments are listed in “south to north order,” starting in New York City and running north to the Capital District.

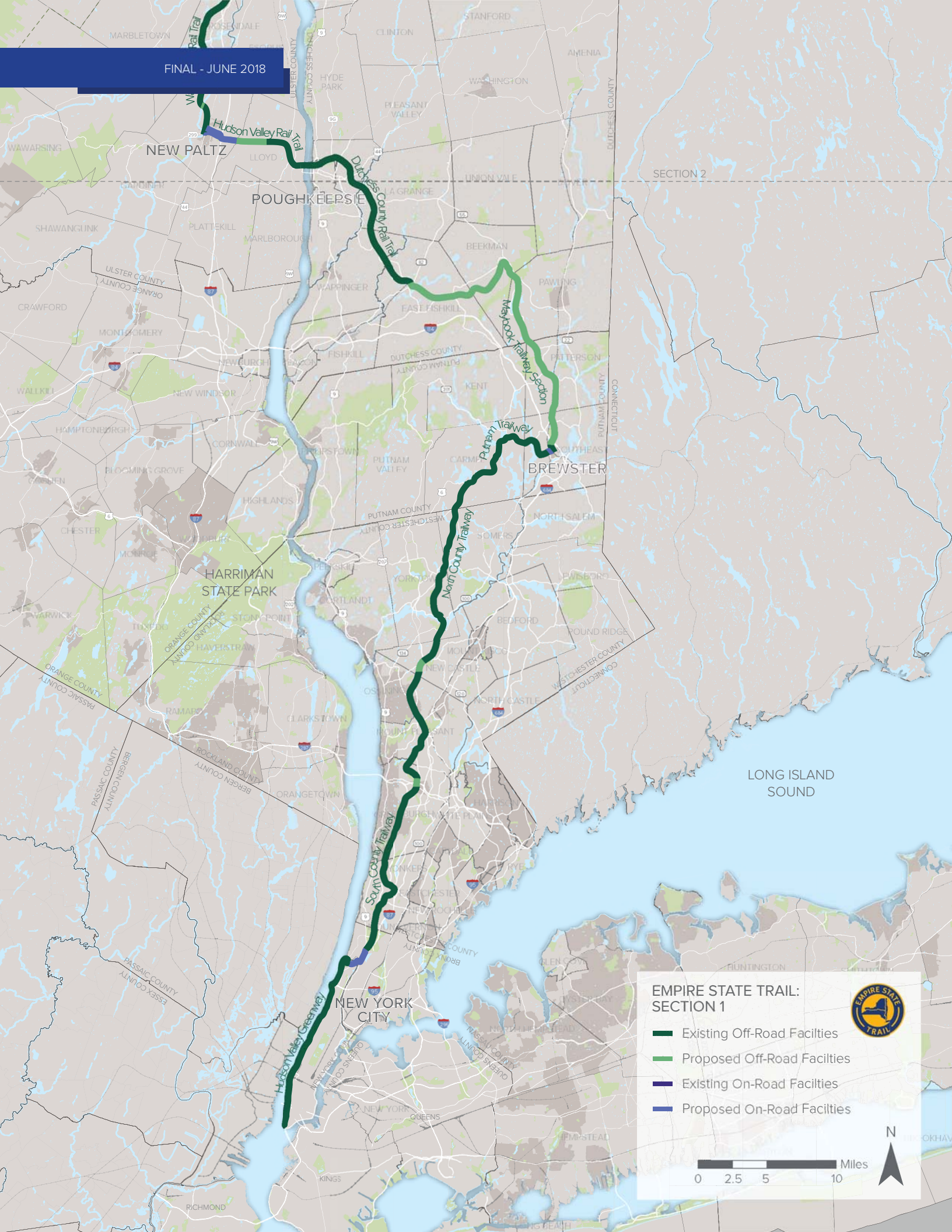
### LOWER HUDSON VALLEY

- Hudson River Park
- Riverside Park/NYC Greenway
- On-Road connection from Upper Manhattan to Van Cortlandt Park
- South County Trailway
- North County Trailway
- Putnam Trailway
- Maybrook Trailway Section
- Dutchess Rail Trail
- Walkway Over the Hudson

### UPPER HUDSON VALLEY

- Hudson Valley Rail Trail
- Wallkill Valley Rail Trail
- Kingston Point Rail Trail and Promenade
- On-Road North of Kingston to the City of Hudson
- Albany-Hudson Electric Trail (AHET Trail)
- Corning Preserve Trail
- Mohawk Hudson Bike-Hike Trail

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### EMPIRE STATE TRAIL: SECTION 1



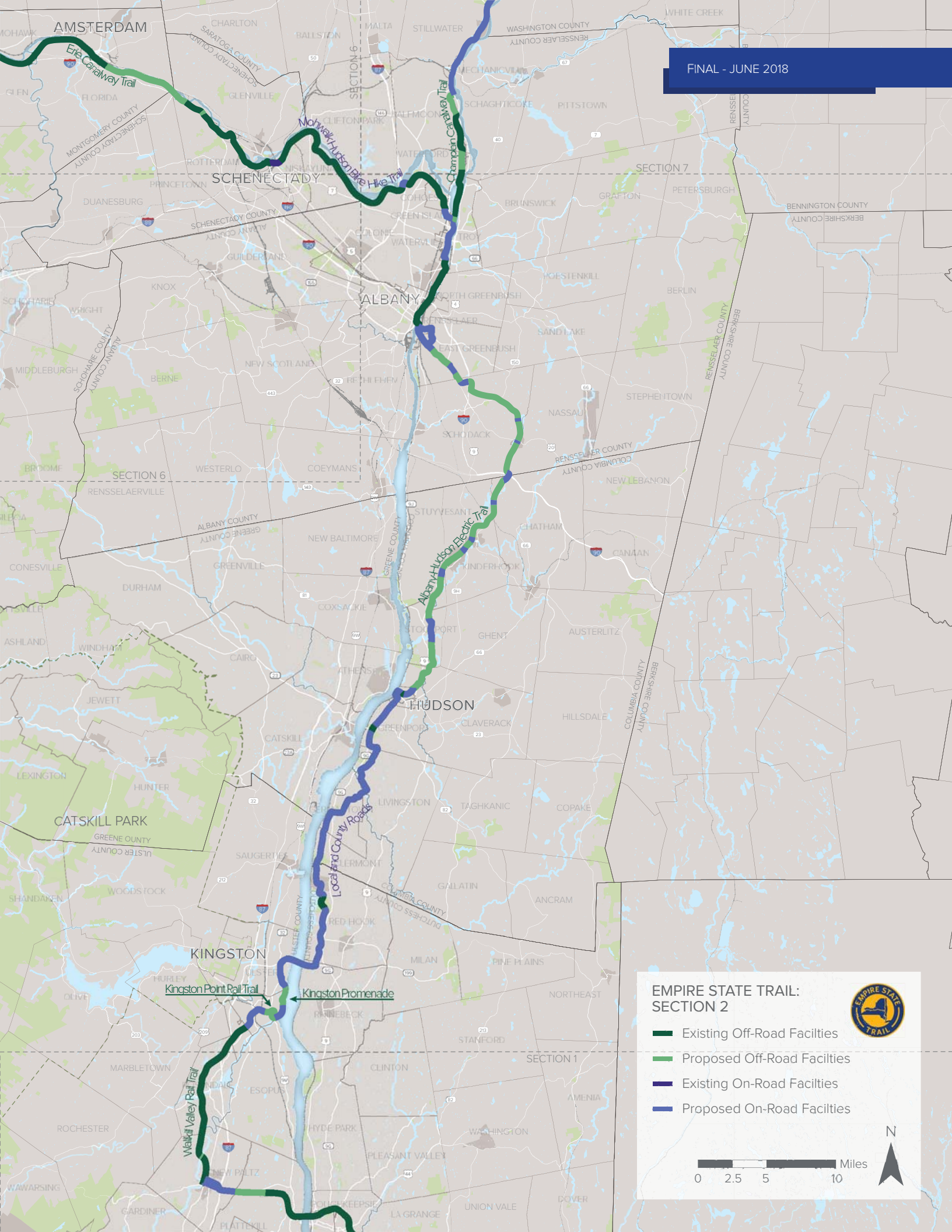
- Existing Off-Road Facilities
- Proposed Off-Road Facilities
- Existing On-Road Facilities
- Proposed On-Road Facilities

0 2.5 5 10 Miles





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EMPIRE STATE TRAIL:  
SECTION 2



- Existing Off-Road Facilities
- Proposed Off-Road Facilities
- Existing On-Road Facilities
- Proposed On-Road Facilities

0 2.5 5 10 Miles







CANAL BRIDGE NO. E-224  
CANAL ROAD  
ORIGINALLY WILLANDS HWY BRIDGE  
BUILT 1910  
BY ENTIRE ENGINEERING CORP.  
REHABILITATED 1992  
BY NYSDOT



## THE ROUTE: ERIE CANALWAY TRAIL

The following maps identify the Empire State Trail route along the Erie Canalway Trail (ECT). The ECT is more than 80% complete. Below is a list of individual projects, presented in “west to east order,” that will be advanced to “close the gaps,” completing a continuous 350-mile bicycle and pedestrian route from Buffalo Harbor State Park on Lake Erie, to Cohoes and the Corning Preserve in the Capital District.

### WESTERN ERIE CANALWAY TRAIL

- Buffalo Connection/Shoreline Trail
- Pendleton Connection
- On-Road connection in Lyons
- Shared Use Path from Lyons to Clyde
- On-Road connection in Clyde
- Shared Use Path from Clyde over Erie Canal
- On-Road connection to Savannah
- Savannah shared use path
- On-Road connection to Port Byron trailhead
- Camillus - Honeywell Trail to Loop the Lake Trail
- Onondaga Creekwalk
- On-Road Water Street Connection in Syracuse
- Erie Boulevard

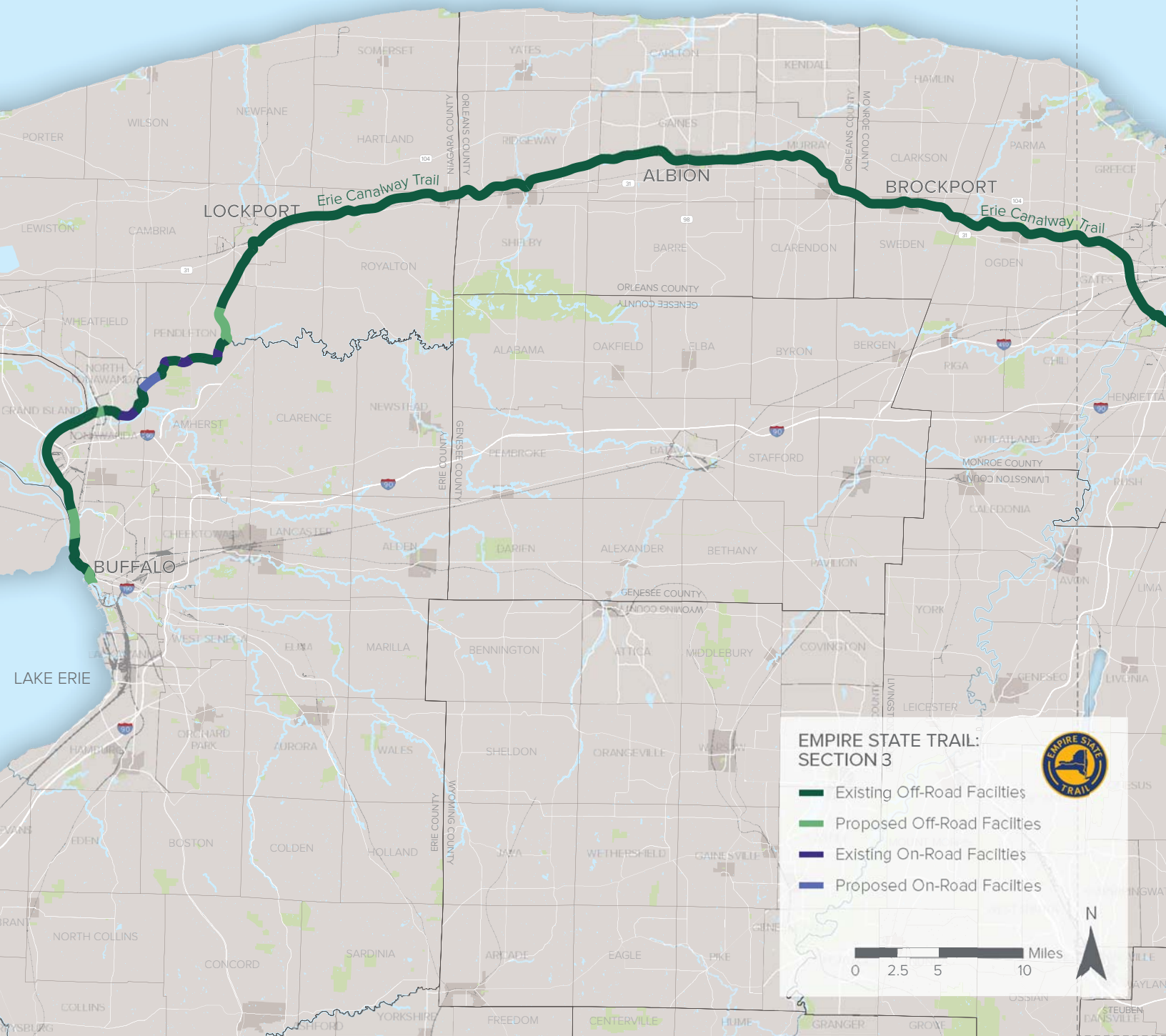
### EASTERN ERIE CANALWAY TRAIL

- Old Erie Canal State Historic Park
- Rome Connection
- Utica - Schuyler
- Ft. Herkimer Church - Lock 18
- Lock 18 - Little Falls
- Schuyler - Ilion
- Ilion - Mohawk
- Amsterdam to Pattersonville
- Rotterdam Junction Connection

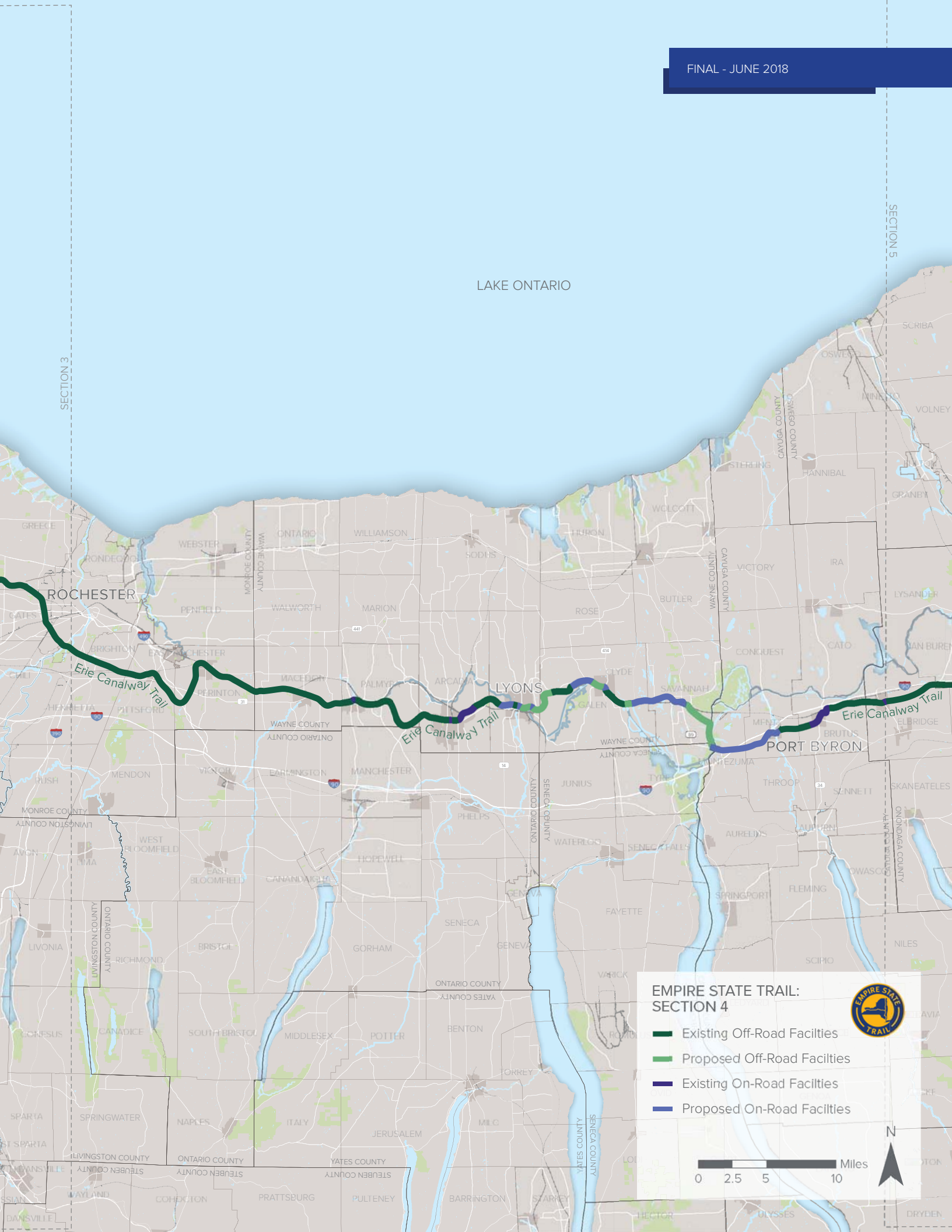


LAKE ONTARIO

SECTION 4







**EMPIRE STATE TRAIL:  
SECTION 4**



- Existing Off-Road Facilities
- Proposed Off-Road Facilities
- Existing On-Road Facilities
- Proposed On-Road Facilities

0 2.5 5 10 Miles

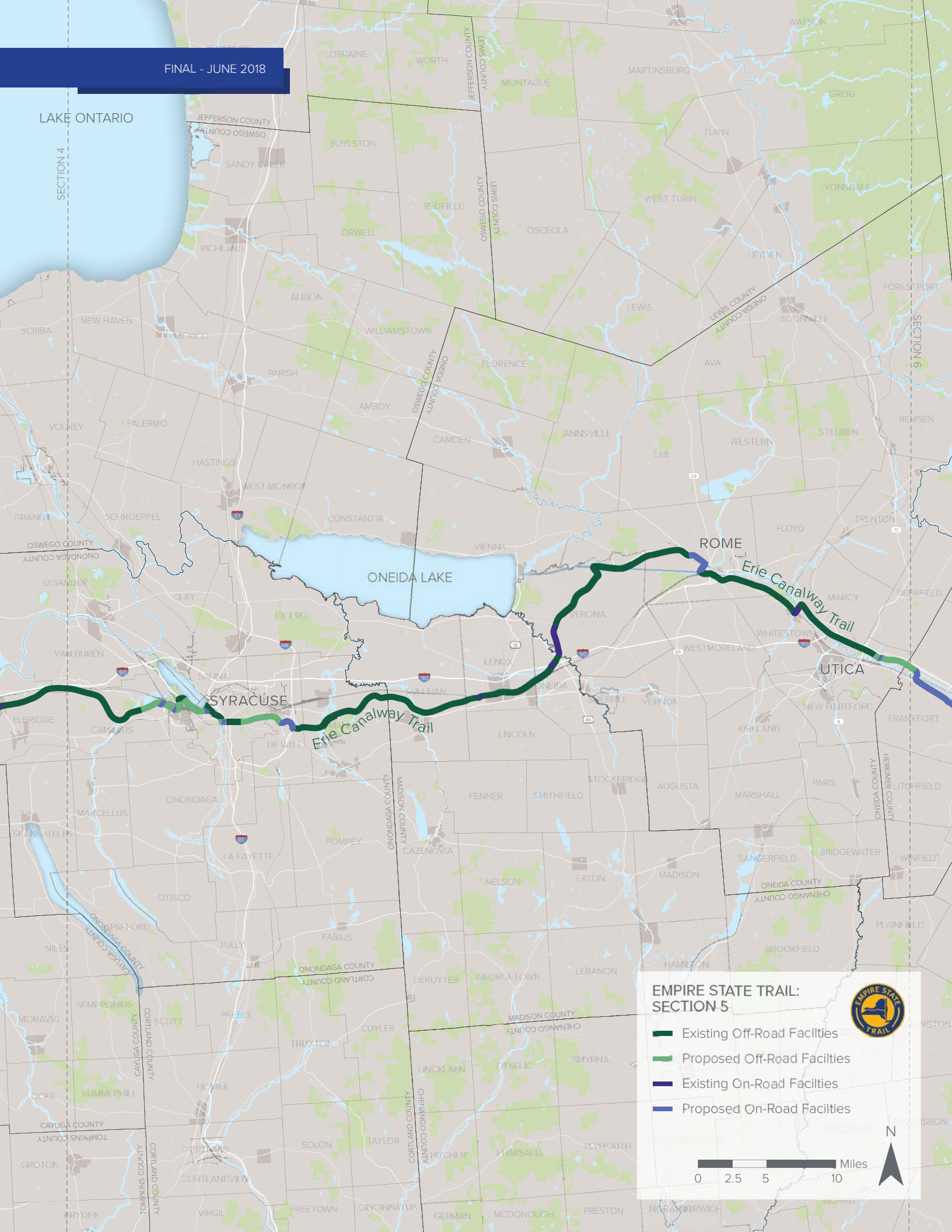


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LAKE ONTARIO

SECTION 4

SECTION 6



**EMPIRE STATE TRAIL:  
SECTION 5**



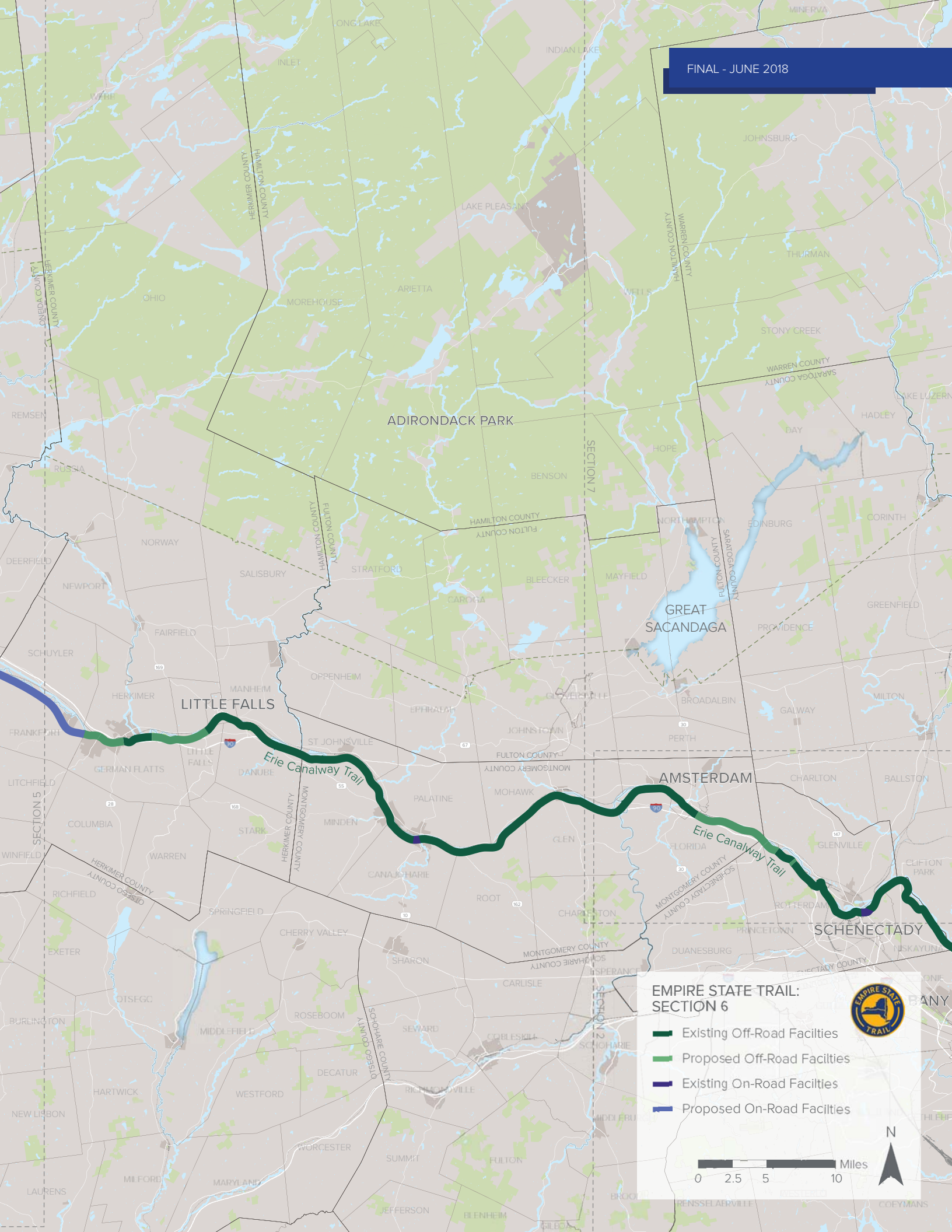
- Existing Off-Road Facilities
- Proposed Off-Road Facilities
- Existing On-Road Facilities
- Proposed On-Road Facilities

0 2.5 5 10 Miles





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EMPIRE STATE TRAIL:  
SECTION 6

- Existing Off-Road Facilities
- Proposed Off-Road Facilities
- Existing On-Road Facilities
- Proposed On-Road Facilities



0 2.5 5 10 Miles











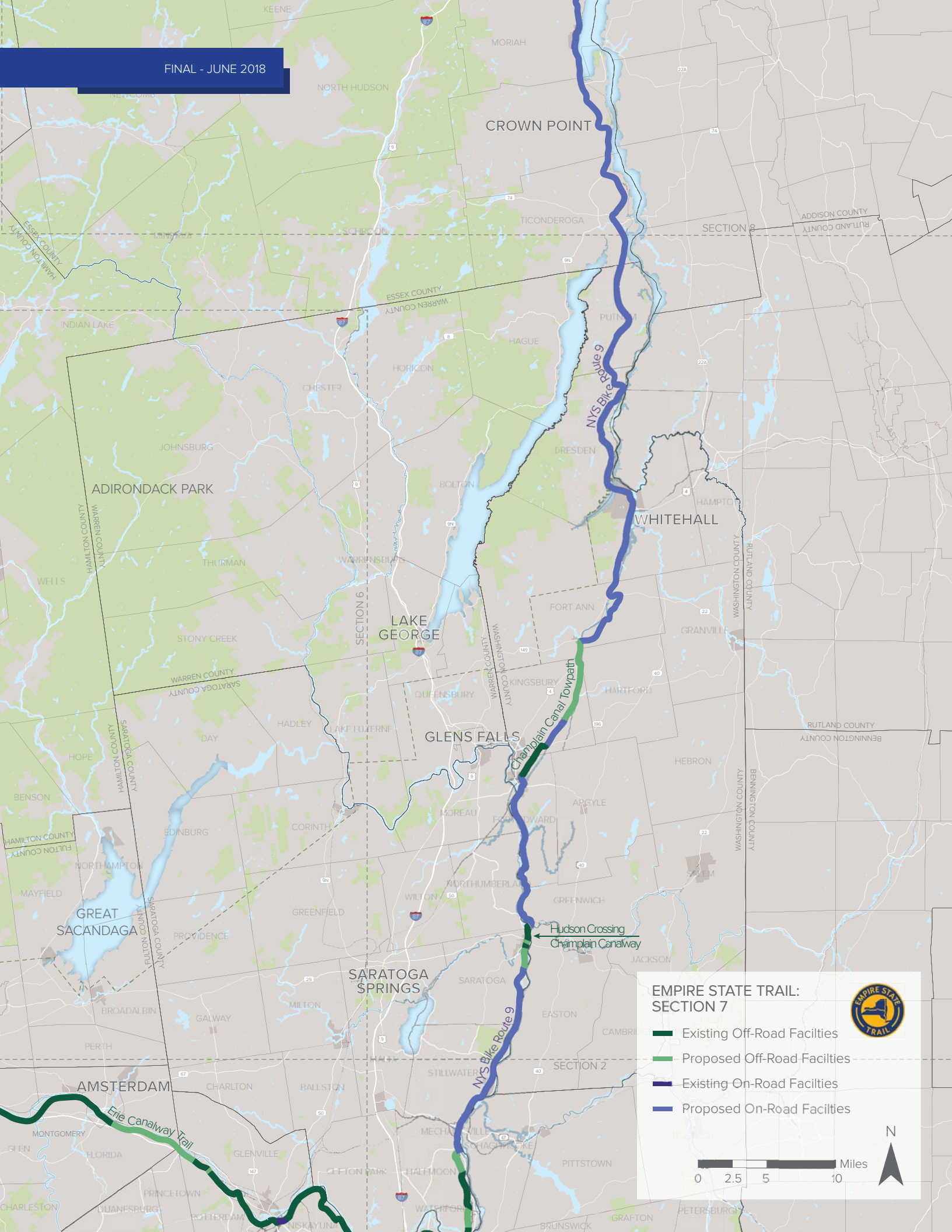
## THE ROUTE: CHAMPLAIN VALLEY

The following maps identify the Empire State Trail route within the Champlain Valley. From the Capital District to Whitehall, wherever feasible the Empire State Trail will be located off-road along Champlain Canal towpaths. The 120-mile section from Whitehall to the Canada border at Rouses Point will be an on-road route primarily intended for experienced bicyclists. The trail segments are listed in “south to north order” from the Capital District to the Canada border.

### CHAMPLAIN VALLEY

- Champlain Canalway Trail
- On-Road from Mechanicville to Stillwater
- Path through Hudson Crossing Park
- On-Road to Fort Edward
- Champlain Canalway Trail - Fort Edward to Fort Ann
- On-Road from Fort Ann to Whitehall
- On-Road from Whitehall to Plattsburgh
- Terry Gordon Bike Path
- Saranac River Trail
- On-Road from Plattsburgh to Rouses Point / Canadian Border





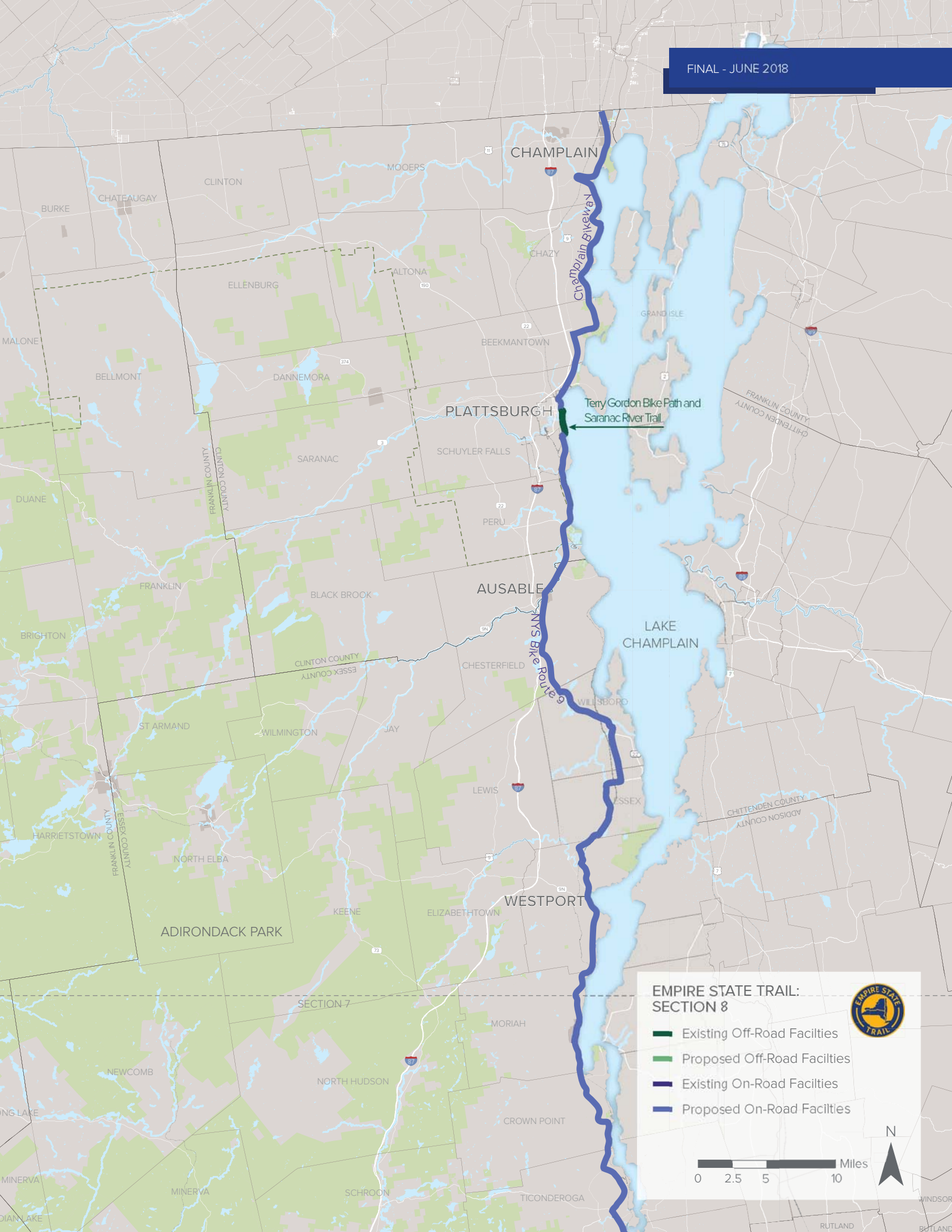
EMPIRE STATE TRAIL:  
SECTION 7



- Existing Off-Road Facilities
- Proposed Off-Road Facilities
- Existing On-Road Facilities
- Proposed On-Road Facilities

0 2.5 5 10 Miles





EMPIRE STATE TRAIL:  
SECTION 8



- Existing Off-Road Facilities
- Proposed Off-Road Facilities
- Existing On-Road Facilities
- Proposed On-Road Facilities

0 2.5 5 10 Miles

N



## 2020 VISION: A TRAIL FITTING FOR THE EMPIRE STATE

Starting in 2018, wayfinding and information signage will be installed along existing trails that will be incorporated into the Empire State Trail, and construction will start on several new trail construction projects.

Development of detailed construction designs is underway, with the goal of issuing trail construction bids for a number of trail segments in 2018. The lead state agency for each project will implement public outreach and input processes as appropriate.

Trail construction will pick up steam in 2019, with ground breakings on a number of trail segments across the state. New Empire State Trail segments will be dedicated and opened to the public as they are completed.

When the entire 750-mile Empire State Trail is completed in 2020, New York State will be home to the longest state multi use trail in nation – emphasizing our leadership role as the Empire State!



**When the entire 750-mile Empire State Trail is completed in 2020, New York State will be home to the longest state multi-use trail in nation.**



