What is a Rail Trail?

Railbanking: Established in 1983 as an amendment to the National Trails System Act.

- A voluntary agreement between railroad companies and trail agencies to convert an out-of-service rail line into a trail.
- Trail agencies are responsible for maintenance -- even though the abandoned corridor may still be owned by the railroad company.
- The railroad company may re-establish the rail line if it is needed.
- Examples in WNY: North Buffalo Rail Trail, Tonawanda Rail Trail, the proposed DL&W Rail Trail

Source: http://www.railstotrails.org/resource-library/resources/rails-to-trails-conversions-a-legal-review/
$1.2 million investment
The first urban Rail Trail in Buffalo
What We’ve Heard Locally

UDCDA Community Needs Assessment (2017)

- Respondents expressed the appeal of living on the streets surrounding Main Street due to:
  - Transit, access, walkability, the Rails Trail, proximity to UB South, historic homes, restaurant choice, diversity, and friendly neighbors.
- Physically active respondents expressed interest in:
  - Incentives to get more people active
  - Improvements to Shoshone Park/Pool
  - Extending the Rail Trail
  - Additional fitness options (i.e. Yoga)
- Respondents expressed interest in:
  - Additional community recreational and athletic options
  - Being intentional about integration by creating inclusive and accessible public spaces and amenities
What We’ve Heard Locally

Community comments from NFTA TOD Workshop #1 - LaSalle Station

- Extend/leverage recreation Trail - Connect to McCarthy Park and trail to the southeast.

William Gaiter Parkway

- There is broken glass, no shade, very little to enjoy along the stretch, and the bike path does not connect to bicycle infrastructure.
- It is used as a speedway and dumping ground
- The street design cuts off neighborhoods from enjoying the greenspace
"The surface of the bike trail is nice, but it needs to link to other bike trails."

"Rails to Trails is probably the best new space in University Heights, a wonderful place for families and nature."

"Linear Park provides a nice retreat from the urban setting while creating a critical link between neighborhoods. As a first year resident, we love using this space and are pleased with the flowers/signage/aesthetics."

"I guess more plantings (flowers, trees) would be good additions but I think rail trail is pretty good as is."

"I can’t think of a comparable space in the area. It’s both an ideal location for a gateway to the trail (convenience and connectivity) and a challenging one."

"Love the bike trail, but it needs to go farther. And have less graffiti."
What We’ve Heard Across the Region

“This is free, so this is for me.”

“Folks want to be able to get to different places without getting in the car.”

“We see a lot of baby boomers maintaining a more active lifestyle than maybe their grandparents did at that age.”

“I can't believe how many people use it. They love it. I've heard nothing but compliments about it.”
Leveraging University-led Research & Design
Existing multi-use trail system in Western New York
Existing Conditions

- Erie County Riverwalk & Shoreline Trail
- Tonawanda to Pendleton Canalway Trail
- North Buffalo Rail Trail
- Tonawanda Rails-to-Trails
- Clarence Pathways
- Shoreline Trail
What would a regional greenway look like?
Recent regional investments in Rail Trail infrastructure

Connecting the Erie Canal Trail Path - Between the Town of Amherst and Town of Pendleton
Image: the Buffalo News


Other Regional Rail Trail Planning Initiatives

Western New York Land Conservancy’s DL&W “High-Line”
Other Regional Rail Trail Planning Initiatives

The Erie Cattaraugus Rail Trail
Benefits of Rail Trails and greenspaces

Social:

- Increases individual physical activity
- Promotes mental health and wellness
- Reduces crime rates
- Increases social cohesion

Economic:

- Attracts home ownership
- Attracts new businesses
- Contributes to commercial growth
- Increase land values by 10-30% without raising taxes

Environmental:

- Green features help better absorb water runoff, purifies the air, contributes to biodiversity and can reduce the impact of extreme weather
- Provides safe urban habitats for flora and fauna
- Connects existing greenspaces (the Olmstedian approach to urban park systems)
- Improves the urban aesthetic
Next steps

- **Fall/Winter 2019 -**
  - Community outreach to block clubs, organizations, and partners to generate support for the project;
  - Tree and bulb planting along William Gaiter Pkwy and North Buffalo Rail Trail;
  - Develop a survey to gage community input along existing North Buffalo Rail Trail.
  - Work with UB Planning Studio on preliminary design concepts for the NGI.

- **Spring 2020 -**
  - Begin programming around NGI;
  - Administer North Buffalo Rail Trail survey;
  - Community breakfast to share Research Fellow findings;
  - Generate a stewardship proposal for NGI/NBRT/William Gaiter
  - Continue community outreach campaign to generate support for the project.

- **Spring/Summer 2020 -**
  - Apply for second year of funding for the NGI;
  - Present concrete plans for Phase II of the NGI;
  - Present survey and research findings to the community at Crossroads of Creativity 2020.
How You Can Help

● Spread the word
● Share your thoughts and feedback
● Remain engaged on the Project Committee
● Share any data/feedback you have on existing trails
  ○ Capital/maintenance costs
● Funding opportunities
● Engagement with other planning initiatives
● Connect us to other stakeholders
● Participate in events

TAKE OUR SURVEY

Text ‘UDCDA’ to 716-342-0401
(Text STOP to quit)
Cities have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when, they are created by everybody.”

- Jane Jacobs