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Adaptive Cycling Along the Erie Canalway: **TRAID on the Trails**

A FITNESS INCLUSION NETWORK GUIDEBOOK

Fitness Inclusion Network



Credits

*This Fit-In Guidebook was created in 2022 by
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Introduction

About Us

Fitness Inclusion Network (Fit-IN) is a grassroots group of athletes, students, families, and professionals in adapted physical education, medicine, physical therapy, occupational therapy, engineering, therapeutic recreation, special education, social work, and disability policy and law. Fit-IN was launched in 2013 with support from the Upstate Foundation/Golisano Children’s Hospital, the Burton Blatt Institute at Syracuse University, and SUNY Cortland Department of Adapted Physical Education. Our mission is to develop innovative ways to promote and support inclusive fitness for children, adolescents and adults with disabilities in Central New York (CNY).



About This Guidebook

Over the past decade Fit-IN has published guidebooks about inclusive walking clubs, unified yoga, accessible geocaching, and other activities. Each aimed to guide youth and others in efforts to create inclusive fitness opportunities in their communities. This Guidebook builds on this tradition while focusing on adaptive cycling. It also highlights “TRAID on the Trails”, a unique program that emerged from years of discussion among Fit-IN partners about how to leverage the Erie Canalway Trail as a resource to promote and grow inclusive recreation opportunities. We hope this Guidebook helps inspire you to explore adaptive cycling, implement TRAID on the Trails, and grow these ideas until we ensure all recreation opportunities are welcoming and available to everyone.



Image by Call of the Loon Productions, courtesy Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor

About Adaptive Cycling

Cycling is for everyone — if they have the right equipment! Many people - young and old, with and without disabilities - are unable to use a two-wheeled bike. Adaptive cycles make it possible for everyone to enjoy cycling, regardless of age, size, or ability.



Image by Frank Forte, courtesy Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor

What is Adaptive Cycling?

“Adaptive cycling” refers to using different types of cycles that are not the standard two-wheeled bicycle. Tandem cycles, handcycles, and tricycles are some of

the many adaptive cycles available. There are wheelchair bicycles and equipment designed to help people of all ages

ride safely. There are also many ways to modify seats, handlebars, and other cycle parts to fit different bodies.



Cycling and Health Equity

Equality and equity are not the same, as illustrated beautifully in the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation infographic shown above. Health equity means increasing opportunities for everyone to be as healthy as possible. If we give everyone the same bike, some people will struggle and others will get left out entirely. If we provide cycles that meet people’s specific needs, then everyone has the opportunity to experience the joys of cycling. That’s health equity!

Tricycles

Tricycles (or “trikes”) are cycles with three wheels, which offer greater support for people with balance difficulties. Trikes come in many different styles such as:

- Upright or Recumbent (reclining)
- With seats or without seats
- With handlebars that are curved or straight, up or down



Image by Clara Neville



Image by Call of the Loon Productions, courtesy Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor

Jill Walsh, pictured above, is an athlete from Syracuse, NY who rides a tricycle competitively. Jill has won multiple medals for road cycling in the Paralympics!

Handcycles

Handcycles are cycles pedaled using hands and arms. These cycles are often recumbent and seat the rider low to the ground. Most have three wheels, but some have two. These cycles allow people who have spinal cord injuries or related conditions to get out and enjoy the canal trails.



Image by Clara Neville



Image by Call of the Loon Productions, courtesy Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor

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“I love going cycling in the mornings at Onondaga Lake Park. I joined a group and started going every Tuesday. I started to like it and I figured I wanted a bike on my own. Someone donated a bike so now I have my own bike. I keep it in my garage and take it to Onondaga Lake in my grandmother’s van. Sometimes I ride in my neighborhood, too.”

— Stephanie

Tandem Cycles

Tandem Cycles are cycles built for two people to ride together. They lower the chance of falls and the need for balancing. They can also allow a visually-impaired person to ride with a sighted person.



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"Having access to a tandem/trailer (cycle) has allowed our family to have many happy rides together on the Erie Canal Trail. One summer we rode a new section each weekend, and we cumulatively biked all the way from Weedsport to Rome." — Jim



Recumbent Seating

Many adaptive cycles are designed with reclining or “recumbent” seats.



Image by Frank Forte, courtesy Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor



Image by Frank Forte, courtesy Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor



Image by Clara Neville

Adaptive Cycle Features

Adjustability

It is important to adjust the size of a cycle to fit the user. Before riding, you should adjust different parts of the cycle:

- Seat position
- Distance from seat to the pedals or foot rest
- Handlebar height or angle
- Different seats, pedals, and handlebar styles are available. Find the one that works best for you!

If you don't have an adaptive cycle, there are many ways to adapt a cycle you do own. Add straps to pedals. Change the handlebars. Add a caregiver handle. Attach adaptive training wheels to make your cycle more stable. The possibilities are endless!



Image by Clara Neville



Adaptive Back Support

Most bicycles are designed for people to ride in an upright position, with no back support. But there are lots of cycles with seats that support the back fully. Many have seatbelts, too!

Electric Assist

There are growing number of electric cycles (“e-bikes”) available, which can be helpful for people who need some assistance pedaling. They can be especially helpful when trying to ride up hills! Electric cycles have a motor, a battery, and a controller that is usually located near the handlebars. The riders use the controllers to adjust the amount of electric assistance – from no assistance to quite a lot!

Room for All

There are so many ways to enjoy a ride on the trail. Wheelchairs, strollers, bike trailers, cargo bikes, wagons, wheelchair/bike combos, adaptive cycles, and even beach trailers with balloon tires . . . there's room for all on the trail!



Cycling as Part of Healthy Inclusive Communities

Health Benefits of Cycling

Riding a bike is healthy, fun and a low-impact form of exercise for all ages and abilities. Cycling is mainly an aerobic activity, which means that your heart, blood vessels and lungs all get a workout. It's a great way to improve your overall fitness level. Cycling can improve both physical and mental health. It is a great way to be outdoors with friends.

The health benefits of regular cycling include:

- increased cardiovascular fitness
- increased muscle strength and flexibility
- improved joint mobility
- decreased stress levels
- improved posture and coordination
- strengthened bones
- decreased body fat levels
- prevention or management of disease

Community Benefits of Cycling

Cycling is an eco-friendly form of recreation and transportation that makes towns and cities more accessible and liveable. Bike infrastructure can help a community to thrive. According to the US Department of Transportation bike lanes are good for the whole community, calming traffic and making streets safer for cyclists, walkers, and drivers. Bike lanes also reduce traffic congestion, which improves air quality. We see more when we cycle through a neighborhood, such as store fronts and local restaurants. Bike paths are good for business. Cycling also brings us closer to nature. Syracuse's Creekwalk Trail connects urban neighborhoods to nature areas along the Inner Harbor and Onondaga Lake. All across New York State the Canalway Trails brings us closer to nature and to each other!

The National Center on Health, Physical Activity and Disability (NCHPAD) is a public health practice and resource center on health promotion for people with disability. Learn more about building healthy and inclusive communities at: <https://www.nchpad.org/>

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“Biking allows Jonathan (pictured right) to be free and play. It's a great activity and exposure to a healthy lifestyle! Being outside builds natural community support and awareness.”

— Jaime, mother of Jonathan

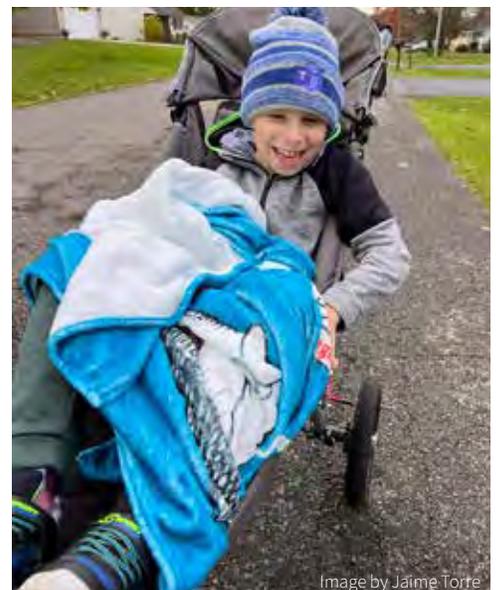


Image by Jaime Torre

How to Lead the Way

Journey Along the Erie Canal

John Robinson and Doug Hamlin tell audiences that if you ride one mile along the Erie Canal, you may find that one mile turns into two, or many more. For John and Doug, one mile turned into an annual 360-mile handcycle ride from Buffalo to Albany with family and friends called “Journey Along the Erie Canal.” Their ride aimed to raise funds and raise awareness for the abilities within everyone. Learn about their journey on the Our Ability website at <https://www.ourability.com/journey-erie-canal/>.

Our Ability is an organization led by John and Doug which is dedicated to inspiring individuals with disabilities to achieve their dreams through education and employment as well as to educate able-bodied individuals about the differences in ability around us. It is the only disability owned and operated business dedicated to building employment opportunities through job platforms, employment webinars, digital profile system and personal empowerment. Their website has a software platform that makes it easier for people with disabilities to connect with relevant job openings, and for employers to connect with qualified candidates. Learn more at <https://www.ourability.com/>.



The Journey Along the Erie Canal and Our Ability are just two of John and Doug’s many accomplishments. Learn more by reading their autobiographies: “Get Off Your Knees: A Story of Faith, Courage, and Determination” (John) and “Spinning Forward: Successfully Redefining Life from a New Perspective” (Doug).



Image by Peyton Seflick

How to be an Ally

ALLY: Acknowledge and respect individual experiences and abilities.

According to the CDC, approximately one in four people in the US have a disability while the World Health Organization reports that nearly 1 billion, or 15% of the global population has a disability. This makes people with disabilities the largest minority group. Disability is intersectional, meaning disability crosses all ages, races, ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, and other groups. Disability is also diverse in individual needs: from hearing and visual impairments to people with mobility disabilities and people with developmental disabilities; it is important to know that organizing to include people with disabilities is not one size fits all.

The first step in creating inclusive and welcoming spaces is to understand what it takes to be an ally and advocate. Remember that as an ally and advocate, you are supporting the movement and working WITH the disabled community. Being an ally, you are using your privilege and power to help create a more just and equitable world for all people.

How to become an effective **ALLY** & advocate:

Acknowledge and respect individual experiences and abilities

Learn about different ability types

Leverage your influence to promote accessibility and inclusion

Yield the floor to people with disabilities to help identify and eliminate barriers



Image by Rick Cote

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Our Cazenovia Hillbender Bike Race & Ride exists to raise funds to support Upstate Golisano Children's Hospital's inclusive mission of adaptive sports like the Adaptive Cycling Program. Having this type of program in CNY is a vital resource for our local kids & families who have special needs and will benefit from these types of programs.

— Rick Cote

How to Scale it Up

Many organizations and partners work to make inclusive recreation opportunities available to a wider audience.

Inclusive Recreation Resource Center (IRRC)



Based at SUNY Cortland, the IRRC is a resource that aims to promote and sustain participation by people of all abilities in inclusive recreation activities and resources. They offer an online training called “Inclusion U” to become a Certified Inclusivity Assessor, preparing people to

evaluate both the physical and programmatic accessibility of recreation sites. The IRRC also hosts an online database where anyone can search for trails and recreation sites and learn about the sites’ inclusivity assessment. For example, people can use the database to look up a program or trail and find out if adaptive cycles will be available and if staff are trained to work with people with disabilities. Learn more at <https://inclusiverec.org/>.

Rochester Accessible Adventures (RAA)



Rochester Accessible Adventures (RAA) is a non-profit based in Rochester, NY which trains recreation businesses to operate with full inclusion whenever they are open. One such business is Erie Canal Boat Company (ECBC), headquartered in Fairport, NY. Through their work with RAA, ECBC offers renters a selection of standard and adaptive cycling (and kayaking) equipment so that families and friends can participate together, 7 days a week. ECBC also operates at Wide Waters Marina in Lockport, NY, and offers satellite programming at an expanding list of locations like Medina, Brockport, and Macedon, NY.

Because of its partnership with RAA, ECBC renters are offered the additional support of RAA’s CanalPal volunteers. These volunteers can be requested during rental reservations and will accompany cyclists and paddlers to provide companionship, assist with traffic flow monitoring, and provide general equipment training on the trail.

Learn more about RAA’s work with Erie Canal Boat Company here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zOaKIS39BAk> and at www.RochesterAccessibleAdventures.org. Check out the newly renovated adaptive kayak launch, adaptive equipment, and program/location offerings at Erie Canal Boat Company here: <https://eriecanalboatcompany.com/>



Partnerships with Municipalities, Colleges, and Others: Community Bike Shares

In the past decade, communities all across the United States have adopted publicly-owned bike share systems, known as “bike shares.” Bike shares vary widely, but they are usually run by an organization in cooperation with the government of a specific city or county. Some bike shares make bikes available for short-term rental at docking stations, while others are “dockless.” Some bike shares are free to use, but most charge riders a fee. Bike shares are changing all the time – resulting in millions of rides!¹

Many cities are exploring how to include adaptive cycles in their bike shares.² In Milwaukee, WI, Bublr Bikes added adaptive cycles to its docked bike share system, which allows self-service rental. Other communities, like Portland, OR and Detroit, MI, have worked with local organizations to establish a separate rental system for adaptive cycles. This model offers rental during more limited hours, but ensures staff are available to assist riders and provides a place for storage of assistive devices (e.g., wheelchairs, canes) while riding.

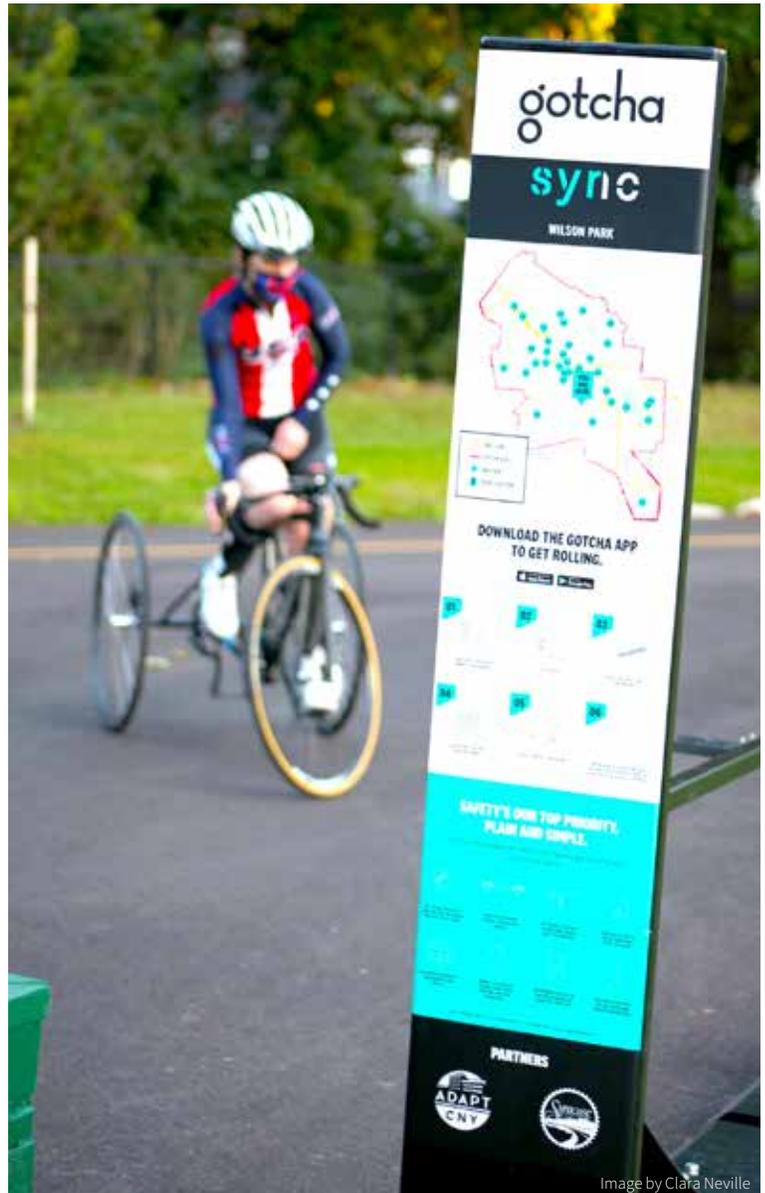


Image by Clara Neville

If your community has a bike share, find out if they're open to including adaptive cycles!

SUNY Cortland has a bike share called the Community Bike Program which includes a wheelchair tow bar that can be used with its adaptive cycles. This enables a student to use a cycle to go to class, transfer to their wheelchair, attend class, and then transfer back to the cycle. Wheelchair tow bars make it much more possible to use cycles for transportation to destinations and not just recreational rides.

¹ National Association of City Transportation Officials. (2021). Bike Share and Shared Micromobility Initiative. <https://nacto.org/program/bike-share-initiative/>

² Portland State University Transportation Research and Education Center. (2020). Adaptive Bike Share. https://trec.pdx.edu/sites/default/files/PSU_BikeShareEquity_Adaptive_10of10.pdf

Partnerships with TRAIID Publicly-Funded Loan Closet

TRAIID stands for Technology-Related Assistance for Individuals with Disabilities.

TRAIID Centers are publicly-funded lending libraries or loan closets for people with disabilities. They provide short term equipment loans at no cost! Regional TRAIID Centers serve all counties in New York State (NYS). Learn more at <https://www.justicecenter.ny.gov/traid-program>.

In CNY, the regional TRAIID Center is housed at AccessCNY and serves the six-county region of Onondaga, Madison, Cayuga, Tompkins, Cortland, and Oswego Counties. Their equipment inventory can be searched through an online database at <https://www.accesscny.org/services/traid-center>.



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Access to an upright three-wheeler has allowed our son, Leo (left center), to enjoy the strength and power of his own body. Since he uses a power chair, adaptive cycling provides his only experience of self-powered mobility — it’s exhilarating, and he loves it.”

— Jim

“

“Recreational equipment is among the most requested items in the CNY TRAIID Center’s inventory. We would love to grow our library and make more adaptive cycles available through TRAIID!”

—Joel Brennan, TRAIID Center at AccessCNY

TRAID on the Trails

For many years, Fit-IN and its partners have discussed ways to leverage the Erie Canalway Trail as a resource to promote and grow inclusive recreation opportunities. In November 2019, Fit-IN hosted a conference about Inclusive Recreation on the Erie Canalway Trail to learn more about regional resources and to explore future possibilities. In many ways the “TRAID on the Trails” idea grew from discussions at this event.

TRAID on the Trails is a program that aims to improve the health of children and adults with disabilities by increasing the availability of recreation-related adaptive equipment available through local TRAIID Centers, planning inclusive programming at public trails, and integrating those activities with medical services. The goal is to bring the TRAIID Center loan closet to recreation sites on a regular basis, enabling people to more easily try out equipment while raising awareness of TRAIID Centers as a community resource. The program can provide the supports needed to help people get active in their community and sustain healthy behavior changes.

TRAID on the Trails in CNY

In 2021, Fit-IN received funding from the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor and the NYS Canal Corporation to work with community partners to pilot TRAIID on the Trails with a one-day event at Cedar Bay Park in DeWitt, NY. The event was a resounding success and helped affirm partners’ commitment to expanding the initiative beyond “one and done” events. Over 100 people participated, and the highlight for many was getting to try out adaptive cycles brought by Move Along, Inc. Staff from AccessCNY talked to families about how they can access free equipment through the CNY TRAIID Center. Our Ability shared their story of cycling the length of the Erie Canalway Trail, from Buffalo to Albany. And most importantly, the partners agreed on the importance of continuing to work together to figure out how to continue TRAIID on the Trails and help the program spread beyond CNY. We hope that this guidebook will help you to bring the joy of adaptive cycling and TRAIID on the Trails to your community!



TRAIL Centers & the Empire State Trail

Empire State Trail

The 750-mile Empire State Trail welcomes people of all abilities, from all walks of life, and all backgrounds to enjoy the longest state multi-use trail in the nation. The Empire State Trail includes the east-west Erie Canalway Trail from Albany to Buffalo and north-south trails from New York City through the Hudson River Valley to Lake Champlain.

The Canalway Trail/Empire State Trail is accessible for all types of bikes, including recumbents and hand cycles. The trail is accessible to people with mobility challenges and meets Americans with Disabilities (ADA) standards. Off-road Empire State Trail sections are 10-12 feet wide with a paved asphalt or stonedust surface (stonedust is compacted, finely-ground material that provides a stable trail surface).

The online Empire State Trail Map, <https://empiretrail.ny.gov>, provides information about trail surfaces, parking areas, and routes. You can find additional trip planning information for the east-west Canalway Trail at www.eriecanalway.org.

Plan trips from different starting points and you'll quickly see that no two sections are alike. What makes each journey great is the changing scenery; diverse and historic cities, towns, and villages; local eateries, ice cream, and craft beverages; and variety of attractions along the route. Lodging, dining, visitor services, and sites of interest are readily available short distances off the trail.

750 miles

New York's Empire State Trail extends north-south from New York City through the Hudson River Valley to Lake Champlain and east-west from Albany to Buffalo.

365 miles

The Erie Canalway Trail is a showpiece of the Empire State Trail network. The trail closely parallels both active and historic sections of the Erie Canal and is mostly flat. Eighty-seven percent is off road and suitable for all ages and abilities. The remaining on-road sections are designated on the shoulders of public roadways, intended for experienced bicyclists comfortable riding adjacent to vehicle traffic. You'll see unique structures like locks and lift bridges, working tugs and other vessels, friendly vacationers in boats of all stripes, and you'll discover canal communities and historic sites that are intriguing and fun cycling destinations. Parking areas, restrooms, and canal amenity centers that serve boaters, hikers, and cyclists are located all along the route.

210 miles

The Hudson Valley Greenway Trail from New York City to Albany starts at the Battery at the southern tip of Manhattan overlooking New York harbor and the Statue of Liberty, and winds north through the Hudson Valley passing through bustling cities, vibrant villages, and scenic rural landscapes. Trail users can visit numerous historic sites, museums, and cultural attractions near the trail route, including the iconic Walkway Over the Hudson in Poughkeepsie. Seventy-five percent of the Hudson Valley route is off-road trail. The remaining on-road sections are designated on the shoulders of public roadways,

TRAID Centers and the Canalway in NYS

This map shows the 12 Regional TRAIID Centers located throughout New York State. Most are right near the Empire State Trail!



The Erie Canalway Trail is an ideal location for Central New Yorkers who want to try adaptive cycling and other inclusive recreation opportunities. Since this large accessible trail system is in close proximity to NY's TRAIID Centers, there is great potential to expand recreational equipment offerings through TRAIID and grow the TRAIID on the Trails program throughout NY State!

How to bring TRAIID on the Trails to your community

1

Engage Your Partners

Involving a broad group of community partners from the beginning will always make for a stronger program. Find the people in your community who will be excited about getting everybody out on the trails. Make sure people with disabilities are on your core planning team and are involved from the beginning.

Find people who:

- **Know disabilities** – Involve the disability community and engage organizations that serve people with disabilities, to help spread the word and make sure programming is inclusive
- **Know adaptive equipment** – Regional TRAIID Centers have this expertise! If you're using adaptive cycles, bike mechanics are key! Team up with bicycle shops or local organizations that own/rent adaptive equipment.
- **Know the trails** – Contact your local Parks Department and others who maintain or promote accessible trails near you.
- **Know healthcare** – Physicians who work with people with disabilities, physical therapists, and other health professionals are well-positioned to support people in getting active in the community.

Partners will be needed for equipment storage, helping to safely fit people to cycles, and programming. Reach out to your regional TRAIID Center, local Parks and Recreation contacts, cycling shops, and others who know your community to see how they want to be involved!



Image by Frank Forte, courtesy Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor



Image by Call of the Loon Productions, courtesy Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor



Image by Frank Forte, courtesy Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor



Image by Frank Forte, courtesy Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor



Image by Call of the Loon Productions, courtesy Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor

2

Find Adaptive Cycles

Finding the right equipment can be challenging. Adaptive cycles are specialized equipment that can be quite costly. Here are some strategies to consider:

- Work with community partners - There are many organizations that might have equipment or be interested in purchasing it. In Syracuse, a non-profit organization called Move Along, Inc. had a fleet of adaptive cycles and volunteers able to get the equipment ready and show people how to use it. The CNY TRAIID Center was also interested in building its inventory of recreation equipment, which is available for free rental.
- Seek funding - Many different funders might be interested in providing grants that cover the cost of adaptive equipment. Hospitals and health-focused foundations could see the health benefits of making cycling available to more people. Businesses might be interested in sponsoring equipment. Organizations focused on the environment, disabilities, aging, and community-building might see value in funding equipment for other reasons. Talk to your local funders and see if you can apply for a grant!
- Programs should offer a wide variety of cycle types, to accommodate many different riders. But don't be afraid to start small, with a few adaptive cycles, and grow the program over time. Show people how much joy cycling brings and build the momentum to get more cycles!

>TIPS

- Think about equipment storage, too. Ideally there could be a space nearby the trail where equipment can be stored when not in use. You could also consider purchasing a large trailer to transport equipment to the trail as needed.
- Get to know staff at your local cycle shop! Find out how they can help adapt a cycle for specific needs.

Some companies with equipment*:

- **Freedom Concepts** <https://www.freedomconcepts.com/>
- **RAD Innovations** <https://www.rad-innovations.com/>
- **Amtryke** <http://www.amtrykestore.org/>
- **Pumper Car** <https://www.pumpercar.com/>
- **Rifton** <https://www.rifton.com/>
- **Trailmate** <http://www.trailmate.com/>
- **Flaghouse** <https://www.flaghouse.com/>
- **Buddy Bike** <http://www.buddybike.com/>
- **Mobility & Access** <https://www.mobilityaccess.com/>
- **benecykl** <https://www.benecyklusa.com/>
- **Wike** <https://wicycle.com/>
- **Fatwheels** <https://www.fatwheels.com/>
- **Bike-On** <https://bike-on.com/>
- **ReActive Adaptations** <https://reactiveadaptations.com/>

*Nearly all of these companies have options for children. See ATVillage.org for more resources about how families can get equipment they need!

Move Along, Inc. provides and promotes inclusive adaptive sport and recreation opportunities to people with disabilities and allies. We are based out of Central New York, but we are part of a larger network of organizations that make up the adaptive sports community. Move Along has a fleet of equipment that can be used for a number of sports, and we are especially excited to make our adaptive cycles a part of the fabric of our community. Our tagline is “Enhancing Abilities” because we believe that everyone should live their life to the fullest, and we know that sometimes it takes some creativity! We started with handcycles, and have expanded to recumbents and tandems. Our goal is to help people realize their own potential through adaptive sport and recreation, and that includes partnering with individuals, organizations, schools and municipalities to make that happen locally. If you are in the Central New York area, give us a shout! If you’re not, there are organizations like ours scattered throughout the country—and the world. We are also a chapter of Move United, a national adaptive sports organization.

Visit us at movealonginc.org



Image by Frank Forte, courtesy Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor



Image by Frank Forte, courtesy Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor

Move Along, Inc. volunteers at TRAIID on the Trails.

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“It has been Move Along's experience that local cycle shops are often willing to work with us. I always recommend that adaptive cyclists strike up a relationship with a cycle shop for maintenance needs, if not full-service. Regardless of where the cycle comes from, it will need to be fixed. The professionals know that most components are similar to bicycles, they are just arranged differently. I've also seen cycle shops do awesome things as far as customization support. For instance, one local shop supported an adaptive cyclist by helping to retrofit an eye trip assist motor when the cyclist wanted to go for longer rides, but had a hard time with all of the large hills in his town.”

— Eddie Zaremba, Move Along, Inc.

3

Find the Right Location

Many adaptive cycles require more space for turning around than your typical bicycle, so look for trails with wide open areas. It will be easiest for people to try out adaptive cycles on a long, flat accessible off-road trail. Some equipment, like handcycles, can be challenging to use on even slightly elevated trails – and extremely difficult on steep hills! If there is a hill, just be sure to recruit volunteers who can help push cycles if people need some assistance!

- The Erie Canalway Trail is ideal! The trail is 365 miles long, providing accessible trail, mostly off-road, between Buffalo and Albany, NY. The trail has been improved in recent years as part of the Empire State Trail project, which is the nation's longest state trail system. Learn more about the Erie Canalway Trail at <https://eriecanalway.org/explore/cycling>.
- The Inclusive Recreation Resource Center (IRRC) is a great resource to find out about accessibility of trails near you! You can search the IRRC database to find information about trails that have been already been assessed, or you can assess the trail yourself using the IRRC Inclusivity Assessment Tool and Trail Assessment. Whichever approach you take, the IRRC is a great tool to learn more about how accessible the trail will be for your event or group. Learn more at <https://inclusiverec.org>.

Checklist for good locations:

- ✓ Accessible parking
- ✓ Flat, wide trail
- ✓ No cars

The image to the right shows a wheelchair charging station and shelter that were built alongside the Creekwalk Trail in Downtown Syracuse. The Creekwalk Trail is a 4.8 mile accessible trail that intersects with the Erie Canalway Trail at Syracuse's Inner Harbor.



Image by Mary Carney



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“It’s really nice to have a place to go where I know there is a smooth path and I don’t have to worry about bumps or mud. It’s accessible for everyone, whether you use a wheelchair or not.” — Helena



4

Plan Pop-ups on the Trail

Once you have the partners, equipment, and location in mind, you'll want to plan your events! Below are some key steps:

- **Visioning.** Take some time to think about your vision of what success looks like. It could be a single-day event or having a group that meets up at the trail weekly. Whatever it is, share your vision with partners so you can work to make it happen!
- **Assigning Roles.** Decide which organizations/individuals will be responsible for leading and coordinating the planning. Talk with partner organizations and figure out what roles they will play. Make sure to plan for people to be in charge of equipment rental and signing liability waivers if needed. Ensure staff/volunteers will have some training in disabilities inclusion.
- **Logistics.** Choose dates and times that work for key partners. If you are planning to meet at a local park, contact the Parks Department to make sure the space you want will be available. Make sure people will have a safe place to store wheelchairs and other personal items while they are out on the trail. Determine what materials and how many volunteers you will need to make your events successful.
- **Promotion.** Create flyers, social media posts, press releases, and other materials to communicate about your event. Use your partners and networks to spread the word widely. *Word of mouth works best!*



Image by Frank Forte, courtesy Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor

Consider aligning with local initiatives! For example, in Syracuse we were able to align TRAIID on the Trails with two complementary initiatives:

The Canalway Challenge is an initiative sponsored of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor which encourages participants to set personal goals and earn rewards for how many miles they travel on the Erie Canalway Trail. Miles are logged online for individuals and teams. You can aim to do 1 mile or all 365 miles! www.canalwaychallenge.org

Monday Mile is a program of the Lerner Center for Public Health Promotion at Syracuse University which helps promote walking or doing something active every Monday. Monday Mile is based on evidence that people are most likely to begin healthy habits on Mondays. By planning TRAIID on the Trails activities every Monday, we were able to take advantage of this local health promotion campaign! <https://lernercenter.syr.edu/healthy-monday/move-it-monday-monday-mile/>



Image by Frank Forte, courtesy Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor

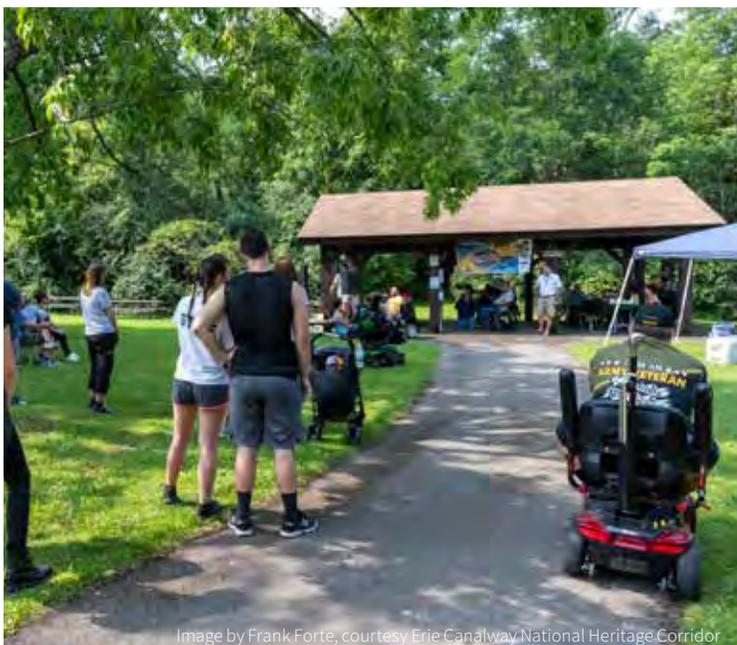


Image by Frank Forte, courtesy Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor



Image by Frank Forte, courtesy Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor

5

Keep it Going!

- **After your events, debrief and figure out how to improve on what you did!**

There are lots of ways to encourage people to keep being active. Some ideas are below:

- **Work with healthcare partners.** Doctors, physical therapists, and other providers are important partners for this work. They can help patients and their families understand the importance of outdoor recreation and which types of activity are most appropriate.
- **Use an app.** *Map My Walk* is one example of a tool that has been used successfully to engage people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Participants can log their activity, map where they went on trails, and share this information with a group. As people engage with the app, the positive social support keeps people motivated to keep coming back to the trail!
- **Share photos and success stories!** Be sure to take photos and videos of people out on the trail so you can share them and celebrate people's accomplishments trying out new activities. These visual reminders of the experience can help motivate people to set new goals and keep being active.



Image by Clara Neville

Reflections on TRAIID on the Trails

By Peyton Sefick

I pull into the Cedar Bay Park parking lot just after 8am on Saturday, August 7th and the first thing that catches my eye is a massive pickup truck with an attached 8'x12' trailer. The trailer's bold blue logo reads, "Move Along." Its back and side doors are both wide open with bike frames, pumps, tools, and wheels spilling out onto the first bit of grass the park's path has to offer. A few young volunteers are already organizing



Image by Frank Forte, courtesy Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor

the equipment in preparation for individuals and families of different ability levels to check out some adaptive recreation on the Erie Canal. After sharing pleasantries with Move Along staff and Upstate volunteers (an interprofessional mix of clinicians and students from both the physical therapy program and medical school), I celebrate the arrival of some generously donated coffee. Mary, my co-conspirator on the day's festivities, and I unpack our overloaded vehicles and start setting up an information station with resources from Access CNY, the Fitness Inclusion Network, Move United, Our Ability, Upstate's Golisano Center for Special Needs, and TRAIID.

Once Sundrop Rise, a Syracuse based soul - rock - reggae band, started playing some of their funky fresh original songs for our event, the following five hours hit me as a bit of a blur as I rack upward of eight miles on my power wheelchair's odometer. Bouncing somewhere between our Wegmans snack and hydration pavilion to chasing down participants using Move Along's adaptive cycles, I see old friends and meet families from around Central New York and from as far as Binghamton, Ithaca, and Utica. The vast majority gathered to check out the accessibility the Canalway has to offer and to feel a part of a community that does not let disability get in their way of enjoying outdoor recreation in the Empire State.

TRAIID on the Trails success built up a community wide confidence in accessing the Canalway for outdoor family fun, as well as laid out a model for hosting events along the Canalway that invites and welcomes all ability levels. Teaming up adaptive equipment loan closets, adaptive sports groups, and accessible outdoor spaces ensures inclusion and participation.



Image by Clara Neville

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