

Community Workshop

Planning and Investment on the Champlain Canal

NOVEMBER 2, 2026

ERIE CANALWAY National Heritage Corridor

NEW YORK STATE Canal Corporation

Colliers Engineering & Design

Introductions

Agenda

1. **A Joint Vision for the New York State Canal System**
2. **Amenities Study**
   - Goals
   - Methods
   - Conditions Assessment
   - Best Practices
   - Needs and Opportunities
3. **Funding Opportunities**

A Joint Vision for the New York State Canal System

The New York State Canal Corporation and the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor aspire to establish the New York State Canal System, comprised of the Canals and the Canalway Trails, as a world-class destination for recreation, and to gain recognition as one of the most accessible land and water trails in the country. As laid out in the Canal Corporation's Canal Recreationway Plan 2050, we envision an evolution of the New York State Canal System from a linear recreationway to a complete network of waterways, parks, and trails.

ERIE CANALWAY National Heritage Corridor

NEW YORK STATE | Canal Corporation

Canals Recreationway Plan 2050

A vibrant throughline of canals, parks, and trails for New York State

Building on the strong foundation laid in the 1995 plan, ***the next 25 years and beyond will see the New York State Canal System evolve from a linear recreationway to a complete network of waterways, parks, and trails.*** This evolution will provide valuable *ecological*, *economic*, and *cultural* assets that complement the *recreational* amenities New Yorkers have come to love.

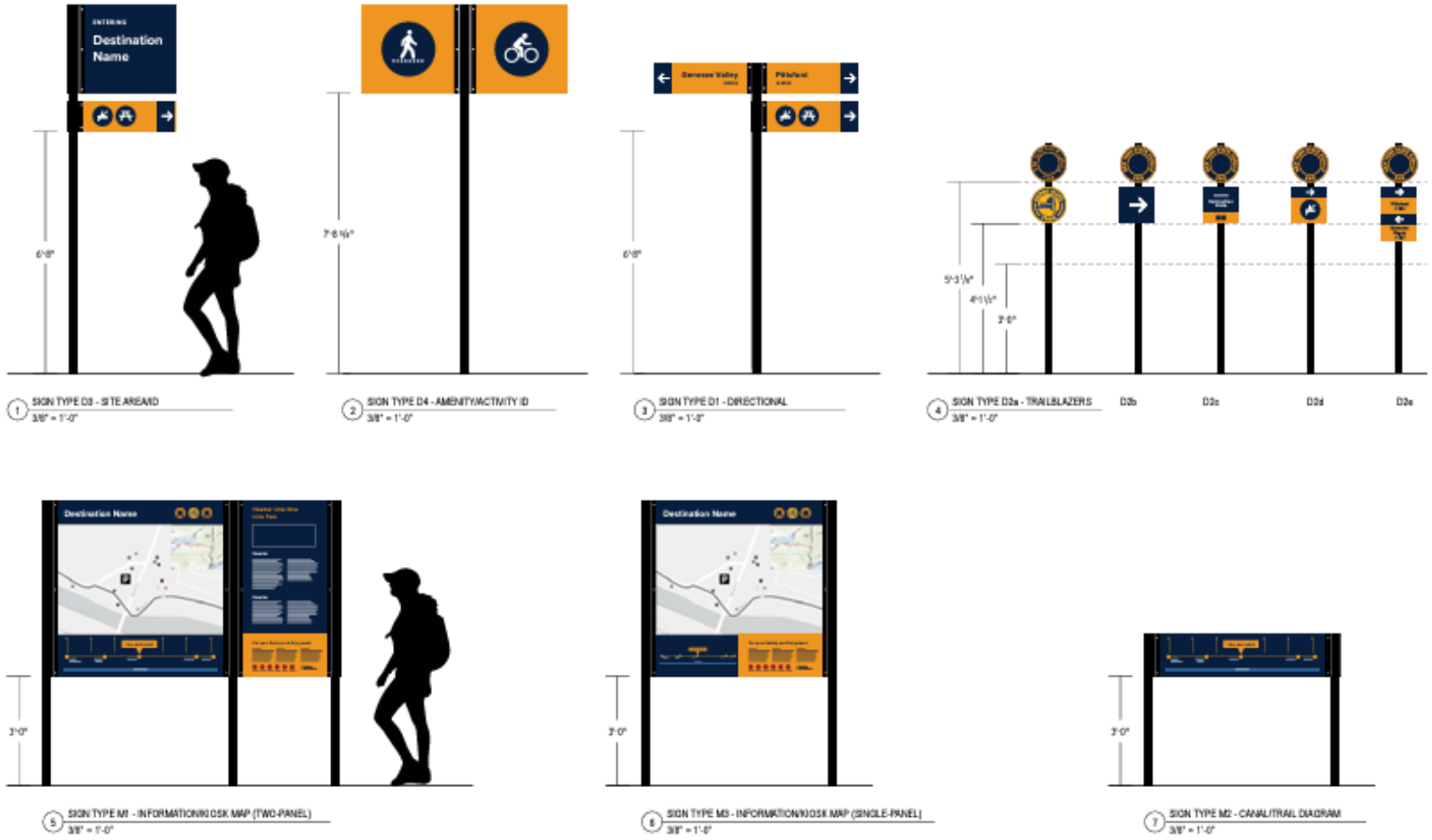


Standardizing

Brand and Wayfinding Signage

Canal Site Identifier

Canalway Trail Identifier

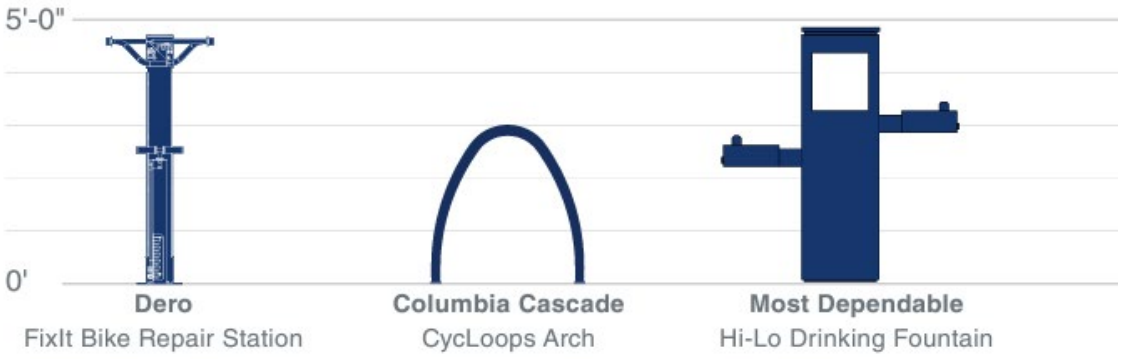


Creating a
Kit of Parts











Site Pieces Monoline Backed Bench



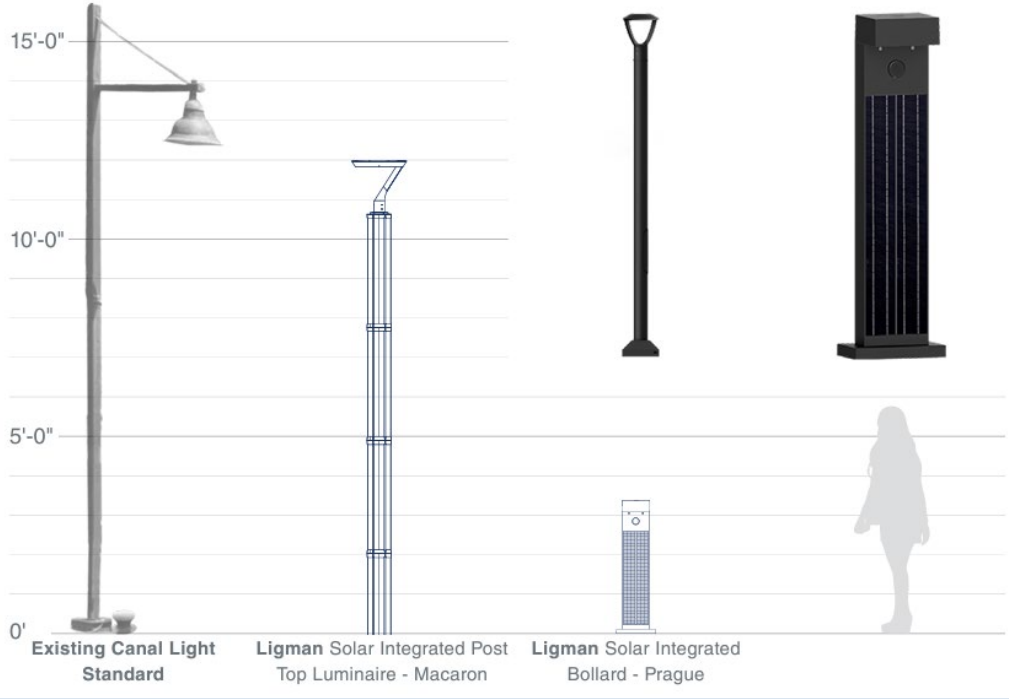
Stone Block (with or without Monoline bench topper)



Site Pieces Monoline Community Table (ADA shown)



Site Pieces Monoline Modular Bench



Amenities Study

Conditions Assessment and Long-Term Planning for Recreational Amenities on the Champlain Canal

Purpose

Who is this study intended for?

- NYS Canal Corporation
- Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor
- Canal Communities
- Non-Profits and Interest Groups
- Small Businesses

How will this study be used?

- As a reference for planning
- As a guide when considering new investments
- To track progress over time

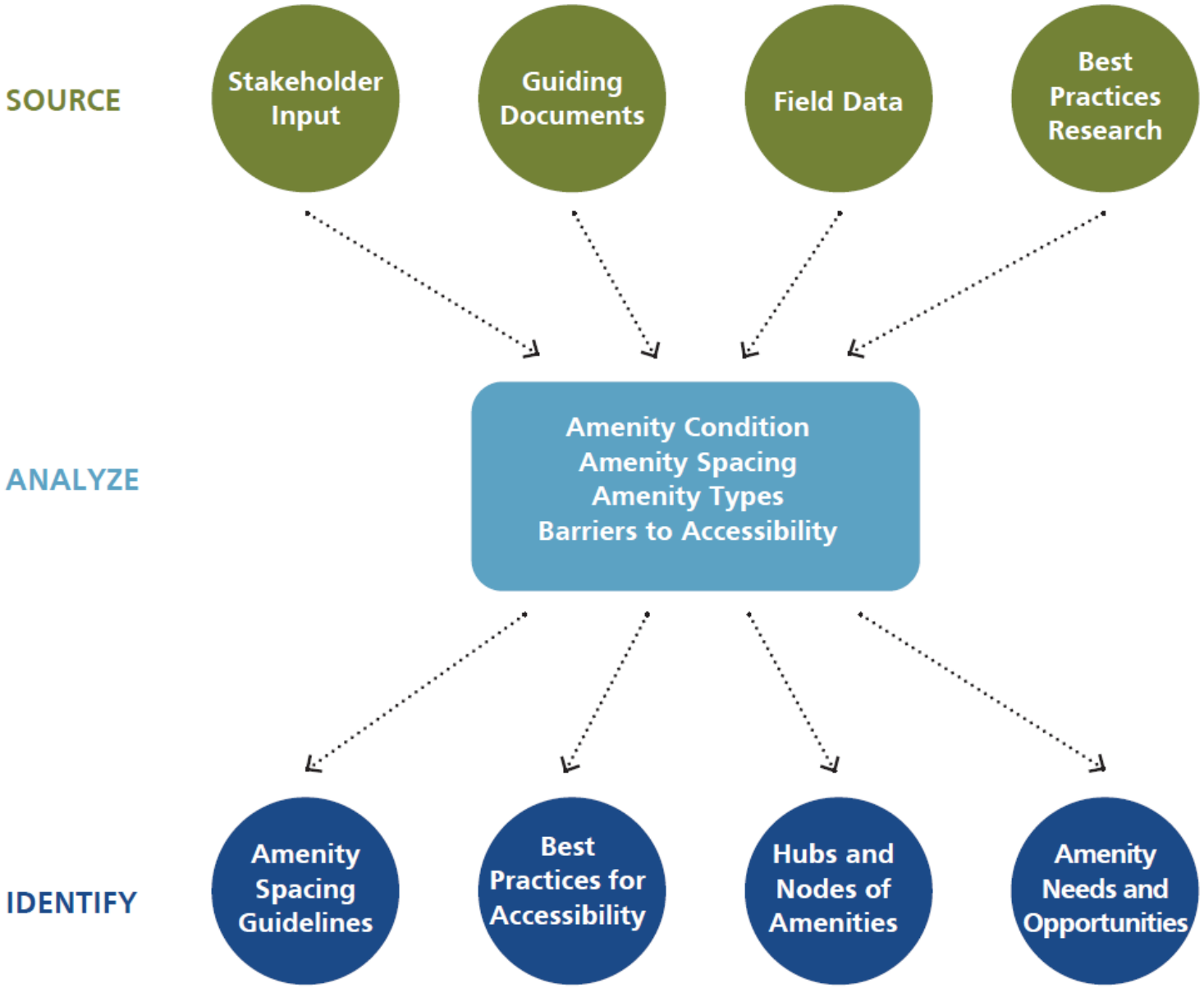
PROJECT GOALS

- Identify existing amenities and conditions
- Identify amenity gaps in the system
- Uncover user needs and preferences
- Define opportunities to enhance amenities

STRATEGIC GOALS

- Improve the recreational user experience and enhance the Canalway Corridor's distinct sense of place
- Improve amenities for people of all abilities
- Strengthen long-term stewardship of land and water trails by users

Our Process


SOURCE
Stakeholder Input
Guiding Documents
Field Data
Best Practices Research
ANALYZE
Amenity Condition
Amenity Spacing
Amenity Types
Barriers to Accessibility
IDENTIFY
Amenity Spacing Guidelines
Best Practices for Accessibility
Hubs and Nodes of Amenities
Amenity Needs and Opportunities

Stakeholder Interviews

5 stakeholder interviews:

- Boating
- Tourism
- Bicycling
- Paddling
- Great Loop Association

STRENGTHS

- Small-scale trail
- Beautiful natural scenery
- Easy trail in terms of terrain/elevation change

WEAKNESSES

- Lacks a distinct identity
- Lack of awareness - needs cohesive effort to promote tourism
  - Making area visitors aware of the trail
  - Making trail users aware of other places to visit
- Lack of connection between trails and nearby communities
- On-road portions detract from experience
- Lack of amenities
  - Restrooms
  - Drinking Fountains
  - Campsites
  - Wayfinding

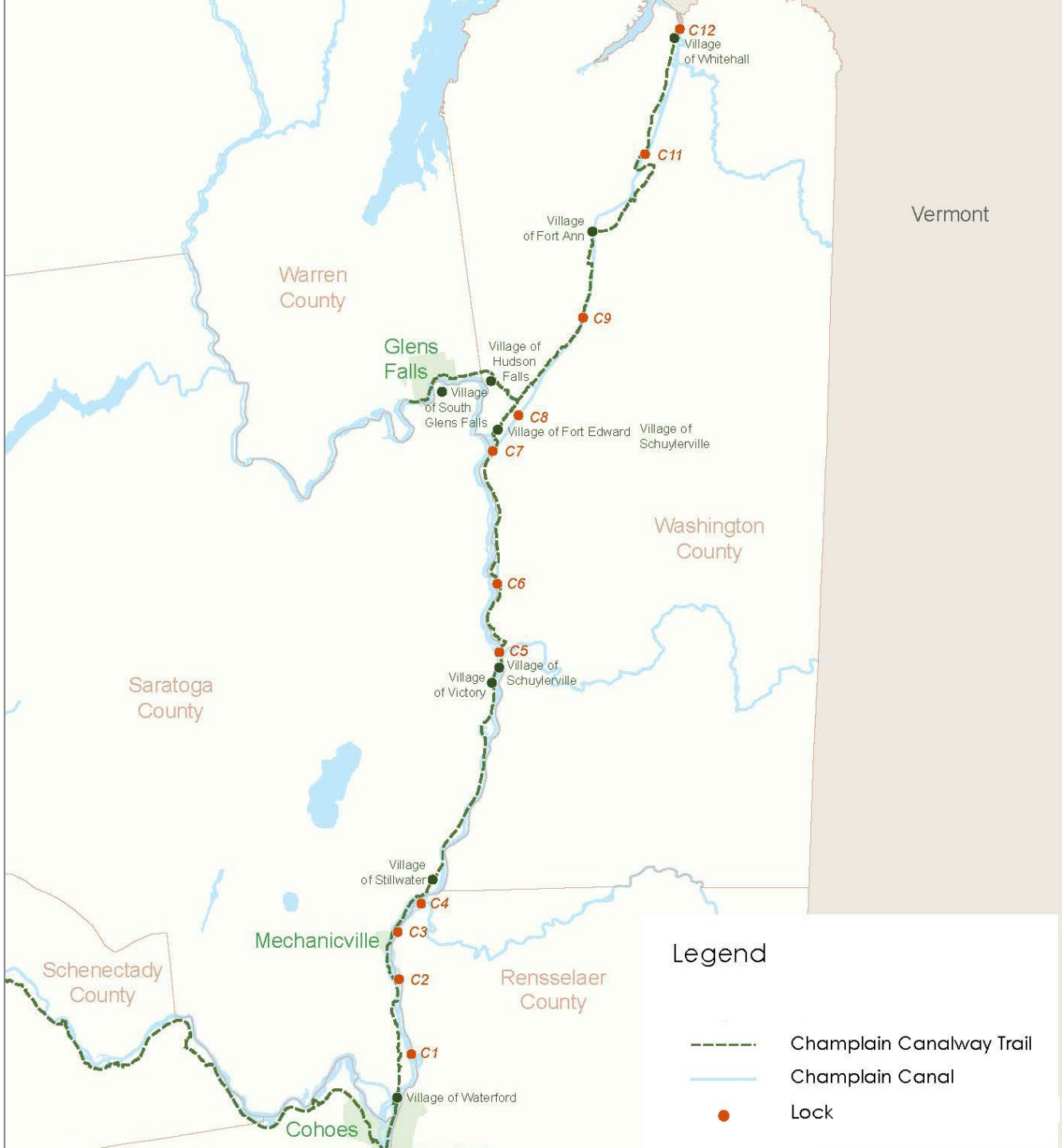
Geographic Scope

Trails Inventoried

Champlain Canal
60 miles

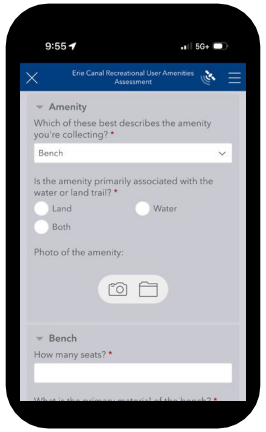
Champlain Canalway Trail
65 miles

Glens Falls Feeder Canal
7 miles



Methods

Field Data Collection



GIS Data Analysis



Best Practices Research

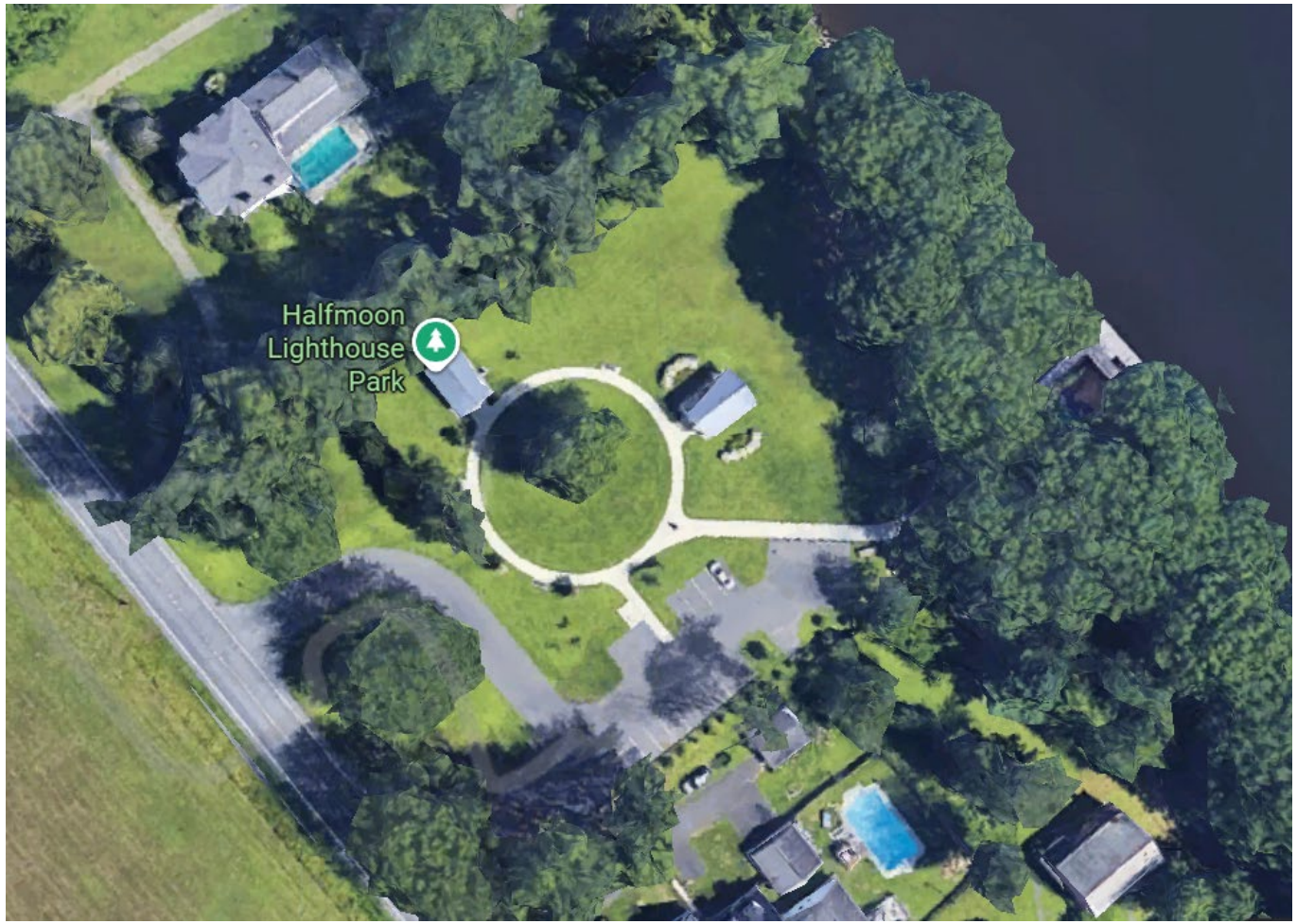


Stakeholder Interviews



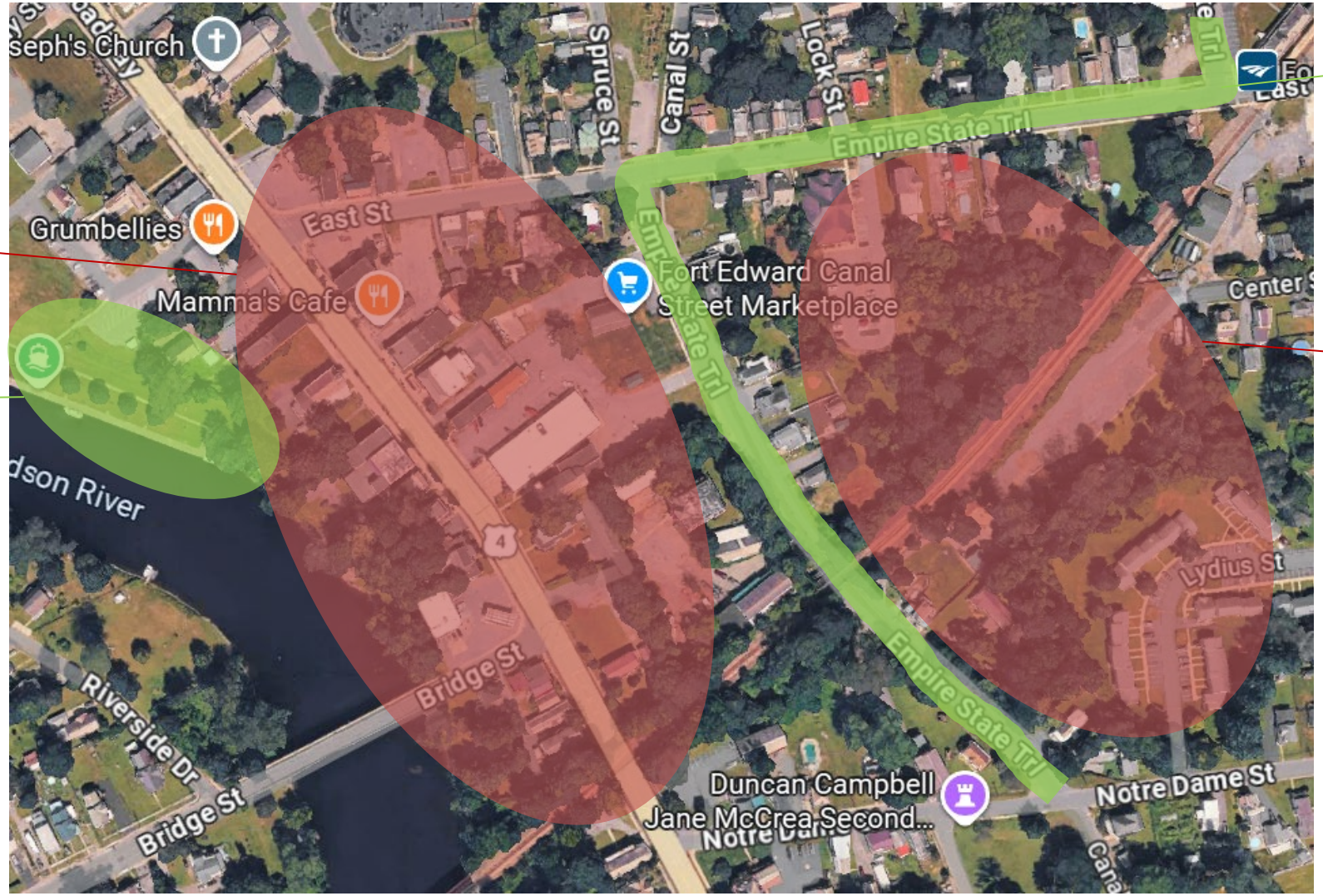
Where was data collected?

- Amenities immediately visible along the Champlain Canalway Trail/Empire State Trail
- Amenities immediately visible at NYS Canalway Water Trail access points



Halfmoon Lighthouse Park – all amenities collected

Where was data collected?



Fort Edward – only data directly visible from the trail and related to trail use was collected

Where was data collected?

Private property was not inventoried onsite; NYS Canalway Water Trail Guidebook and other publicly available sources provided information to digitize.



Whitehall Marina, Whitehall

Amenities Assessed

Bench

Bike Charging

Bike Parking

Bike Rental

Bike Repair Station

Boat Charging

Campsite

Drinking Fountain

EV Charging

Fuel

Hand Launch

High Dock

Laundry

Marina

Parking

Pavilion

Picnic Area

Potable Water Spigot

Restroom

Sewage Pumpout

Shower

Sign

Storage

Table

Waste Receptacle

Conditions Assessment

How was Condition Defined?

3 classification types, based on NYSCC 2022 Trail Inventory Asset Manual Rating System

Good

Limited surface material wear, structural elements fully intact



Schuylerville

Fair

Some sign of surface material and/or structural wear, but functional



Coveville

Poor

Significant surface material and structural wear; severely damaged or could fail if used



Glens Falls Feeder Trail

How was Condition Defined?

3 classification types, based on NYSCC 2022 Trail Inventory Asset Manual Rating System

Good

Limited surface material wear, structural elements fully intact



Lighthouse Park, Halfmoon

Fair

Some sign of surface material and/or structural wear, but functional



Fort Edward

Poor

Significant surface material and structural wear; severely damaged or could fail if used

For several amenity types, there were no poor-condition amenities

Global Findings

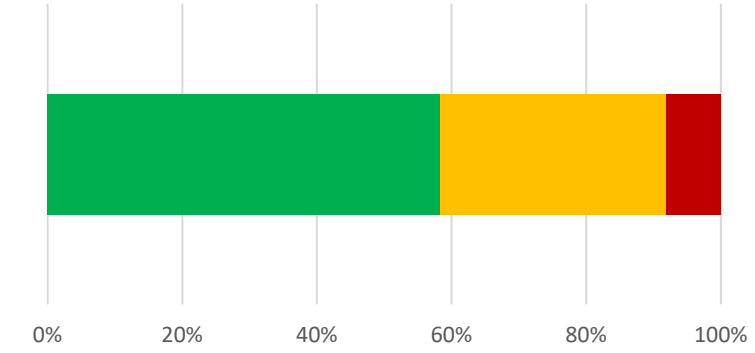
- In general amenities are in good condition (58% overall)
- Water trail amenities in better condition than land trail

Good
Limited surface material wear, structural elements fully intact

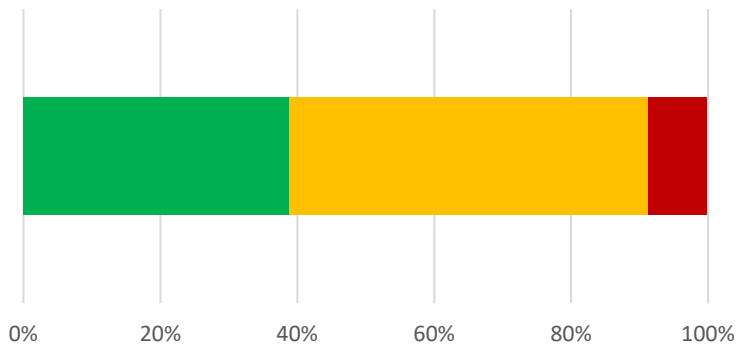
Fair
Some sign of surface material and/or structural wear, but still functional

Poor
Significant surface material and structural wear; severely damaged or could fail if used

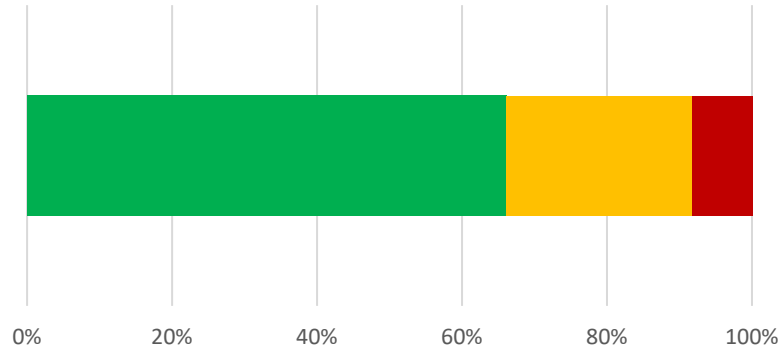
All Amenities



All Champlain Canalway Trail Amenities (545)



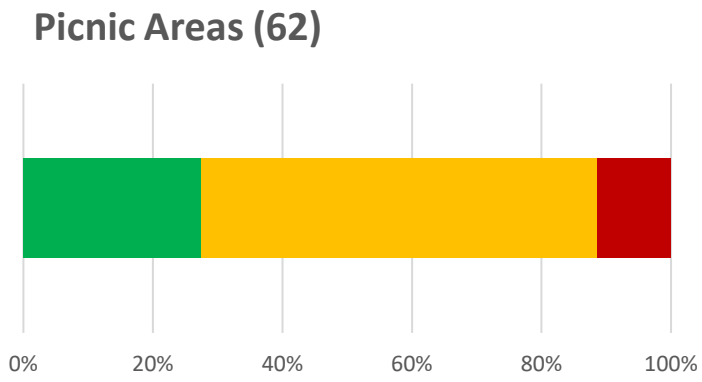
All Champlain Canal Amenities (139)

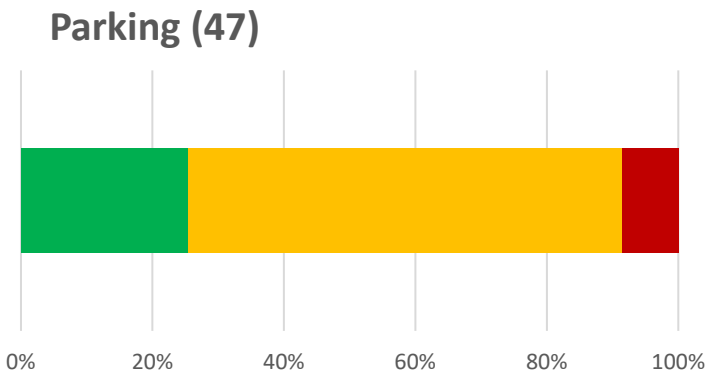


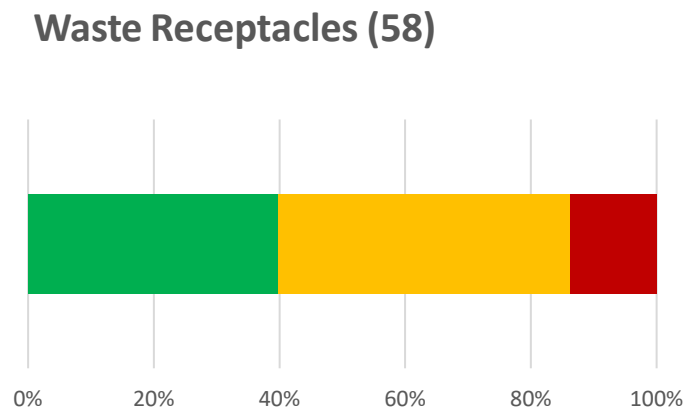
There is some overlap between these two charts for amenities that serve both trails.

Shared Amenities

Parking lots, waste receptacles, and picnic areas in need of investment throughout the trail



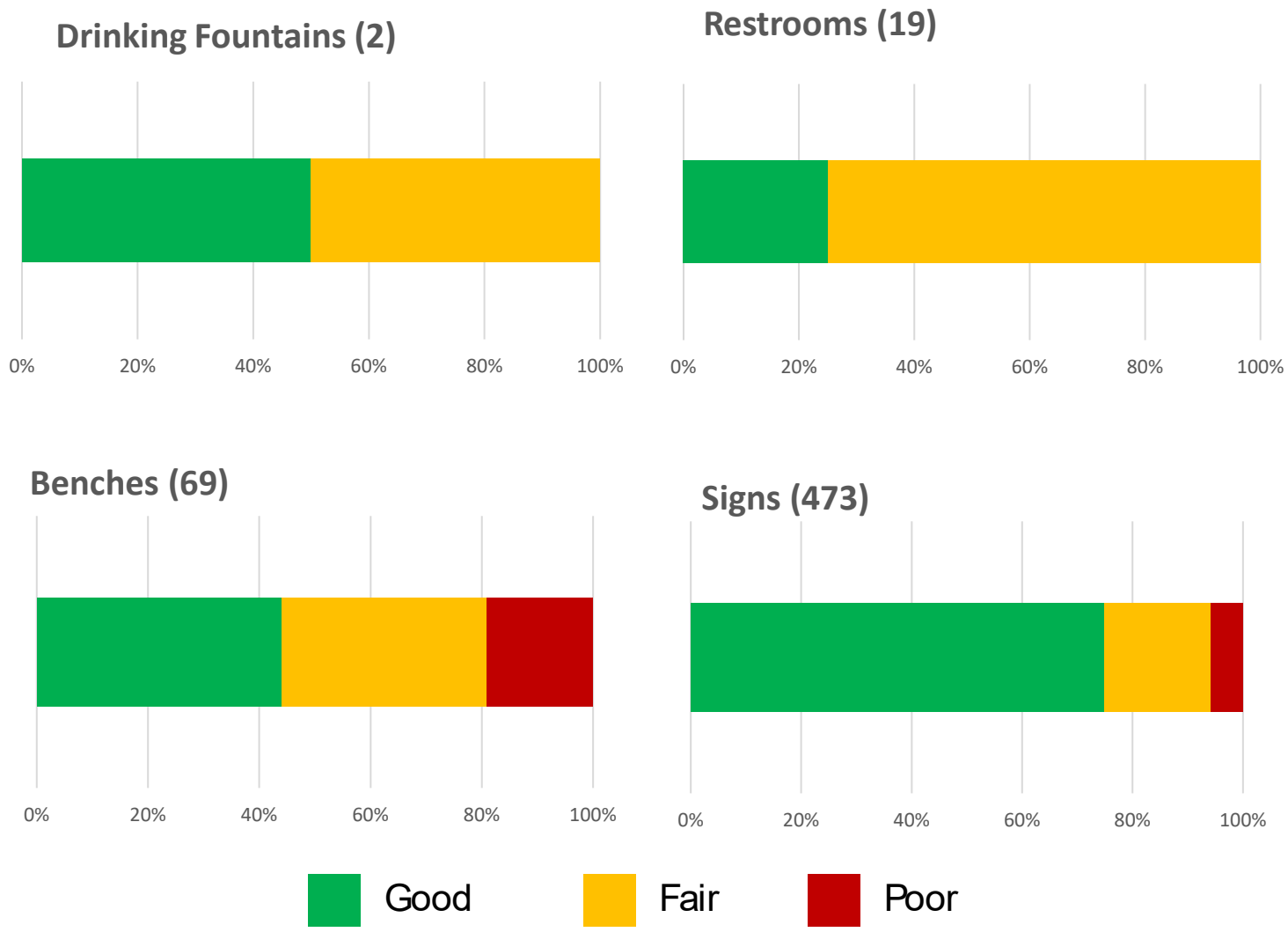




Good Fair Poor

Shared Amenities

- Only two drinking fountains inventoried in system
- Restrooms may have sudden need for repairs due to majority in fair condition
- Poor condition benches should be removed or replaced

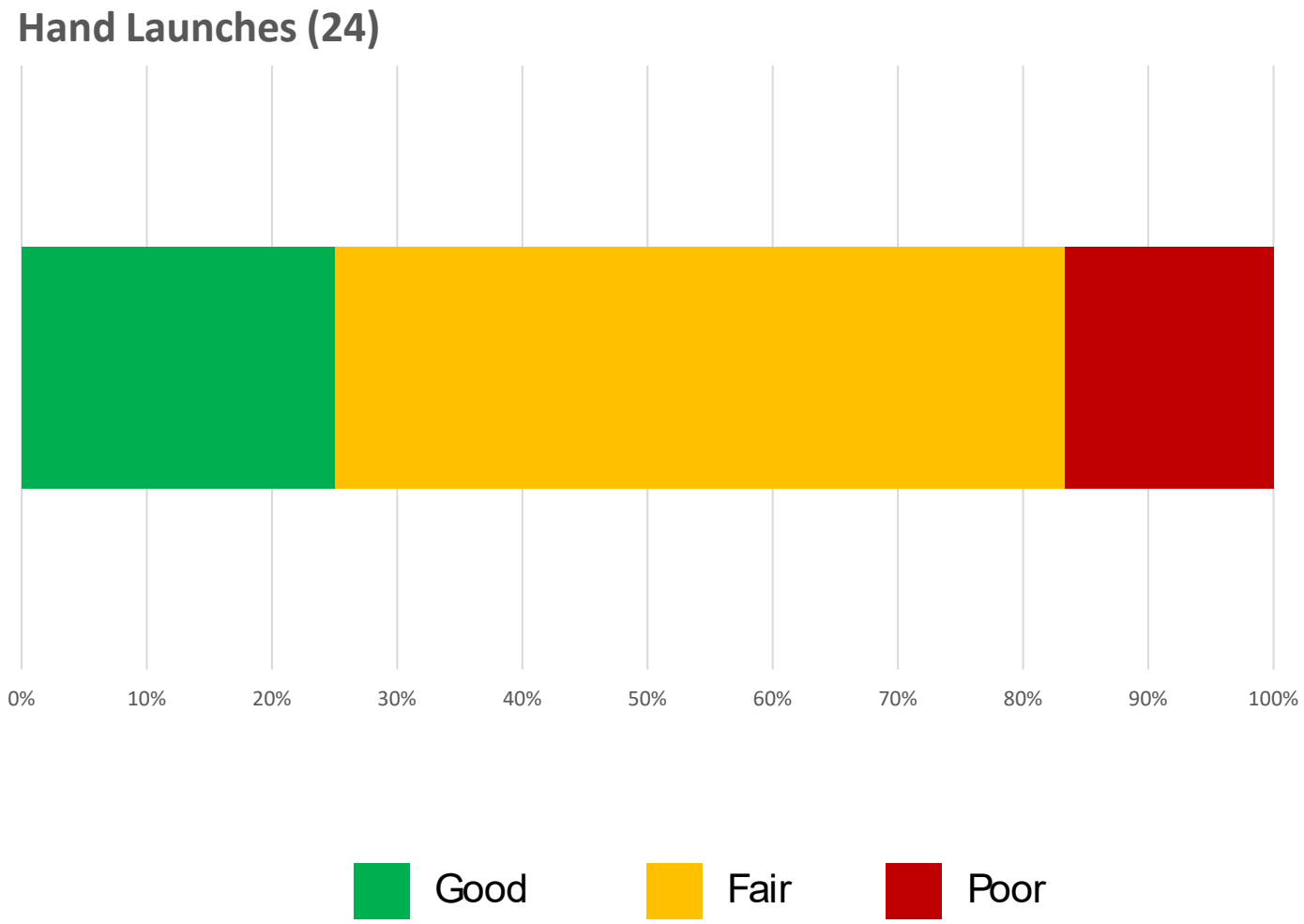


Water Trail Amenities

- Majority in fair condition, significant investment may be needed in near future
- Poor condition launches concentrated in the northern segment of trail
- Almost 40% are bank launches, which can be harder to find



Bank Launch at Lock C9 tucked away

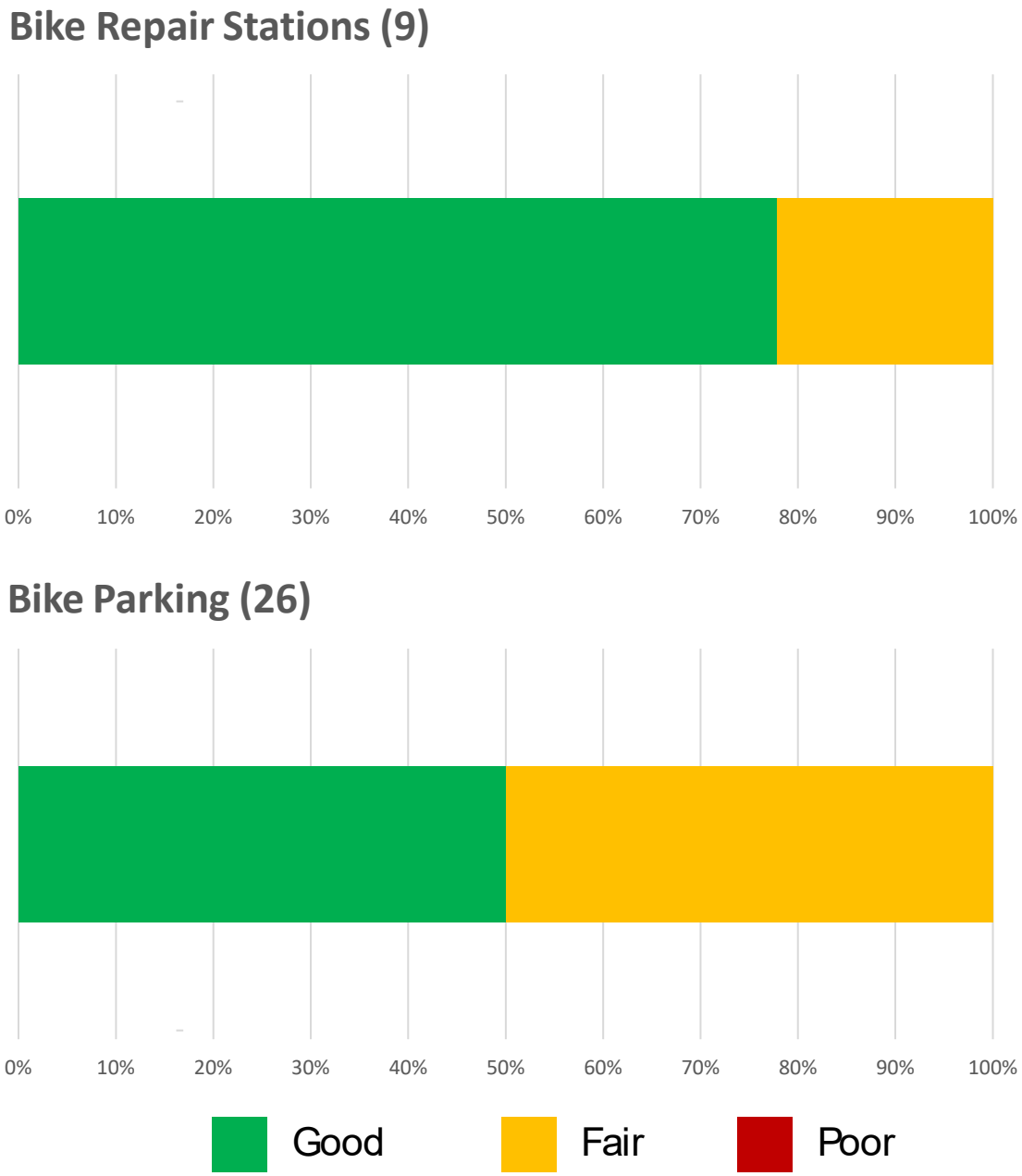


Cycling Amenities

- Bike repair stations in good condition overall, but likely newer
- Co-locating bike parking and bike repair stations would be helpful



Bike Repair Station in fair condition at Fort Ann



Accessibility Best Practices

- Accessibility should be a key focus of design for new investments
- NYS Canal Corporation, Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, and partnering nonprofit groups, small businesses, and communities should reference the following in designing for inclusivity:
    - Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Standards
    - Architectural Barriers Act (ABA) Standards (certain facilities)
    - Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor's Hand Launch Facility Design Guide
    - University of Buffalo's Center for Inclusive Design and Environmental Access (IDEA) Guidelines
    - Additional Trainings, Workshops, and Resources on Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Website!
- Provide information so that users know what to expect
- Focus on creating networks of accessible hubs and nodes



Good example of accessible picnic area

Adequate knee/toe space and firm, stable pathway

Accessibility Considerations - Restrooms



Adjustable height, adult-sized changing tables



Full-height doors for privacy, recessed fixtures to maximize clearance



Multiple sink heights for a variety of heights, ages, and abilities

Source: Univ. at Buffalo IDEA Center

Accessibility Considerations – Paddling, Boating, and Fishing Facilities



Natural-looking surfaces like this mulch-resin surface with edge protection meet ADA requirements for firm, stable surface
(Source: Univ. at Buffalo IDEA Center)



Transition strips between surfaces to smooth the transition
(Source: Univ. at Buffalo IDEA Center)



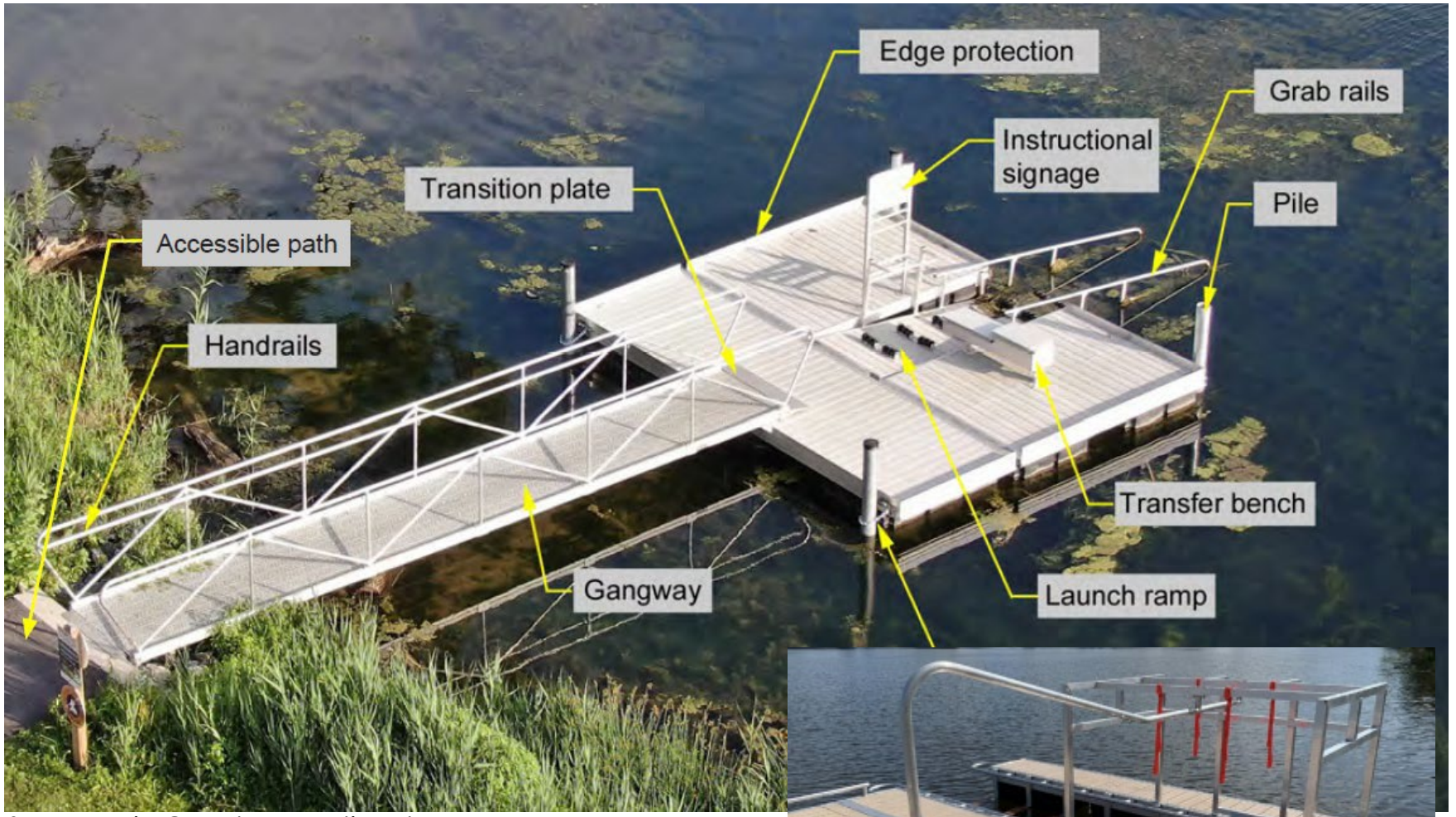
Consider high and low water marks in planning for maximum gangway slope requirements
(Source: Univ. at Buffalo IDEA Center)
(Image: BoardSafe Docks)

Accessibility Best Practices

Hand Launches

Considerations:

- Not all paddlers can use this type of launch
- Docks like this are too high to get out without using the adaptive equipment
- Co-locate with another type of launch, such as concrete ramp, bank launch, or low profile dock



Source: Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Hand Launch Facility Design Guide



Overhead Grab Bar Preferred
(Source: Univ. at Buffalo IDEA Center)

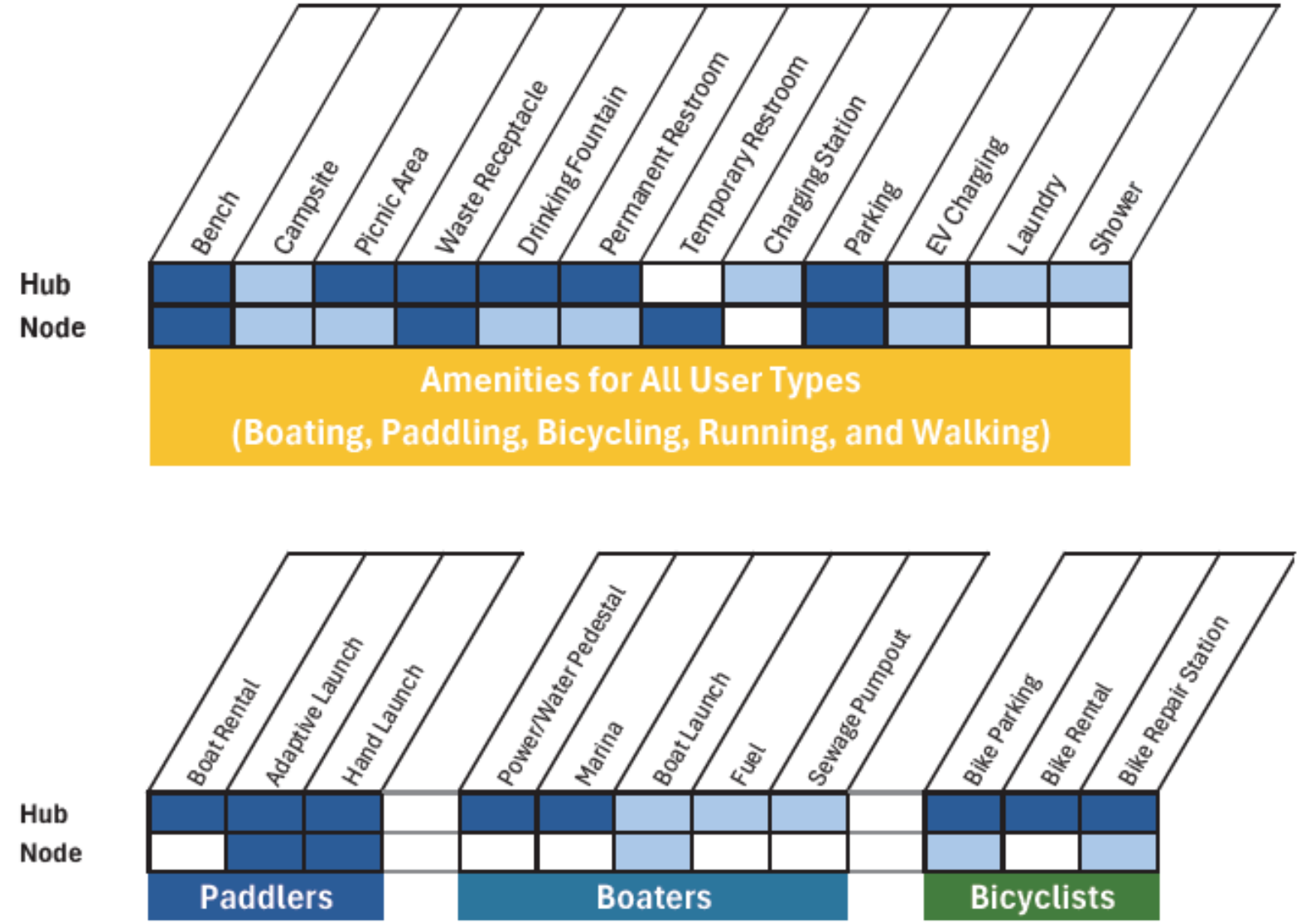
Best Practices to Infill Gaps

1. Define and Identify hubs and nodes

	A hub tends to have:	A node tends to have:
Proximity	Proximity to a major center of activity with off-trail amenities	Proximity to a minor center of activity
Connections	Connectivity to both the land trail and water trail, except in places where the trails diverge	Most have connectivity to both the land trail and the water trail, but could serve just one
Amenities	A higher concentration of amenities targeted to a range of user types (daytrippers and overnighters, first-timers and experienced users, etc.)	A lesser concentration of amenities and may be geared more towards experienced users using the trail for a few hours or a single day

***These are general guidelines, there will always be exceptions**

2. Identify amenities that should be located at hubs and nodes



3. Determine ideal spacing of amenities along the trail

	Frequency	Spacing	Spacing Notes
SHARED AMENITIES			
Drinking Fountain	Every few hours	20-30 miles	In remote locations, greater spacing may be necessary due to lack of infrastructure.
Restroom	Every few hours	20-30 miles	In remote locations, portable toilets provide a useful alternative.
Showers	Every day	30-50 miles	
Laundry	Every few days	50-100 miles	
Campsite	Every day	30-50 miles bicycling 20 miles paddling	
Picnic Area	Every few hours	Locate at trail access, every 10-15 miles	
Bench	Varies	At trail access, every 1/2 mile within 2 miles of hubs and nodes	

***Recommended spacing is from the perspective of long-distance trail users. Short-distance/daily users are assumed to start/end trips at a hub or node.**

3. Determine ideal spacing of amenities along the trail

BICYCLIST AMENITIES			
Bike Rental	One-time use	30-50 miles	Strive to be available at all hubs.
Bike Repair Station	Every few hours	Locate at trail access, every 10-15 miles	Strive to be available at all hubs, some nodes.
BOATER AMENITIES			
Marina	Every day	25 miles	
Power/Water Pedestals	Every day	25 miles	
Sewage Pump Out	Every few days	100 miles	
PADDLER AMENITIES			
Hand Launch	Every few hours	10-15 miles	Include adaptive launches at hubs. Paddlers typically travel 20 miles in a day but need breaks.
Boat Rental	One-time use	30-50 miles	Include at all hubs, some nodes. Locate with adaptive launches, roller docks, and bank launches.

Needs Assessment and Opportunities

Location-Based Needs and Opportunities



Location-Based Findings

We identified:

- Hubs and nodes of amenities
- Significant gaps in amenities
- Potential candidate locations for amenity investment

These recommendations:

DO provide guidance for where investment is needed

DO NOT preclude other types of investment



Lock C6, Fort Miller

Hubs and Nodes Overview

5 Hubs

- Whitehall
- Fort Ann
- Fort Edward*
- Schuylerville*
- Waterford

5 Nodes

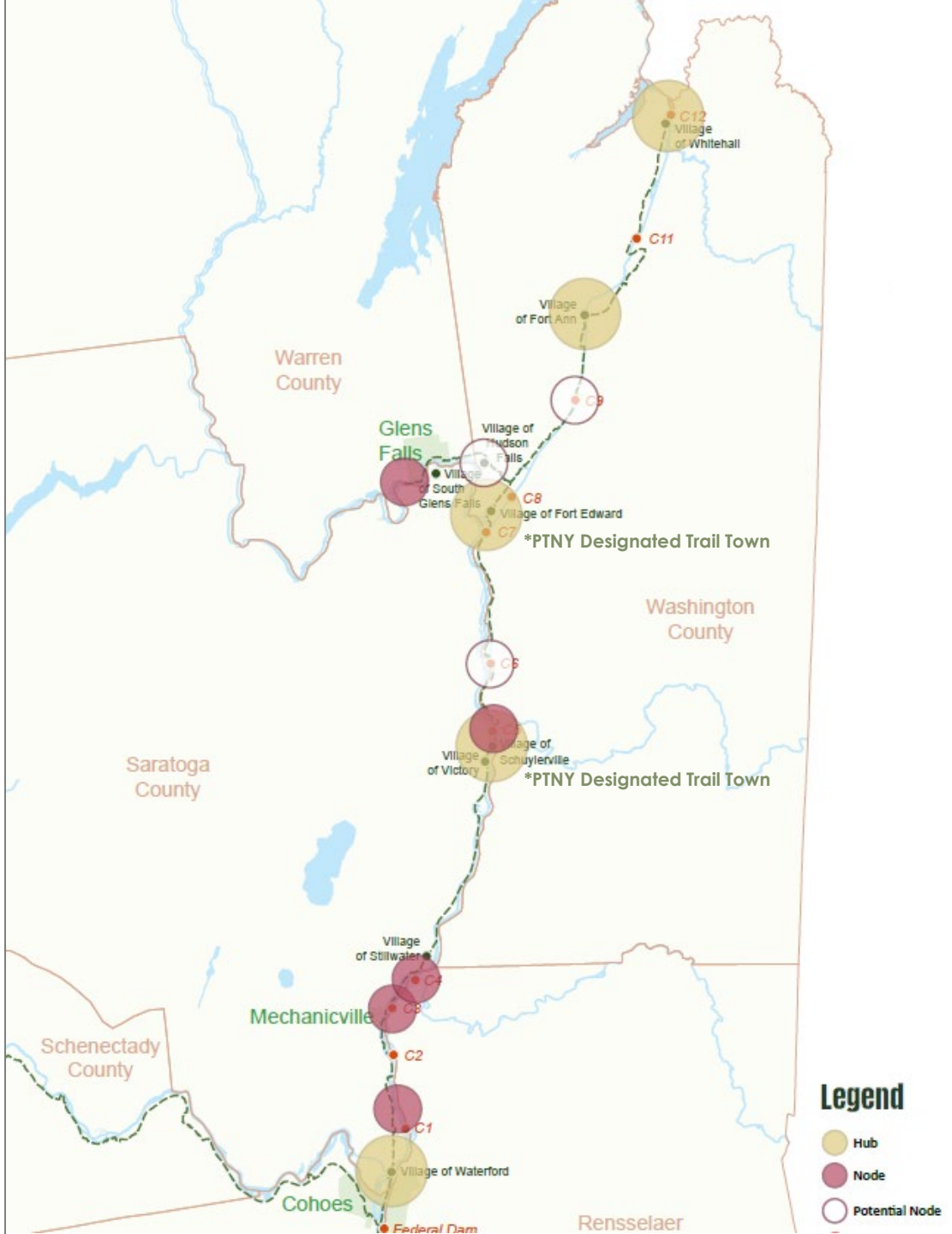
- Overlook Park
- Lock C5/Hudson Crossing Park
- Lock C4/Blockhouse Museum Park
- Mechanicville
- Halfmoon Lighthouse Park

3 Potential Nodes

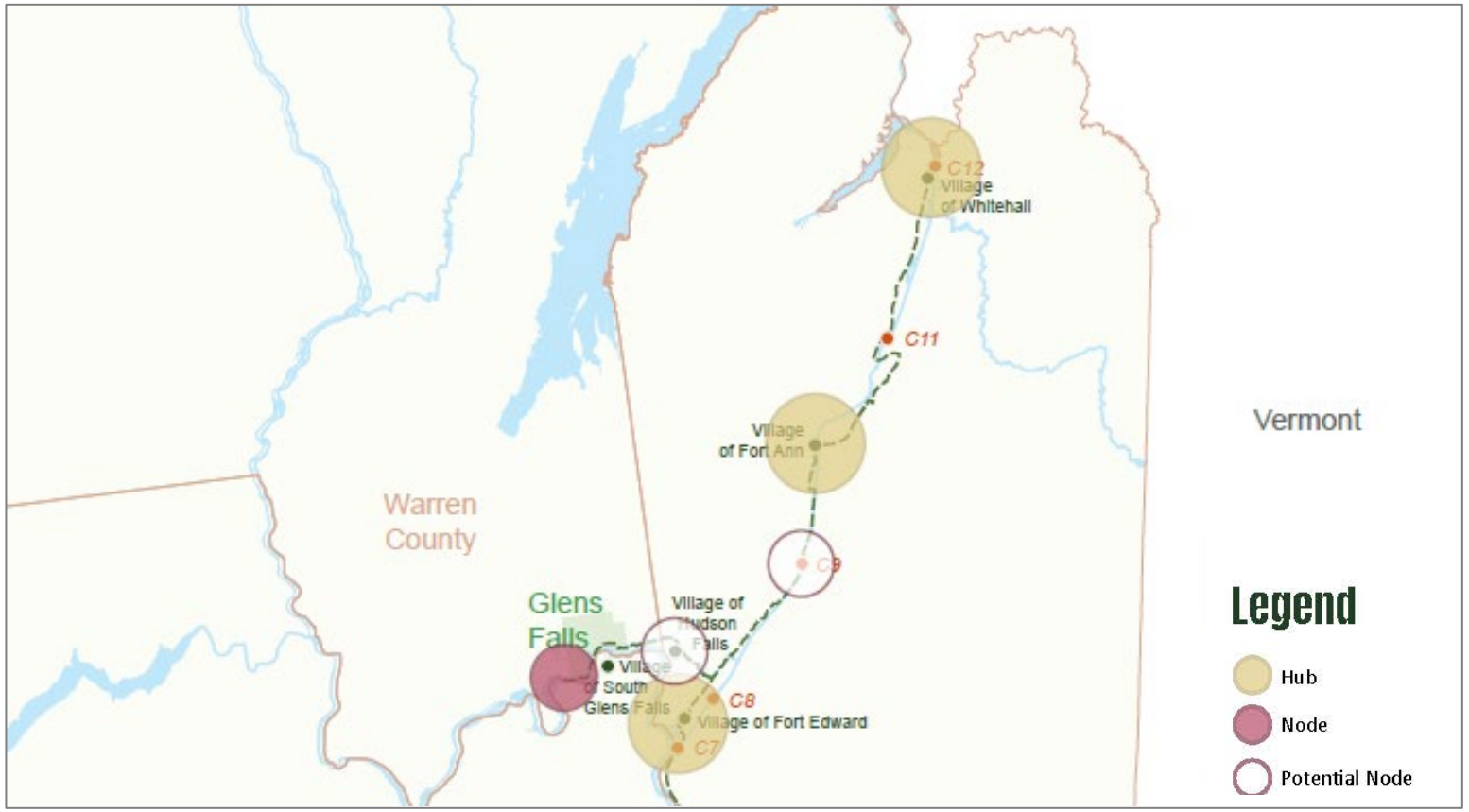
Location is right or helps to break up the distance, but significant investment is needed

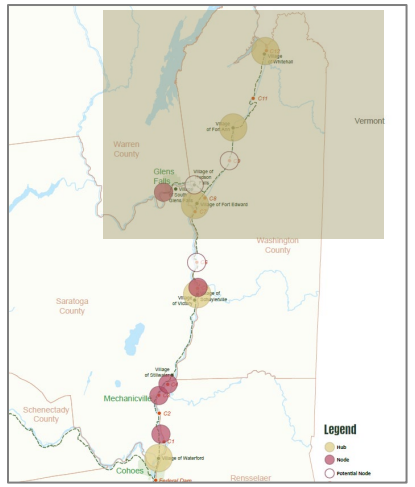
- Lock C9
- Murray Park
- Lock C6

*** PTNY Designated Trail Town**



Hubs and Nodes - North

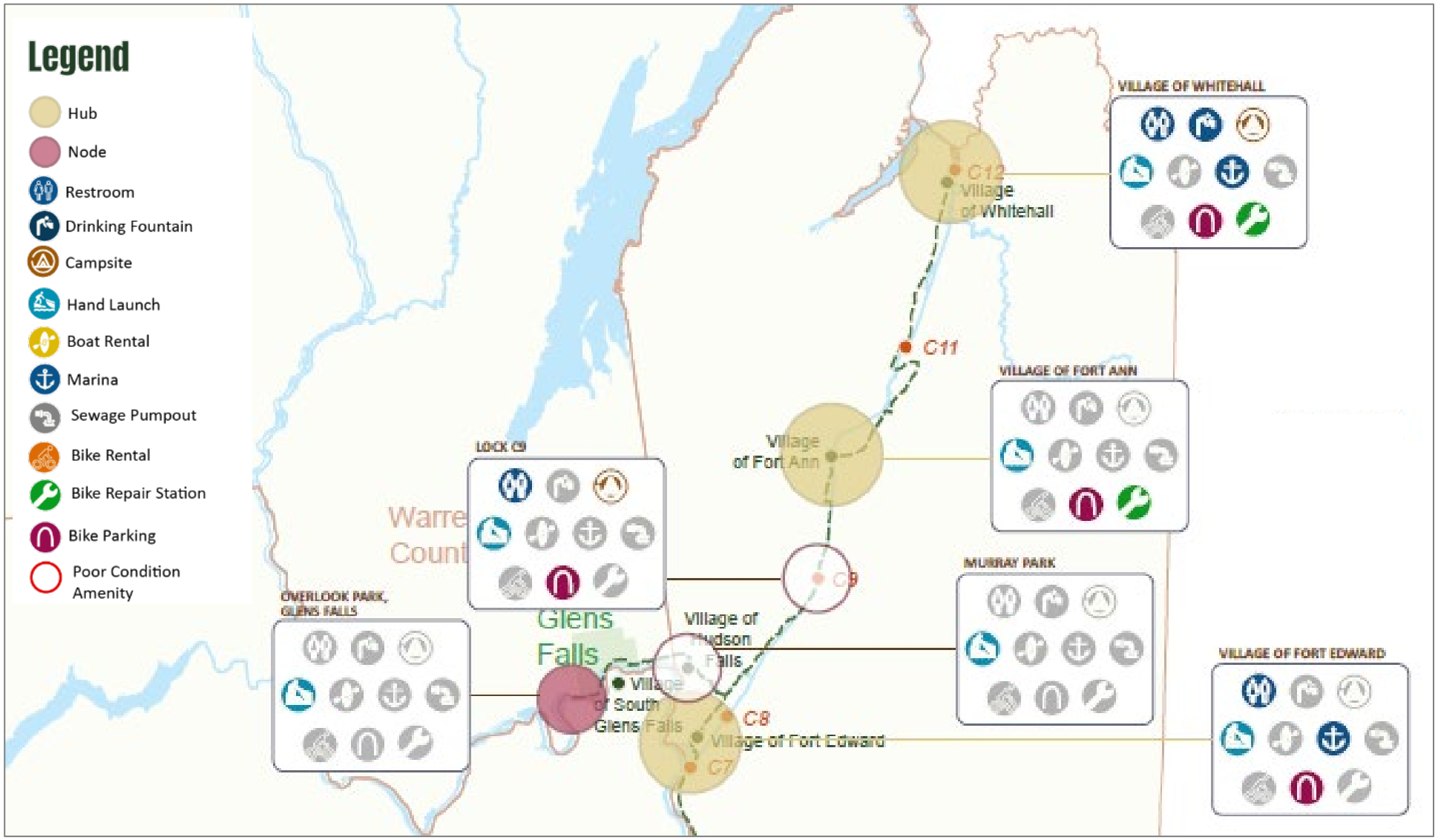


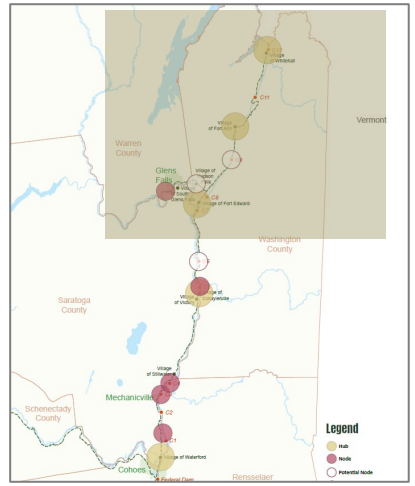


Lock C9: significant community investment needed for ongoing maintenance, vandalism deterrent

Murray Park: good visible location, just needs some amenities

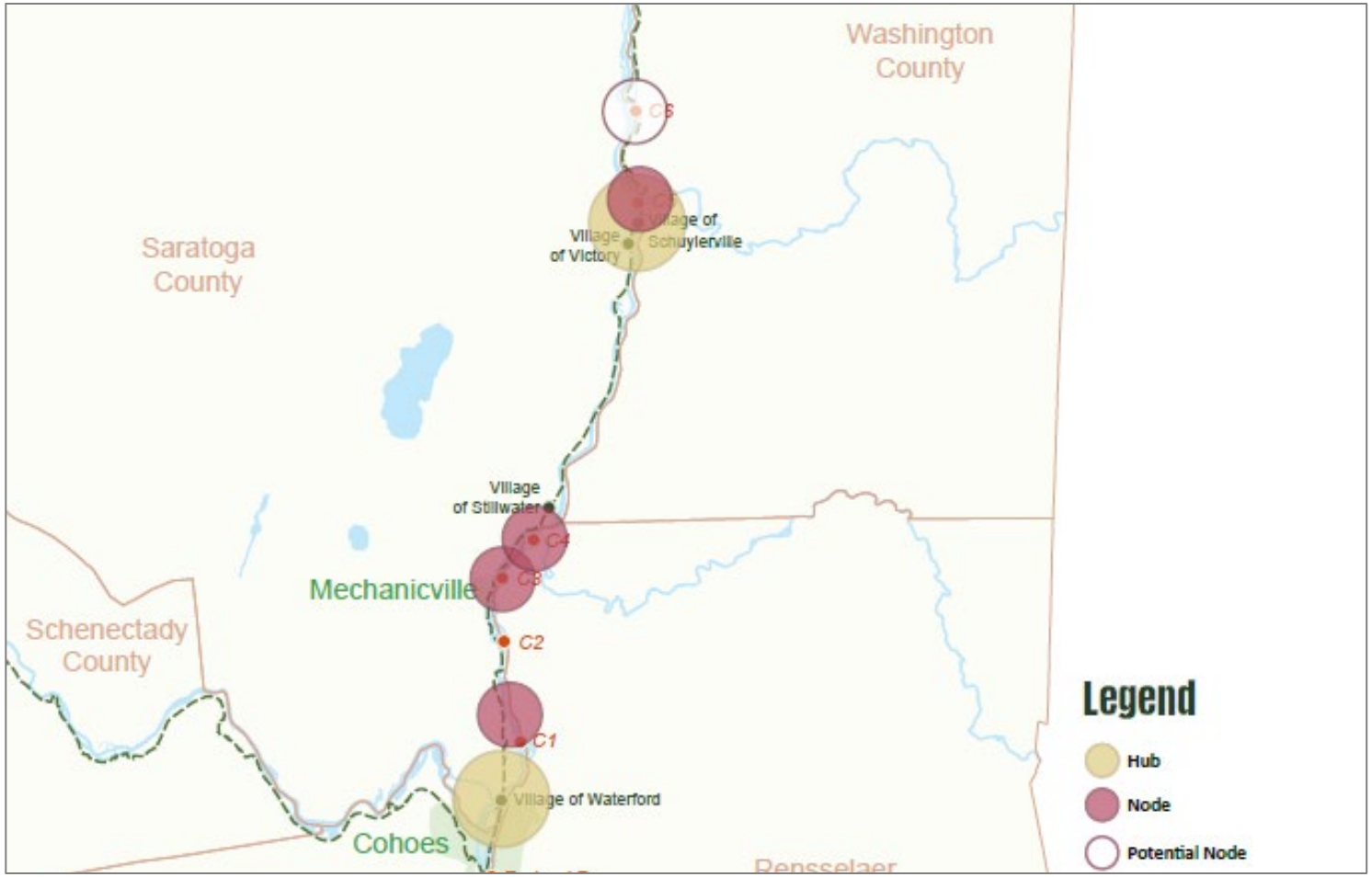
Hub and Node Amenities - North

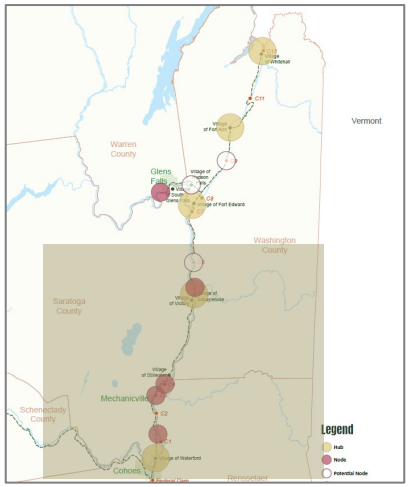




Whitehall and Fort Edward have strong mix of amenities

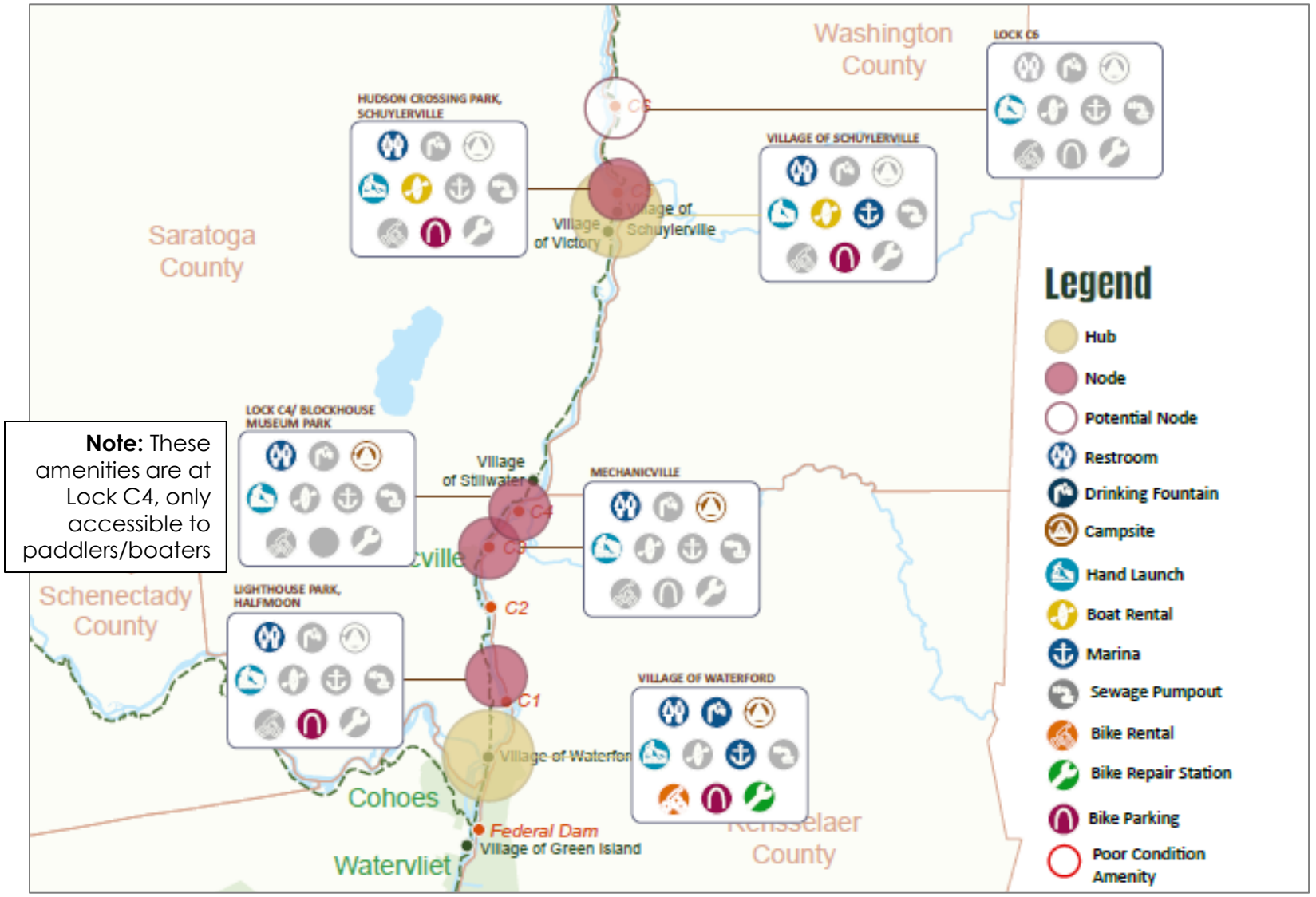
Hubs and Nodes - South



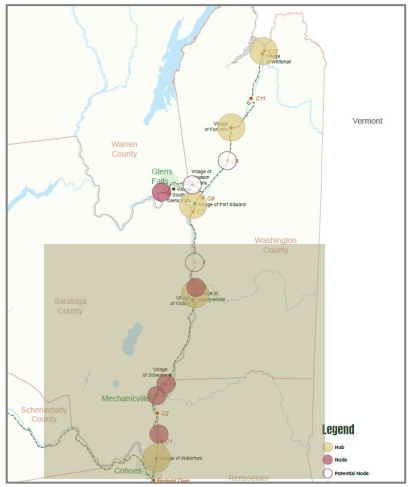


Lock C6: Logical turnaround point for cyclists from Schuylerville origin, but needs amenities

Hub and Node Amenities - South



Note: These amenities are at Lock C4, only accessible to paddlers/boaters

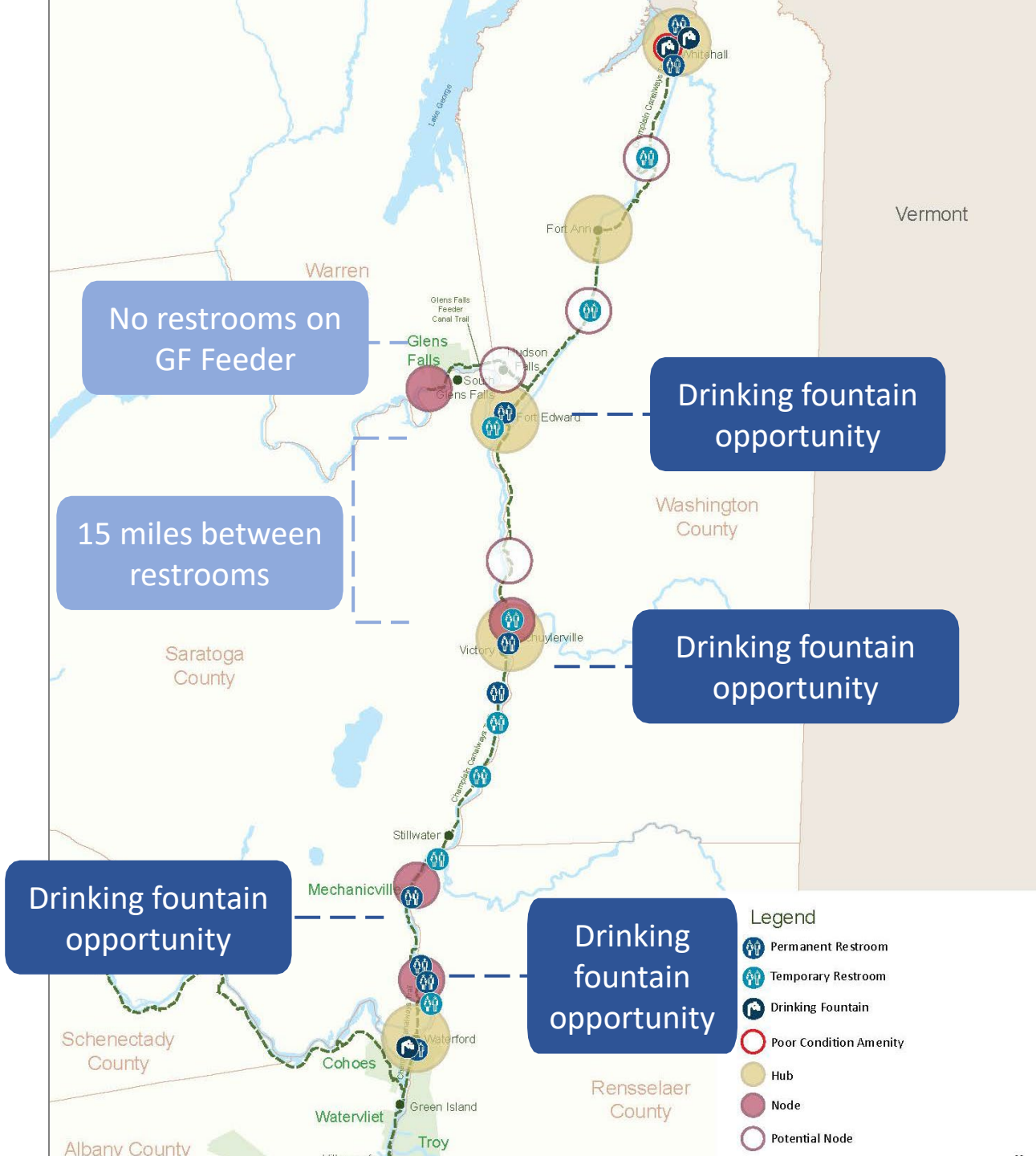


- Schuylerville and Waterford have strong amenity concentration
- Mechanicville and Lighthouse Park have potential
- Lock C4 for NYS Canal Water Trail users, Blockhouse Museum Park for Canalway Trail users

Shared Amenity Recommendations

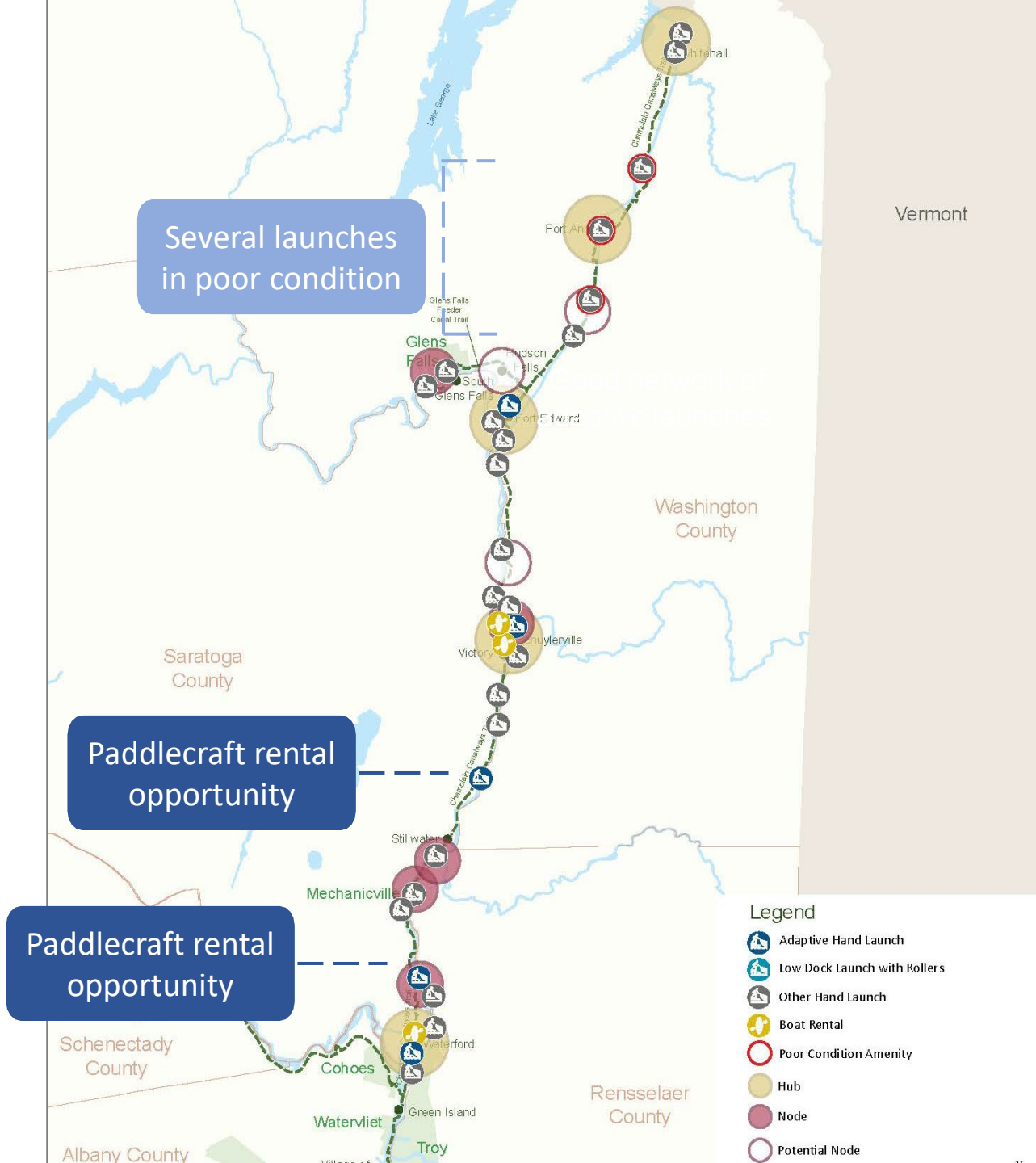
Champlain Canal/NYS Canalway Water Trail

- Restrooms generally well distributed but drinking fountains significantly lacking
- Seek opportunities to install drinking fountains at hubs and nodes with permanent restrooms
- Seek opportunities to upgrade temporary restrooms with permanent at hubs and nodes where utilities exist



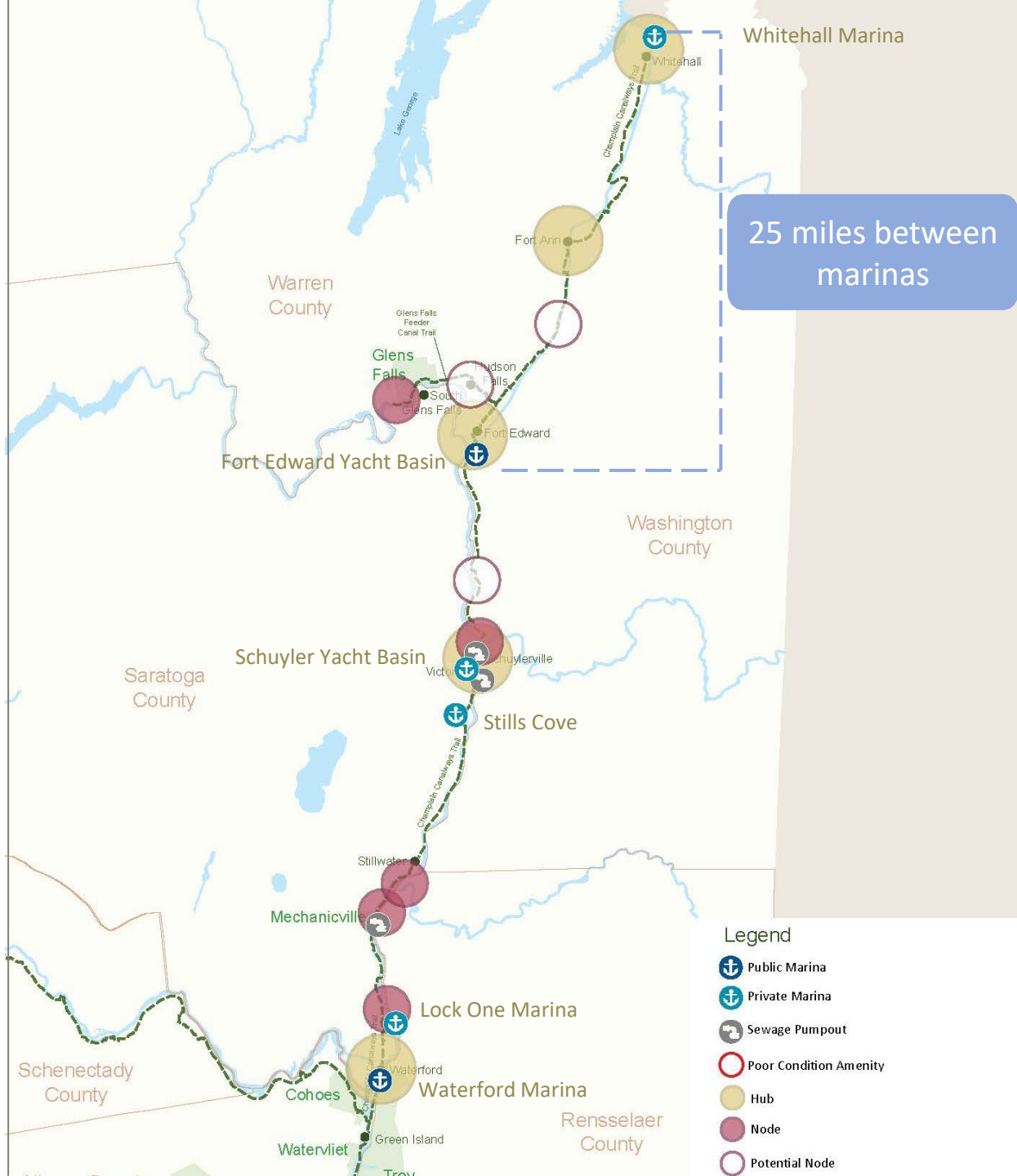
Paddler Amenity Recommendations

- Lots of launches
- Adaptive launches well distributed
- Add more adaptive launches in northern segment
- Consider upgrading bank launches at hubs and nodes
- Pair new paddlecraft rentals with existing adaptive launches



Boater Amenity Recommendations

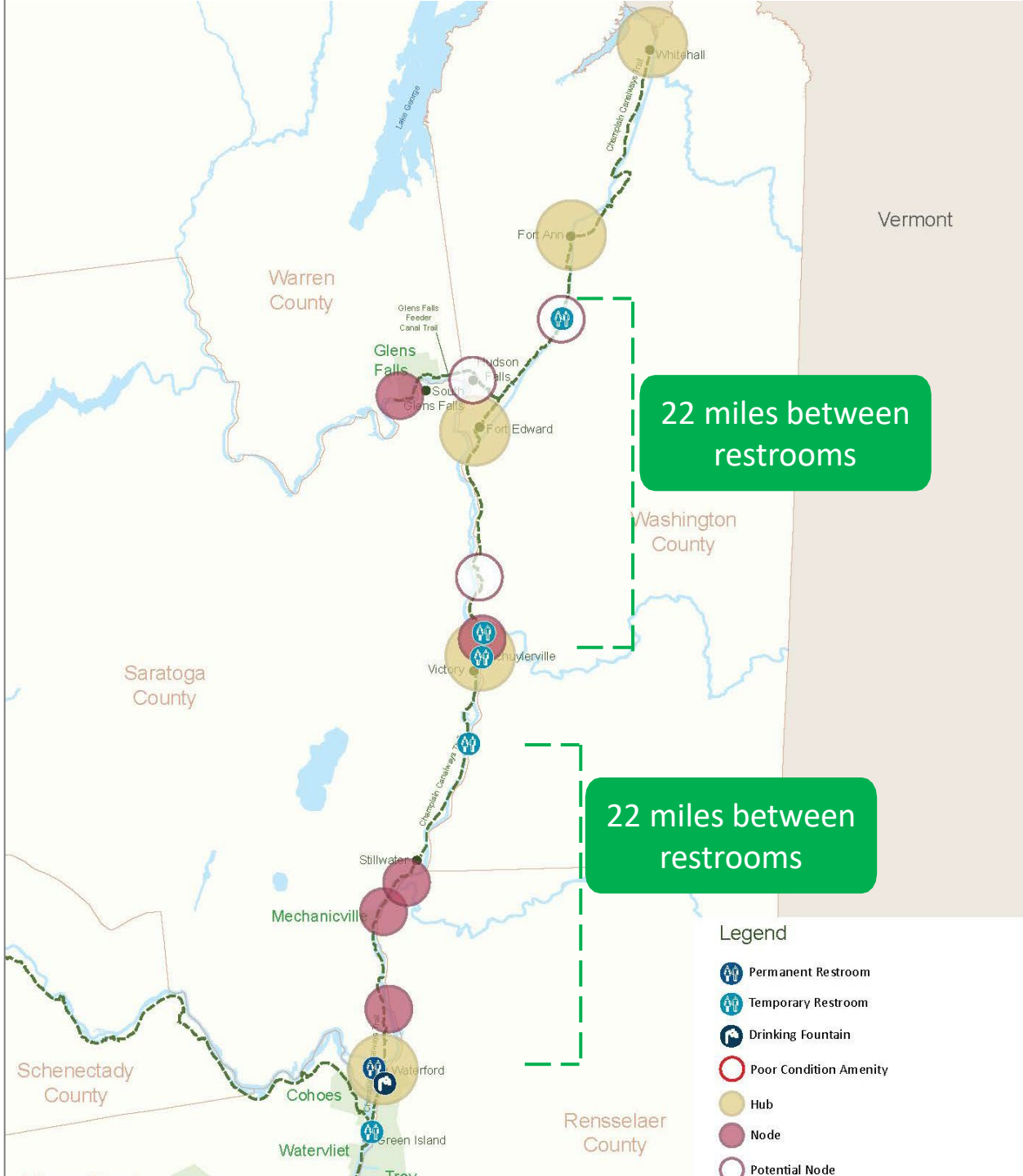
- Ensure marinas have balance of space for larger and smaller vessels
- Fort Edward Yacht Basin pursuing campsite, opportunity for placemaking
- Signage/information at marinas would encourage visitors to stay and explore
- Consider opportunities to add power/water pedestals at marinas



Shared Amenity Recommendations

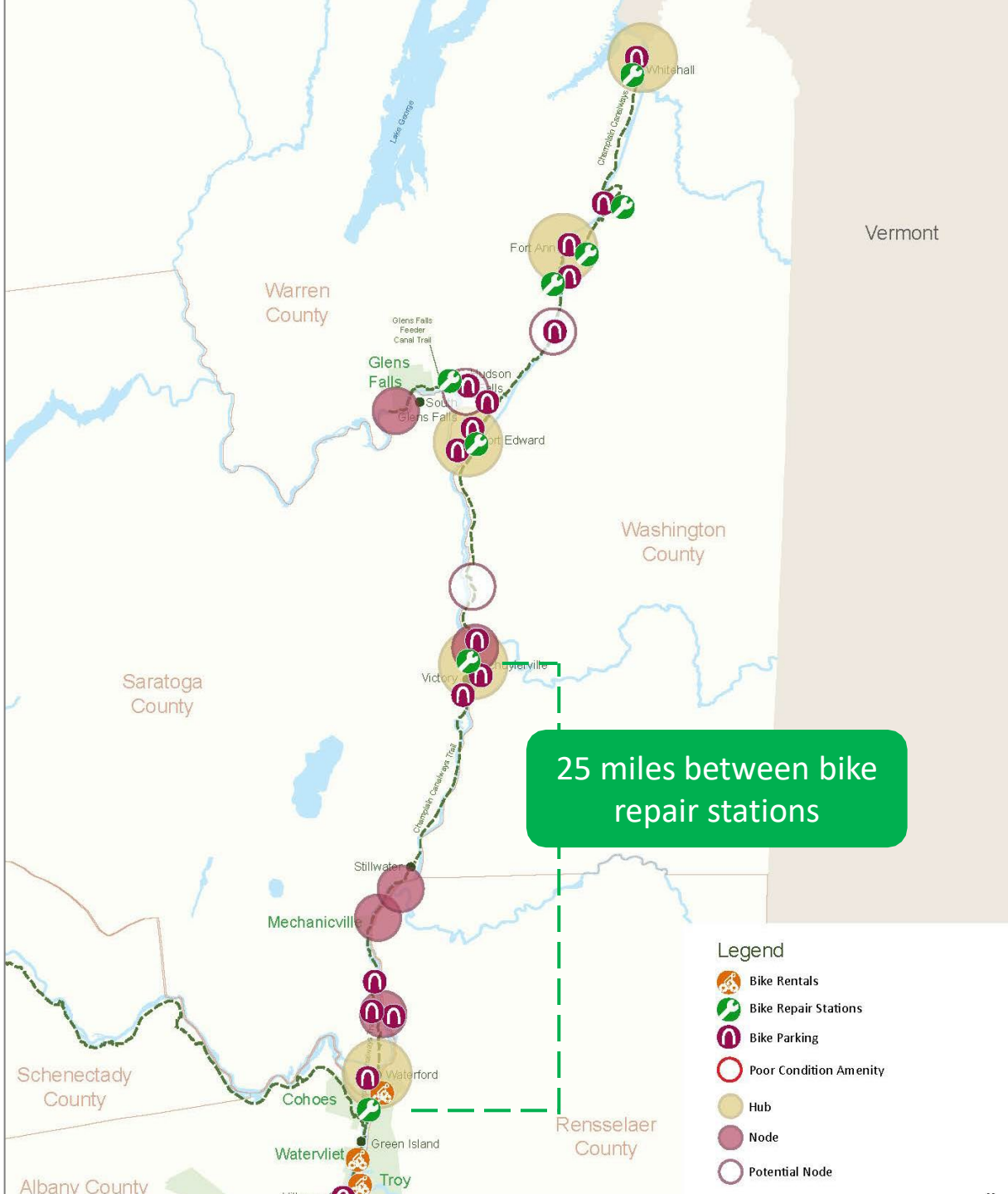
Champlain Canalway Trail

- Land trail amenities are far more sparse
- Significant lack of drinking fountains and restrooms
- Seek opportunities to
  - Enhance wayfinding from land trail to water-oriented amenities
  - Add portable restrooms in places bicyclists are likely to pass by



Cyclist Amenities

- Bike Hubs to focus amenity investment:
  - Fort Edward
  - Fort Ann
  - Schuylerville
  - Mechanicville
  - Waterford
- Bike rack, repair station, restroom, and drinking fountain should be co-located at bike hubs
- No bike rentals identified – consider for Schuylerville, Fort Edward, Fort Ann



Trailwide Needs and Opportunities



Maximizing Amenity Impact

Finding opportunities to share amenities among all user types maximizes benefit from capital investment, supports maintenance efficiency, and creates a nexus of activity. How can we optimize this?

Key comfort amenities (showers, laundry, restrooms) tend to be geared toward water trail users. Land trail users would benefit from wayfinding so resources can be shared.

Many communities lack a clear connection to the trail. Placemaking and amenity clustering can help create a gateway for all users.

This is true for both on-road and off-road portions of the Canalway Trail!



Locks and marinas feel out of scale for paddlers. Focus on launches and portage trails at these locations.



Locks are key resources for camping, but often not in centers of activity and lack signage. Signage and placemaking investments are key here.

Wayfinding Recommendations

- Prioritize Directional Signs with distance to next destination
- Use more detailed signs at key destinations where there is a lot to explore



Simple and effective for nodes, decision points, along the trail (Ft. Ann)



Best for larger areas with lots of amenities, like hubs (Hudson Crossing Park)

Strong wayfinding system is especially critical given spotty service, remote locations, and distance from trail to nearby communities

Wayfinding Recommendations

- Consistently co-locate Empire State Trail and Champlain Canalway Trail Markers
  - *Often on-road signs only note Empire State Trail, uninformed user may not realize they are also on Champlain Canalway Trail*
- Ensure markers are located at decision points
  - *Signs missing at some key decision points*

Strong wayfinding system is especially critical given spotty service, remote locations, and distance from trail to nearby communities



Good example of co-located EST and CCT Trail Markers

Wayfinding Recommendations

- Mix of standard and private signage will always be a reality
- However, well-maintained and high-quality signage reinforces sense of place and welcoming feel



Ft. Edward



Schuylerville



Hudson Crossing Park

Next Steps

How can you make use of this report?

Establish an Implementation Plan





Accessibility Assessment of Hubs and Nodes

Prepare Cost Estimates and Seek Funding Opportunities





Incorporate signage and amenity design standards

***NYSCC Guidelines Released**

Engage with Community Partners





Explore Opportunities for Private Partnership

Funding Opportunities

NYSCC & ECNHC Funding Opportunities:

NYS Canal System Tourism Infrastructure & Events Grants

Tourism Infrastructure & Amenity Support

Award Range:
$5,000 to $24,000

Event Support

Award Range:
$500 to $3,000

https://eriecanalway.org/resources/grants

Eligibility:

counties, municipalities, units of local government, not-for-profit organizations and federally recognized Native American tribes

Objectives:

- Facilitate **recreation** and/or **tourism**
- Enhance **visitor amenities** and/or improve the visitor experience
- Commemorate the **history, heritage, or culture** of the canals
- Encourage **overnight stays**
- Make recreational and tourism assets more **accessible** for people with and without disabilities and expand audiences served
- Improve and/or promote **connectivity** between recreation areas and communities and/or between waterways and land trails

Timeline:

- Enrollment Open: October 13
- **Application Deadline: November 20**
  Announcement: February 2027

NYSCC Funding Opportunities:

Canalway Grant Program – CFA

$1 Million Total
Grant Minimum- $25,000
Grant Maximum- $150,000

Requirements:

- 50% Match
- Capital Projects
- Along Canal Corridor

Priority:

- Strategic Alignment with REDCs & EST
- Community Support
- Project Readiness (two years to implement)
- Effectiveness and Impact
- Financial Viability

Timeline:

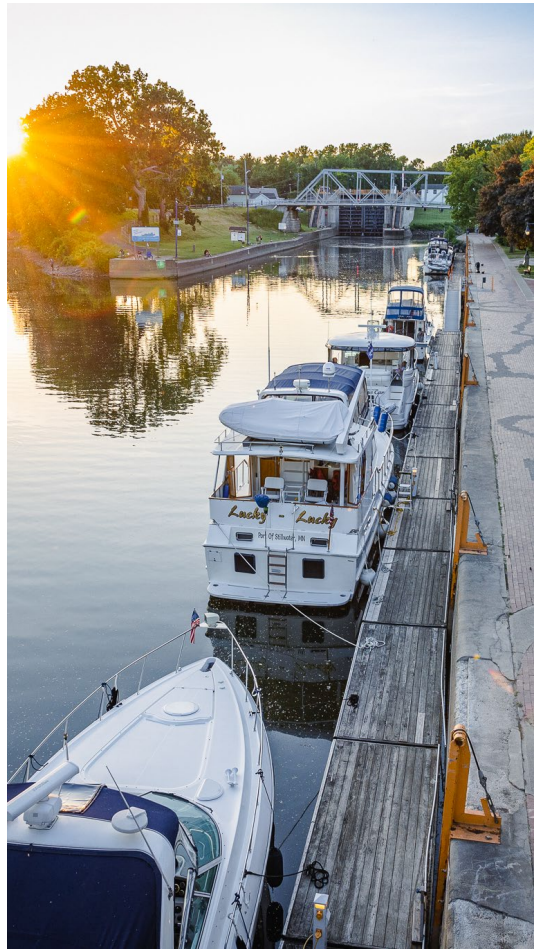
- Enrollment Opens: **May 2027**
- Application Deadline: **July 2027**
- Announcement: **January 2028**

Link:

https://www.canals.ny.gov/Doing-Business/Grants/Canalway-Grant-Program







Other Sources

CFA State Parks Grants

- Environmental Protection Fund Grant Program for Parks, Preservation and Heritage (EPF)
- Municipal Parks and Recreation Grant Program (MPR)
- Recreational Trails Program
- Local Waterfront Revitalization Program

Rails to Trails Conservancy **(Federal)**

Athletic Brewing Company Two for the Trail Grants **(Private)**

Boating Infrastructure Grant Program
(Public/Private)

Thank you!

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