

SECTION 4.

Needs Assessment

This section presents both systemwide and regional needs for the Erie Canal, NYS Canalway Water Trail, and the Erie Canalway Trail. Hubs and nodes for amenities are identified in each region, along with the amenity needs in each. A detailed gap analysis of key amenities is also presented.

Systemwide Needs and Opportunities

Through evaluation of amenities and activity centers, several systemwide needs and opportunities were identified to enhance the recreational user experience. These include:

1. investing in standardized wayfinding
2. enhancing placemaking at campsites
3. leveraging opportunities to encourage shared use of amenities by multiple user types
4. strengthening maintenance agreement processes

These targeted investments will support the goal of elevating the Erie Canal, NYS Canalway Water Trail, and the Erie Canalway Trail to a world class recreational destination.

1 Invest in Wayfinding

Wayfinding was one of the most commonly cited challenges expressed by stakeholder groups. They noted several sign types in need of enhancement, some of which are identified to the right. Canal Corporation is in the process of developing a comprehensive wayfinding system that will be implemented on land they own, but this would not apply to segments owned by other entities. The following sections identify specific wayfinding needs.



On-Road Trail Markers

Some portions of the Erie Canalway Trail are located on roads, which can pose a challenge for navigation. Users noted that increased signage for on-road portions, especially at turns or other decision points, would help with navigation. It should be noted that placement of these markers is regulated by the Federal Highway Administration's *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD)* and NYS Department of Transportation's *TSMI-17-08, Guidance for the Empire State Trail*.



Mile Markers

Mile markers help users track their progress and convey their location in the event of an emergency. Though mile markers were well spaced in places where they have been installed, they are not consistently present and there are a variety of mile marker types. Two examples are provided above. A standard mile marker system is recommended. It should be noted that if on-road portions of the Erie Canalway Trail are converted to off-road, distances will change and a mile marker system would need to be updated, which would be a considerable capital expense.



NYS Canalway Water Trail Markers

Water Trail markers were recently installed at public access points on the NYS Canalway Water Trail. They are intended for users on the water to identify public take-outs by differentiating from private docks, as well as for landside users to identify public launch points. There are instances where these signs might be visible from the water but not from the road or nearby parking lot, which would be the first point of arrival for those launching. There may be an opportunity to add supplemental markers closer to landside access points.



Trail Destination Signs

Trail destination signs indicate the distance to the next milestone or destination along the Erie Canal, NYS Canalway Water Trail, and Erie Canalway Trail. Users rely on signs like these to track progress and make decisions about whether to stop and rest or continue to the next destination. There are a variety of sign types like these with varying designs and levels of detail. Users prefer signs that note both the distance to the next stopping point and what amenities they will be able to access when they arrive.



Off-Trail Destination Signs

Off-trail wayfinding signs are those that direct users to destinations and services located near the trail. There are a wide variety of these types of signs, including maps, arrows, and distances. Users prefer signs that provide direction to general centers of activity, such as downtowns and Central Business Districts. This is consistent with the wayfinding system that Canal Corporation is developing.

2 Enhance Placemaking at Campsites

Campsites were highlighted among users as a key resource for those who want to complete an affordable long-distance trip by bicycle, boat, or paddlecraft. In particular, users rely on primitive campsites, such as those located at locks and through community partnerships, for camping, but these locations often lack any sense of arrival, such as clear signage. Investment in these locations to create clear and consistent signage that indicates to users that they have arrived at a designated campsite and that they are permitted to stay overnight would create a more consistent and predictable experience, increasing confidence among users.



A typical primitive campsite at a lock has few defining characteristics to indicate that a user is permitted to camp there. (Lock 23, Clay)

3 Maximize Impact through Shared Amenities

The Erie Canal/NYS Canalway Water Trail and the Erie Canalway Trail are unique in that they are two parallel trails geared towards different types of users, however many amenities can benefit multiple user types. For example, a restroom located at a marina on the Erie Canal might have been intended for boater use, but bicyclists on the nearby Erie Canalway Trail would benefit from knowing it exists and having easy access to it. Finding opportunities to share amenities among user types maximizes the benefit from capital investment, supports maintenance efficiency, and creates a stronger nexus of activity. The following opportunities were identified to make amenities more widely available to multiple user types.

- **Expand use of long-distance trip amenities such as showers and laundry facilities**, which currently tend to be located at marinas and geared towards Erie Canal users. As the Erie Canalway Trail gains popularity for long-distance bicycling, enhanced wayfinding to direct Erie Canalway Trail users to these amenities would enhance access.

- **Enhance the paddler experience at locks and marinas.** Locks and marinas are designed for use by boaters and therefore feel out of scale for paddlers. Paddling stakeholders noted frustration when they arrive by water at a hub of activity but cannot access it due to high vertical walls or inadequate launches. Identifying key locations where hand launches such as low docks with rollers or adaptive launches can be installed would enhance the experience for paddlers. Similarly, as paddlers are not always comfortable locking through alongside larger boats, well-defined portage trails and highly visible signage would encourage paddlers to land and portage around the locks.
- **Cluster amenities at community gateways.** It was noted that although the trails pass directly through many communities, there is not always a clear connection to those communities, which is a missed opportunity. Placemaking, the process of designing and building public places that are inviting and uplifting to the community, can be used at points of connection to the community to strengthen ties to the trails, encourage trail users to visit the community, and create a nexus of activity among users.

4 Strengthen Maintenance Agreement Processes

It is imperative that recommended investments are implemented in compliance with state and local regulations and that they are maintained in the long term. With roughly 100 jurisdictions owning portions of the trail system, and countless private and non-profit entities operating on the trails, this can present a unique challenge. Maintenance agreements define responsibilities between entities, such as a community installing amenities on Canal Corporation land or non-profits installing amenities on municipal land. Strong maintenance agreements ensure the safety, functionality, and attractiveness of trail amenities long after they are installed.

Maintenance agreements currently exist in some cases but are not consistently used. Model agreements, combined with strong community engagement around the importance of maintenance agreements, could make this practice more commonplace to ensure amenity investments reach their maximum potential.



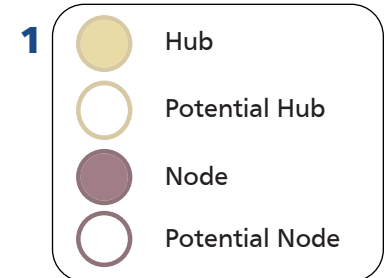
Cyclists on the Erie Canalway Trail in Niskayuna.

Regional Needs

For the purpose of this study, analysis and recommendations were divided into four regions, shown in Map 4.1. The following pages detail location-based recommendations specific to each region. In each region, there is a narrative description of needs and opportunities followed by a series of maps. Specifically, the following six elements will be included for each region.

1 Locations of Hubs and Nodes

A map of the general locations of hubs and nodes is shown for each region based on the criteria outlined in Section 3. Existing hubs and nodes are places where the hub and node criteria outlined in Section 2 are currently met. Proposed hubs and nodes are places where there is potential based on proximity to an activity center or strategic location along the trail, but would require significant amenity investment.



2 Existing Amenities at Hubs and Nodes

A summary map of the key amenities currently available at each hub and node is provided for each region. Amenities that do not currently exist are greyed out. Amenities in poor condition are outlined in red.



3 Gap Analysis by Amenity Type and User Group

A series of five maps shows the locations of key amenities along the trails, with specific needs and opportunities called out. These maps are not specific to hub and node locations. Poor condition amenities are outlined in red.



4 Needs and Opportunities at Hubs and Nodes

A narrative description of the location context of each hub and node is provided to highlight key needs and opportunities at each location. These are based on field observations as well as stakeholder input.

5 Additional Needs and Opportunities

A narrative description of needs and opportunities not specific to a hub or node is also provided. These are based on field observations as well as stakeholder input. They may note needs identified for the region overall or for a specific user group, such as bicyclists.

6 Summary Table

Each region concludes with a summary table of the recommended amenity investments at each hub and node, including the municipality and county where the hub or node is located along with the jurisdiction of the trail and whether trailside land is owned by Canal Corporation, DEC, OPRHP, or another entity.

MAP 4.1 Study Area Regions





Region 3: Fairport to Baldwinsville/Camillus

Overview

Region 3 begins at the Village of Fairport. The Erie Canal/NYS Canalway Water Trail and the Erie Canalway Trail are co-located from Fairport to Lyons. East of Lyons, the trails diverge but cross over at certain points. Nodes have been identified at these crossing points to maximize on opportunities to share amenities.

This region is home to some of the most rural portions of the system. The Erie Canalway Trail is characterized by long stretches of woods and farmland broken up by smaller towns and villages, which makes the points of arrival in hubs and nodes especially important for long-distance travelers. There are significant

At a Glance

75 miles

ERIE CANAL
NYS CANALWAY WATER TRAIL

70 miles

ERIE CANALWAY TRAIL

3

EXISTING
HUBS

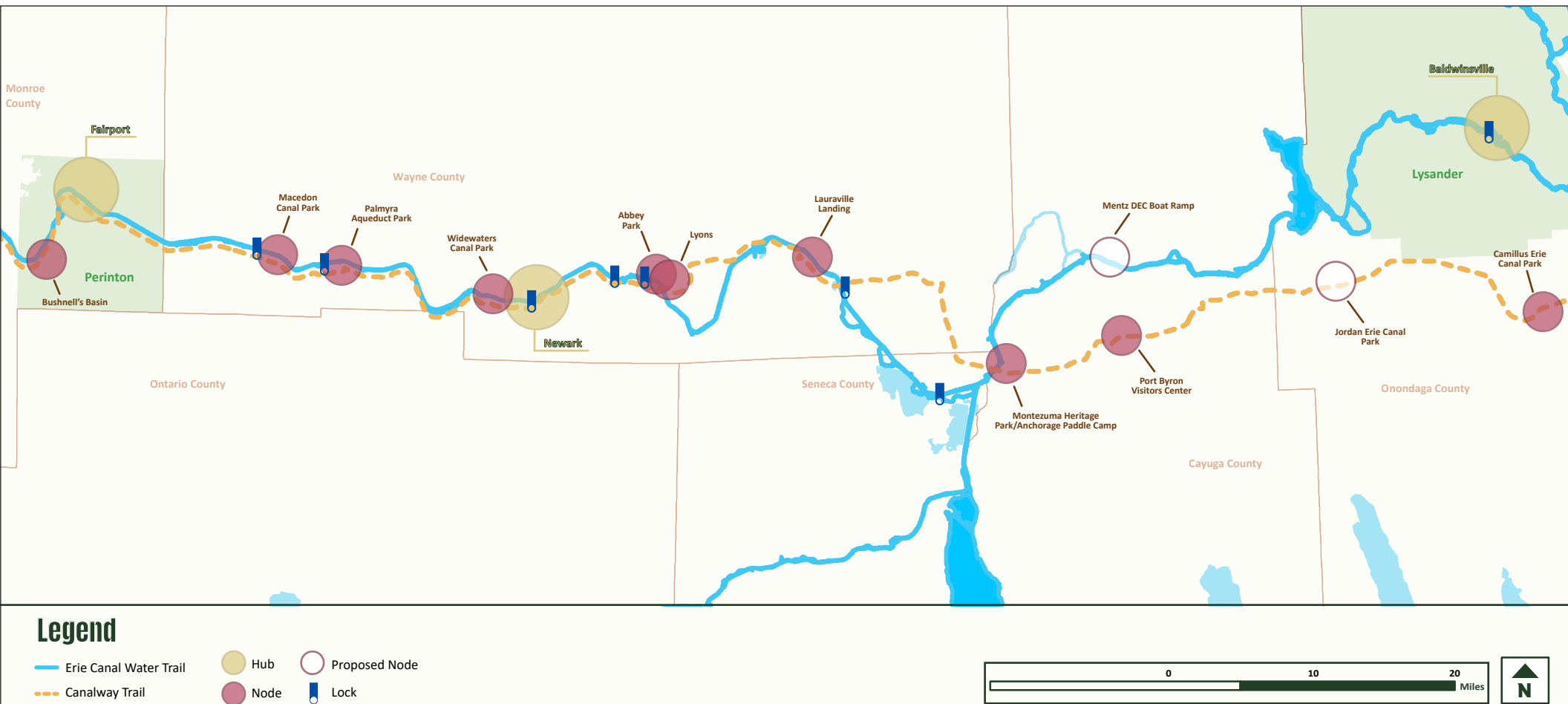
9

EXISTING
NODES

2

PROPOSED
NODES

MAP 4.15. Locations of Hubs and Nodes, Region 3



Note: Region 3 maps include overlap with Regions 2 and 4.

on-road portions of the Erie Canalway Trail, which has been noted as a challenge for long-distance cyclists trying to navigate with limited trail signage.

Despite the rural nature of this region, the western portion contains many locations that work well as nodes, with a strong sense of arrival into downtown centers and dense concentrations of amenities. There are adequate restrooms and drinking fountains along the majority of this region. Although the Erie Canalway Trail diverges from the water at certain points, locations like Lauraville Landing, Lyons, and Montezuma Heritage Park/ Anchorage Paddle Camp are strategically located at places where it meets the water, providing opportunities for multiple user types to share amenities.

Region 3 Hubs and Nodes

Map 4.15 illustrates the locations of hubs and nodes in Region 3. There are three existing hubs, nine existing nodes, and two proposed nodes in this region.

Overview of Hubs

Map 4.16 illustrates amenities currently available at hubs in Region 3. Hubs are between 20 and 50 miles apart in this region. The hubs at Fairport and Newark serve both the Erie Canal/NYS Canalway Water Trail and the Erie Canalway Trail,

while the Baldwinsville hub only serves boaters and paddlers.

Village of Fairport

Fairport has capitalized on its connection to the canal and created a strong nexus of activity along the water. Users can easily access the local shops, restaurants, and lodging options. As noted previously, this hub is an exemplary model of investment in enhancing accessibility.

Village of Newark

Newark is unique in that it is one of the few places with a campsite located in its downtown, close to local goods and services. This hub is geared more towards boaters than paddlers, and would benefit from a kayak launch so paddlers could access the amenities.

Baldwinsville

The Village of Baldwinsville is a strong center of activity, with amenities for boaters and paddlers alike. Shops, dining, and entertainment are available directly adjacent to the marina, where local boaters often spend weekend evenings socializing. The paddler amenities are located nearby in Mercer Park. Long-distance paddlers would benefit from wayfinding signage to connect to amenities like showers, as well as shops and services.

Overview of Nodes

Map 4.16 illustrates the amenities currently available at nodes in Region 3. The majority of nodes are located at canalside parks, along with smaller villages and the Port Byron Visitors Center. Potential nodes are shown at the Mentz DEC Boat Ramp and Jordan Erie Canal Park.

Macedon Canal Park

There are points of access to amenities on both sides of the water at this park, and signage suggests that bicyclists may cross the lock bridge to access the southern side. A new adaptive kayak launch and ample parking and picnic areas make this location attractive, though the amenities are not concentrated to create a strong sense of arrival. Several amenities, including an older boat ramp, are in poor condition and should be evaluated for investment. This node would be a good candidate for a kayak rental vendor. Shops and restaurants on Main Street are a short walk away.

Palmyra Aqueduct Park

This linear park stretches along the length of the canal, but has several key amenities such as restrooms, a kayak launch, and a new self-serve kayak rental kiosk.

Widewaters Canal Park, Newark

This is a useful node for paddlers but does not have a way for boaters to access it. Bicyclists could cross a nearby bridge to access the restroom but would benefit from wayfinding signage. Because there is an adaptive launch located here, this node is a good candidate for a kayak rental vendor.

Abbey Park, Lyons

Abbey Park is a county park located just a short walk from the Village of Lyons. The Erie Canalway Trail passes through the park and the park is located along the canal with several hand launch facilities that are clearly marked with Water Trail signage. The small scale of the park makes it so that amenities are easily visible from both trails. There is ample parking, a permanent restroom, and a picnic area with a pavilion and grills.

Village of Lyons

Lyons was noted by many stakeholders as a strong example of the way a community can create a welcoming atmosphere for long-distance trail users. A volunteer organization welcomes boaters and connects them with services. The fire department allows camping on their lawn and access to

their restrooms and showers. Ample signage points visitors to destinations in town.

Lauraville Landing Park, Clyde

Similar to Abbey Park, Lauraville Landing has amenities for multiple user types that are well concentrated and visible from both trails. Shops and restaurants in Clyde are short walk away.

Montezuma Heritage Park/Anchorage Paddle Camp

The Erie Canal and Canalway Trail cross over at this location. Although these are two nodes of amenities located across the street from each other, one geared towards Canalway Trail users and the other towards Water Trail users, with adequate signage there is opportunity for multiple user groups to take advantage of amenities here. With additional investment, this location could develop into a hub in the future.

Mentz DEC Boat Ramp

This node is located in one of the most remote parts of the canal. Without a node here, long-distance paddlers would have to travel over 30 miles without a restroom. This location currently only has a parking area, a concrete ramp, and a fishing dock, but with some investment

could serve as a key stopping point for paddlers.

Port Byron Visitor Center

This visitor center is often used as a gathering point for bicyclists to start a trip on the Erie Canalway Trail. The staffed facility allows trail users to use the restroom and drinking fountain. Additional bicycling amenities such as a repair station would be helpful.

Jordan Erie Canal Park

Similar to the Mentz Boat Ramp on the Erie Canal/NYS Canalway Water Trail, this location could be an opportunity to close the gap between nodes for long-distance cyclists, but would require some investment in basic amenities like a portable restroom.

Camillus Erie Canal Park

This park has basic amenities for Erie Canalway Trail users and serves as a simple resting point along the trail.

Region 3 Amenity Needs and Opportunities

Maps 4.17-4.20 illustrate the locations of key amenities in Region 3 and identify elements that work well along with needed investments.



Shared Amenities (Map 4.17, 4.18)



Though drinking fountains are generally well positioned in this region, there is a 30-mile gap between Fairport and Lauraville Landing. Although this is within an acceptable range based on the Best Practices section, there is a permanent restroom with plumbing at Abbey Park which could present an opportunity for a drinking fountain to shorten this gap.

There are 20 miles between restrooms along the Erie Canalway Trail along the eastern portion of this region (Map 4.19). Although this is an acceptable range based on best practices, there could be an opportunity to add a low-maintenance option such as a portable restroom or self-composting toilet at Jordan Erie Canal Park. There may also be an opportunity to create a partnership with a private campground in Weedsport to allow trail users to use their restrooms.



Paddlers (Map 4.19)



The eastern portion of this region of the Canal is especially remote, which creates a challenge for paddler amenities. A low-maintenance restroom at the Mentz DEC Boat Ramp, such as a portable or self-composting toilet, is key to providing long-distance paddlers with a critical amenity here.

Locations like Abbey Park, Lauraville Landing, and Widewaters Canal Park have strong amenities for paddlers and are located near centers of activity. These locations would benefit from adding adaptive launches and boat rentals to open them to a wider array of users.

The Village of Baldwinsville, which is a key hub for boaters and paddlers, should strive to better connect paddler and boater amenities, or otherwise invest in paddler amenities near the center of activity at the marina near Lock 24.

Several hand launches in this region are in poor condition and should be further evaluated for repair or replacement. This could present an opportunity to add more adaptive launches.



Boaters (Map 4.20)

Boater amenities are well-positioned within this region. A mix of public and private marinas provide boaters with places to rest and recharge. Private marinas help to close the gap in services along the eastern portion of this region, which is more remote. Given the remote nature of much of this region, enhanced awareness of amenities available is especially important here for trip planning and decision-making.



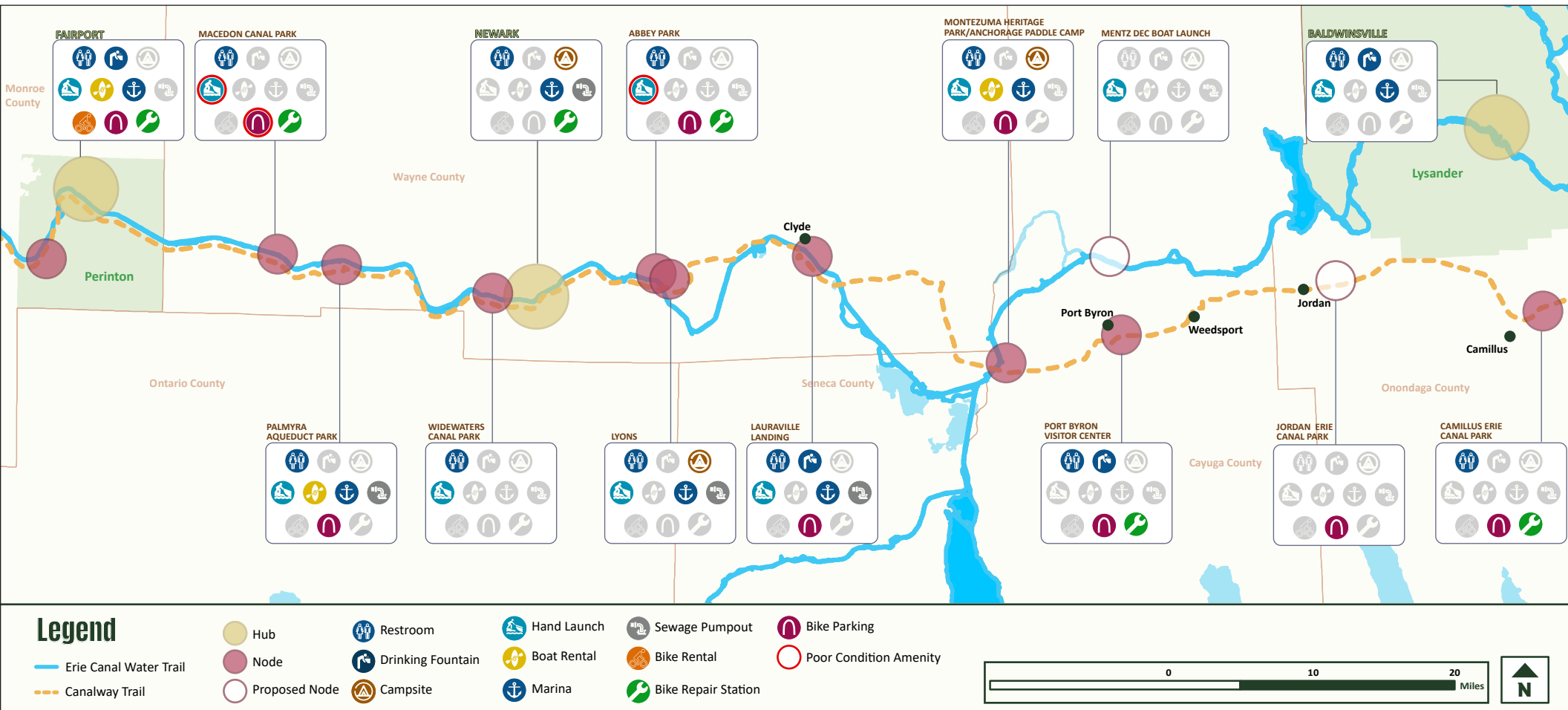
Bicyclists (Map 4.21)



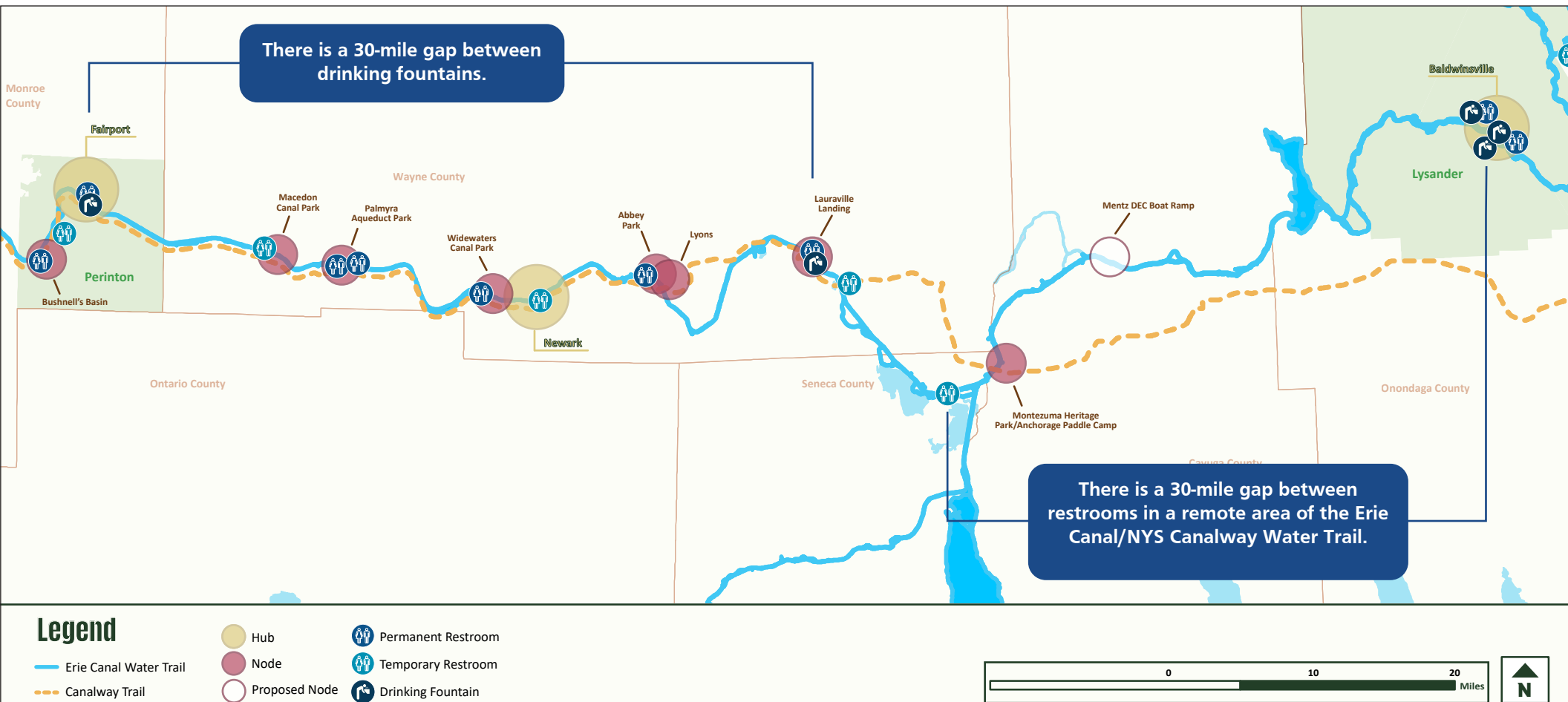
Several locations were identified where amenities geared towards bicyclists should be added to enhance their experience on the Erie Canalway Trail.

- The addition of bike racks and bike rentals in Newark would enhance this hub, which is geared towards boaters, for bicyclists
- A bike repair station at Lauraville Landing and Montezuma Anchorage Park would assist bicyclists in closing this gap.
- Jordan Erie Canal Park would benefit from a concentration of bicycling amenities

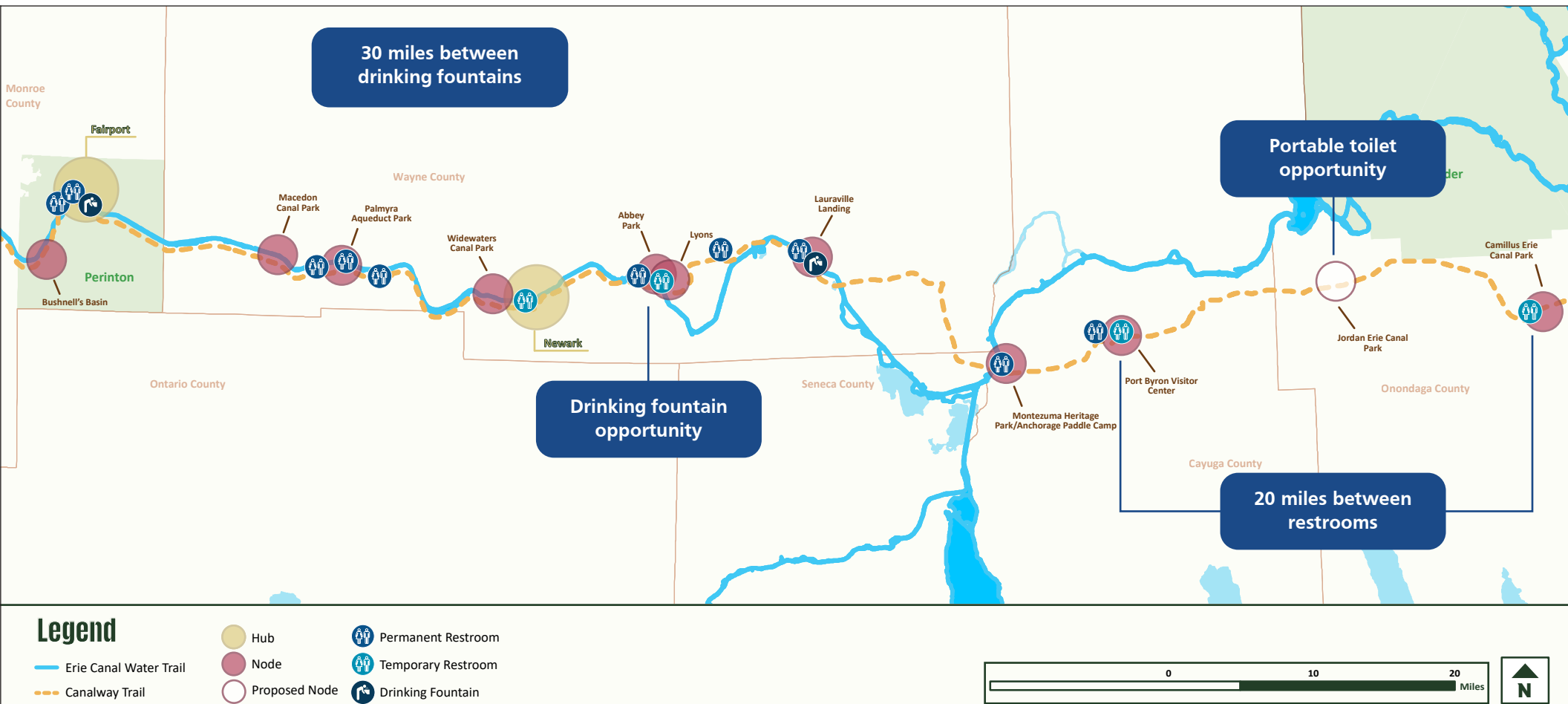
MAP 4.16. Existing Hub and Node Amenities, Region 3



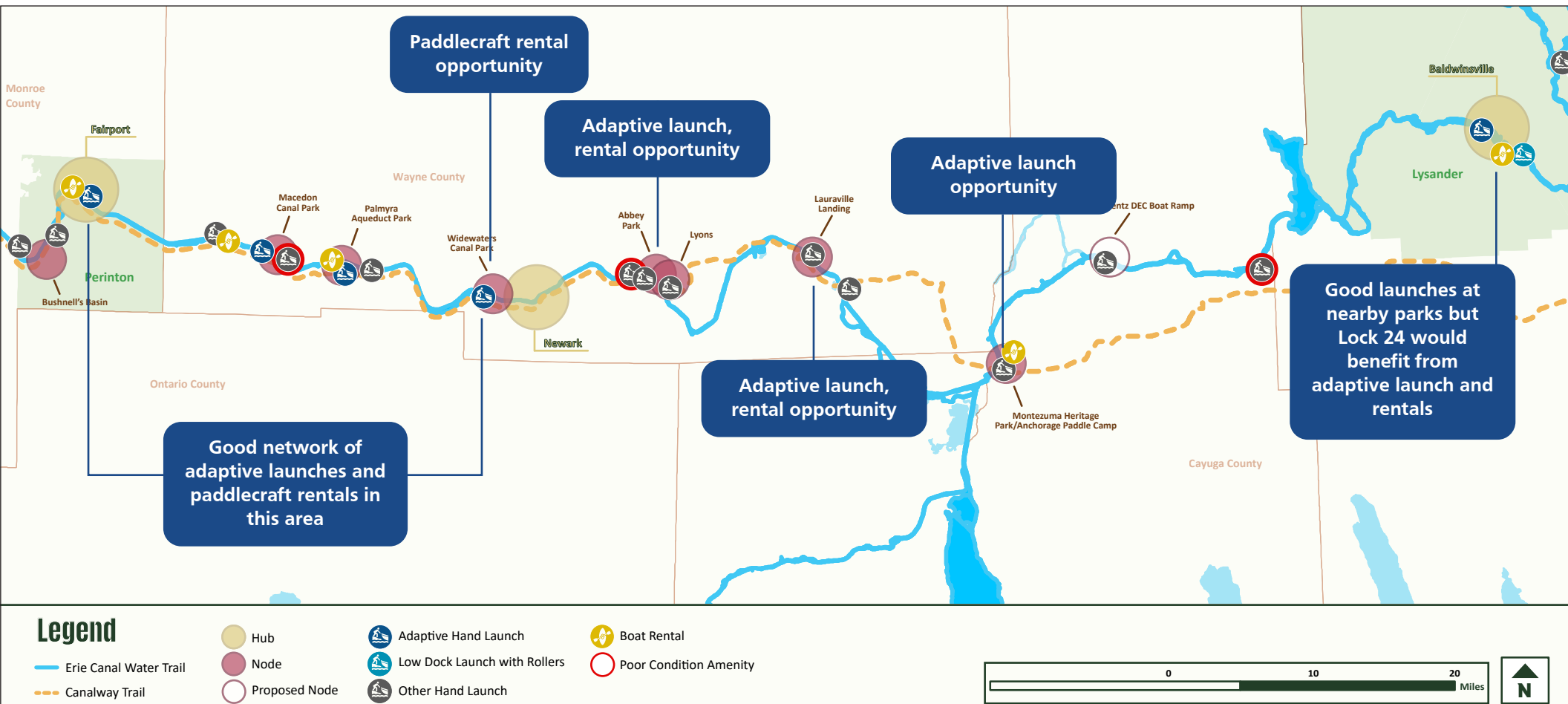
MAP 4.17. Existing Shared Amenities, Erie Canal and NYS Canalway Water Trail, Region 3



MAP 4.18. Existing Shared Amenities, Erie Canalway Trail, Region 3



MAP 4.19. Existing Paddler Amenities, Region 3



MAP 4.20. Existing Boater Amenities, Region 3



MAP 4.21. Existing Bicyclist Amenities, Region 3

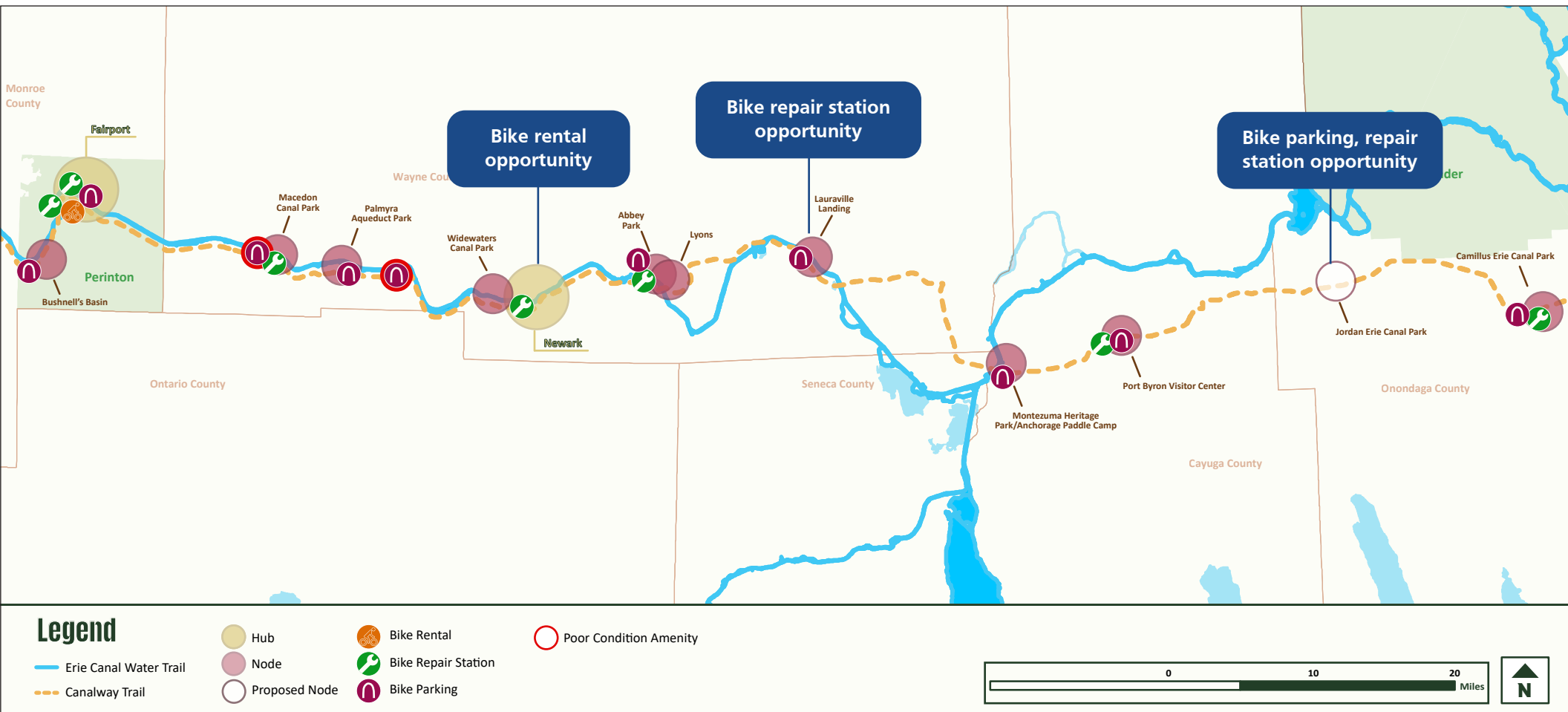


TABLE 4.3 Summary of Amenity Needs, Region 3

Hub/Node Name	Type	Amenities Needed	Municipality	County	Erie Canalway Trail Jurisdiction(s)	Land Jurisdiction(s)
Fairport	Hub		Fairport	Monroe	Village of Fairport Canal Corporation	Other
Macedon Canal Park	Node	Bike Rack (poor condition)	Macedon	Wayne	Canal Corporation	Canal Corporation
Palmyra Aqueduct Park	Node	Bike Repair Station	Palmyra	Wayne	Canal Corporation	Canal Corporation
Widewaters Canal Park, Arcadia	Node	Bike Rack Bike Repair Station Boat Rental	Arcadia	Wayne	Canal Corporation	Canal Corporation
Newark	Hub	Boat Rental Adaptive Hand Launch Bike Rental Bike Rack	Newark	Wayne	Canal Corporation	Canal Corporation
Abbey Park, Lyons	Node	Drinking Fountain (potential) Adaptive Hand Launch Boat Rental	Lyons	Wayne	Town of Lyons	Canal Corporation Other
Lyons	Node	Bike Rack Bike Repair Station	Lyons	Wayne	Town of Lyons	Canal Corporation Other
Lauraville Landing, Clyde	Node	Bike Repair Station	Clyde	Wayne	Village of Clyde	Other
Montezuma Heritage Park/ Anchorage Paddle Camp	Node	Bike Repair Station	Montezuma	Cayuga	NYS DOT	Canal Corporation NYS DEC Other
Port Byron Visitor Center	Node		Port Byron	Cayuga	NYS DOT	Other
Mentz DEC Boat Ramp	Potential Node	Restroom	Mentz	Cayuga	n/a	Canal Corporation
Jordan Erie Canal Park	Potential Node	Restroom Bike Repair Station	Jordan	Onondaga	Village of Jordan	Other
Camillus Erie Canal Park	Node		Camillus	Onondaga	Town of Camillus Onondaga County	Other
Baldwinsville	Hub	Boat Rental Adaptive Hand Launch	Baldwinsville	Onondaga	n/a	Canal Corporation Other

"Erie Canalway Trail Jurisdiction" refers to the entity or entities that own this segment of the Erie Canalway Trail. "Land Jurisdiction" refers to the entity or entities that own either the land surrounding the Erie Canalway Trail, such as a park with amenities that the trail passes through, or land used for Erie Canal/NYS Canalway Water Trail access points.