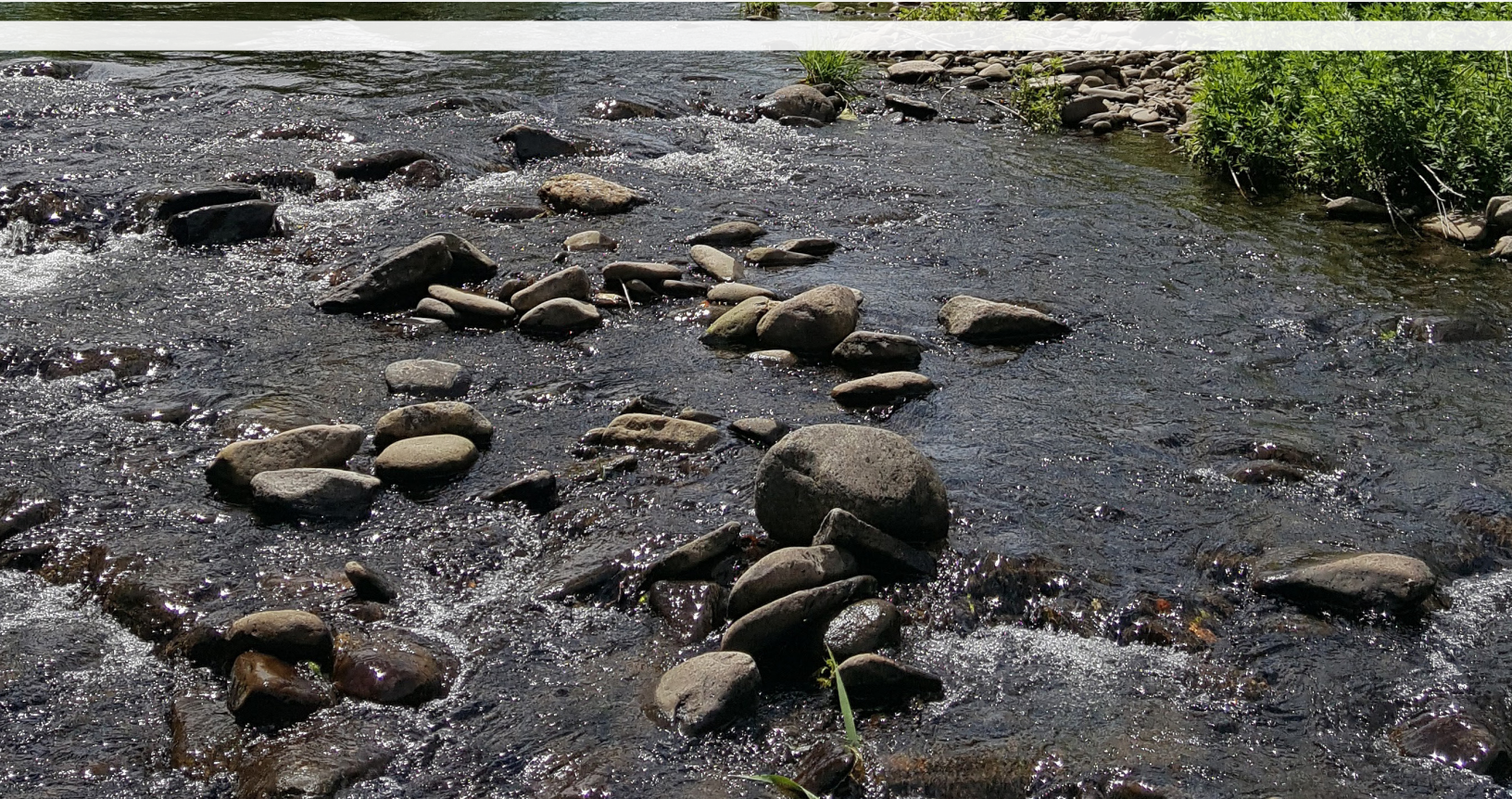# The Vision

TRAIL VISION STATEMENT

The Sullivan County O&W Rail Trail will become a continuous recreational trail that will attract visitors and link to businesses and amenities in 9 hamlets and 2 villages, maximizing the value of main street economic development, streetscape and community renewal projects in its host towns and villages, and provide health and quality of life benefits to residents and visitors.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

Through the project process, the advisory committee along with the project team, developed five (5) project objectives that would reflect the mission and vision of the trail. These project objectives support the goal of providing a continuous multi-use trail that will promote economic development and provide opportunities for visitors and residents to engage in recreational activities. They are as follows:

TRAIL DEVELOPMENT:
- Create a scenic and enjoyable trail along the former O&W rail corridor
- Design a new trail that is continuous with no gaps
- Enhance existing trail segments with new wayfinding, trail amenities, and programming
- Enhance natural, cultural, and built areas along the new trail system

TRAIL EXPERIENCE AND INTERPRETATION:
- Highlight the local history, culture, and natural environment
- Interpret and teach the history at the O&W Railroad
- Enhance all hamlets, villages, and towns along the trail corridor
- Enhance and interpret the natural environment, rivers, mountains, and native flora and fauna

TRAIL MARKETING:
- Create a successful brand for the trail system
- Use brand for a new and complete wayfinding system for the entire trail
- Use brand for marketing the trail
- Attract new visitors and residents to the trail.

TRAIL AMENITIES:
- Provide a safe, comfortable, and engaging experience for a variety of trail users
- Design a trail system that will accommodate a diverse range of users such as pedestrians, bicyclists, dog walkers, families, and equestrians, while respecting ADA guidelines
- Include amenities that will ensure a comfortable and engaging experience, such as gathering spaces, seating, interpretive signage, wayfinding, trail rules, and trash receptacles
- Minimize safety hazards for all user groups

IMPLEMENTATION:
- Prioritize the build out sequencing
- Determine which segments will have the greatest positive impact for residents in the area
- Discover the greatest potential for the longest continuous segment or segments
- Prioritize connections that require bridges and connections between existing trails

PLANNING PROCESS

A systematic planning process was employed to learn and then make recommendations for the existing O&W Rail corridor, which includes developed and undeveloped segments. The resulting document is broken down by modules including Project Oversight, Public Engagement, Trail Assessment + Preferred Trail Alignment, Design Guidelines, Trail Branding & Marketing, Operations & Maintenance, Build-Out Sequencing, Opinions of Cost, and Engineering. The subsequent modules can be used independently and if needed can be separated from the rest of the feasibility study.

PROJECT OVERSIGHT

Several levels of leadership contributed to this trail feasibility study. These committees included the Project Steering Committee, O&W Trail Committee, Sullivan County Trails Committee and the Sullivan County Legislature. For more information on these committees, see Appendix A.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Public engagement was an important part of the overall planning process. The public engagement process was used to create a set of trail development criteria, which ultimately led to the final trail route and trail segment priorities. The consultant team first contacted owners of property on undeveloped segments of the rail bed to determine their level of interest in and support for the trail, as well as their willingness to have their land acquired for the trail. Property owners who abutted the trail as well as communities that surround the trail were also invited into the planning process. The consultant team was able to solicit input from these property owners and communities to identify and address possible design concerns as well as opportunities. Based on

community input, the project team proposed the overall look of the trail or trail brand, and determine the preferred trail alignment. The project team utilized neighborhood meetings, online resources, and interview sessions to gather public data from the Sullivan County community.

Trail Assessment + Preferred Trail Alignment

The project team assessed the entire O&W trail system within Sullivan County and gathered information from both developed and undeveloped segments. A variety of trail characteristics were analyzed for both the developed and undeveloped segments. Based on this analysis, existing segment upgrades were determined for the entire project area. Necessary segment upgrades are described in detail within this trail assessment. Preferred connection strategies were also identified and developed between existing trail segments. Alternative on-road trail alignment strategies were explored and recommended where the old O&W railbed was not feasible or suitable for off-road trail development. These preferred connection strategies and alternative routes are illustrated through maps and described through a detailed narrative later in this study.

Design Guidelines

Design guidelines were created to assist with the construction of future segments, as well as for making repairs and upgrades to existing segments. The Design Guidelines address different types of trail users, bike facilities, pedestrian trail design, trail materials, wayfinding signage, branding, landscaping elements, and other trail and trailhead amenities. The Design Guidelines also ensure the trail follows consistent standards throughout. Certain designed areas of the trail vary slightly based on their location and trail experience.

Trail Branding & Marketing

In order for the trail to be cohesive and marketable, a trail logo and new trail name were created. The project team, working with the O&W Trail Committee, considered several potential signage options and logo schemes before picking the final design. The new trail name will be used to unite the existing separated segments and will appear on marketing and fundraising efforts as well as future trail signage. Segment themes were explored for different portions of the trail. A trail brochure was also created to help promote and market the existing trail segments as a regional trail. The trail brochure includes information about nearby attractions, businesses, and ways to gain access to the trail.

Operations and Maintenance

An overview and suggested outline for maintenance and management of the entire Sullivan O&W Rail Trail was written to assist future trail managers. The nearby and

developing Empire State Trail was used as a model for these standards.

BUILD-OUT SEQUENCING

A strategy for property acquisition and building the trail was developed for parcels that are necessary for the trail alignment to be successful. Along parts of the trail, where the trail parcel has been merged with larger parcels only the trailbed parcel needs to be acquired for the future trail.

OPINION OF COSTS

An opinion of cost was created for future trail construction and property acquisition based on available market data. Potential funding opportunities are also included within this assessment.

ENGINEERING

For specific areas along the proposed Sullivan O&W Rail Trail route, more in-depth design and planning was done in detail to propose immediate future upgrades and improvements.
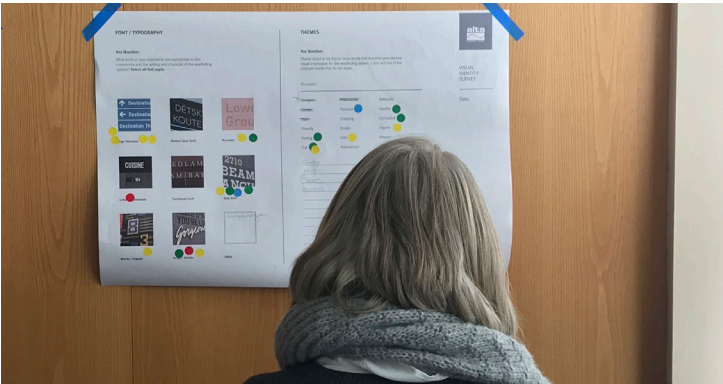
Steering Committee member participates in visual preference survey.

HOW TO USE THIS PLAN

This document is a guide towards improving existing segments as well as creating future segments for the Sullivan County O&W Rail Trail. Each section of this feasibility study describes a portion of the entire strategic planning process and can be viewed separately or as one cohesive document. For this reason, each section will be considered a module. It is recommended that this document is considered in its entirety even if planning to use only one module.