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MEDIA RELEASE

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Cyclists Countdown to 200 Years of the Erie Canal, Call on Governor to *Close the Gaps* in Erie Canalway Trail

- Postcards Delivered in Albany-

ON TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, Parks & Trails New York (PTNY), the state’s leading not-for-profit, park and trail advocacy organization, and Bike Barn Cohoes hosted a ***Close the Gaps*** ride to call on the Governor to fund completion of the statewide Erie Canalway Trail (ECT). Cyclists rode from Watervliet to Albany, riding on the Mohawk-Hudson portion of the statewide Erie Canalway Trail. As they reached the pedestrian bridge in Albany, they delivered hundreds of postcards, signed by users of the trail from across the state, urging Governor Cuomo and the legislature to *Close the Gaps* that remain in the trail.

The ECT extends 360 miles across New York State, of which 281 miles (78%) are now open to the public as off-road, multi-use trail. Unfinished, or “gap” sections of the trail, force cyclists and other trail users onto city streets, discouraging some users and frustrating touring cyclists. When complete, the Erie Canalway Trail will be the longest trail of its kind in the nation and a world-class destination for cyclists and other outdoor enthusiasts. Trail enthusiasts have set October 2017, the bicentennial of the start of work on the original Erie Canal, as a target date for completion of the state-wide route.

The ECT brings important economic and environmental benefits to the more than 3.7 million New Yorkers who live in the 14 counties along its route: 1.6 million annual visits, \$253 million in total trail-related sales, \$28.5 million in taxes, and 3,440 jobs supported according to a 2014 report, *The Economic Impact of the Erie Canalway Trail: An Assessment and User Profile of New York’s Longest Multi-use Trail*.

However, the ECT cannot reach its full potential and offer maximum economic and quality of life benefits until it is finished from Buffalo to Albany as a continuous, off-road trail. Since PTNY and the Canalway Trails Association New York (CTANY) launched their “*Closing the Gaps*” campaign in 2010 in conjunction with U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, interest in completing the ECT among citizens, community leaders, and local, state and federal government officials has reached an all-time high.

PTNY’s annual *Cycle the Erie Canal* bike tour brings more than 600 cyclists to upstate New York. Each year cyclists from across the country and from around the world come to cross the state along the historic Erie Canal. This year’s ride began in Buffalo on July 12, and finished in Albany one week later. The bike tour demonstrates the great recreational and economic potential of the ECT, and also brings into focus the need for its completion as a continuous, off-road trail.

Photos from the Close the Gaps ride and postcard delivery can be found at

<https://picasaweb.google.com/100876398021756736920/CloseTheGapsRide?authuser=0&feat=directlink>

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