Patroon Greenway Project

A Community and Transportation Linkage Planning Project

Task 1 Report:

Existing Conditions, Opportunities and Constraints

Prepared for:

Capital District Transportation Committee

Albany, New York

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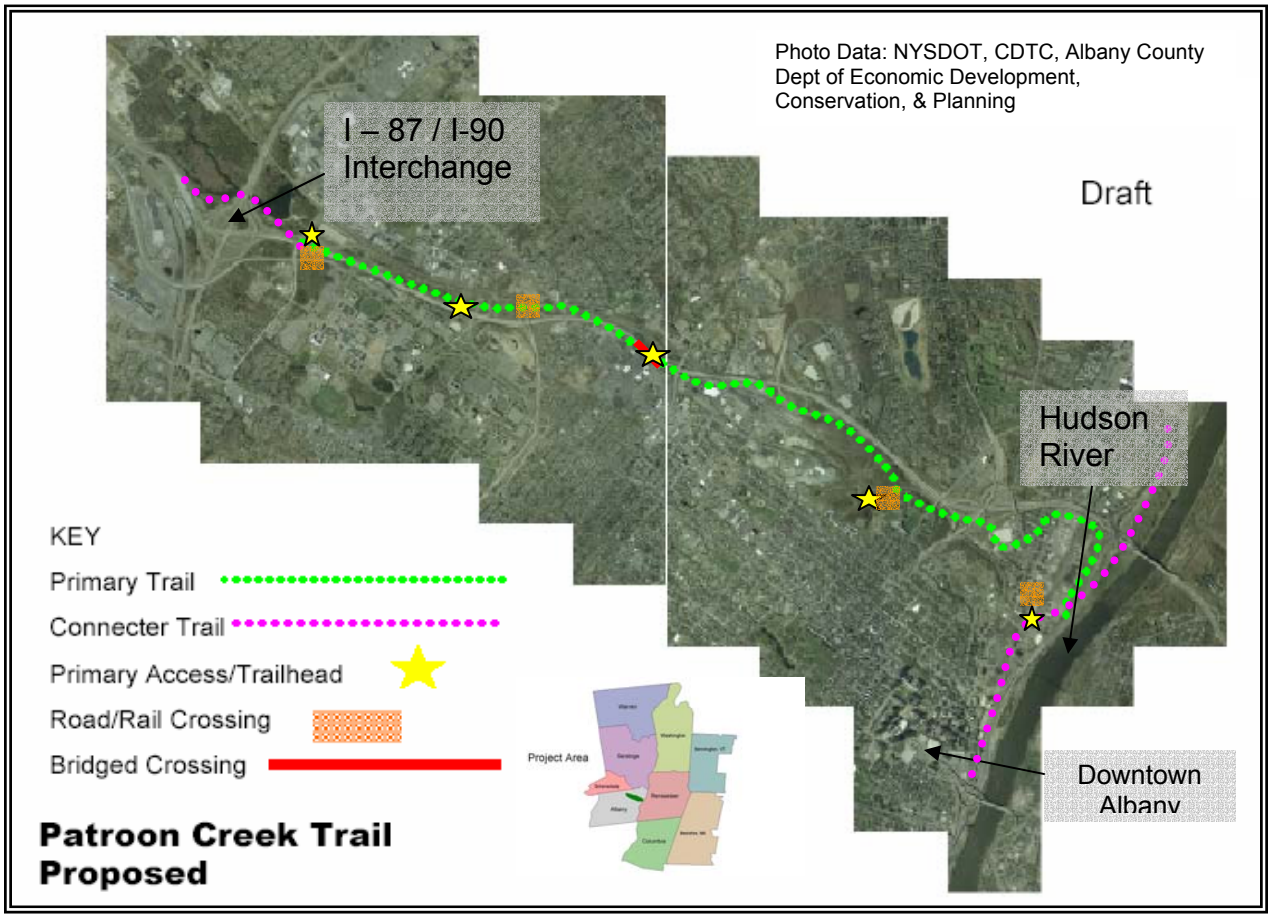
This project is funded through the Capital District Transportation Committee's (CDTC) Community and Transportation Linkage Planning Program.

1. Overview of the Study Area

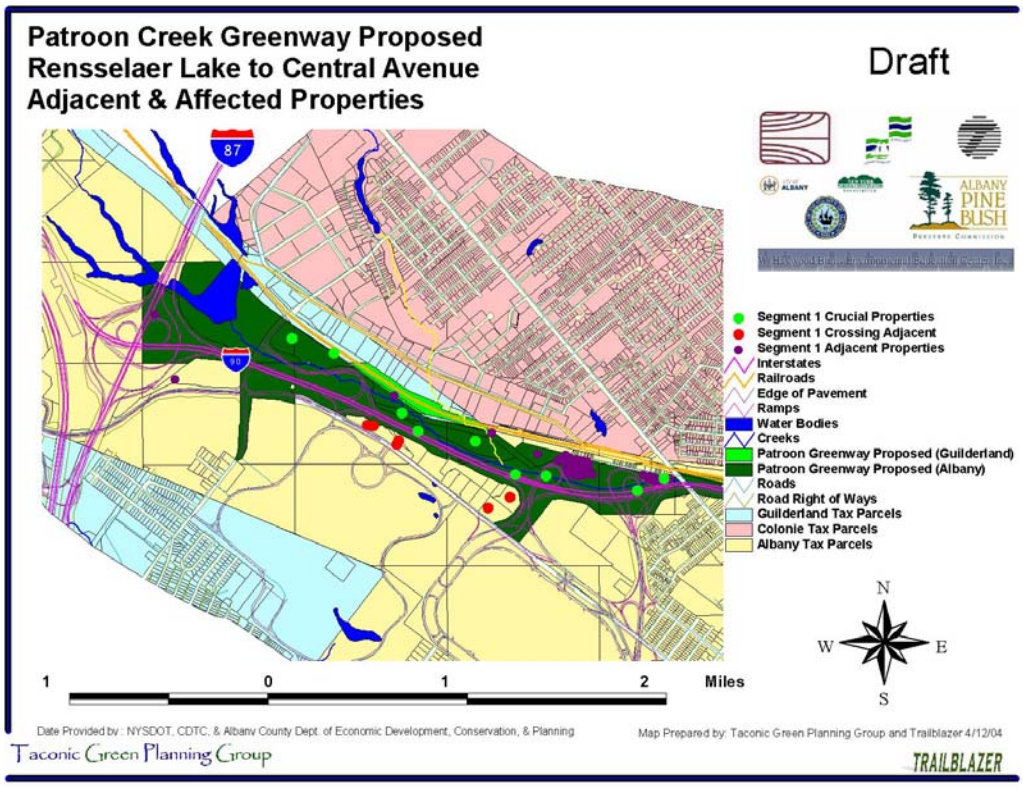
The Patroon Greenway is a project being developed to connect the communities and resources along the I-90 corridor in Albany, New York. This study is funded through the Capital District Transportation Committee's (CDTC) Community and Transportation Linkage Planning Program.

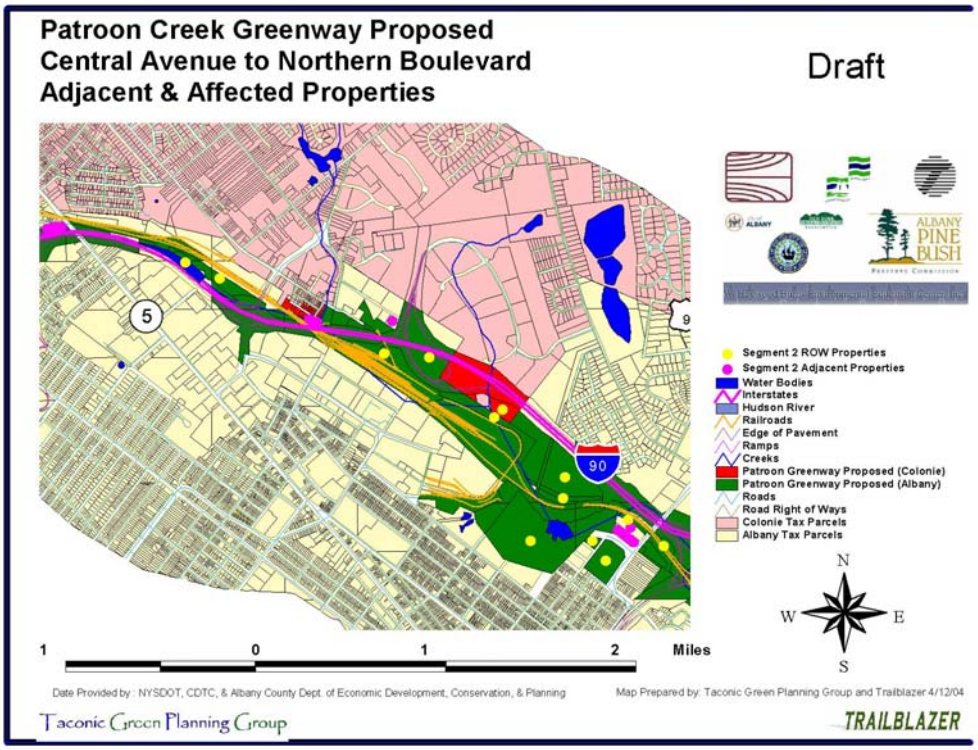
The proposed Patroon Creek Greenway Trail will be a 6 +/- mile path between the Albany Pine Bush Preserve at the interchange of I-90 / I-87 and the Corning Preserve along the Hudson River. A preliminary concept for the trail corridor was developed by NYSDOT during the preliminary planning for upcoming reconstruction in the I-90 corridor. This general concept is illustrated below.



2. Maps of Tax Parcel Ownership

The Patroon Greenway corridor includes the NYSDOT I-90 highway right-of-way, multiple railroad tracks, the Patroon Creek (visible at the surface in some locations, diverted into underground culverts in others), sections of Albany County Sewer rights-of-way, power lines and public open spaces including the Albany Pine Bush and Tivoli preserves. Since most of the trail corridor is identified within these land holdings, there are only a few locations where private properties would be involved in developing the trail, and these are generally parcels related to connector trails which provide access to the proposed trail corridor. In the initial NYSDOT analysis which proceeded this study, the trail route was developed entirely within State-owned rights-of-way, although other alignments may potentially provide better access and connectivity for adjacent communities. The following maps illustrate land ownership along the Greenway Corridor.




Patroon Creek Greenway Proposed
Central Avenue to Northern Boulevard
Adjacent & Affected Properties
Draft
5
90
Segment 2 ROW Properties
Segment 2 Adjacent Properties
Water Bodies
Interstates
Hudson River
Railroads
Edge of Pavement
Ramps
Creeks
Patroon Greenway Proposed (Colonie)
Patroon Greenway Proposed (Albany)
Roads
Road Right of Ways
Colonie Tax Parcels
Albany Tax Parcels
N
W
E
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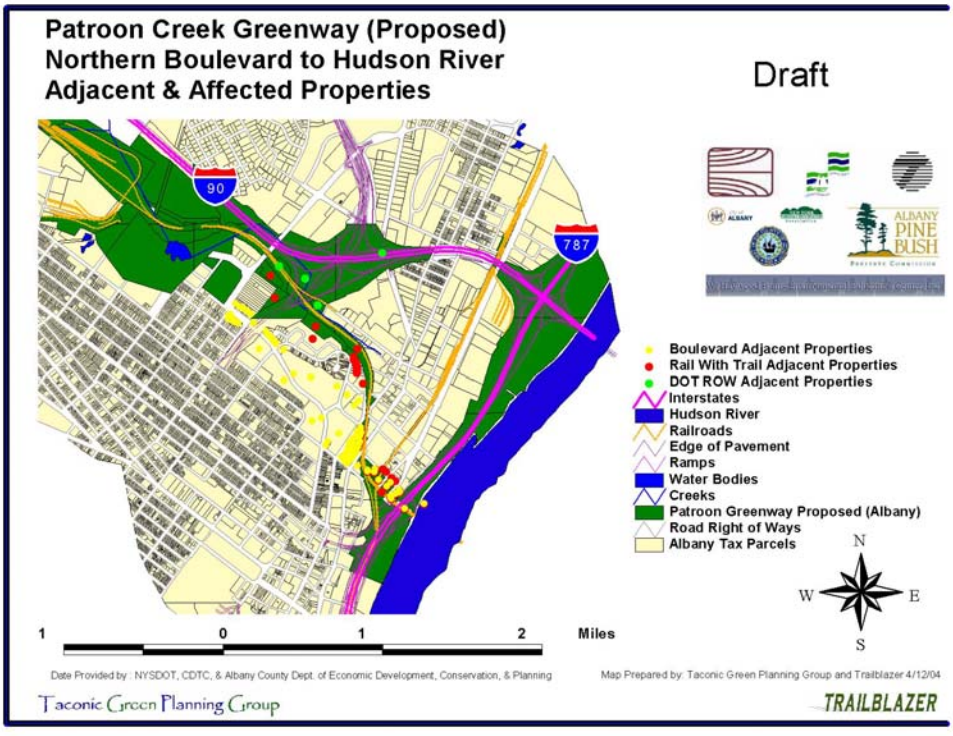
1 0 1 2 Miles
Date Provided by : NYSDOT, CDTC, & Albany County Dept. of Economic Development, Conservation, & Planning
Map Prepared by: Taconic Green Planning Group and Trailblazer 4/12/04
Taconic Green Planning Group
TRAILBLAZER


Patroon Creek Greenway (Proposed)
Northern Boulevard to Hudson River
Adjacent & Affected Properties
Draft
90
787
Boulevard Adjacent Properties
Rail With Trail Adjacent Properties
DOT ROW Adjacent Properties
Interstates
Hudson River
Railroads
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Patroon Greenway Proposed (Albany)
Road Right of Ways
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N
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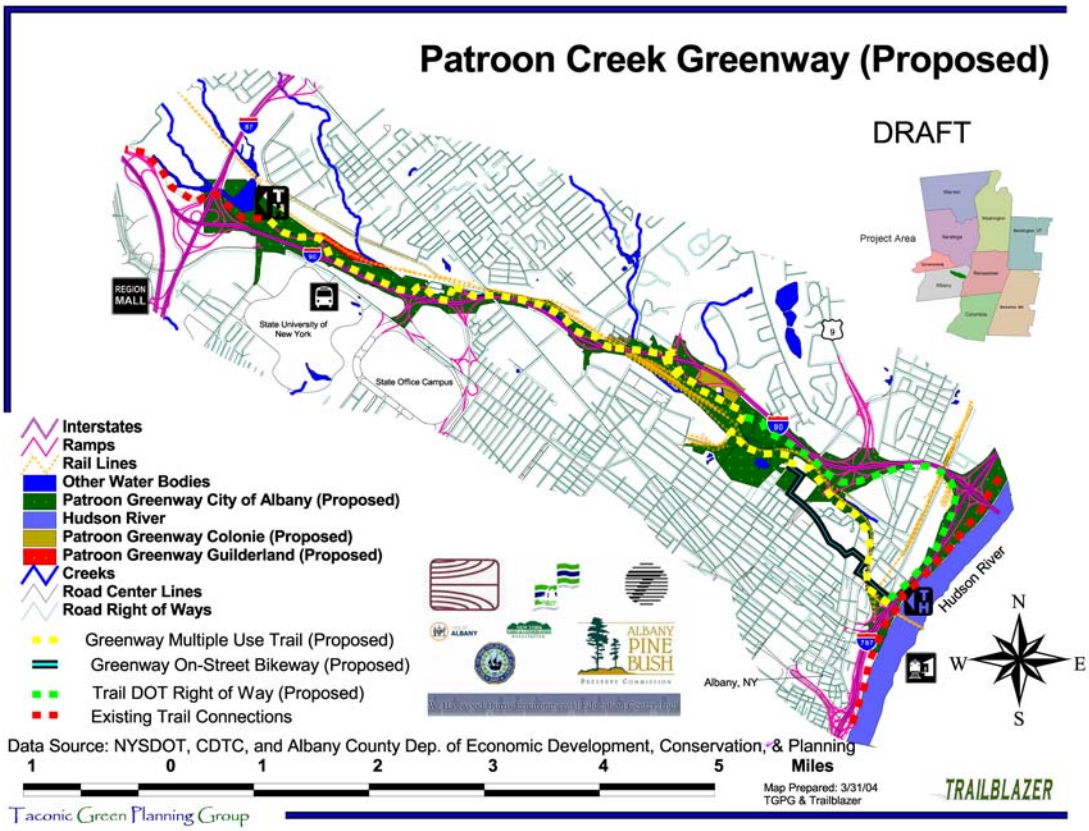
Date Provided by : NYSDOT, CDTC, & Albany County Dept. of Economic Development, Conservation, & Planning
Map Prepared by: Taconic Green Planning Group and Trailblazer 4/12/04
Taconic Green Planning Group
TRAILBLAZER

3. Trail Alignment

Based on land use and ownership, a conceptual trail alignment within the Patroon Greenway corridor can be identified parallel to the Patroon Creek between Rensselaer Lake and the Tivoli Preserve. This alignment is on the north side of I-90 west of Everett Road, utilizing NYSDOT and Albany County Sewer / NIMO rights of way and an enhanced at-grade crossing of Central Avenue. East of Everett Road, the trail would cross under I-90 onto an abandoned railroad line on the north side of the main CSX track, and then utilize an abandoned trestle to cross the tracks into the Tivoli preserve. Note that detailed negotiations will need to be conducted with all land owners as part of the trail development process.



4. Route Opportunities and Constraints

There are a number of key issues related to the Patroon Creek Greenway Trail. These include physical, financial and organizational concerns as outlined below:

Opportunities:

Non-Motorized traffic connection between Albany Pine Bush Preserve at Rensselaer Lake with Tivoli Preserve utilizing existing NYSDOT and Albany County / NIMO and abandoned railroad corridor.

Congestion relief / air quality enhancement for the I-90 corridor, especially in combination with CDTA Bike on Bus service.

Access to recreation, physical fitness and nature for Arbor Hill and other urban neighborhoods.

Connection between West Albany Recreation center / athletic fields and the trail.

Potential to connect the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail at Schenectady and Corning Preserve.

Historic preservation of the abandoned railroad trestle and interpretation of the 'cut' east of Everett Road.

Restoration and environmental education along the Patroon Creek, including potential sections to daylight the creek.

Mitigation from the cleanup of the adjacent NL industries superfund site.

Corporate partnership with adjacent developments along the corridor to 'adopt' trail sections, including healthcare facilities, retail centers, hotels, technology companies, etc.

Potential 'connector' trails to the Hudson River waterfront, Arbor Hill, Corporate Woods, UAlbany / State Office Campus, and the new high tech facilities.

A first phase project linking Rensselaer Lake and Tivoli Lake is possible, utilizing the existing Albany County right-of-way / service road, and adding in additional connections in future phases

Educational / interpretive opportunities exist for environmental, historic and cultural resources in the corridor.

Constraints:

Potential right-of-way issues for utility right-of-way (surface access rights will have to be negotiated)

Crossings of Fuller Road, Central Avenue, and other sections will require challenging design solutions, including cantilever sections and narrow 'pinch' points along I-90. "Rail with Trail" sections may need to be considered, along with appropriate safety and security design features.

Access to the trail from a North-South direction will require pedestrian bridges and / or accommodations on existing spans to maximize use from adjacent communities and destinations.

Project timing of current NYSDOT and NYS Thruway Authority I-90 reconstruction projects may not allow for trail solutions to be integrated.

Project funding will need to compete with other regional priorities.

Public interest, support, and advocacy for the project are necessary.

Existing 'Patroon Creek' development sites between Washington Avenue and I-90 have occurred without ped/bike/trail connections, and retrofitting these facilities will be a challenge.

View of the Patroon Creek and potential trail right-of-way from the abandoned railroad trestle. Photo: J.Thomas

5. Current Land Uses

The Patroon Creek corridor includes a complex mix of land uses including single family residential, industrial, transportation, utility, commercial and institutional uses.

Major linear properties include the NYSDOT I-90 highway corridor, the CSX railroad, the former NL Industries superfund site (which is in the cleanup process), Niagara Mohawk power company properties including power lines and a new substation. Industrial properties include the NIMO site at the I-90 / I-787 junction, and a variety of industrial buildings along the railroad corridor. Freihoffer's Bakery is located in the corridor, west of Tivoli preserve.

Large scale land uses along the corridor include the State University of New York at Albany Campus (17,000 students and faculty), the State Office Campus (which is in the process of redevelopment into a high-tech center) and Corporate Woods office park.

Health care facilities within proximity to I-90 include The Albany Memorial hospital, as well a number of medical office facilities located in the "Patroon Creek" strip development along Washington Avenue.

Park and Recreation uses include the Tivoli preserve and park adjacent to Livingston Middle School, Rensselaer Lake / Albany Pine Bush preserve at Fuller Road, the West Albany recreation fields located on the north of the Corridor west of Everett Road, and the Corning Preserve along the Hudson River.

Retail and commercial uses are found along Central, Everett and Fuller Roads, Washington Ave and Northern Boulevard, including hotels and restaurants. Potential re-development of the North Albany Waterfront may be a future asset.

Residential neighborhoods include Arbor Hill, the community between Central Avenue and the Route 85 / I-90 ramps.

The redevelopment of a number of tax parcels between Broadway and Van Woert Street in North Albany, including the development of a large Asian Market, provide potential resources and connections for the Greenway corridor.

The Patroon Creek is a potentially significant environmental resource, and opportunities exist to enhance the waterway as a linear park with creek, pond and wetlands sections along the corridor.

6. Land Ownership / Right of Way Issues

The largest land owners along the corridor are NYSDOT (1-90 and related parcels), Niagara Mohawk Power Company (utility rights-of-way, substation and maintenance site), Albany County Sewer Authority (right-of-way and substations), CSX Railroad (active and abandoned lines) and the D&H / CN Railroad (active line parallel to I-787). Key issues are as follows:

1. 'Pinch Points' Along I-90 – NYSDOT: Adjacent to the I-85 / State Office Campus Ramps, adjacent to the Fuller Road I-90 westbound ramp, and between Northern Boulevard and the Hudson River.

2. Access to Bridges / I-90 Crossings – NYSDOT: The initial concept plan includes several proposed cantilever sections on existing bridges, plus possible use of existing wide shoulders in some locations.

3. Albany County Sewer / NIMO Right-of-Way: Albany County will need to arrange surface use of this easement with NIMO, who owns the property.

4. Abandoned Trestle: Critical for access across the active CSX lines north of the Freihoffer's Bakery and west of Tivoli Lake.

5. Inactive Rail Lines: Potential use of the inactive CP Rail Line parallel to I-787 between Corning Preserve Boat Launch and I-90.

6. D&H Freight Line Crossing - Access to Corning Preserve Boat Launch from Erie Street west of I-787 below the New Asian Market site.

New construction and service roads provide examples of possible trail alignments in the I-90 corridor. (Photo: J. Thomas)

7. Alignment Analysis

Based on field reviews and data collected during this phase of the project, it is possible to develop a continuous non-motorized greenway trail along the Patroon Creek Corridor between the Albany Pine Bush Preserve and the Tivoli Lake Preserve. It is also possible to connect this linear facility with adjacent land uses north and south of the I-90 corridor, and to extend the trail to the Hudson River waterfront in Albany. Key elements of this potential alignment include:

1. Development of the trail within the NYSDOT lands along the I-90 corridor, including some cantilever sections and challenging designs at several 'pinch points.'

2. Utilizing the Albany County Sewer / NIMO right-of-way.

3. Restoring the abandoned railroad trestle over the CSX tracks for pedestrian and bicyclist connections to the Tivoli Lake preserve.

4. Extending the trail between Tivoli Preserve and the Hudson River via three complimentary routes: an on-street Boulevard utilizing existing streets, a rustic footpath on the hillside behind the new Hope VI housing and a long-term multi-use path using the I-90 and/or a rail-with-trail section.

This combination of alternatives is identified in the maps shown on the following pages. These options will be developed in more detail during the alternatives analysis phase of this planning study.

The existing trestle structure over the CSX tracks is a historic resource and a potential safe crossing for the Patroon Greenway Trail. (Photo: J. Thomas)

8. Next Steps

Using the baseline information developed in this document, the next phases of the Patroon Greenway project will develop more detailed planning-level alternatives for the potential alignment of the primary trail route, produce a regional impact report, and proposed project costs. Public involvement meetings will be conducted, as well as ongoing discussions with participants on the project advisory committee. As always, comments, suggestions and ideas are welcome. For additional information, please contact CDTC, or the project consulting team at the following address:

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The mobile bicycle repair shop in Albany is an indication of the potential for community oriented business and facilities supported by Greenways in the Capital Region. The next phase of the Patroon Greenway plan will develop additional support for these kinds of opportunities. (Photo: J. Thomas)

9. Appendix

9.1 NYSDOT Concept Plan

9.2 Project Base Map

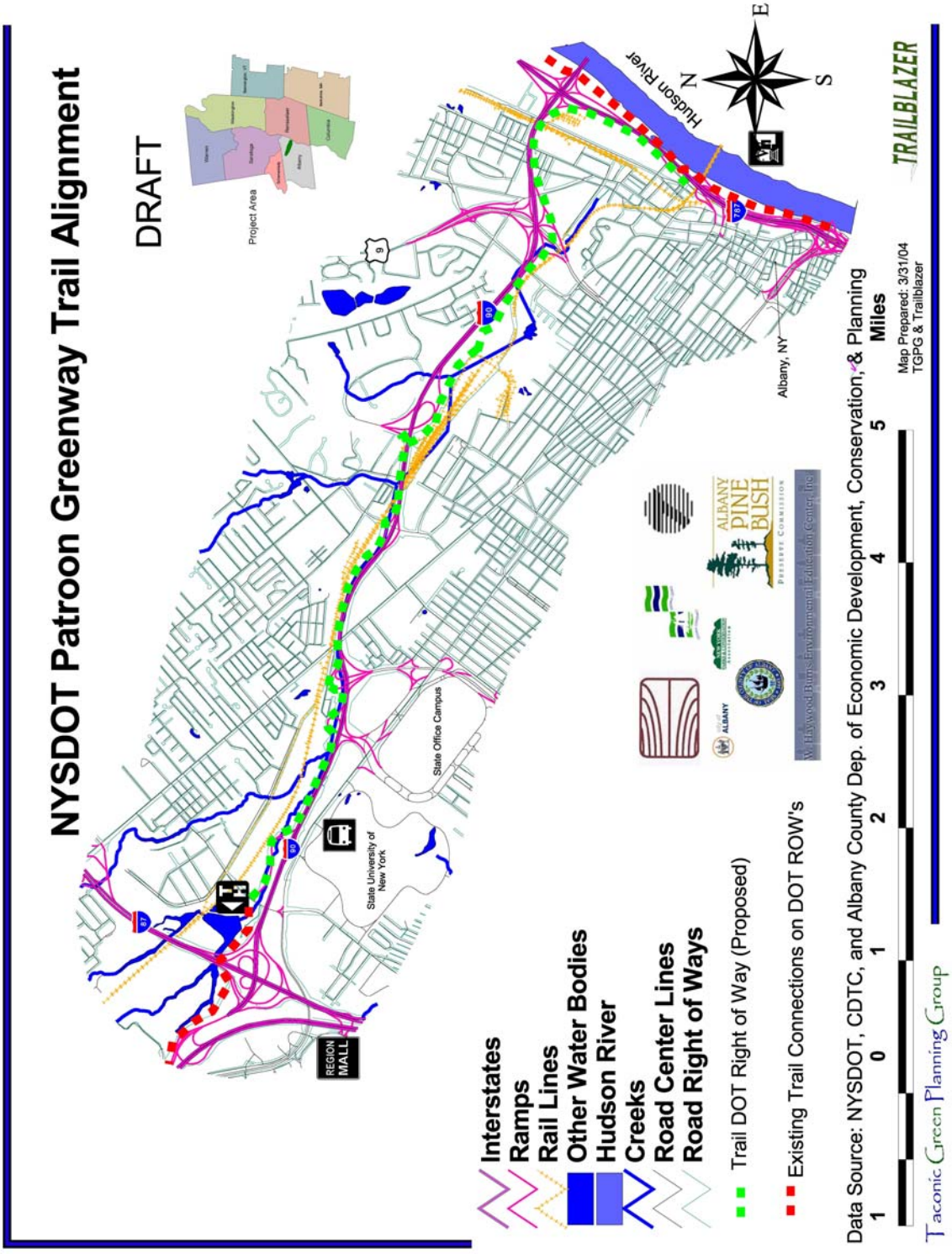
9.3 Existing Conditions Photos

9.4 Aerial Photos with Field Notes

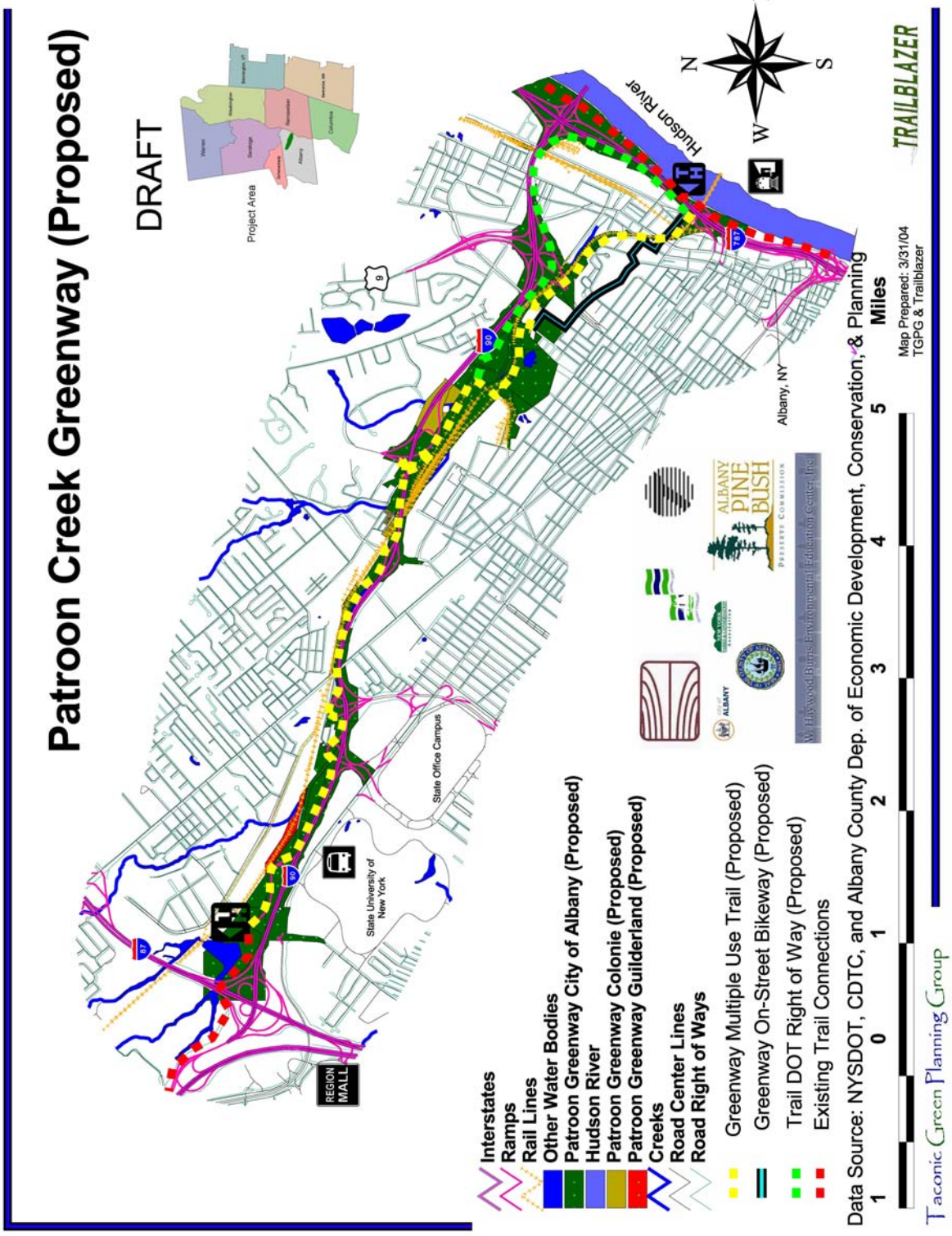
9.5 Patroon Creek Waterway Map

9.6 Adjacent & Affected Property Maps

Appendix 9.1: NYSDOT Concept Plan



Appendix 9.2: Project Base Map



Appendix 9.3.1: Existing Conditions Photos

I-90 Construction Shows what trail construction might look like

Rensselaer Lake, Western Terminus of Patroon Trail

Rail Trestle to be converted to important crossing

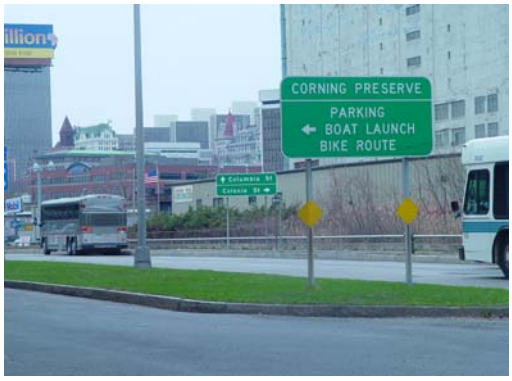
Tivoli Preserve, a key piece of the Patroon Greenway

Appendix 9.3.2: Existing Conditions Photos

Aerial View of Corporate Woods & CSX Rail Yard

Example of a Bike/Ped Crossing of a busy Street

Amtrak Train illustrates Property Use Challenges



Corning Preserve, Eastern Terminus of Patroon Trail

Appendix 9.3.3: Existing Conditions Photos

I-90 Bridge/Corridor Crossing of CSX Rail line

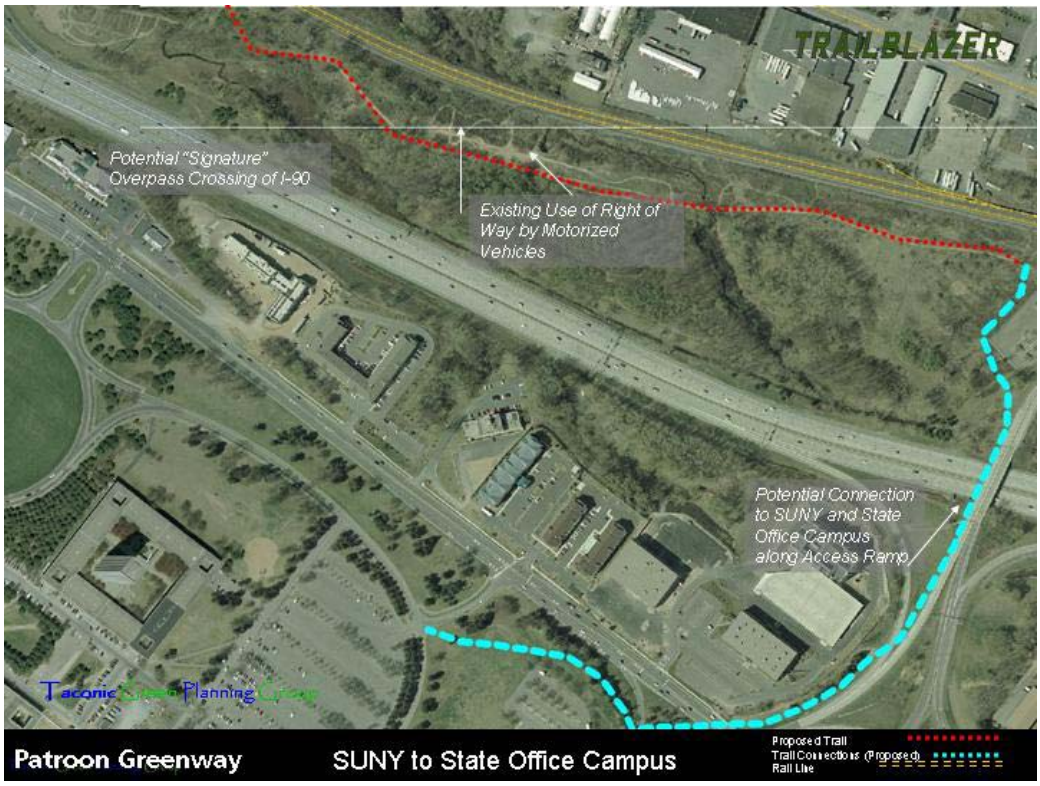
Arbor Hill Elementary School Area

I-90 Construction showing ConcreteLane Supports

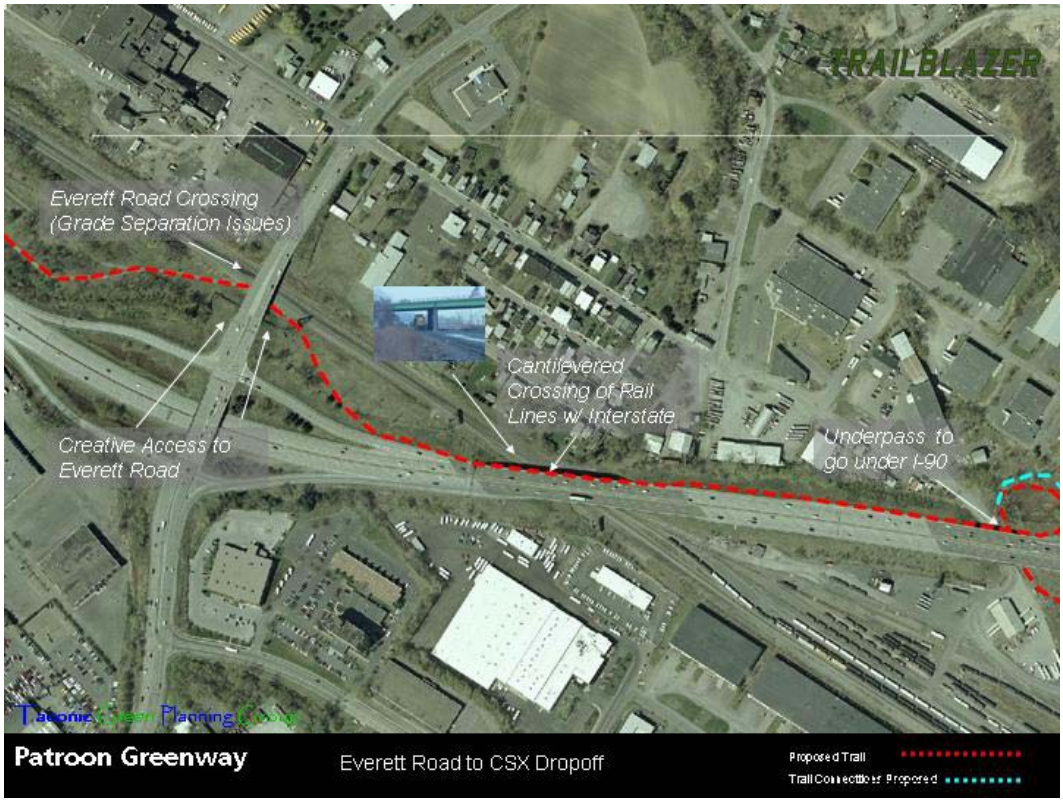
Corporate Sponsorship Opportunities to be explored

Appendix 9.4.1: Aerial Photos with Field Notes

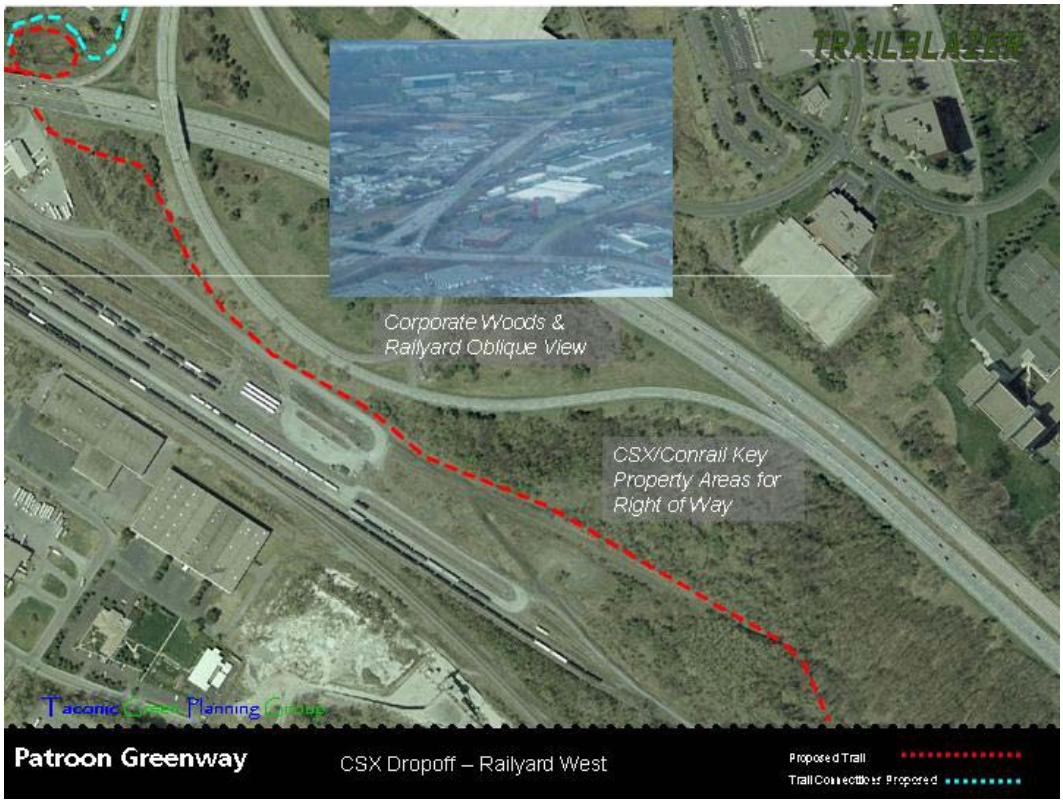
Appendix 9.4.2: Aerial Photos with Field Notes



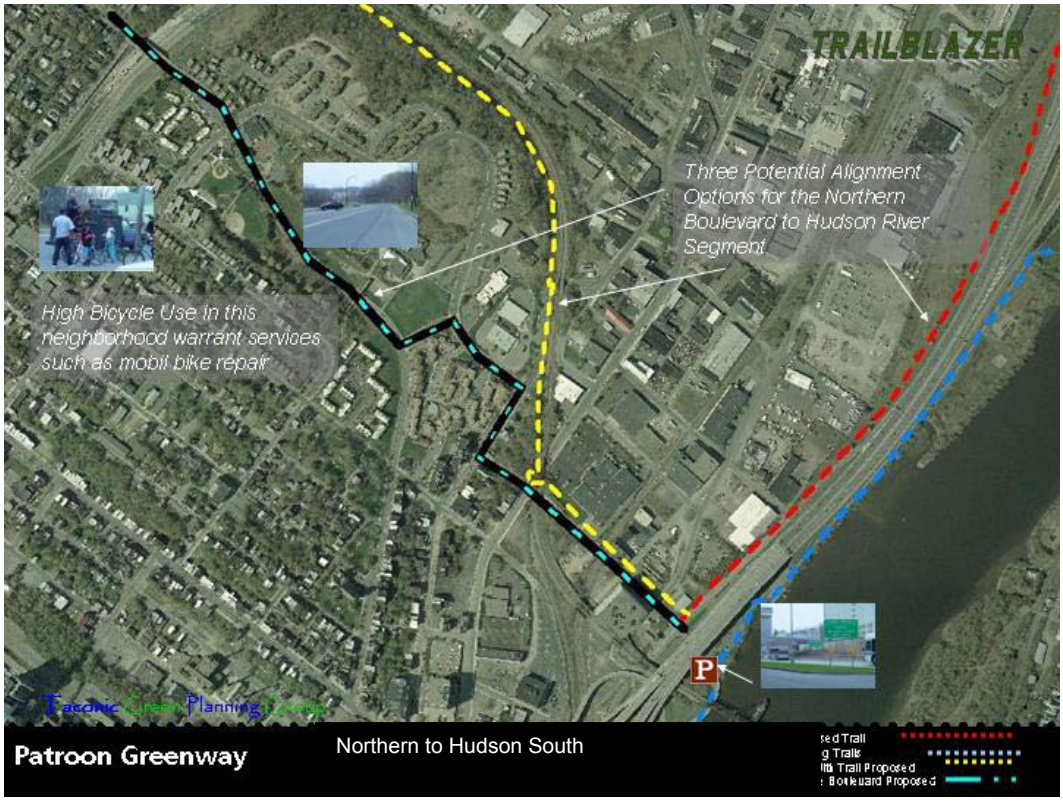
Appendix 9.4.3: Aerial Photos with Field Notes



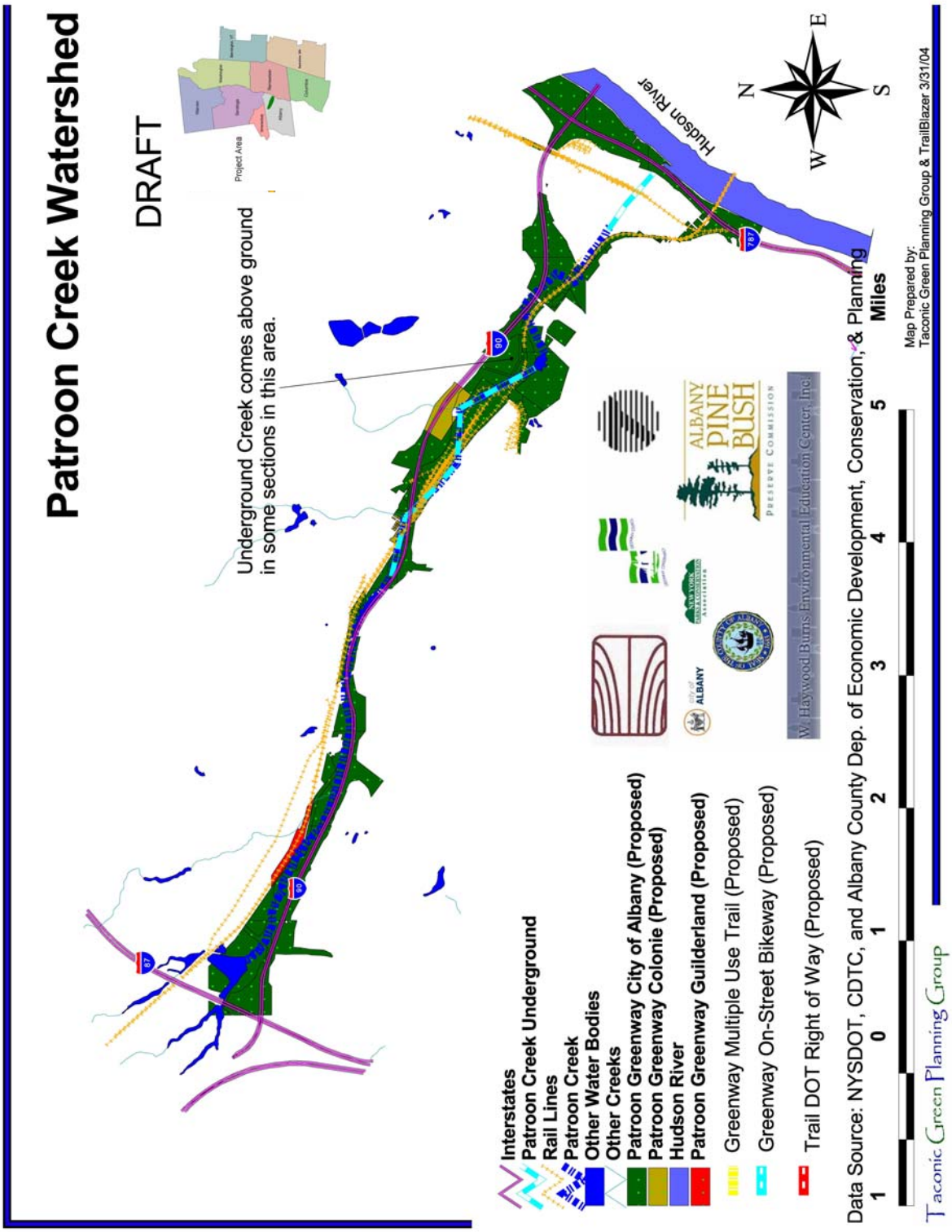
Appendix 9.4.4: Aerial Photos with Field Notes



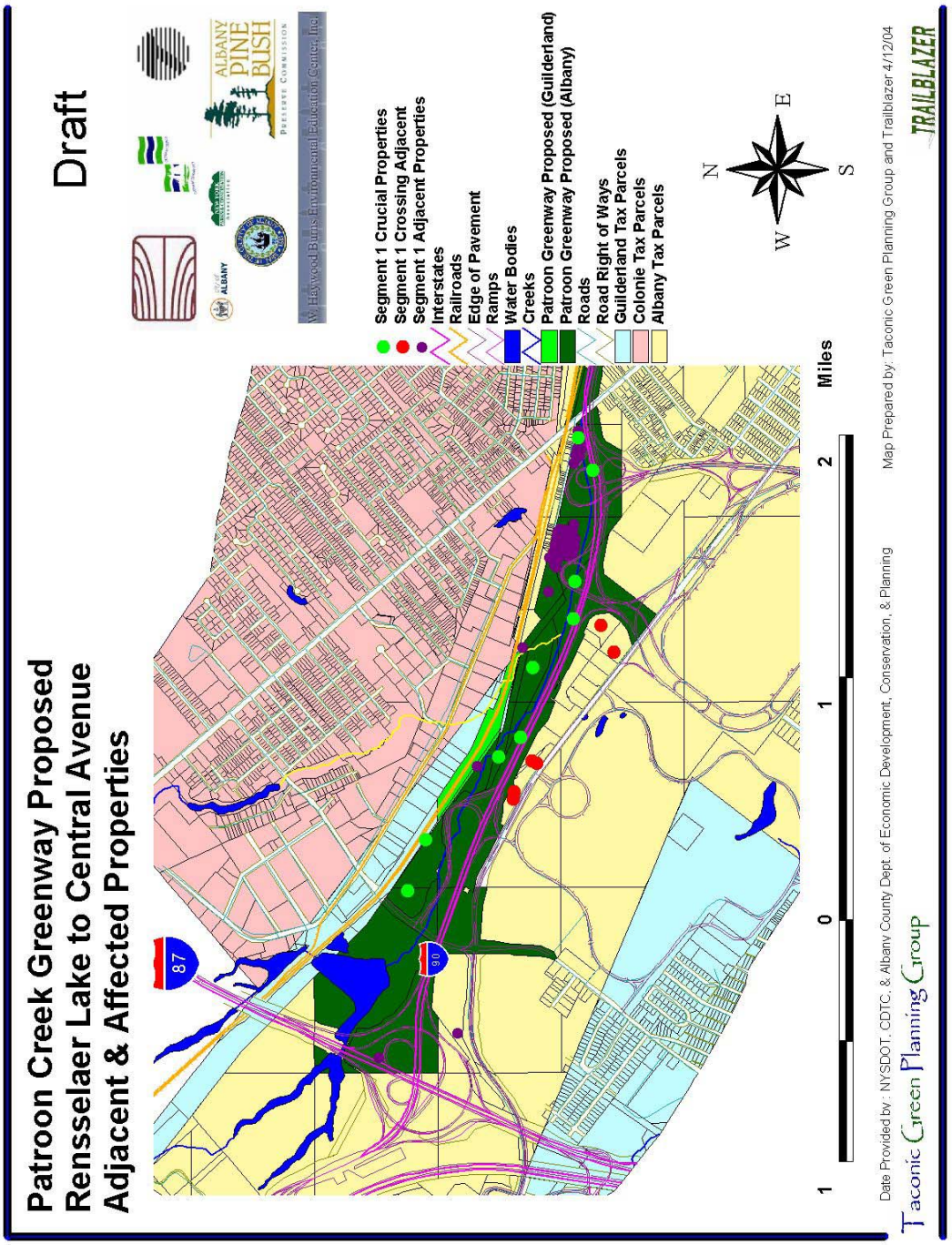
Appendix 9.4.5: Aerial Photos with Field Notes



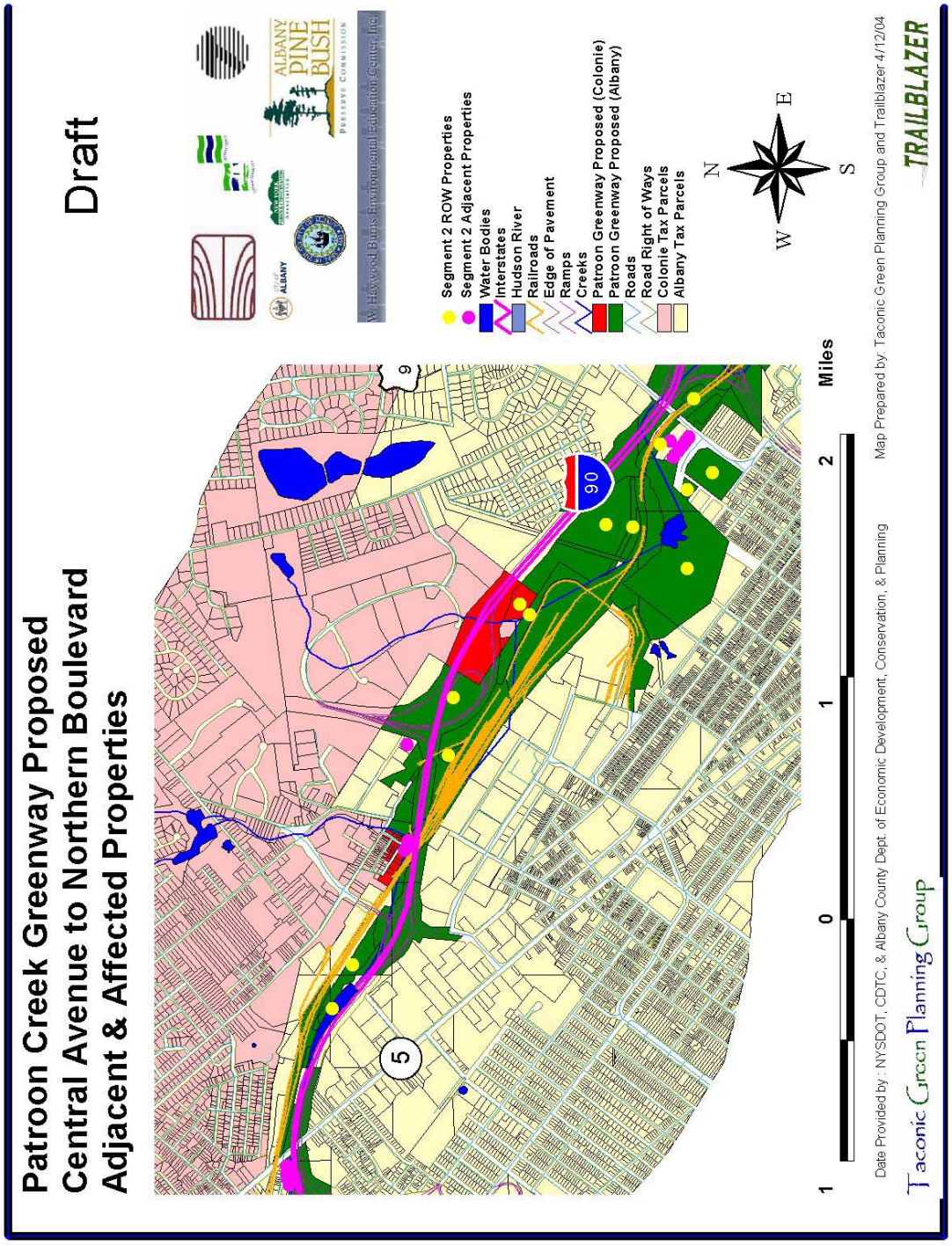
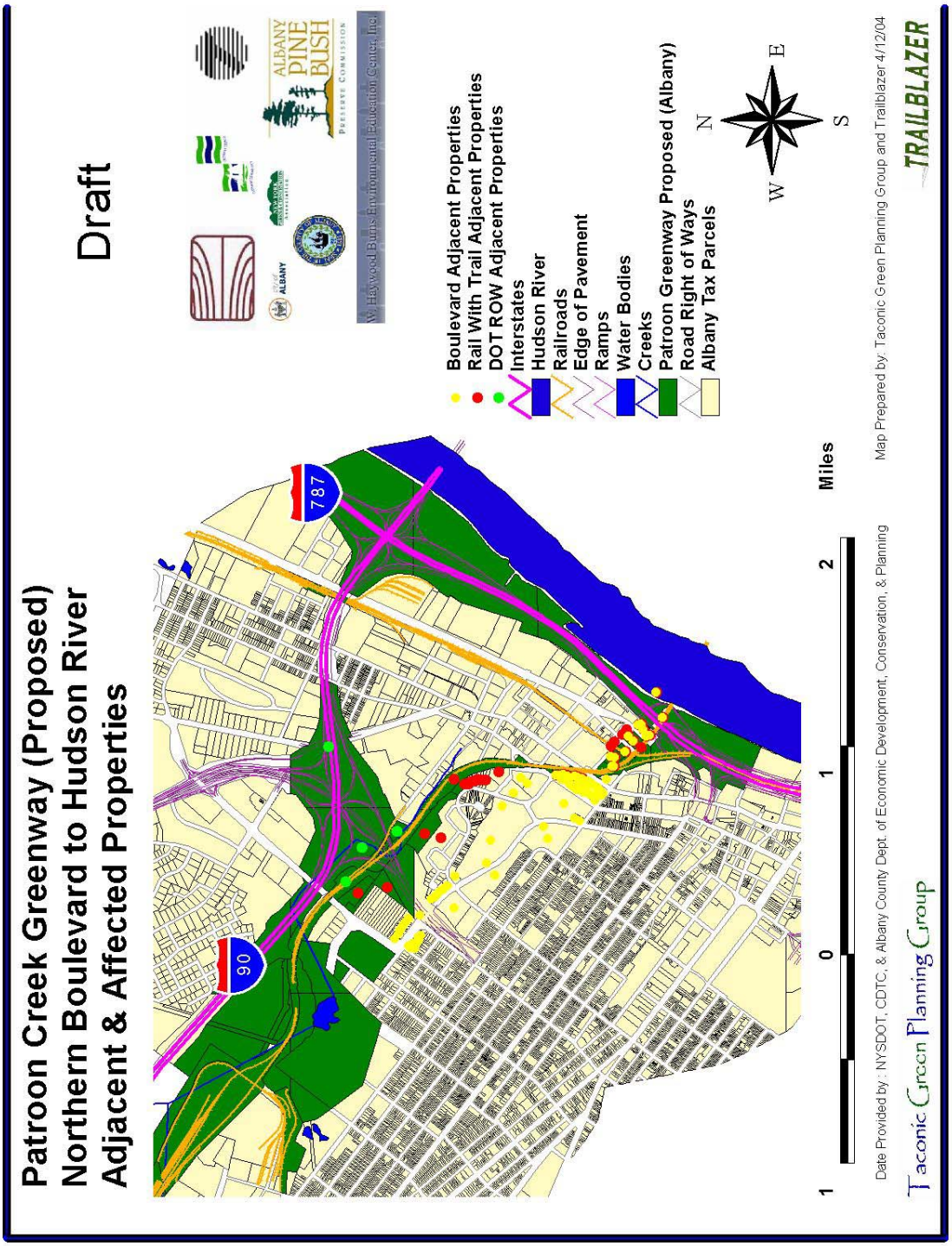
Appendix 9.5: Patroon Creek Waterway Map



Appendix 9.6.1: Adjacent & Affected Properties



Appendix 9.6.2: Adjacent & Affected Properties



Appendix 9.6.3: Adjacent & Affected Properties