

MARKETING STRATEGY

THIS PLAN PROVIDES A COMPREHENSIVE MARKETING STRATEGY TO BUILD AWARENESS of existing trails and the potential of new trails to create a multi-county trail network in the Capital District. This trail network provides alternative routes of transportation, connections and commuter options while also providing greater access to the outdoors and endless recreational opportunities. The plan needs to appeal to the general public, local businesses and elected officials alike in order to build support and progress.

This brand and marketing strategy should be used to promote the region and network as a whole and should provide tools to municipalities and tourism promotion agencies (TPAs), as well as independent trail networks and recreation facilities to help promote their own trails.

TARGET AUDIENCE

- COMMUTERS
- CYCLISTS
- LOCALS
- TOURISTS
- NATURE LOVERS
- FAMILIES
- RUNNERS
- CASUAL TRAIL USERS
- HIKERS
- BUSINESSES & EMPLOYERS
- GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

PROMOTERS

- LOCAL BUSINESSES
- TOURISM PROMOTION AGENCIES
- CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE
- CITIES, TOWNS & VILLAGES
- PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENTS
- LAND TRUSTS & CONSERVANCIES
- NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS
- EMPLOYERS





CAPITAL TRAILS

NEW YORK

BRANDING

While there are many individual trails that make up this trail network, an overall brand that represents the entire trail network and the connections that it creates between communities is recommended. The branding will provide a cohesive look for all trail network materials while upholding the existing trail brands on sections within the network. Existing trail brands are already well known to the public and will remain the primary brand while the trail network brand will be secondary within their sections.

The goal of this brand is to become a household name within the Capital District, to create a consistent look and message that encapsulates the region and the trail network, and to make this trail network a destination that people want to experience and support.

When marketing the trail network, consistency is key. A brand system that is easily recognizable with strong visual elements that can work across various applications has been developed for this network of trails.

THE BRAND: CAPITAL TRAILS NY

A brand for this trail network, called Capital Trails NY, has been developed. Five initial name and logo options were created and presented to the public via online surveys and stakeholder workshops, which were held in each of the network's four counties. From there, it was narrowed down to two distinct favorites and edits were made to both based on the feedback received. The two options were then presented at the Capital District Trails Plan Open House where Capital Trails NY was a clear favorite among stakeholders and community members.



CAPITAL TRAILS

NEW YORK

CAPITAL TRAILS NY

The name Capital Trails NY is straightforward and to the point. It immediately implies trails in New York's Capital District. The name can be easily linked to the Empire State Trail and other statewide trail efforts. It's also a nod to the fact that the heart of the Empire State Trail Network (the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor and the Hudson Valley National Heritage Area) lies within the Capital District.

The artwork depicts a city skyline in the background and a trail in the foreground to symbolize the trail connections between urban and rural communities in the region. The typeface used for Capital Trails is bold yet approachable, with letterforms in all caps, softened by their rounded edges. The blue and yellow color palette ties into New York State's official colors and will be easily readable on signage.

As seen within this marketing strategy section, multiple versions of the logo have been created so that branding can work across a range of applications. A Brand Standards Guide has been developed with guidelines on how to use the logo; how to use in concert with other trail names and logos; and what fonts, colors and branding elements should be used in marketing materials. This document will ensure consistent and cohesive execution of the Capital Trails NY brand.

MARKETING PLAN

A brand is only as successful as its roll out plan. It must be put to work through consistent applications and marketing efforts so that the brand's visibility will increase and interest will peak. The following deliverables are recommended to market this trail network.

WEBSITE

A website is an important platform to reach all audiences and to inform and engage the public and stakeholders. It can be the hub for all information and resources related to this project and can be tailored to each different audience. For trail users it can include trail maps, locations of trail heads, information on different trails amenities and difficulty levels, and links to existing individual trail websites. For stakeholders it can provide the overall plan, updates on progress and information on how to become involved. For sponsors it should provide sponsorship information and access to brand assets. The website should be responsive (optimized for phones, tablets and computers alike) so it's mobile-friendly and offers access to every user. From a content standpoint, the site should be heavily branded and include compelling professional photography of the trail network.

Recommended Website Features:

- Trail Network Map (downloadable & printable)
- Interactive Map
- About Section
- A list of trails within the network and links to trail websites, if available. Additional information could include:
 - Trailhead Locations
 - Trail Amenities & Accessibility Information
 - Difficulty Level
 - Types of Trail Use (Hiking, Biking, Horseback, etc.)
 - Informational Descriptions & Historical Context (if applicable)
 - Connections to Other Trails

- Schedule of Trail-related Events
- Reports on Progress of Trail Plan
- Copy of Trails Plan
- Sponsorship Information
- List of Sponsors
- Tools for Project Partners, Existing Trails & Sponsors
 - Logos
 - Brand Guidelines
 - Social Media Graphics
 - Photography
 - Downloadable Trails Report Plan
 - Downloadable Maps
- Blog Posts/News Section*
- Contact Info

*Guest bloggers could be invited to develop content that can be shared on the website blog, social media and email blasts.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram & Twitter are great places to share information and resources and to engage with your audience. Given that this network represents a vast amount of trails in the region and this brand is meant to help promote not only the network, but the individual trails, content from specific trails and existing trail users is already abundant. Project partners and trail users should be encouraged to submit photos and content and to share their experiences on the trail network.

SOCIAL MEDIA RECOMMENDATIONS

- Feature and thank sponsors
- Share photos & videos
- Share updates on progress of trail network plan
- Share blog posts and news articles relating to project
- Link to project website whenever possible
- Create occasional graphics using trail network branding elements to promote events, openings of new trails and to thank sponsors
- Create a hashtag for the network and encourage audience to use the hashtag in their own posts
- Engage by liking, commenting and reposting other content
- Hold periodic contests to boost following and engagement
- Identify and engage with social media influencers that have a similar target audience
- Hold Instagram Takeovers with social media influencers
- Boost posts on social media to increase following, engagement and general awareness

SIGNAGE

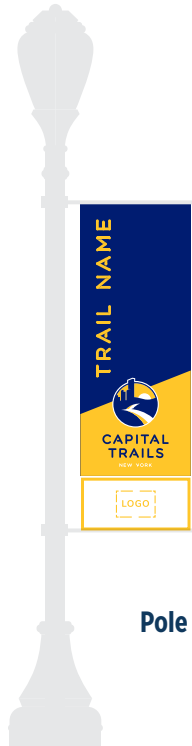
Signage is not only crucial for wayfinding in trail networks, but it's great way to drive your brand. Signage should be developed to alert people that they are either on a trail that is part of the trail network and can connect to other trails, or they are near a trail that can connect them to another destination. This network's trail signage can be used by itself or in conjunction with existing trail signage. Different types of signage should be developed for trail heads, trail connections, road routes, trail routes, and shared trails.

- **Kiosks:** In high traffic areas, a kiosk should be placed that contains a trail map, the trail network map, the trail network brochure, a sign-in sheet, and any trail specific collateral or information.
- **Pole Banners:** In high traffic areas where infrastructure allows, pole banners that indicate you are on a network trail with the trail's name and logo should be installed.
- **Trail Connection Signage:** Directional signage with distance information and trail names should be placed at key connection points within the trail network.
- **Banners:** Large format vinyl banners with grommets are great for trail specific events and can be easily moved from place to place. Banners can include sponsor logos and trail network branding.
- **Trail Head Signage:** Trail head signage with trail network branding and trail information should be placed at trail access points.
- **Trail Markers:** Trail markers should be placed on trees or posts throughout trail network routes.
- **Road Signs:**

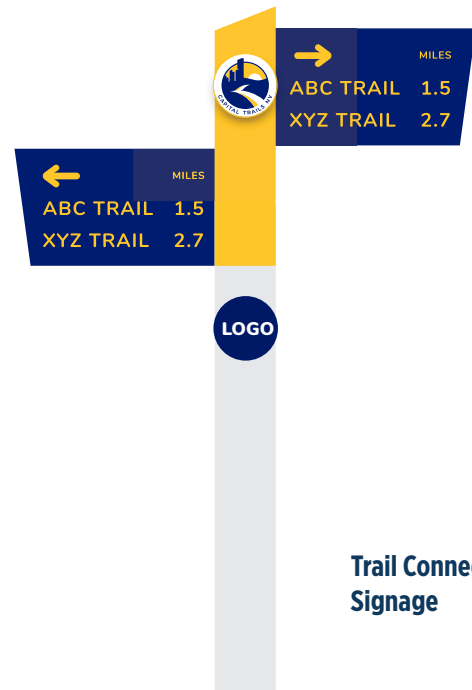
Route Signs: Signage for on-road routes to let people know they are on the trail network.

Directional Signs: Many people are unaware of trail access points, especially if they are not local. Directional signs along roads that are close to access points should be installed.

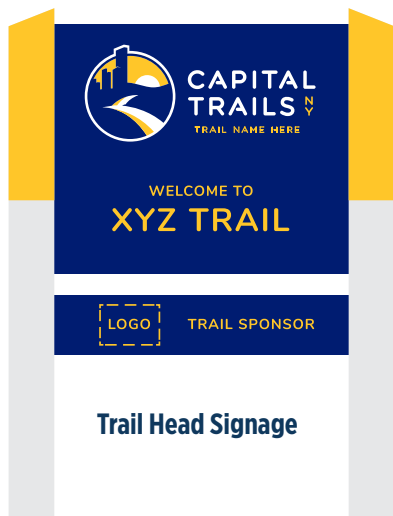
SIGNAGE EXAMPLES



Pole Banners



Trail Connection Signage



Trail Head Signage



Kiosk

EMAIL MARKETING

Periodic email blasts are a great way to keep your audience involved and up-to-date. Stakeholders and project partners should get consistent emails that keep them up-to-date on the progress of the network and should provide information on more ways to get involved. A clear call-to-action should be placed on the trail network website for people to sign up for your e-newsletter. Sign-in sheets should be placed at trail heads so users can submit contact information. Trail users and people who sign up on the website should receive e-newsletters that include new trail announcements, suggested day trips and upcoming trail-related events. Existing databases should be used to communicate with stakeholders and interested citizens on the growth of the trail network and to provide reminders of how to get involved. Databases can be grown with an email sign-up page on the website, sign-in sheets at trail heads, and sign in sheets at events, meetings and other public forums.

BROCHURE & TRAIL MAP

A brochure with a trail network map targeted to everyday trail users and tourists is a great way to promote the trail network as a destination and to provide people with necessary information on using the trails. The brochure and trail map should be pocket-sized and should include information on access points, trail amenities, trail uses, and difficulty. It should also include website and social media information. The brochures should be distributed to visitor centers, rest-stops, recreation hubs, and at trail head kiosks.

OUTREACH

Connecting with the media and regional and statewide Tourism Promotion Agencies is an important piece of the marketing strategy. By connecting with the right media outlets with the right story you'll be able to reach your target audience online and in print publications, such as newspapers and magazines.

OUTREACH RECOMMENDATIONS

- Send targeted press releases to media outlets. Keep in mind the readership of each publication and tailor the content accordingly
- Reach out to regional social media influencers and travel and sports writers, (For example, Pure Adirondacks), and pitch them on stories
- Seek out opportunities to get the website shared on directory sites, like AllTrails.com, Trails.com and ILoveNY.com
- Reach out to popular hiking and outdoor bloggers to see if they will feature the trail network
- Provide suggested day itineraries to TPAs (Tourism Promotion Agencies), bloggers and social media influencers

SUGGESTED OUTREACH:

- The Times Union
- The Saratogian
- Adirondack Sports
- Saratoga Living
- Saratoga Today
- The Daily Gazette
- The Record
- Discover Albany
- Albany Convention & Visitors Bureau
- New York State Conservationist
- Rensselaer County Tourism
- Online & Social Media:
 - saratoga.com
 - albany.com
 - cliftonpark.com
 - nyfallfoliage.com
 - alloveralbany.com
 - discoverschenectady.com
 - iloveny.com
 - pureadirondacks.com
 - exploresaratoga.com

BRANDED MERCHANDISE

People love swag! Affordable branded merchandise can be handed out to trail users, sponsors, and project partners to spread the word about the trail network. More substantial merchandise options can be sold to raise money for the trail network. The key is to create quality products that people will want and will proudly use or display.

MERCHANDISE RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Vehicle Decals
- T-shirts
- Tote Bags
- Water Bottles
- Keychains
- Embroidered Patches
- Carabiners
- Field Guides
- Magnets
- Mugs
- Mini Flashlights
- Ornaments
- Deck of Cards
- Prints
- Greeting Cards
- Postcards
- Bike First Aid Kits
- Pens



SPONSORSHIPS

Sponsorship opportunities are a great way to get businesses and residents involved with the development of the trail network and to give back. Sponsorship levels that fit all budgets should be available and multiple levels of sponsor recognition should be developed.

CORPORATE SPONSORSHIP RECOGNITION OPPORTUNITIES

- Promotion on trail network website, social media and email blasts
- Event sponsorship
- Guided staff hikes
- Hosted volunteer trail upkeep workdays
- Company logo on shirts, brochures, bags, and other trail network merchandise

RESIDENT SPONSORSHIP RECOGNITION OPPORTUNITIES

- Bench plaques
- Pavers
- Tree plaques/signage

ADOPT-A-TRAIL

- This can be offered as a premium level of support. It can be offered both to businesses and individuals to sponsor a trail section with larger donations. Trail adopters can get involved by helping with the upkeep of the trail and they can be recognized by the trail network with signage at each end of their trail segment and with branded merchandise giveaways.



Sponsorship Opportunities Brochure

KEY MARKETING PLAN TAKEAWAYS:

- All project materials should have a cohesive look and message so that the brand becomes easily recognizable.
- Project partners and sponsors should be provided with the tools (and free swag!) they need to help promote the trail network.
- Consistent engagement with the media and the public is key to gaining awareness and building support.
- Signage, print collateral, social media, and all other trail network materials and platforms should be treated as branding and marketing opportunities.

*Marketing will not necessarily be the responsibility of the Capital District Transportation Committee.