

**2020 NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation  
Recreation Trails Program****Background**

The Recreational Trails Program (23 USC 206) provides funds to the States to develop and maintain recreational trails and trail-related facilities for both non-motorized and motorized recreational trail uses. The Recreational Trails Program (RTP) is a set-aside of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP). In New York State, the RTP is administered by the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP), and the procedures for RTP projects are outlined in the NYS RTP Guide.

New York State receives approximately \$2M per year in RTP funds. RTP funding is intended for trail-based projects that are primarily recreational in nature, rather than serving a strictly transportation function. Projects must be related to trails as defined in 23 USC 206 (a) and 23 USC 206 (d). States must use 30% of each annual apportionment for non-motorized recreation, 30% for motorized recreation, and 40% for diverse recreational trail use. The RTP funds many kinds of recreational trail uses, such as pedestrian uses (hiking, running, wheelchair use), bicycling, in-line skating, equestrian use, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, off-road motorcycling, all-terrain vehicle riding, four-wheel driving, or using other off-road motorized vehicles.

**Project Development Process**

Projects are solicited through a competitive application process, and proposals are reviewed by OPRHP based on the selection criteria published with the solicitation for proposals. Awards typically range from \$5,000 to \$250,000. Municipalities, state agencies, federal agencies, and not-for-profit organizations are eligible to receive RTP funding. Currently, municipalities and not-for-profit corporations must apply through the online New York State Consolidated Funding Application (CFA) in odd-numbered years, and State and Federal agencies, public benefit corporations and public authorities must apply through the State Application Solicitation in even-numbered years. The CFA process is handled through the Regional Economic Development Councils. Projects are evaluated based upon eligibility, cost-effectiveness, accountability and innovation, and must further the goals of the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan.

**Proposed STIP Process**

Federal rules and guidance allow projects to be grouped by function, work type and/or geographic area using the applicable National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) classification of Categorical Exclusions under 23 CFR 771.117(c) and (d) and/or 40 CFR part 93. These can include smaller programs dedicated to a specific purpose such as the RTP. The use of Grouped projects is subject to FHWA review in consideration of the management of the program.

For greater efficiency in managing the program, OPRHP proposes adding future RTP projects to the STIP in a group (in lieu of first adding individual project to MPO TIPs). A group project will

eliminate the need for about 10 – 20 individual project records each year and the associated phases and modifications required for each of those records. Management of the RTP will be enhanced because RTP projects will be listed and maintained as a single program for FHWA, NYSDOT and OPRHP oversight. Individual projects including their descriptions, locations, funding, and award years will be captured on a separate list but the annual funding for the RTP program will be added to the STIP as a grouped project. Public involvement for the STIP group will occur through an amendment notification posted on the NYSDOT STIP web page for a given review period.

OPRHP will inform the MPOs of future solicitations for projects in order to increase MPO member awareness of the program opportunity. MPOs will be notified of project locations in their areas (about half of the FFY 2020 projects are expected to be in MPO areas) after selections have been made through the CFA process. MPOs may choose to list the projects on their TIPs for informational purposes but it will not be mandatory, and that listing will not impact the obligation of any projects in the RTP grouped project in the STIP. Should individual MPOs choose to opt out of this approach, they may progress the RTP project(s) in their area through their regular MPO process.

The NYS OPRHP proposal was approved by the NYSAMPO Directors at their July 10, 2020 meeting. The following 2 projects in the CDTC planning area were awarded funding from this program:

**Project Name: OPRHP Trail Assessment Project: Accessibility and Maintenance**

**Project Description:** Assess up to 20 miles of trail for accessibility. Work with parks to provide and update trail head signage relating to accessibility.

**Project Location:**

<b>Park</b>	<b>Region</b>	<b>Attendance (2018)</b>	<b>Miles of Trail (Approx.)</b>
Saratoga Spa	Saratoga	3,065,622	18.9
Chenango Valley	Central	214,454	26.6
Southwick Beach	Thousand Island	84,212	2.2
Sterling Forest	Palisades	309,492	99.8
Taughannock Falls	Finger Lakes	577,391	7.5
Black Diamond Trail	Finger Lakes	not recorded	8
Hamlin Beach	Genesee	345,821	3.1
Fort Niagara	Niagara	474,077	3.8
Jones Beach	Long Island	8,156,628	17.6
Rockefeller	Taconic	414,211	44.7
Genesee Valley	Allegany/Genesee	50,133	71.3

**Project Narrative:** The GIS Section of NYS Parks seeks to fund a Trails Technician position to perform assessments on up to 20 miles of trail in 11 state parks across the state. This project will expand upon work begun under a 2018 RTP grant by growing the inventory of trails assessed for accessibility opportunities across New York. Those 11 parks are: Saratoga Spa, Chenango Valley, Southwick Beach, Sterling Forest, Black Diamond Trail, Taughannock Falls, Hamlin

Beach, Genesee Valley Greenway, Fort Niagara, Jones Beach and Rockefeller. The technician will follow the NYS Parks guidelines for trail conditions assessment and utilize the Universal Trail Assessment Process (UTAP) or a similar method which follow the ABA Access Board accessible guidelines for trails. Condition assessments will also be conducted to provide managers with information on what trail improvements are necessary in order to enhance visitor enjoyment of the trail systems while protecting natural resources. Accessibility assessments will allow staff to consider trails for access improvements. Trailhead signage data will also be standardized, automated and produced but not the actual trail head signs themselves.

This application seeks to fund one position for the term of 2 years to accomplish these goals. The GIS Section Manager will supervise the position and provide overall coordination of the project.

This project does not require SEQOR.

**Total Project Cost:** \$102,927.50

Federal Share (maximum 80%): \$82,342.00

Matching Share (minimum 20%): \$20,585.50 in State force account

**Project Name:** East-West Road Multi-Use Trail

**Project Description:** Install a 10' wide paved, multi-use trail along the East-West Road. The trail is approximately 2,000 linear feet and runs on the north side of the road from the terminus of an existing trail to the intersection with the North-South Road. Project includes tree removal and crosses two federally regulated freshwater wetlands.

**Project Location:** Saratoga Spa State Park

**Project Narrative:** This project serves to connect an existing paved, multi-use trail along Route 9 in order to create an accessible off-road route through Saratoga Spa State Park. The existing trail along Route 9 currently terminates at the East-West Road. Patrons must then use the East-West Road to create a loop within this section of the park. The East-West Road is one of two major entry points into the park and is therefore a very busy vehicular route. The proposed trail will run along the north side of the East-West Road and will be separated by a 5' wide vegetated swale. This swale will serve as both a buffer between pedestrians and vehicles as well as a stormwater diversion channel.

This project enhances recreational access for persons with disabilities by creating a paved multi use trail separated from vehicular traffic. Currently, the only access along this route for persons with disabilities is in the travel lanes of the East-West Road. In the same manner, the proposed trail promotes safer trail conditions for all users. We will minimize impacts to natural resources by limiting the number of trees to be removed and by widening existing stream crossings instead of creating new crossings. Approximately 30 trees will need to be removed on this project. This trail will primarily be constructed off the shoulder of an existing road and will be separated from

the road by a 5-foot wide vegetated buffer to help reduce stormwater runoff. Keeping the trail close to the road will minimize the amount of grading required. This project was identified in the Saratoga Spa State Park Master Plan adopted in December 2019. There is one variation in that the Master Plan calls for a stonedust trail and we are proposing to pave the trail. Paving will cost more up front but will reduce long term maintenance and allow for a more even surface. This trail is not part of the Statewide or National Trails Plan.

**Total Project Cost:** \$345,000

Federal Share (maximum 80%): \$276,000

Matching Share (minimum 20%): \$69,000 in State funding

