Cover photo: Lakes to Locks Passage, Inc. Annual Meeting, group break-out sessions, Photo by Dan Jeanson.

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INTRODUCTION

The New York State Canal Corporation has embarked on a planning process to update the 1995 New York State Canal Recreationway Plan to guide the future development of the canal system. The University at Albany’s Fall 2014 Planning Studio is assisting the New York State Canal Corporation in this effort. This report represents the second stage of this process: the results of a public input session conducted to collect public opinion on the canal system. The input from this public input session supplements the information gathered during stakeholder interviews conducted in the first stage on this process.

The location for this public input session was the October 8, 2014 annual meeting of Lakes to Locks Passage, Inc. This private nonprofit organization was established to protect, interpret, and promote the interconnected waterway of the Upper Hudson River/Champlain Canal, Lake George, Lake Champlain, and the Richelieu River/Chambly Canal. They invited Brian Stratton, Director of the New York State Canal System, to be the keynote speaker at their annual meeting. They also invited the University at Albany Planning Studio to use this time to conduct a public input session. The shared interests of these three entities provided the setting for the public input session.

University at Albany Planning Studio would like to thank the Lakes to Locks Board of Directors and staff, who generously allowed the Planning Studio to utilize their meeting to conduct this public input session, and the meeting participants who donated their time and insights about the canal system.
MEETING CONTEXT

On Wednesday, October 8, 2014, Lakes to Locks Passage, Inc. held its annual meeting at the Crandall Public Library in Glens Falls, N.Y. The meeting marked the twelfth anniversary of the organization and featured a public input session conducted by graduate students from the University at Albany’s Fall 2014 Planning Studio.

Members of the planning studio assisted Lakes to Locks Passage, Inc. in setting up and organizing the meeting, and devised and carried out the room layout and transitions. Studio members staffed the reception table and handed out meeting materials to meeting participants. Following this welcome, meeting participants were directed to three visual displays created by the planning studio where they were encouraged to place stickers on maps of the Lakes to Locks Passage region to show where they live, where they go to recreate, and to indicate their favorite activity along the canal system.

The Lakes to Locks Passage Board meeting culminated with a keynote address by New York State Canal Corporation Director Brian U. Stratton, after which the room was transformed by the planning studio into a public input session divided into five discussion groups. Facilitated by five pairs of planning studio members, these groups discussed the future of the New York State Canal System.

The meeting received coverage in the local newspaper of record, the Post-Star of Glens Falls, N.Y., which published a story that appeared in its online version later that day (the full online article can be found in Appendix A). The meeting was advertised by the same newspaper in an announcement on the preceding day. Lakes to Locks Passage, Inc. issued its own press release of the event, and posted the announcement on its website www.lakestolocks.org.
METHODOLOGY

In total, meeting participants were asked five questions. Three questions were posed in the form of interactive stations and the other two questions were posed in small group discussions. The interactive stations were placed near the registration table with assistants standing nearby to direct participants. The intent of the stations was to capture participant interest at the beginning, encourage participation, and show the scale of the canal system’s influence and how it affects each participant individually.

The answers to these three questions reflect the nature of the audience present at the meeting. Most were from the area surrounding the Champlain Canal. Many were especially interested in museums and historic sites, as well as canoeing or kayaking.

Following the Lakes to Locks Passage board meeting, participants broke out into five groups with students serving as facilitators and note takers for each group. During this session, participants were asked:

1. What is your vision for the future of the canal system?
2. (a.) What are some initiatives you would like to see on the canal system?
   (b.) Are there specific programs or projects you would suggest for the canal system or canal communities?

The answers to these questions were sorted into relevant categories and are presented on the following pages.
METHODOLOGY

Figure 4: What is your favorite activity to do along the canal system?
There were several common themes and recommendations that emerged during the group discussions. They are as follows:

**History** - Participants suggested that canal system history should be represented and enhanced through connections, increased awareness, and preservation of character at varying scales.

**Partnerships** - The importance of establishing a strong lead entity was cited by participants for canal system success. Stronger partnerships between the public and the private sector were also recommended.

**Marketing** - Participants discussed three key marketing needs: image, target audience, and techniques. Groups also recommended that there should be more investment in market research.

**Tourism** - Through preserving historic aspects of the canal system, and completing the Canalway Trail, participants felt that tourism could be leveraged as an income-generating activity for canal communities.

**Recreation** - Participants believed that completing the Canalway Trail, expanding year-round recreational opportunities, and increasing connections to canal-side businesses during events would expand recreational activity along the canal system.

**Education** - There were three types of educational needs raised by the participants: education in the classroom through curriculum, providing information to tourists, and educating local communities.

**Community development** - Participants strongly believed that tourism was the driving factor behind community development.

**Infrastructure development** - Recommendations were put forth to expand opportunities for locals and tourists by increasing canal-community connections, developing amenities, and promoting the historic nature of the canal system.

**Infrastructure maintenance** - Major maintenance issues highlighted by the participants included: dredging to increase commercial shipping, improving water quality, controlling invasive species, and completing trails.

**Commercial shipping** - Participants discussed the need to form a coalition to address commercial use on the canal, and to educate businesses about shipping opportunities.
HISTORY

The canal system’s history was one of the significant themes that public input meeting participants demonstrated in their discussions. They indicated a desire for increased representation of the canal system’s history through the implementation of regional and statewide plans, the evaluation of local and regional canal groups and statewide associations, as well as organizations in development and management, and finally, by those maintaining the canal’s historic segments. Participants tried to signify the importance and value of the canal system’s history and its historic characteristics, particularly for the attraction of visitors and encouragement of partnerships. As indicated in discussions, crucial concepts to focus on are recreation, preservation and restoration, making use of the Path through History program and increasing awareness of the canal system’s history.

Participants’ vision for the presentation of the canal system’s history in the future involves connections, awareness, and character. The following ideas and suggestions are specific examples that show the importance and value of the canal system’s history and its value to the public input meeting participants:

**Participants want:**

- A partnership with surrounding parks and sites to provide signage showing connections with historic sections that are currently unmarked.
- Connections via a path through the canal system’s history by using technology for interpretation in order to encourage visitors.
- Connections between downtowns, historical sections, and well-travelled roads to encourage visitors.
- Enhanced opportunities for awareness of the canal system’s history through tourism in order to increase revenues.
- Maintaining and perpetuating the canal system’s historic character through heritage and historic trails, heritage tourism, and repurposing old buildings.
- Creating a balance between commercial interests and maintenance of the historic character.
- Raising historic awareness through a partnership between historical groups and educational tour groups to incorporate the history of the canal system in the education system.
- Establishing character through the restoration of historic sections along the canal system, linking history and canal system use.
Partnerships are extremely important especially when it comes to a resource as large as the canal system. The canal system is 524 miles long and passes through many different communities. The only way to market this is through partnerships of the canal communities, public and private sectors, as well as local and state governments. These partnerships would allow the canal system to work as a whole, combining resources and budgets. Many of the participants also stressed the need to have a leading entity when it came to the canal, and believed that the initiative that could strengthen the canal system as a whole was a stronger partnership between the public and private sectors. Participants also wanted to see ‘I Love NY’ become more involved with the canal system.

Participants mentioned many other kinds of partnerships as well:

- **Educational partnerships** between schools and historical groups. One partnership that has worked particularly well along the canal system is a project at Old Erie Lock 19 in Vischers Ferry, Saratoga County where a local high school partnered with volunteer engineers who mentored students through the design and reconstruction of an historic footbridge.

- **Marketing partnerships** were mentioned more than once, specifically a stronger relationship with I Love NY as well as a stronger effort by communities to cross-market the canal system so that visitors stop at more than one community.

- **Community partnerships:**
  - Opportunities for students to engage in public service
  - Networking between libraries, Town Halls, and other information centers for more effective communication with visitors
  - Partnerships across multiple levels of government and citizen organizations (like the one between Canal Corp., Warren County, and the Feeder Canal Alliance).

- **Commercial partnerships:**
  - Partner with Amtrak to increase bicyclist accessibility to trails by allowing bicyclists to bring their bikes on trains and de-board near the Canalway Trail.
  - Increase cooperation between community businesses and the NYS Canal Corporation.
  - Provide automatic membership for canal side businesses to local Chambers of Commerce.
Marketing was another key area of concern brought up by public input meeting participants. In order for other investments in the canal system to be successful, it was determined that awareness of opportunities along the canal system must be increased. Participant comments and recommendations fell into three main categories: 1) What image to market; 2) who to market to; and 3) how to market.

Perhaps one of the greatest marketing challenges identified by participants was determining the appropriate level of focus for marketing given the size of the canal system and diversity of its components. In the end, a four tier focus for marketing unveiled itself, suggesting that a multi-layered approach for marketing might be best:

- **Tier 1** - At the broadest geographic perspective, some participants recommended marketing the entire waterway loop or “water highway” as well as what lay beyond the canal, including connections to lakes and communities.
- **Tier 2** - At the next level down, participants strongly supported marketing and interpreting the canal as a whole entity with attention paid to all parts of the system. Many participants felt that current marketing efforts primarily target the Erie Canal, with the Champlain Canal getting less attention.
- **Tier 3** - Some participants also recommended regional branding, citing the success of the Lakes to Locks Passage. It was suggested that there could be broader information of regional resources.
- **Tier 4** - Finally, at the most local level, participants recommended more marketing and education targeting local residents as a method of increasing word of mouth marketing of canal history and offerings to canal users.

In regards to identifying appropriate audiences for marketing, the most common recommendation made by participants was to invest in more market research. Participants suggested that tracking canal users would be helpful in determining their habits (i.e. do boaters leave their boats and go into communities?). Others suggested marketing the canal specifically to those living in New York City, highlighting the canal’s quiet communities and pastoral view sheds. Finally, it was recommended that the canal be marketed to commercial users as well as tourists.
MARKETING

All five facilitated groups advocated for increased funding for marketing, stating that there needs to be more, better and visible marketing and advertising. Specific initiatives recommended for marketing include:

- Connect communities to share information and market the canal as a whole.
- Increase awareness by hosting more events (i.e. bike tours).
- Increase use of technology to help communities spread information: utilize social media and mobile applications; and create a digital towpath website displaying information about the canal.
- Attend meetings and events in-person: attend boat shows in Canada; meet with communities and companies face-to-face.
Lack of tourism is a growing challenge that the canal system faces. In times like these, where economic development is vital, an increase in tourism could be the key to turning things around and allowing the canal to prosper. Throughout participant responses, tourism was linked to marketing, recreation, infrastructure and education. Across the board, participants saw improving tourist draws as a way to market the canal as a tourism destination. The canal system has many important educational and historic aspects that participants saw as important items to highlight. There are so many different activities to do along the canal that it could be marketed as a tourism destination for people of all different ages and backgrounds.

Overall, tourism was seen as a way to bring money to the canal communities while preserving the historic nature of the canal system. Although participants felt that preserving historic trails and completing the Canalway Trail were the best ways to bring tourism to Upstate New York, they were also concerned with encouraging visitors to step off the trail and spend tourism dollars. In order to tap into the linear nature of the canal system and create linkages, several participants spoke of various passport programs to entice visitors to travel from community to community. This would be done by strategically placing passport stamp sites that encourage people to get off the trail or the canal and go into communities. This sort of program would also be an effective cross-marketing strategy.

Meeting participants also discussed the need to market the entirety of the canal as a “water highway”. The discussion highlighted the need to attract tourism by way of water, which included strategies to attract both national and international cruises, as well as opportunities for small tourism-related businesses along the canalway. Some of the individual suggestions are listed below.

- Offer 4 day weekend package deals including hotel, transportation and activities with mini itineraries.
- Partner with international cruise companies.
- Encourage the reinstatement of floating casinos.
- Identify opportunities for boat/kayak/canoe rentals as well as whitewater rafting.
TOURISM

Additional ideas for driving tourism along the canal came in the form of programs and events. Thematic tours were brought up several times as specific programs participants would like to see along the canal. Some themes suggested were: Ecotourism, Agro-tourism, driving tours, and kayak and paddle tours. Participants also had many ideas for events that could take place along the canal. These events would allow the canal communities to get involved and bring their local connections to the tourists. Participants wanted to see more and similar events that make use of the canal. This type of local involvement was seen as the key to connecting the canal communities and the canal system.
RECREATION

Recreation can bring a source of additional revenue to communities. Looking at the responses of the participants on the three questions, biking and completion of the trail along the canal had the most frequent responses; the remaining responses can be broken out into three categories: 1) Canal-wide recreational opportunities; 2) year-round access; and 3) connection to canal-side businesses.

1) Canal-wide recreational opportunities: a completed Canalway Trail and communities that are bike, motorcycle and snowmobile friendly. They want to see the canal with more accessibility to multiple modes of recreation such as kayaking, ice skating and fishing tournaments. They also are in favor of having bike facilities along the entire canal system, like that of the Lake Champlain Bikeway. The participants talked about introducing a birding trail along the entire length of the canal for enthusiastic birders. They felt that locating golf course holes at each lock, such that the entire length of the canal encompassed a complete course, and the installation of linear parks along the canal would be a great source of entertainment for the visiting public and boaters. Participants wanted “age-tailored opportunities” for younger generations to enjoy the canal.

2) Accessibility to the canal is limited in winter months due to weather conditions and lowered water level. Therefore, the participants suggested more wintertime trails to increase recreation on the canal. Participants felt skating on the canal would be a good recreation option in winter. The canal being available to the public all year round with the additional recreation options, would help to increase the number of businesses in the canal-front villages.

3) Participants also talked about opportunities to increase hotel business by attracting people to the canal fronts. The participants spoke of projects and programs to install art along the canal, which would improve the canal-way aesthetically and spread awareness of the canal simultaneously. An event like Saratoga’s “Head of the Fish” regatta was suggested as a way to increase participation from the public.
EDUCATION

The term education, as raised by participants, encompassed not only the formal, classroom type of education, but also education as a means of outreach and guidance in moving forward. The recommended educational activities fell into three distinct categories: 1) classroom and curriculum; 2) education and outreach through public dissemination of information; and 3) education at the community level as a means of assisting canal communities.

In relation to classroom and curriculum, the necessity of integrating canal concepts into the educational curriculum and thereby getting students excited about, and involved with the canal through classroom instruction was highlighted. Participants suggested changing current curriculum content to make it more in tune with the history and the future of the canal, as well as finding ways to connect students with community partners for activities that are focused on the canal system. The Lock 19 project in Saratoga County was highlighted as an example of a project that successfully connected students with community partners. For this project, 60 high school students were mentored by engineers, who donated their time, building a historic footbridge at Lock 19. Participants also recommended enhancing arts programs in schools as a means by which to educate and engage students with the canal system.

The second recommended action was education and outreach through public dissemination of information; finding the best way to inform and educate the public not only about the history of the canal system, but also to educate the public about the canal system itself as well as the opportunities available within nearby canal communities. Recommended outreach methods are described below:

- Interpretive signage that shares location information or information about the significance of the area.
- Waterway guides should be more robust and should include information on all of the services offered along the canal system as well as descriptions of activities scheduled.
- Localized information packaging and marketing: Information should be regularly updated and available both in print and online (i.e. a toolkit for my community that highlights the assets within that community such as museum, historic buildings, trails, parks, etc.).
- Improve knowledge of local assets and educate the public about what is in their community with regard to the canal system.
- Distribute Information and education about invasive species.
Lastly, the third category pertained to education at the community level to assist communities, both canal-side and land-side, with economic development and growth. This education could come in the form of providing communities with the tools needed in order to start or restart their economic development engine by utilizing the canal system. One recommendation was for the creation of a planning template utilizing successful communities, showcasing before and after scenarios, to provide examples of opportunities for re-envisioning, revitalizing, and expanding local economies. This template would encourage communities to reinvent themselves using successful models. Another recommendation from the participants was to make local residents more aware of what they have in terms of historic resources, emphasizing the value of preservation. For example, in Whitehall, all of the cast iron on buildings was removed, thus losing an important piece of history for the community. Additionally, attendees stressed the importance of educating communities about available economic opportunities and how to move forward with implementation of those opportunities.
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Turning towards the individual communities lining the canal, the following concepts were presented by participants as strategies to spur community development. These comments move beyond the NYS Canal System to incorporate the needs, challenges, and prior successes of canal communities. Several of the participants were elected officials or representatives. Their suggestions highlight the challenges communities face, and their relationship with the canal system.

Throughout the responses, the concept that ‘tourism drives economic development’ was put forward several times. This concept points to the interconnected nature between tourism and economic development, highlighting the importance of supporting both tourism and economic development so that the cities, towns, and villages lining the canal system can thrive. One action put forth to support this concept was the need to complete the Canalway Trail. This was highlighted many times across multiple groups as an important project.

Similarly, there was a strong emphasis on strengthening connections between the canal system and nearby communities. Two types of connections were discussed: transportation and business-to-canal connections. In reference to transportation, participants discussed strengthening the linkages between boat, train, and bicycle traffic such that visitors seeking to switch modes of transportation are able to have a smooth transition. Secondly, meeting participants discussed encouraging the connections between recreational canal use and the business community with an emphasis on downtown. Some of the individual suggestions are listed below.

- Build hotels along the canal system that cater to boaters.
- Increase research on boater needs - where do they go when docked, and what services do they need?
- Increase services for boaters - some communities have successfully marketed services such as Laundromats as “the best on the canal,” successfully drawing boaters into communities.
Several techniques and implementation strategies were listed by participants. They cited a need to share best practices among the canal communities so that successful models could be replicated. Participants also recognized that securing grant funding would be a necessary step for many of these projects. It was recommended by one group that tourism zones be established so that communities were not competing against one another for funding based on visitor count. Lastly, the need to increase the quantity and availability of user information was highlighted. Participants recognized the value of locating this information at points of entry into the communities. This information would be used to guide canal system users to the businesses and amenities that they need to support and improve their overall experience.
Infrastructure development is a key aspect in the success of the recreationway along the Canal System. Infrastructure is defined as the basic physical components of interrelated systems and organizational structures needed for an operation that facilitates the production, and distribution of goods and services. The term typically refers to the technical structures that support a society, including roads, bridges, ports, bicycle paths, pedestrian walkways, curbside landscaping, etc. all of which are encompassed by the New York State Canal System and its accompanying recreationway. Expanding infrastructure for locals and tourists would not only increase the number of people who recreate, but it would bring more people to the canal communities as well. As residents of communities along the canal, the participants had a variety of suggestions ranging from small additions to larger projects in order to fulfill the vision they had for the canal system. Although there were many proposed ideas on where infrastructure development should occur and in what means, most came back to the general concept of making connections and offering amenities.

Connections could occur in many different ways: using signage and way finding, increasing accessibility, completing the Canalway Trail, and making intermodal connections. Participants cited a lack of signage necessary to highlight these community assets (including unmarked old buildings which could be repurposed or restored, old canal walls, and foundations, for example). Most people still don’t know their locations or significance. As discussed in the previous section, making these improvements ties in closely with community development, as it would provide an opportunity for local municipalities to benefit from increased traffic due to the ease of use and opportunity available. Some specific trails missing connections are the Washington County portion of the Canalway Trail, Hudson Falls to Ft. Ann, Blueway trails, and snowmobile trails.

The desire for increased amenities also generated a wide range of ideas from large projects such as brownfield cleanup, to small improvements such as picnic tables. Lessening the stigma associated with brownfields and improving the aesthetic helps draw people to the area by offering scenic places along the waterfront for people to enjoy and contributes to community development. Maintenance dredging to widen canal locks to their fullest capacity and providing more boat launch points along the canal are other improvements that would allow communities to benefit from established enhancements and drive further success.
INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

In turn, this strategy would also require more overnight options for hiker/biker/boater campsite areas and hotels/motels would need to be large enough to accommodate a tour bus of people. In addition to amenities, services could be offered to help accommodate a variety of potential user needs including holding tanks, garbage facilities, public restrooms and showers, increased hours of lock operation and increased Wi-Fi access at strategic locations to facilitate information provision to canal users.

The participants also emphasized the importance of integrating history with infrastructure development. The NYS Canal System had a huge historical impact on New York; there are many locations and buildings that should be highlighted and/or repurposed and there are also many structural pieces that should be preserved. Maintaining and caring for these pieces could generate more opportunity for education and interest in the area.

Finally, although many of these improvements would help canal communities, an important installment would be placing visitor centers at locks. This would help provide users with knowledge of the area and would provide an opportunity to showcase historic locations to visit, inform visitors of businesses that offer bike rentals, and create awareness of other local shops and eateries. As a result, these would all help strengthen the connectivity between canal communities and visitors as well as improve the community and local economy.
The often-repeated statement that water is the most destructive force in nature certainly holds relevance in context to the canal system. The Barge Canal is celebrating almost one hundred years in operation. In order to meet the demands that any infrastructure project intends to provide, maintenance must be of critical importance to ward against the effects of time and degradation processes. This differs from other themes we have covered thus far, in that it is an eventual imperative, as nothing is permanent. Few, if any, of the other priorities can occur if the canal is not functioning. Proper, safe, effective, and efficient operation of the canal infrastructure - the walls, locks, pumps, indeed the water itself, as well as all those items listed above, defines a challenging set of interrelated systems, some of which currently date to well beyond their original designed lifespan. Therefore it is not surprising that participants in the public meeting highlighted the urgent need to maintain and modernize New York’s aging canal infrastructure.

When asked about the future vision, initiatives, and specific programs or projects of the canal system and/or canal communities, a few key concepts were discussed by participants in regards to maintenance of canal infrastructure. For one thing, there was recognition that huge opportunities exist for industries but will require navigational channel dredging so that tonnage increases in cargo and recreational boats can be facilitated. Stewardship of the canal in the form of a clean Hudson River was also cited. Specifically included in this task was the control of invasive species, environmental dredging due to polluters, and navigable dredging for commercial and recreational use.

Participants suggested a host of infrastructure maintenance related initiative items. In terms of vision alone, the condition and scarcity of boat launch points were cited as a maintenance issue. Some cited that the Historic Champlain Canal Walls, such as those owned in the Village of Whitehall, which introduce a funding challenge in terms of maintenance. Participants questioned how to make best use of them (Old Lock 5 was used as an example). Another initiative discussed was forming a collaboration to replace aging ferries. Other maintenance initiatives consisted of canal ports, docks, marinas, visitors’ centers, and hydraulic bridges.

Suggested specific infrastructure maintenance programs or projects for the canal system and/or canal communities included storm water management, wastewater control projects, brownfield remediation, and expanded Wi-Fi capability along the canal recreationway. It was suggested that older communities need additional funding sources to address their infrastructure needs. It was also suggested that a balance be found between offering new amenities and maintaining existing resources.
COMMERCIAL SHIPPING

Commercial shipping is defined by the United States Coast Guard as any vessel engaged in commercial trade or that carries passengers for hire (excluding ferries). Throughout the responses the need to “increase commercial use of the canal” was seen as a common theme. This notion tied together the other key themes that were pulled from the meeting by encompassing the overall need to identify partnerships, market the canal to attract tourism, generate revenue for the canal and neighboring communities, educate the communities on existing commercial opportunities, and address development and maintenance of the canal’s infrastructure while maintaining its historic character. The following concepts were presented by participants as strategies to increase commercial shipping along the canal system.

Participants discussed the need to form a coalition in order to make an economic case for increased commercial use of the canal, as well as to educate canal communities and businesses about shipping opportunities and the equipment needed. Participants suggested a hands-on approach towards marketing the commercial use of the canal system, offering examples of how face-to-face meetings with businesses have worked over the past few years. Participants also wanted a case to be made for the recent inefficiencies of the railroad to move goods in a timely manner due to the oil tankers that have been filling up the port of Albany’s rail yards, with one participant adding that the canal system is a safer transportation option.

A majority of participants stated that a key factor to realizing an increase of commercial shipping along the canalway would be to address the canal system’s infrastructure and maintenance. Participants stated that increased dredging of the canal system would be needed to ultimately increase the overall tonnage of commercial shipments on the canal system.
APPENDIX A

Press Coverage for Lakes to Locks Passage, Inc. Annual Meeting.


APPENDIX B

Facilitated Discussion Notes
The five break-out groups were given names in deference to the location of the Lakes to Locks Passage, Inc. annual meeting taking place on the Champlain Canal. Below is a list of the groups, as well as each group’s facilitator and note taker.

**Team C5 – Schuylerville**  
Facilitator: Jenny Majkut  
Note taker: Lauren Ellmers

**Team C6 – Fort Miller**  
Facilitator: Katherine Czajkowski  
Note taker: Lisa Ford

**Team C7 – Fort Edward**  
Facilitator: Samantha Young  
Note taker: Chanchilo Ezung

**Team C9 – Kingsbury Lock**  
Facilitator: Joe Seman  
Note taker: Robyn Keefe

**Team C12 – Whitehall**  
Facilitator: Farokh Bagheri  
Note taker: Deb Nelson
Team C5 – Schuylerville

**Question 1. What is your vision for the future of the canal system?**

- Channel dredging
- Boat launch points
- Bike friendly villages
  - Also for motorcycles
  - Snowmobiles
- Cohesive Network
  - Touch Canada
  - Loop Ability
- Bike and Boat
- Historic Champlain Canal Walls
  - Village owned in Whitehall
  - Funding challenge. What to do with them?
  - Old Lock 5
- Partnering: surrounding parks
- Broad
- Proper signage (Also necessary for Historic sections that are unmarked. E.g. Lock 5 in Whitehall)
- Encourage visitors
- Path through history
- Hard to find historical signage/way finding
  - Needs someone who knows
- Using technology for interpretation
  - Smart phones (New App)
- Still need signs
  - Unmarked buildings
  - Old Canal walls and foundations
- Most people still don’t know location or significance
- Cultural data inventory
- Connecting downtowns to historical sections and well-travelled roads
  - E.g. Whitehall has 14,000 cars/day on Route 4. How do you capture this volume?
- I <3 NY

Need to focus on more than Buffalo for upstate
**Question 2a.** What are some initiatives you would like to see on the canal system?

- **Involve local people**
  - Can’t compete with NYC
  - Friends and relatives are the #1 reason people visit
  - Marketing to locals
  - Integrate with schools
- **Event based tourism is a good introduction**
- **Need a well-organized volunteer group**
  - Push people along the path/canal to other places of significances and interest, “cross pollination”
  - Connect communities and information
- **Challenge:** Communities are further apart on the Champlain Canal, than they are on the Erie Canal. More of a challenge to collaborate
- **Not as much boat traffic**
- **One Strength:** Connection between NYC and the St. Lawrence Seaway
- **Challenge:** Lock are narrower
  - Restrictive of boat size. 17.5’ high boat in too big
    - Tour boats with hydraulic bridges
    - Need to increase tourist cruise boats
- **Visitor Center, Waterford**
- **Need visitor centers to be volunteer staffed**
  - There is a need for training for volunteers
  - Volunteer manual and training sessions
  - Cooperation between sites. How to get from site-to-site.
  - Link all attractions
- **Tourist Zones:** sending people elsewhere add to their visitor count. This creates competition between sites
- **We need linkage and cooperation**
- **Tracking customers.** 20% south of canal system. Long Island and NJ have dropped off
  - Fuel Costs and dockage
  - Accessibility to local people
  - Connecting dots to Saratoga
    - Need transportation to help with this
- **Need to market to drivers:** get them to come see the attractions and have something to do.
- **Boaters spend more money**
- **Need for more infrastructure and amenities**
- **Whitehall needs a big hotel**
- **No one can accommodate a tour bus in the North Country**
  - 55 passengers, all need to share the same hotel
• More biking options
• Larger geographic scope. Something to see along the way to the hotel
• Amtrak and the Canal. Connection and engaging travelers
• Fairly open to be approached
• Would need car rentals, taxis
• Is there enough critical mass?
• NYS is not rental car friendly
• Amtrak, Westport shuttle
• Out of the box partnership

Question 2b. Are there specific programs or projects you would suggest for the canal system or canal communities?
• Connection
• Bike rental station
• 4 day weekend
  ○ Packaged deals: Hotel, transportation and activities
  ○ Need to build mini itineraries
• I <3 NY info center in Whitehall
• Public bathrooms will draw people to stop
• NYS grants won’t fund: challenge
• Picnic tables, benches
  ○ Works in the Town of Saratoga
  ○ Talk to people who stop
  ○ Give them knowledge of activities
• Visitors want to talk to someone
• Example: Passport to the North Country Book. Has a diary section
  ○ Stamps per page: Similar to RVs and States
  ○ Along the Trail
  ○ Sport for local resident to sign off
  ○ Have local interviews in the book. ‘Touch points”
  ○ Sticker/lock
• Lock charge: challenge
• Hours of operation: Closed after 7pm.
• Boaters needs to find a place to stop
• Whitehall has free mooring, and 2 marinas (competition)
  ○ Can’t remember free mooring section at this point.
• Need holding tanks
• Garbage
• Shower
• How much can the state provide? Where do you draw the line (fine line)
  ○ Competition between free, state provided amenities and private business
● Maintenance
● Balance between offering amenities and maintaining pre-existing resources
● Boaters show how much they spend with their receipts from the local community. If they spend a certain amount, then there is no charge to tie up
  ○ A not-for-profit marina does this
● Business community should financially support: a donation or a $1 charge

● This process should talk to businesses along the canal
● Need their input. Is their perspective similar (small, local-owned businesses)
● Making the Canal 4-season
  ○ Snowmobiling policy-NYS Canal Corp should revisit this policy
● There is a need to connect areas: Whitehall to Vermont
● Snowmobiling ability to cross the canal
  ○ Old Forge has made some progress at this
  ○ Continuous snowmobile trail from Finger Lakes to the Adirondacks
● Ottawa, Winterlude Event
  ○ Canal-based event
  ○ Poutine
  ○ Skating
  ○ Cultural Events
  ○ Kid-friendly
● Winter triathlon
● Requiring public service component from students. Capture their involvement at the local level.
Team C6 – Fort Miller

Question 1. What is your vision for the future of the canal system?
- Kayaking tours
- Bike & trail tours
- Water access to smaller communities (planning for CFA)
- Planned itineraries for boaters so as to better coordinate traveling through the canals and canal communities
- Heritage/Historical trails
- Linkages to water access
- Marketing and appreciation for the Pastoral view shed
- Stewardship of the canal
- Events
- World class fishing tournaments
- Quiet communities (marketed as an asset)
- Multi-modal connections
- Accessibility
- Expanded commercial use
- Ft. Ann Waterfront
- Heritage tourism
- Promote a world class image
- Viable Agro-tourism
- Repurpose old buildings
- A CLEAN River
- Community Identity

Question 2a. What are some initiatives you would like to see on the canal system?
- Partnerships such as the Warren Co. Bike w/ Battlefield Education (Historical groups with educational tour groups)
- Connectivity: Geotourism
- Expansion of Wi-Fi at the canal ports, docks, marinas, & visitors centers to expand community opportunities to showcase their opportunities to boaters
- Digital towpath
- Linear/ canal golfing w/ holes at ea. Lock
- Passport facility to get a stamp – like the National parks used to do stamp at all locks as proof one has been their collect them all as a source of pride
- Coordinate on Blueway Trails
- Heritage reinforcement
• Educational tours
• Adirondack Park Passport
• Grant opportunities
• Information dissemination – resource center expansion
• Networking between libraries and Town Halls and other information centers
• Partnerships as between the Canal Corp, Warren Co., and the feeder canal alliance

Question 2b. Are there specific programs or projects you would suggest for the canal system or canal communities?
• Localized information packaging and marketing, regularly updated in print and online (a toolkit for my neighborhood)
• Soccer Golf course
• Ask Chamber of Commerce for automatic membership for Canal side communities. To include event/amenity linkages
• Reciprocal business community and Canal Corp cooperation
• New and expanded heritage center w/ trail from Hudson Falls to Ft. Ann
• Help local municipalities identify and apply for grant opportunities
• Marketing help
• Multi-modal interconnections: bike/pedestrian/boating/trails
• Signage
• Improve local knowledge of local assets
• Connect Educational opportunities with Economic opportunities
• Municipal reinvention
• Planning template, using successful communities (before & after) to inform communities of potential opportunities for re-envisioning and expanding their local economies (bring into the 21st century)
• Assert the need for communities to change in order to re-start their economic development engines
• “Locktoberfest”
• Bike & Pedestrian Trails
• Urban Kayak & Paddle tours
• Navigational dredging to accommodate larger canal barges
Team C7 – Fort Edward

Question 1. What is your vision for the future of the canal system? What is your vision for the future of the canal system?
- Completing all trails – bike, towpath, etc.
- Enhancement of businesses - Kayaking
- To make communities more bicycle friendly as biking brings businesses
- Raise awareness by hosting events like bike tour, etc.
- More activities: Replicate Lake Champlain Bike
- Ethno-tourism
- Enhance history and opportunity for awareness of the history through tourism for increase in revenue - All ethnicity
- Raise awareness of the different features of the corridor
- Accessibility
- Communities support of canal: e.g. - Fort Ann
- Hiker, biker, boater camp site areas :- not to be closed on Labor Day – open all year round

Question 2a. What are some initiatives you would like to see on the canal system?
- Birding trail on the entire length of the canal
- Basins to be interpreted better, used to be focused places, start using them
- Restoration
- Link History and use canal as a link
- Locks – Guides to the local communities and a visitor center
- Implementation interpretive scenario
- More, better and visible signage and advertisement
- Marketing and branding
- Image – asset to the state [e.g. spreading the word out about the canal]
- Incorporate the history of the canal in the education system [e.g. 4th grade]
- High school integration
- Wi-Fi for lock areas

Question 2b. Are there specific programs or projects you would suggest for the canal system or canal communities?
- Locktoberfest
- Create more visibility
- Learn other aspects of canal
- Festivals: Add winter events
- Connection and collaboration between partners
• Tours
• Battle of Bennington: ways to learn about the canal and its history
• Lock 5: Tour boats
• Readily availability of information
• Arts along the canal
• Thematic driving tours
• Sculpture trail
• Inform people about opportunities
• Spread awareness on local opportunities
• Agriculture and agro-tourism: potato storage
• Ecotourism
• Farmers market – used to connect people to the local communities
Team C9 – Kingsbury Lock

Question 1. What is your vision for the future of the canal system? What is your vision for the future of the canal system?

- Completed Canalway Trail, economic development will come.
- People use Canalway Trail in the wintertime.
- People use the entire waterway loop with increased people coming up from the south.
- There is increased commercial use of the canal, creating a balance between commercial opportunities and recreational opportunities, maintain historic character, but continue to increase commercial use.
- There is increased awareness of canal opportunities and canal destinations.
- Younger generations have age-tailored opportunities to enjoy the canal.
- There is increased connectivity between trail and canal communities through pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure.
- There is a common site/effort on the canal to interpret and market the canal as a whole, help the many small groups with small budgets to market and interpret the canal effectively.
- There is a designated entity/tool responsible for helping canal communities get information out.

Question 2a. What are some initiatives you would like to see on the canal system?

- Marketing should entice people to go beyond the canal (i.e. into canal communities or onto the lakes).
- More money should be spent on marketing.
- Market the entire Erie Loop, and not just segments.
- More research should be done on boaters using the canal; do boaters dock, get out and use the canal in other ways?
- Increase bus tours of the canal. Current tours are isolated to specific areas of the canal due to budgetary constraints.
- Increase railroad and canal connections e.g. allow bicyclists to hop on a train with their bicycle and get out at the canal.
- Railroad itself currently a barrier to accessing the canal because it cuts it off and you have to cross tracks. There is a need to increase access safely.
- Physically go to Montreal boat show to attract boaters from Canada.
- Increase communication about commercial canal opportunities versus the railroad.
• There is often a backlog using the RR, slowing everything down (because of oil tanks) – no one is using the canal. Canal might be safer because of the transportation of oil tanks. Increase commercial use of canal by making the economic case and marketing it.
• Global Foundries used the Canal after having a face-to-face meeting.
• Market the “water highway.” Emphasize the entire waterway loop, not just the canal.
• Capitalize on the interest in the Champlain Canal.
• People don’t think about the Erie Canal – market it to day boaters.
• Cross-promote the canal, e.g. Three Chamber of Commerce visitor centers are actively promoting each other’s portions of the canal. A visitor may come to a specific part, but just a little cross-marketing could get them to visit additional communities.

Question 2b. Are there specific programs or projects you would suggest for the canal system or canal communities?
• Canal Corporation should complete trail segments in Washington County.
• More projects like the one at Lock 19, where engineers in building a historic footbridge mentored students from the high school. Everyone donated his or her time. 80 students were involved and 3 students went into engineering. http://www.southernsaratoga.org/pages/HistoricLock19Project
• Market services as the “best on the canal, e.g. Laundromat in Waterford is the cleanest on the canal. Mechanicville also has potential, as its state-of-the-art Laundromat is located near a public dock.
• Current waterway guides could be more robust. Should include all the services offered along the canal.
Team C12 – Whitehall

**Question 1.** What is your vision for the future of the canal system?
- Ice skating
- Complete Champlain Canal Trail
- More tourism – focus on Champlain Canal – Erie gets all the attention
- More small towns/offshoots from Canal – e.g., Ticonderoga
- Promotion of Canal outside NYS (Canada)
- Canal as spine of system
- Canal to border of Canada – challenges to coordinate with Canada to connect canal systems – gigantic loop – 2 Nations sponsor
- Huge opportunities for industries – navigational dredging – heavier cargo and recreational boats
- Cruises
- Tonnage increasing
- Small commercial ventures shipping along canalway
- Lower carbon footprints
- Increased outreach and education – concern with spread of invasive species – need better awareness

**Question 2a.** What are some initiatives you would like to see on the canal system?
- Navigational dredging
- Improved visitor amenities
- Invest in local communities
- Improve aesthetics
- Broader information of regional resources
- Packer boats with agricultural products – like Vermont Sail Freight
- Awareness initiative
- Social media
- Collaborative initiatives – work together
- Lakes to Locks starting; maybe expand to Vermont and Canada and other parts of canal system
- Ferries getting old and will need replacement; need dredging to transport replacements
- Need to talk to Canada – need governments as well as NGOs to talk
- Canada – e.g., Plattsburgh is “Canada’s suburb
  “Plattsburgh has Montreal culture, US tax base
- Cleanliness – including invasive species, “other” dredging (GE)State/Province connections
Question 2b. Are there specific programs or projects you would suggest for the canal system or canal communities?

- Tax incentives to create new businesses along the canal, like in Syracuse, Utica, Lockport on Erie Canal
- Navigational dredging
- Land connections between Downtowns and canal
- Trails, transportation (buses, trolleys)
  - Need to make it easy
- Cleanliness – water quality, invasive species – e.g., Lake George Association
- Storm water management, etc.
- Agricultural non-point source pollution
- Little oversight
- Better education – easier/cheaper/safer to bulk ship – need equipment
  - Other countries or port of US have such equipment
- Railroad connections for easy transport – e.g., Mechanicville
- International transportation
- Difficult to get cold-start – be opportunistic
- Non-agricultural industries – spring house, restaurants
- Skate the canal
- Older communities need money to help with their own infrastructure – e.g., wastewater, brownfields, Canal Corp could help
- Canal not necessarily accessible to motorists – e.g., Whitehall
- Signage, way finding
- Small parking lots, scenic overlooks e.g. Fort Ann
- Make local people more aware of what they have e.g. Whitehall with cast iron on buildings
- Leaf peepers, skiers – going to Vermont – make places on way more accessible/destination on the way
- Vermont sells themselves – we (NYS) don’t do so well
- Regional branding
- Lakes to Locks
- Spines; successful example
- Events that make use of canal – e.g., Locktoberfest, Cardboard boat races
- Cruises
- Whitehall – were 3 marinas – now 1 marina
- NYS offers free power and pump out at wharf – take out private business opportunities
- Kayaking – through lock for free
- Opportunity for boat/kayak/canoe rentals – possible insurance issues (Lake/Canal disconnect)
- Hudson Crossing Park – Whitewater rafting opportunities
- Rental needs – kayak, canoe, raft
- Aesthetic views of old canal
- Canal mule sculpture – recently purchased one
- Festivals
- Fleet of river boats
- Possibly floating casinos
- Crew regatta – e.g., like Head of the Fish in Saratoga
- Hotels, etc.
- Awareness, also to get canal users to get off system to communities
- Location: Fort Ticonderoga is not accessible by boat
- Poor signage
- Low visitation
- We don’t sell well – branding/marketing
- Challenges with focus of marketing the area e.g., Vermont small but NYS too big and too many areas
- Hoosick Falls – beautiful but forgotten
- Need opportunities to use canal, especially if not on canal, reason to use canal
- Champlain Canal Bike tour – 3rd annual this year, fairly successful
- Complete Champlain Canal Trail
- Way finding
- Enhances Arts program – students – tie in

Other observations of group sessions:
- Group members were not completely aware of the NYS Canal Corporation’s role.
- Group members were confused by our group names, thinking that they were supposed to comment on that specific area rather than the whole canal.
New York State Canal Recreationway Plan Update
Lakes to Locks Passage, Inc.
Annual Meeting

Prepared for the NYS Canal Corporation
UAlbany Planning Studio

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