

Chapter 5 - The Canal Recreationway Concept

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Chapter 5 - The Canal Recreationway Concept

"Would to God we may have wisdom enough [to improve the] vast inland navigation of these United States"

George Washington, following a journey up the Mohawk River, 1783

In George Washington's time, improving inland navigation meant improvement for commerce. Today, commercial shippers have largely found alternate routes, and while the revival of this industry continues to be an important goal, the current-day potential of the Canal lies in its development for recreation and tourism. The task of this Plan is to determine the method for accomplishing these objectives.

5.1 DEFINITION OF THE CANAL RECREATIONWAY

For purposes of this Plan, the Canal Recreationway is defined as, *"a linear park to be developed for boating and other recreational use, taking advantage of the Canal's historic heritage, conserving its beauty and natural character, and utilizing recreationway improvements to enhance the economic development potential of the Canal."*

Exhibit 5-1, "Conceptual Framework," illustrates the Canal Recreationway concept: a waterway and greenway stretching across upstate New York, linking major metropolitan areas and historic canal villages through recreation and tourism. Key ideas in the definition are further discussed below.

Linear Park

One of the Canal's greatest assets is that it is an unbroken and continuous system, running through the full breadth of upstate New York. As defined in the *NY Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan* of 1989, a linear park

"functions as a recreational facility in itself and also provides access between recreational destination points and other community facilities." The Canal's accessibility is significantly enhanced by the fact that it connects upstate's four major metropolitan areas and runs through the center of many of its smaller communities.

While the canal waterway is totally continuous, landside access is not. One of the important goals of the Plan is to complete the end-to-end trail, enhancing landside access to the Canal along its entire length.

Canal Boating and Recreation

Types of Recreation

As a waterway, the Canal's potential for recreational boating is its most important asset. Boating not only provides recreation and entertainment for boaters, it also enlivens the Canal for landside visitors and those who live and work along the waterway.

The second most important recreation potential is the end-to-end trail, which is not only a hiking, biking, equestrian and skiing facility, but also functions as landside access to parks, historic sites, restaurants and other facilities along the Canal, and as a connecting link between one facility and another.

Visitor Services

The Canal's potential to attract visitors is critically related to the availability of services, and one of the most determining factors in the low rate of usage of the Canal today is the comparative scarcity of places to launch, rent or dock boats, buy gas or supplies, have a meal, learn about canal attractions, or even use a telephone or rest room.

Time, Distance and Speed

Because the Canal Recreationway will be used by people on the move – in boats, walking, bicycling, etc. – the relationship of time spent, distance covered, and speed of travel is a key factor in planning and locating services along the Recreationway. Generally, people spend about

five hours a day in transit, excluding stops, resting, eating, etc. Characteristics of time, distance and speed for the most common modes of travel include:

- *Hiking*: Typically a person walks at an average speed of three miles per hour and, if hiking long-distance, will cover 15 miles in five hours. Approximately seven to eight miles will be covered in a half-day.
- *Boating*: A boat under power traveling at an average speed of seven miles per hour will cover 35 miles in a five-hour day, and 17 to 18 miles in a half-day.
- *Biking*: A cyclist typically travels at ten miles an hour, covering 50 miles in a five-hour day and 25 miles in a half-day. A serious cyclist will travel further, and perhaps at higher speeds, depending on the surface material of the trail and other factors.

Exhibit 5-2, "Time, Distance, Speed Analysis for Boating, Hiking and Cycling," indicates full- and half-day stopping places for travel at the western end of the Canal, illustrating the frequency of services needed for the three modes of travel. As an example, a hiker traveling at three miles per hour and starting at Tonawanda would take a day to reach Lockport. A boater, traveling at seven miles per hour, would reach Lockport by lunch time, and would end the day in Medina. A cyclist, moving at ten miles per hour, would pass Lockport in mid-morning, lunch near Middleport, and arrive in time for dinner in Holley.

Historic Heritage

The Canal's historic heritage is an important factor in the success of the Recreationway. A true national and state treasure, the Canal is known and loved by millions, who will come to visit its historic sites and work to realize its potential.

Preservation of the historic character of the Canal involves:

- Maintaining the historic development pattern of clusters of settlement connected by stretches of open space.
- Identifying and preserving historic districts, sites, and architecture in canal communities. Cities, villages and hamlets with waterfront docking facilities are termed *canal ports* in this Plan. To the extent possible, visitor services will be located in ports, both to reinforce their historic role and to build upon already existing facilities.
- Identifying and preserving historic canal infrastructure and artifacts.
- Interpreting the Canal's history, places, and people.

Natural Setting: A Greenway

The open space and environmental resources of the Canal System are among its most important assets and they will contribute immensely to the success of the Recreationway. These resources have many roles: they contribute to the unforgettable beauty of the canal corridor, constitute an important recreation asset, protect and help to ensure adequate water quality, preserve a diverse system of flora and fauna, provide opportunities for hunting, trapping and fishing, and form the basis for a valuable agricultural industry.

This Plan proposes to conserve the open-space resources of the Canal System through establishment and protection of a greenway.

The greenway will be of varying widths depending upon existing conditions, ownership, local regulation, and many other factors. In areas like the Montezuma Wetland Complex, the greenway will include the entire protected wetland. In cities, the greenway may be no more than a landscaped trail. The principle, however, is to protect existing environmental resources, include as much green area as possible, and provide a continuous connected ribbon of open space along the Canal.

Economic Development and Canal Ports

Economic development is defined as the creation of economic benefit. The Canal Recreationway has the potential to create the following economic benefits:

- Direct revenue to the Canal Corporation and the Canal System Development Fund in the form of lease revenues, tolls and other payments.
- Economic benefits to local communities and the state as a result of canal visitation and tourism. Benefits include jobs, business creation, property-tax revenue to local municipalities, and sales-tax revenue to the state and localities.
- General quality-of-life benefits which will come as a result of the canal recreation amenities and the physical revitalization of canal communities.

To the extent possible, canal visitor services and projects will be concentrated in canal ports, so that existing economies will be reinforced and enhanced. Whenever possible, canal services will be provided by the private sector, and public facilities will be utilized only when private businesses are unable or unwilling to provide service.

The largest number of canal users today are local. While this will probably continue to be the case, the economic benefit of the Canal will be significantly enhanced through its ability to attract tourists. Regional, national and international visitors will stay several days in the area, patronizing lodging facilities, restaurants and shops, and bringing new money to the local economy. The plan places major emphasis on developing those unique aspects of the Canal that will be most likely to appeal to tourists: charter and tour boating, high-quality and predictably available services, and historic accuracy.

The Plan recognizes that initial public investment to conserve, enhance, and market the Canal will be required before long-term private

investment and substantial economic development can be realized.

5.2 THE CANAL RECREATIONWAY PLAN FORMAT

The following sections of this report detail the Plan for the Canal Recreationway and how it will be implemented. In the remainder of Part 2, Chapters 6 through 8 describe the Plan proposals: systemwide elements to conserve the Canal and its resources; boating and landside activities to more fully use the Canal; and projects to enhance the Canal. Chapter 9 discusses the economic benefits of the Canal Recreationway and Chapter 10 provides recommendations regarding marketing and interpretation.

Systemwide Elements of the Plan: Conservation of Canal Resources

Chapter 6 describes the first step in planning for the Canal: establishing policies for conserving the existing resources and for adapting the Canal to the needs of a new Canal Recreationway. Systemwide elements include historic preservation, open space and natural resources, and canal-system management.

Boating and Landside Activities: Creating a Recreationway

The second step is creating the Recreationway: enhancing tourism facilities and providing a regular system of boating and other services along the Canal. Chapter 7 discusses boating, trail, landside recreation, scenic byways and canal-access improvements.

Canal Projects: Enhancing the Recreationway

Canal projects will enhance the potential of the Canal for boating, recreation and tourism, and are the primary vehicle through which the Plan

will be implemented. Three types of projects are discussed in Chapters 7 and 8:

- *Canal Harbors:* Seven strategically located mixed-use projects with a boating theme. It is intended that these projects be implemented as public-private partnerships, initiated by the Canal Corporation, with its direct funding participation.
- *Canal Service Ports and Locks:* These regularly spaced projects will be located between the seven major boating centers to enliven the Canal and provide reliable services to Recreationway users. Full implementation of the system will result in services located in canal ports and locks approximately 10 miles apart. These projects are to be initiated by local municipalities, and would be eligible for funding from the Municipal Canal Development Program, a program created in 1993 to implement local canal initiatives.
- *Local Projects:* Over 500 projects of all types, as proposed in the seven regional plans. These projects provide diversified destinations and services to residents and tourists. Initiation and funding is to come from sources other than the Canal Corporation, including nonprofit, private, local, state and federal sources.

Economic Development

Economic development for canalside communities and the Canal Corporation will result from conserving, using, and enhancing the Canal for recreation and tourism. Chapter 9 outlines the economic framework and benefits of the Canal Recreationway.

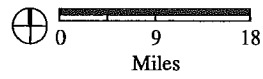
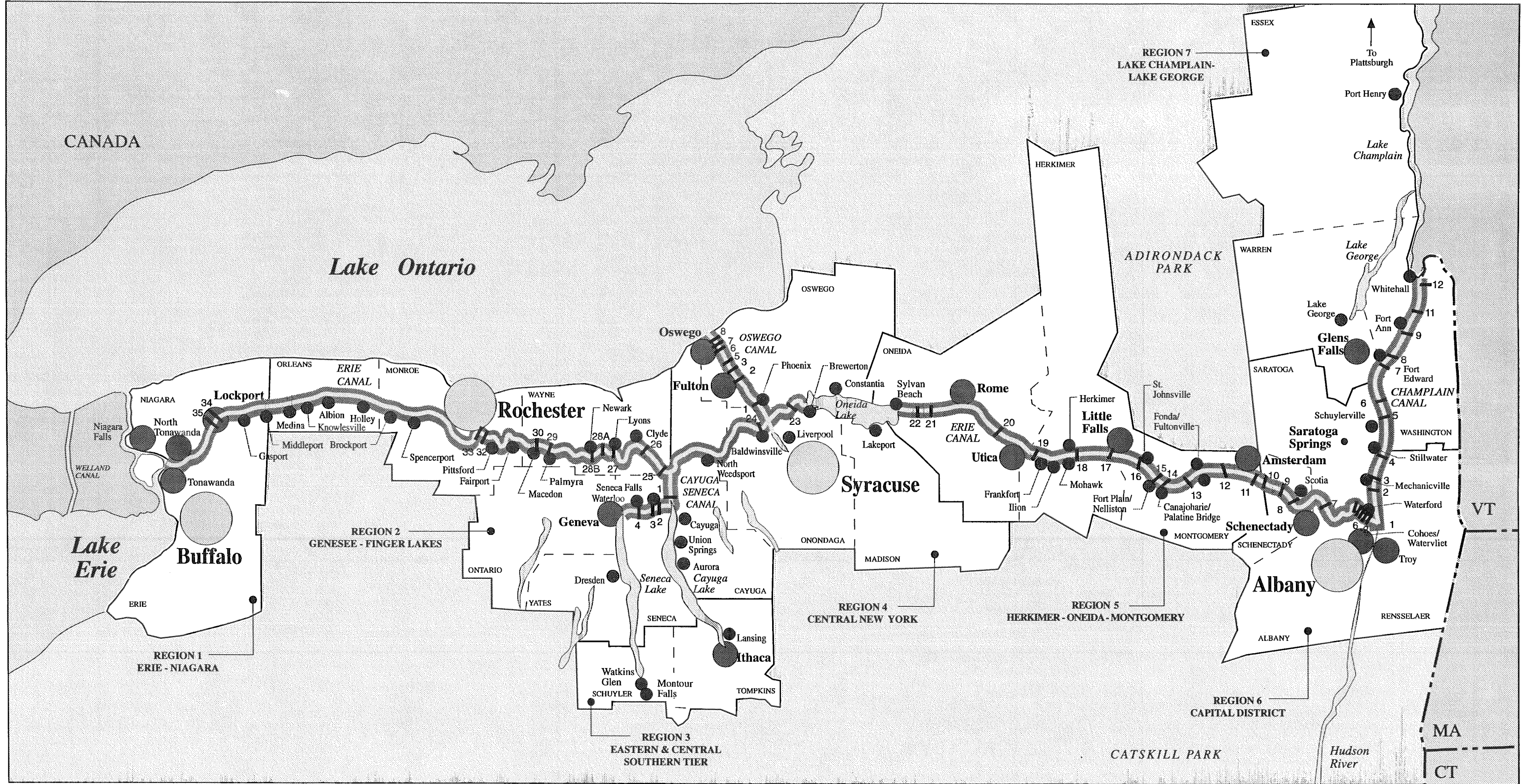
Marketing the Recreationway

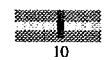


"Unlocking the legend," a program used for promoting and marketing the Canal Recreationway, should be expanded. Detailed plans for coordinated marketing and interpretation are included in Chapter 10.




Implementing the Plan



Part 3, Chapter 11, "A Plan for Action," discusses how the Plan is to be accomplished. It is proposed that the Canal Corporation and the Thruway Authority be the lead agencies in developing the Canal Recreationway. Full implementation of the Plan, however, will require participation of many additional groups. Chapter 11 describes a partnership approach to implementation and outlines the roles of the Canal Corporation, other levels of government, nonprofit groups and private business in successful implementation of the Plan. Action steps and funding programs are specified to implement the various systemwide planning elements, the boating and landside recreation proposals, and the canal projects.

NEW YORK STATE CANAL RECREATIONWAY PLAN



-  NYS Canal System Lock number
-  Canal greenway
-  Canal waterway

-  Major city
-  Small city
-  Village or hamlet

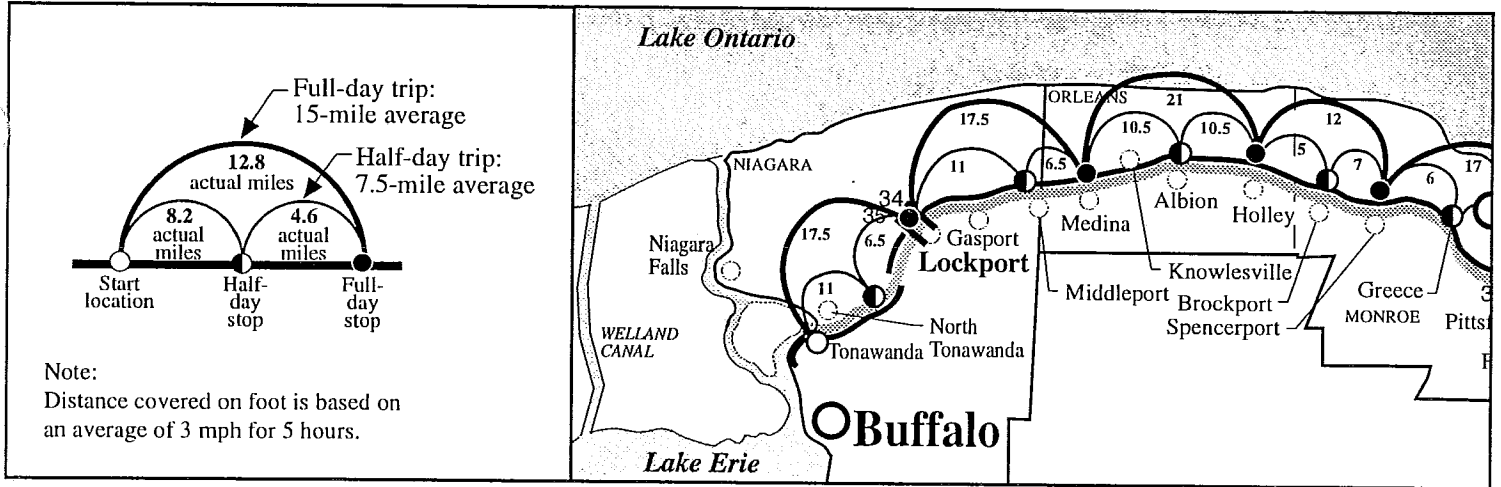
-  County boundary
-  Planning region boundary

Conceptual Framework

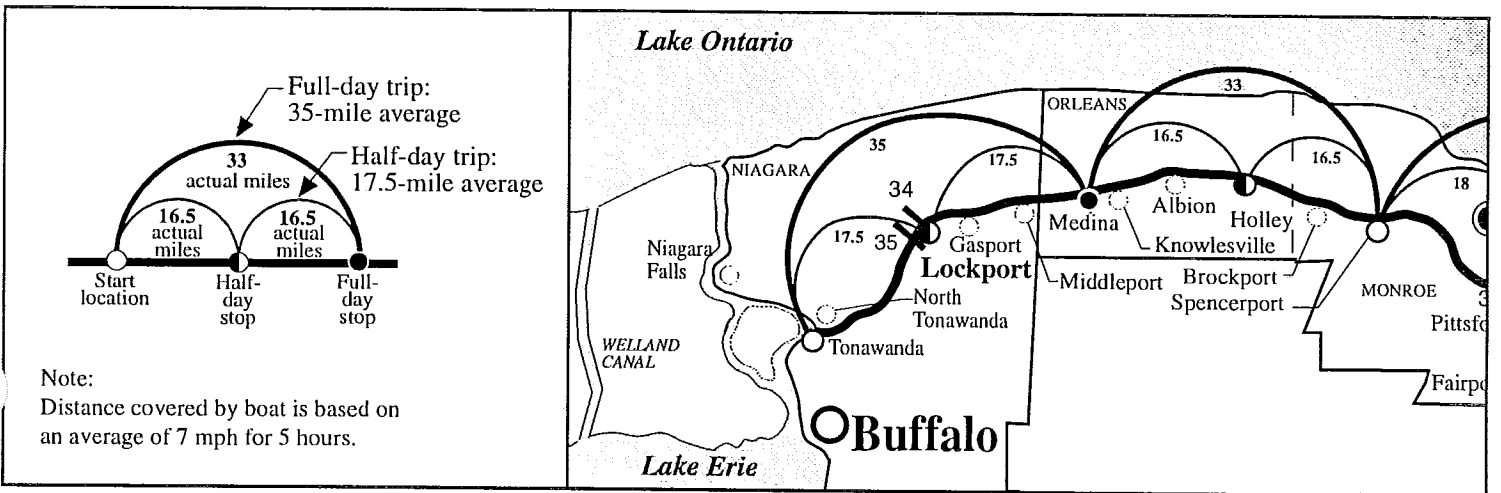
Beyer Blinder Belle Consortium

Exhibit 5-1

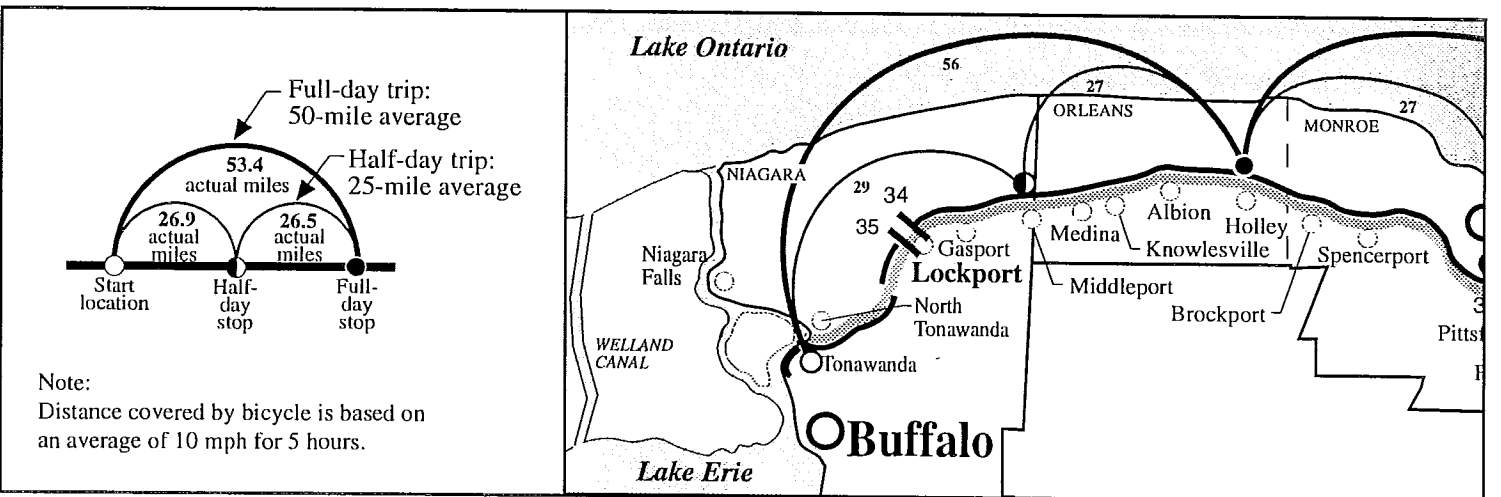
NEW YORK STATE CANAL RECREATIONWAY PLAN



Hiking



Recreational Boating



Cycling

Time-Distance-Speed; Hiking, Boating and Cycling

Beyer Blinder Belle Consortium