



Erie Canalway News Release

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Study Reveals Strong Economic Impact of Local Historic and Cultural Sites

WATERFORD, NY- Results of a study released today by the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor show that cultural and historic sites and museums in the eastern part of the National Heritage Corridor have a significant economic impact on the region. Visitors to heritage sites generate an estimated \$38 million in sales at local businesses, which support 507 jobs providing \$14 million in wages to local residents.

Congressman Paul Tonko, along with NYS Assemblymen Steve Englebright, Bob Reilly, and John McEneny, joined officials from the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, the New York State Museum, New York State Canal Corporation, and NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation to announce the news at the New York State Museum, which was among the sites that participated in the study.

“This study shows that we must continue to preserve sites that are historically and culturally significant – and we are blessed with abundance in upstate New York,” said Congressman Tonko. “Not only do they serve to boost community pride, but they serve as an economic engine, drawing tourists and creating jobs. That’s why just last week, I announced the creation of the National Heritage Area Caucus, which will pool efforts in Congress to strengthen and grow our National Heritage Area program.”

According to the study, nearly 1 million people visit heritage sites in the Eastern Region of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor each year (Albany to Rome). On average, day trip visitors spend about \$33 per trip and overnight visitors spend approximately \$360 per trip.

“The National Heritage Corridor creates a valuable synergy between historic and cultural sites and other attractions all along the waterway,” said Beth Sciumeca, Executive Director of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor. “By working together to support and promote the unique assets of the Corridor, we are strengthening the economic vitality and quality of life in the region.”

In 2008, the Erie Canalway National Corridor undertook a major surveying effort to collect data on the travel and spending patterns of tourists to heritage sites in the National Heritage Corridor. Conducted in partnership with Dr. David Lewis of the University at Albany Geography and Planning Department, the survey generated 800 responses at 22 participating heritage sites.

A more detailed follow up survey gathered additional detail from 138 respondents. Because 60 percent of the in depth responses came from visitors to sites from Albany to Rome, researchers were able to develop a detailed case study of the Eastern Region of the National Heritage Corridor.

Key findings include:

- 70% of visitors to East Region are day trippers and 80% are from New York State.
- More than half of visitors to sites in the eastern region come for a specific cultural and heritage tourism site or special event, rather than to visit the region in general. Historic sites and festivals are top attractions, followed by museums. This is in contrast to visitors to the West Region of the Corridor, where visiting family and friends is a more typical draw.
- The typical profile of a Corridor visitor is an adult between ages of 46 and 75, with income of \$75,000 or more per year and travelling with immediate family members.
- These visitors patronize local businesses: of those that shop, 57% visit historic downtowns, 43% shop in locally owned stores, 50% of meals eaten are in locally owned restaurants, and 21% of overnight visitors stay in locally-owned lodging facilities (vs 29% who stay in chain hotels/motels).
- Most survey respondents reported learning about Corridor sites and activities from a previous visit and from the Internet. Family and friends was the next most common method for visitors to get their travel information. Repeat visitation to the Corridor is high – 54% reported being a repeat visitor.
- Total visitors to heritage sites in the eastern region are estimated at 998,000 per year. Most of these visitors are day trippers who live in or near the Corridor. (See attached for maps of visitor origins).
- Day trip visitors spend approximately \$33 per trip and overnight visitors spend approximately \$360 per trip (See attached for visitor spending details).

Survey sites in the Capital Region and Mohawk Valley included: the New York State Museum, Albany Heritage Area Visitor Center, Troy RiverSpark Visitor Center, Waterford Harbor Visitor Center, Schoharie Crossing State Historic Site, and the Arkell Museum in Canajoharie.

The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor spans 524 miles across the full expanse of upstate New York. It encompasses the Erie, Cayuga-Seneca, Oswego, and Champlain canals and their historic alignments, as well as more than 230 canal communities. The Corridor's commission and staff, in partnership with the National Park Service, work through public and private partnerships to promote historic preservation, recreation, education, tourism, and economic revitalization throughout the Corridor.

Additional quotes on the results of the economic impact study:

Senator José M. Serrano said: “I applaud the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor for releasing a report that clearly shows the positive economic impact of the historic and cultural sites of upstate New York. Not only does heritage tourism contribute to a healthy economy, it also serves significant educational and recreational purposes for a great deal of New Yorkers and visitors alike. We must do all we can to protect and preserve these historic treasures, which display the rich cultural and natural beauty offered by the Empire State.”

NYS Assemblymember Steve Englebright said: “This study truly exemplifies the importance of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor as a key attribute in promoting our state’s historical and cultural significance while acting as a serious economic generator. It is vital to the wellbeing of our citizens that there be educational and recreational outlets available at an affordable cost that preserve our state’s cultural treasures. It is essential that we continue to invest in our heritage areas like Erie Canalway to continue the growth of tourism and protection of our cultural assets in New York State.”

Carmella R. Mantello, Director of the New York State Canal Corporation, said, “The results of this latest economic impact study dovetail findings of previous studies and help to confirm what we already know - the Erie Canalway and New York State Canal System offer a multitude of recreational and heritage opportunities that provide an economic boost to the regions along the canal in Upstate New York.”

Carol Ash, Commissioner of the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, said: “This new study is yet more evidence of the crucial role our rich cultural heritage plays in the economy of the Mohawk Valley. As the manager of several of these historic sites, we at State Parks champion their importance to the public and commend Representative Tonko and the Erie Canalway National Heritage Commission for their commitment to enhancing tourism and fostering the vitality of Mohawk Valley communities.”

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