

Press Release: May 1, 2023

The Dryden Rail Trail Connect the Trails! Fest celebrates connecting communities

By the Dryden Rail Trail Task Force

On Saturday, May 20, at 12:00 noon, the towns of Dryden and Ithaca will celebrate the opening of the Game Farm Road crossing between the Dryden Rail Trail and the East Ithaca Recreation Way, officially connecting these two popular trails. Two groups of trail users—each walking, running, or riding bicycles—will approach Game Farm Road simultaneously on both trails, arriving from designated starting points near the trails. As the symbolic gates are opened, there will be family-friendly activities, music and snacks, and a few brief remarks by those who made the crossing possible. Visit the event website at drydenrailtrail.org/events for more information, including maps, meeting locations, and parking options.

Although the Game Farm section of the Dryden Rail Trail has been [open since the Fall of 2021](#), the crossing at Game Farm Road required additional planning and improvements to make it safe for the public. These efforts included conducting a traffic study, developing a crossing plan, negotiating a speed limit reduction with New York Department of Transportation (NYSDOT), regrading and repaving a section of the road, and installing new signage, a crosswalk, and flashing warning signals.

The project required committed and strong partnerships among multiple jurisdictions. Game Farm Road is maintained by Tompkins County, and NYSDOT oversees speed limits. The center of the road marks the border between the towns of Ithaca and Dryden, both of which collaborated on developing studies and the crossing plan, as well as installing the approved infrastructure. In October 2022, Tompkins County Highway Department removed the largest obstacle to the crossing by flattening a rise in the road that created line-of-sight safety issues for motorists and trail users alike.

Work on the Dryden Rail Trail began in 2016, when the Town of Dryden ambitiously embarked on efforts to connect the villages and hamlets in the Town of Dryden to Ithaca and Cornell University. The goal was to establish the trail along the nearly 15-mile route formerly used by the Elmira, Cortland & Northern Railroad and the Southern Central Railroad. By connecting to the East Ithaca Recreation Way, the Dryden Rail Trail is now linked to a larger network of trails in Ithaca and Tompkins County—allowing direct commuter access to the Cornell University campus.

The next phase of the Dryden Rail Trail will be to construct a bridge across Route 13 and connect the trail to Pinckney Road. This phase—financed through federal, state, county, and municipal funds, as well as foundation grants and local donations—is expected to begin in late 2023.

The final phase of construction will be to build the trail between Route 13 and Freeville. When completed, the Dryden Rail Trail will traverse the Town of Dryden from west to east and will serve as both a linear park and a commuter route. The completed Trail will offer users expanded opportunities for recreation as well as a means for alternative transportation to work, school, community centers, or stores.

For more information on the Dryden Rail Trail, visit drydenrailtrail.org or follow us on [Facebook](#) at @TownofDrydenRailTrail.