

Appendix A

A bike path along the Thruway between Exit 23 and Exit 25? (submitted to the Thruway Authority, June 17, 2003; slightly edited and submitted to the Albany County Planning Department, July 17, 2003)

At a time when the CDTC is updating its priority bike/ped network and the Thruway Authority is considering construction along the Thruway corridor between Exits 21 and 25, the Guilderland Pathways Committee would like to suggest consideration of an off-road bike path along the south side of the Thruway between Exits 23 and 25. Some potential advantages of such a path:

- there is a continuous ROW for the path
- development may be possible without construction of bridges or tunnels
- the path would connect a number of regionally attractive destinations that are now not served by bike paths in the region
- it could connect to the regional bike path network (see map, below).

What would it connect?

Eastern Rotterdam

NYS Bike Route #5 (at Exit 25 and in McKownville)

The Pine Bush Preserve east and west of Route 155

The proposed Pine Bush Greenway between Fuller Road and Kings Road in Colonie

The proposed Patroon Path between Fuller Road and the Corning Preserve

The Lone Pine and Fort Hunter residential areas of Guilderland

Crossgates Commons, Crossgates and Washington Avenue Extension

The CDTA hub at Crossgates

McKownville

The University at Albany and the Harriman Office Campus

North Bethlehem

The Whitehall Road area of Albany

University Heights

If extended to the Port of Albany the path could connect to the Hudson River Greenway bike route and downtown Albany.

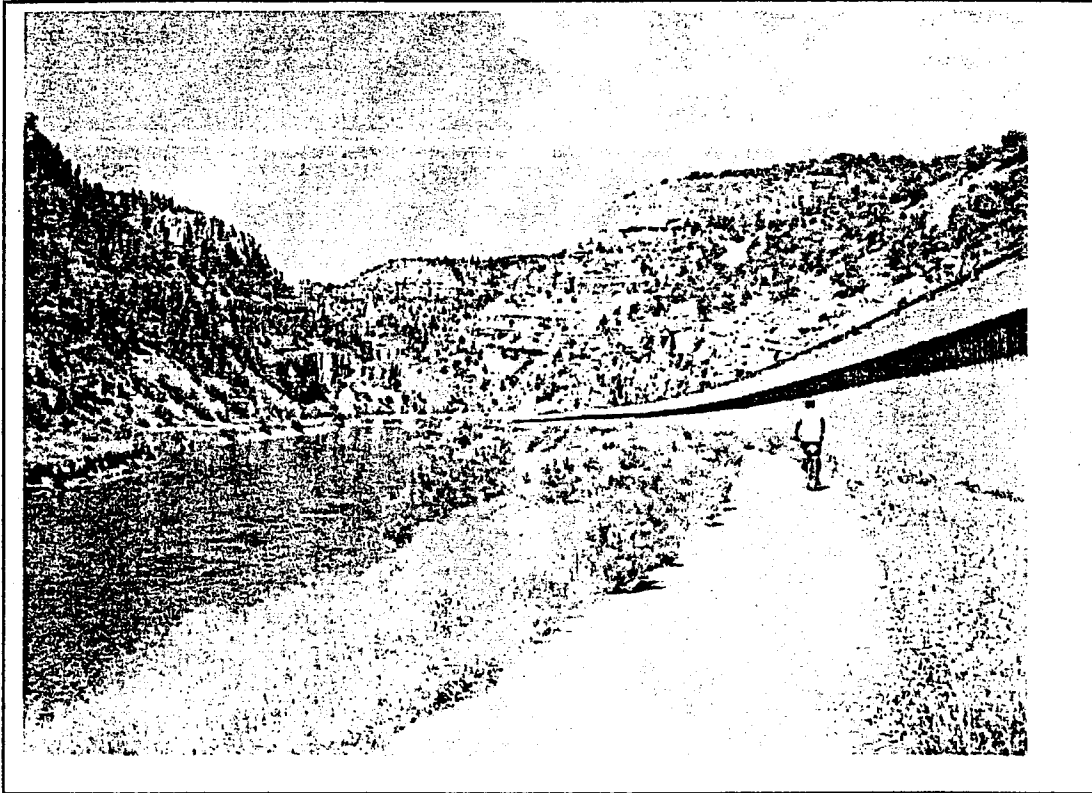
If the abandoned D&H rail line between Voorheesville and the Port becomes a bike path, the rail path could connect to the Thruway path via Normanside at Rockefeller Road .

But aren't bikes and pedestrians incompatible with interstate highways?

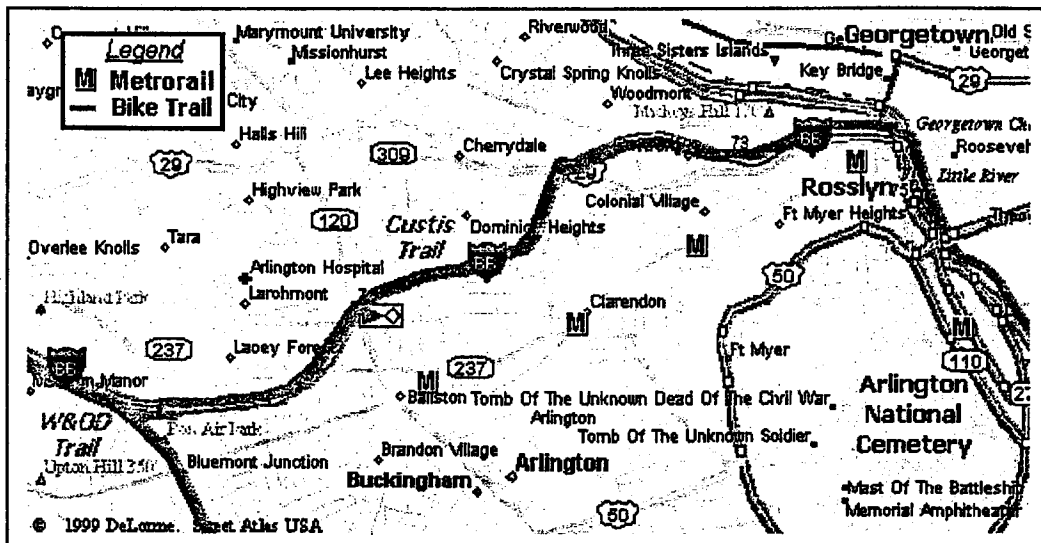
Not any more. TEA-21 makes federal funds available for non-motorized projects within Interstate highway corridors. Some examples:

- I-90 in Seattle (the Mountains to Sound Greenway)

- I-70 in Glenwood Canyon, CO (the Glenwood Canyon Bike Trail)
(from pw1.netcom.com/~reynen/2001/bikecolorado)



- I-66 in Arlington, VA (the Martha Custis Trail) (from bikewashington.org/trails/wad/custin.htm)



Locally:

- The bike path between Fuller Road at Lake Rensselaer and the Pine Bush Preserve west of the Albany Landfill lies adjacent to the Thruway as both cross under Rapp Road.
- The proposed Patroon Path presumably lies in, or adjacent to, the right-of-way of I-90, mostly on the north side, between Fuller Road and the Corning Preserve.
- The proposed connection between Broadway in Menands and the Corning Preserve bike path uses the ROW of the entrance ramp from Route 32 to I-787. See <http://www.cdtcmpo.org/crossroads.pdf>, page 2:

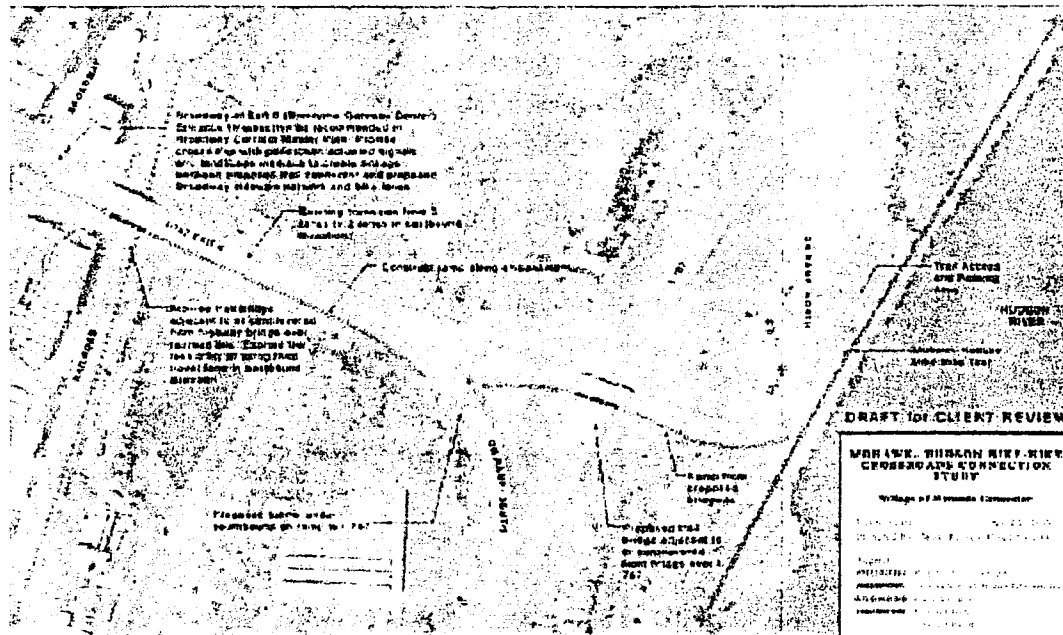


Figure 1: Proposed Trail Plan to Access the Menands Village Center Using Exit 6 as the Linkage.

Why not use existing highways?

Existing highways in the area do not and cannot meet bicycle standards. The Oregon DOT (Oregon Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, Oregon DOT, 1995) suggests that shared roadways in urban areas are suitable if they have low speeds (under 25 mph) or low volumes (under 3000 ADT). None of the local highways come close to those standards. Here are some counts, from <http://www.cdtcmpo.org/tvr/maps/albcotv.htm>

Lydius St	Old State Rd to NY 146 (Carman Rd)	ALB	Minor Urban Arterial	4500	1999	<u>O[5]</u>
Old State Rd (East)	NY 146 to Kings Rd	ALB	Urban Collector	14800	1999	<u>O[5]</u>
Old State Rd (East)	Kings Rd to Albany City Line	ALB	Minor Urban Arterial	9600	1999	<u>B[1]</u>

Route 20:

US 20/NY 146	ALB	Principal Urban Arterial	25600	2001	<u>B[1]</u>
NY 146 to NY 155	ALB	Principal Urban Arterial	28300	1999	<u>A[1]</u>
NY 155 to Crossgates Mall	ALB	Principal Urban Arterial	36300	2001	<u>B[1]</u>
Crossgates Mall to Fuller Rd Alternate (NY 910F)	ALB	Principal Urban Arterial	41100	2001	<u>B[1]</u>
Fuller Rd Alternate to CR 156 (Fuller Rd)	ALB	Principal Urban Arterial	28000	1999	<u>A[1]</u>
CR 156 to NY 85	ALB	Principal Urban Arterial	25200	1999	<u>A[1]</u>

Carman Road:

US 20 (end overlap) to Schenectady County Line	ALB	Principal Urban Arterial	16400	2001	<u>B[1]</u>
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Schoolhouse Road:

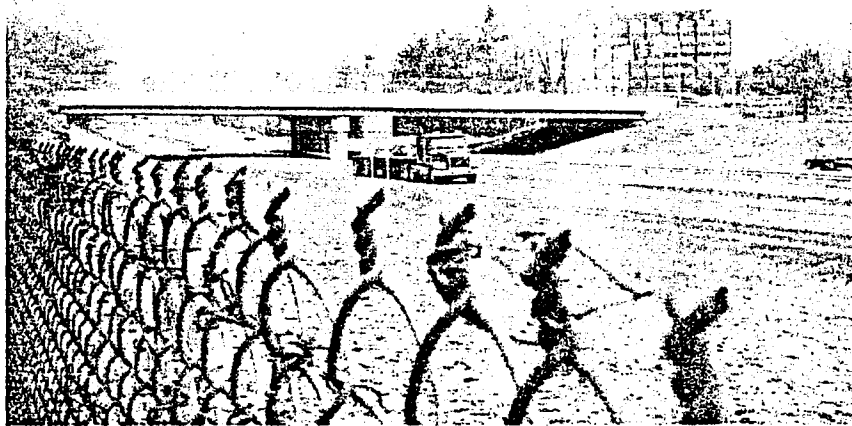
Krumkill Rd to Guilderland Town Line	ALB	Minor Urban Arterial	10400	1997	<u>B[1]</u>
Guilderland Town Line to I-87 Overpass	ALB	Minor Urban Arterial	10400	1997	<u>B[1]</u>
I-87 Overpass to US 20	ALB	Minor Urban Arterial	10500	1997	<u>B[1]</u>

For highways that don't meet the standard to be a shared roadway, 6 foot bike lanes are the recommended Oregon DOT standard on urban arterials and major collector streets. No collector highway in Guilderland, except perhaps Route 146 north of Guilderland Center, comes close to having that width, and most town and county roads in Guilderland lack sufficient right-of-way to construct even 4 foot bike lanes.

The proposed Thruway path could provide an alternative route for NYS Bike Route #5 east of Exit 25. Western Avenue between Carman Road and McKown Road presently has some substandard sections (north side at the Kaikout Kill, across from 20 Mall; both sides west of Willow Street/Foundry Road, over the Hunger Kill) that would appear to be very expensive to bring to standard because of ravines adjacent to the highway. In any case traffic volumes and the density of driveways on Western Avenue are both quite high.

Is a path along the Thruway feasible?

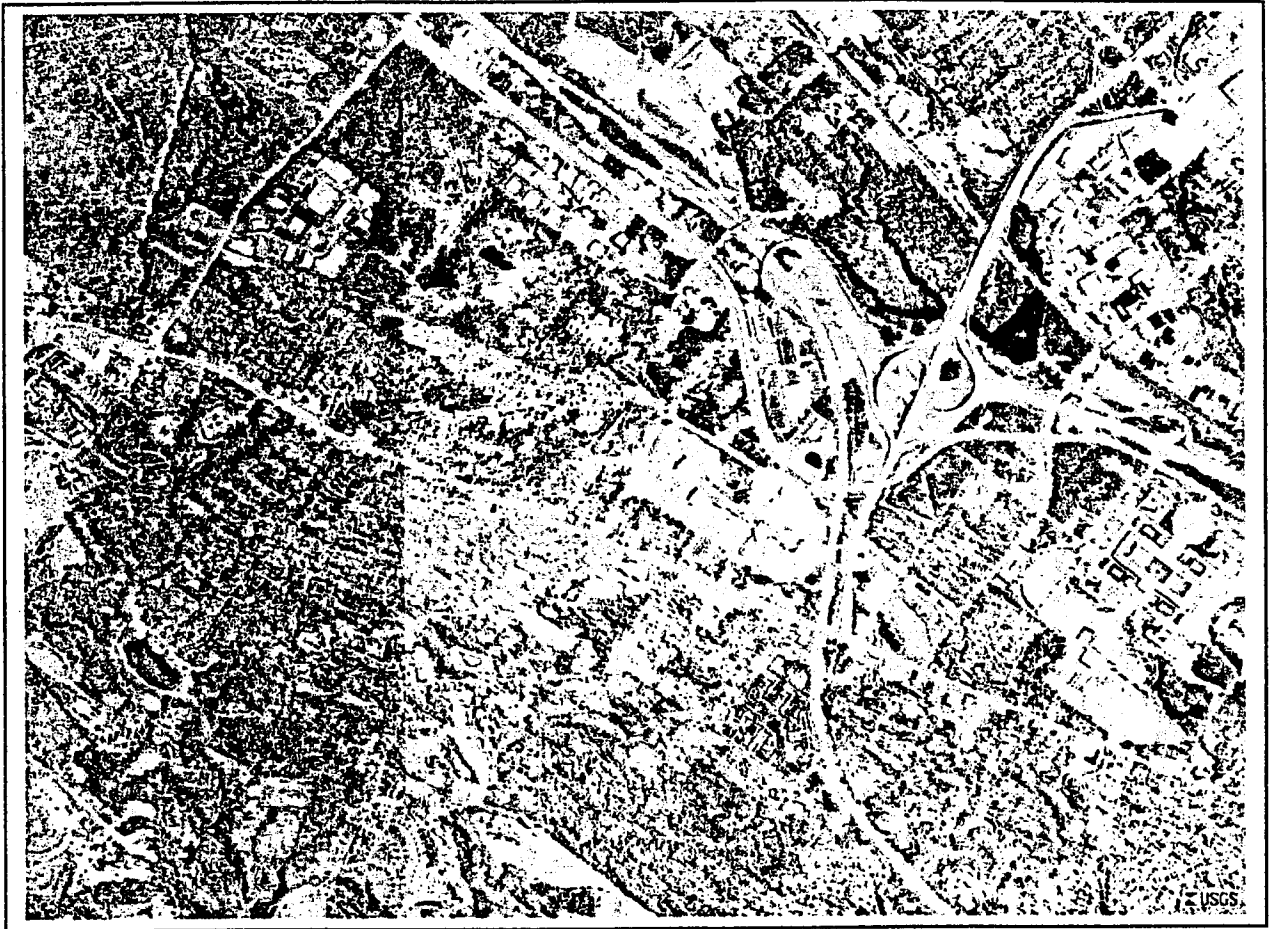
The main obstacles are the bridges, and all the Thruway bridges in the region appear to look like the Western Avenue Bridge,



in that the land slopes up from the edge of pavement to the top of the bridge, as shown here. The older ones also have vertical columns holding up the bridge at the edge of pavement on both sides, rather than columns only in the median. Since the bridge is 14 feet or more above the pavement, and for bike paths an 8 foot clearance is acceptable (Oregon DOT), it appears possible to locate a bike path part way up the slope, well separated from the highway, and still have adequate vertical clearance.

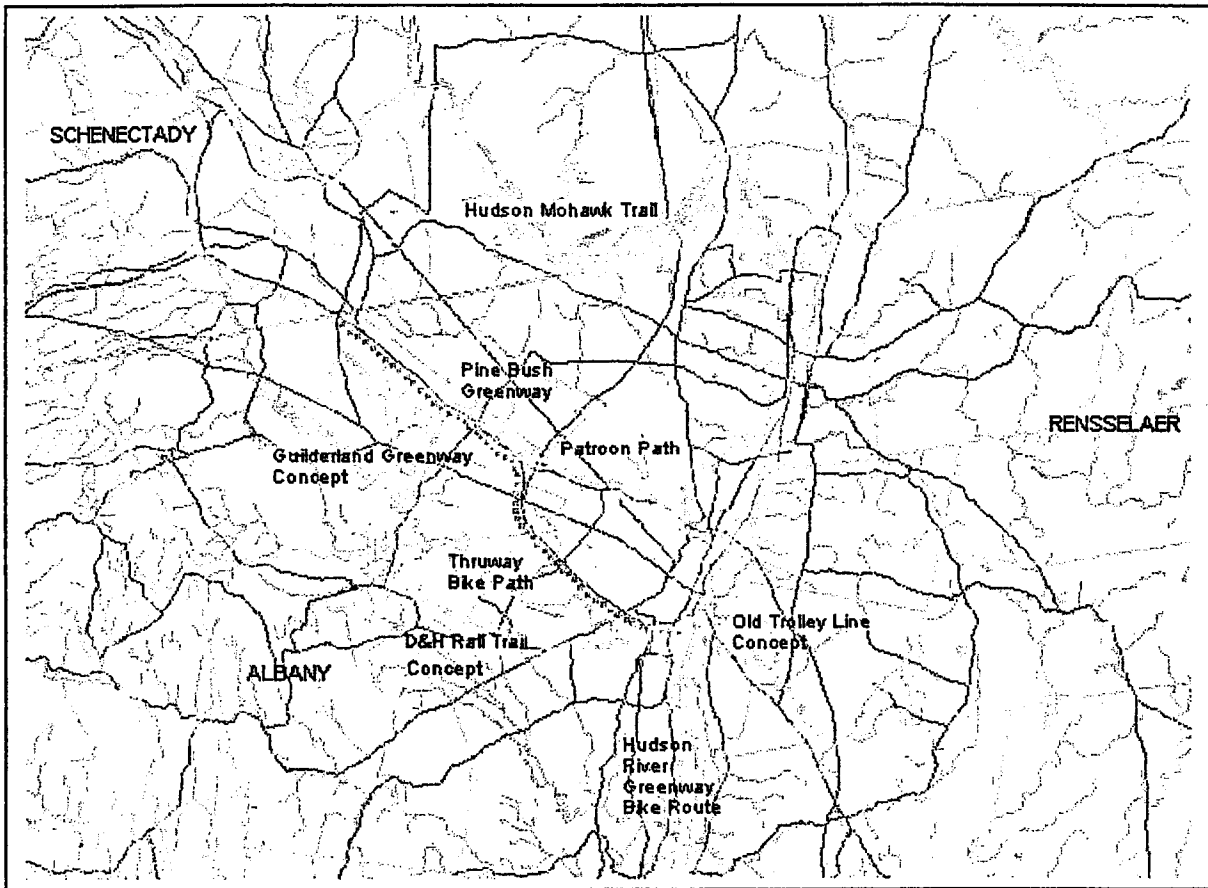
Between Exit 25 and Exit 23, the only highway the Thruway goes over that I'm aware of is Krum Kill Road. For an initial path it appears possible to design an at-grade crossing of Krum Kill Road. That location could also be a reasonable place for bike traffic heading for the St. Peter's Hospital or University Heights area to move from a path on the south side of the Thruway to a path on the north side east of Krum Kill that would connect to New Scotland Avenue near Whitehall Road. (Farther east, Hackett Boulevard appears to have plenty of room for bike lanes east of South Main Ave. except at the Academy Road intersection.)

Here is a map of part of the path, showing connections to the Pine Bush path via Rapp Road, to the Washington Avenue Extension north service road, to Crossgates, and to McKownville via McKown Road and Abele Park:



The path indicated here would appear to be constructible with minor topographical alterations and without constructing any bridges or tunnels (as compared to the Menands connector, shown above).

Here is a map of how a Thruway bike path could fit into the regional network.



The paths in purple or green dots are conceptual. (The Old Trolley Line concept arose during a design charette by Fraser Associates for the 9 and 20 corridor in East Greenbush earlier this year; the Pine Bush Greenway was proposed by the Pine Bush Commission a couple of years ago; the Guiderland Greenway Concept was initially proposed by the Guiderland Pathways Committee last year; the Patroon Path has been designed by DOT; the D&H Rail Trail Concept is presently being considered by Albany County.)

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7/17/03