



**Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad
New York Byway**

UPDATED

**Corridor Management Plan
2026-2036**

November 20, 2025

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We acknowledge that New York State is the ancestral, unceded, and traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee, Shinnecock, Lenape, and other Indigenous communities who have been the original caretakers of this land for countless generations.

The development of this Corridor Management Plan is made possible through a New York State Economic Development Administration Tourism Partner Sub-Awards Grant.

Special appreciation is extended to the Underground Railroad Consortium of New York State (URCNYS) for the network's leadership and ongoing commitment of time, energy, and resources to expand and bring this important story to communities and visitors. Appreciation is also given to the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area and the Cayuga County Office of Tourism for their contributions of both financial and human resources to engage stakeholders in the byway process and facilitate the creation of this document.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Born into enslavement, Harriet Tubman journeyed through New York several times seeking freedom. She eventually chose New York as her home, as did many other freedom seekers. Abolitionists and other Underground Railroad agents committed their lives to helping individuals escape enslavement.

The first phase of the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad New York Byway encompasses 176.76 miles and links 22 places of significant association with Harriet Tubman, the Underground Railroad, or freedom seekers. The byway begins at the City of Auburn in Cayuga County and continues from Seneca County through Ontario, Wayne, Monroe, Orleans, Niagara, and Erie Counties before reaching its western terminus in Niagara Falls in Niagara County.

The historic quality of the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad New York Byway (Phase 1) is evidenced at several nationally recognized locations including the U.S. Department of the Interior's designation of the Harriet Tubman National Historical Park in the City of Auburn, two National Historic Landmarks (William H. Seward House in the City of Auburn and the Erie Canal/New York State Barge Canal in Erie and Wayne Counties), and three sites listed on the National Register of Historic Places (1816 Farmington Quaker Meetinghouse in Ontario County, Mount Hope Cemetery in Rochester/Monroe County, and the Michigan Street Baptist Church in Buffalo/Erie County).

The National Park Service (NPS) has also featured the Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Center in the City of Niagara Falls on its "Travel with Tubman" program¹ and 14 other sites on the NPS National Underground Network to Freedom program.² These sites further demonstrate the historic significance of Phase 1 of the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad New York Byway and provide unique experiences for travelers along the route.

The eight counties where Phase 1 of the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad New York Byway traverses already attract visitors to the region. The designation of Phase 1 of this historic byway generates an opportunity to expand visitation and spending from key markets, including individuals and families of African descent, Cultural Heritage Travelers, Domestic and International Leisure Travelers, School Groups, and traditional Scenic Byway Visitors.

The July 2025 *American Travel Sentiment Study* on Road Trip Travel reports that, despite concern about rising gas prices, half (56%) of travelers have spent at least one night following a touring route or scenic/historic highway in the last five years. The top three interests while on touring routes are great local restaurants, cafes, and dining (40%);

¹ Travel with Tubman Program, National Park Service, <https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/travel-with-tubman.htm>

² National Underground Network to Freedom Act, Public Law 105-203 (July 21, 1998), <https://www.congress.gov/105/plaws/publ203/PLAW-105publ203.pdf>

wonderful outdoor scenery (40%) and historical sites/attractions (36%). Source: [*American Travel Sentiment Study Wave 98*](#), Longwoods International.

Additionally, the byway can lure visitors to lesser-known but historically significant sites where they can learn more about Harriet Tubman, Underground Railroad agents, and freedom seekers in New York. The byway will also serve as a connector to African American neighborhoods, businesses, and other visitor services, encouraging travelers to linger longer (and spend more) in communities along the route. As needed and appropriate, additional interpretation – in the form of kiosks, exhibits, events, or experience centers – will enhance the visitor experience by connecting the traveler with the byway’s historical significance. Recreational activities along the byway, such as the Empire State Trail and Erie Canal, further expand the diversity of experiences available to visitors.

Stewardship of the byway and its significant resources is paramount to maintaining its historic integrity for current and future generations. Therefore, conservation and preservation strategies will be a priority for the byway organization and its stakeholders. Several organizations already support segments of the byway through the “Adopt-a-Highway” program, and a key priority is to expand this program to all segments of the byway.

Marketing is essential for increasing awareness of the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad New York Byway, especially since the route will be designated in phases. During Phase 1, marketing will focus on foundational elements such as branded signage along the route, promotional materials (website, brochures, and on-site decals) to help visitors and residents become aware of the byway and encourage their engagement with historic sites, businesses, and communities. Additionally, the marketing efforts will help spur interest in the designation of Phase 2, culminating in a New York byway focusing on Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad from the New Jersey border to Canada.

VISION OF THE

HARRIET TUBMAN UNDERGROUND RAILROAD NEW YORK BYWAY

As a vehicle for education, preservation, and economic growth, the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad New York Byway fosters community pride, enhances residents’ quality of life, preserves its historic and natural assets, inspires visitors to be agents of change, and elevates the authentic stories of Freedom Seekers on their journey to Freedom by providing exceptional and inclusive experiences along its eventual border-to-border route.

TAGLINE: Sharing Authentic Stories of Harriet Tubman, the Underground Railroad, and Freedom Seekers in New York.

The 100+ volunteers involved in the development of this Corridor Management Plan included leadership from the Underground Railroad Consortium of New York State, descendants of Freedom Seekers and relatives of Harriet Tubman, state and federal government agencies, historical associations and historians, historic sites managers, heritage areas, tourism promotion agencies, and other local

stakeholders. The Steering Committee crafted five goals to prioritize tasks and produce desired outcomes. The group also devised an organizational structure and identified potential financial and human resources to implement Phase 1 of the Corridor Management Plan and designate the remaining sections of the byway (Phase 2) to create a border-to-border route in 2027. The Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad New York Byway represents a unique educational and economic opportunity for the state to showcase its distinctive connection to an important era of American history.

ACRONYMS

CMP	Corridor Management Plan
DMO	Destination Marketing Organization
HTURB	Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway
NHA	National Heritage Area
NPS	National Park Service
NTF	Network to Freedom (National Park Service Program)
NYSTIA	New York State Tourism Industry Association
TPA	Tourism Promotion Agency
URCNYS	Underground Railroad Consortium of New York State

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The Byway Foundation

INTRODUCTION

The Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad New York Byway (HTURB) is an initiative of the Underground Railroad Consortium of New York State (URCNYS) that will connect resources (historic sites, canal ways, rivers, railways, and other pathways) related to the Underground Railroad and Harriet Tubman, including some URCNYS sites and sites that showcase freedom seekers' journeys through New York state, as a series of thematic heritage tourism experiences. This byway's primary intrinsic quality is demonstrated by its significant *historic* integrity, particularly evidenced at the National Park Service's designated "Travel with Tubman" and "Network to Freedom" sites in New York.

PHASE 1: Initially, the Byway Steering Committee is seeking designation for two segments spanning eight counties, totalling 176.76 miles, with 22 documented resources demonstrating the significance of Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad in New York.

PHASE 2: Upon designation, the byway organization will focus on securing resolutions of support from the remaining jurisdictions so the byway will be a contiguous border-to-border route between New York City and Niagara Falls, ending at the location where many Freedom Seekers, including Harriet Tubman, crossed the international border to freedom in Canada. It is hoped that the entire border-to-border byway can be designated as a contiguous route by 2027.

The Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad New York Byway's goal is to serve as the northern connector for a multi-state/nationally designated byway from Dorchester County, Maryland (Harriet Tubman's birthplace) to St. Catharines, Ontario, in Canada (Harriet Tubman's destination for freedom seekers). The byway will ultimately connect with other state byways (the proposed New Jersey Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway, the existing Pennsylvania Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway/ Brandywine Valley National Scenic Byway, Delaware's 98-mile Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway, and the existing 125-mile Maryland Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Scenic Byway and All-American Road to provide a continuous multi-state route.

If the national byway designation process reopens for applications, the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad New York State Byway organization will work collaboratively with other states to secure designation of the multi-state route as an All-American Road by the Federal Highway Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation. Because of its proximity to the Empire State Trail (a multi-use trail), the Erie Canal, and other waterways or bodies of water (such as the Finger Lakes, Lake Erie, Lake Ontario, and the Hudson River), the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad New York Byway will enhance its designation significance through recognition of its recreational integrity (the second intrinsic quality required for future designation as a National Byway and All-American Road).

THE BYWAY’S ORIGINS

Numerous sites and organizations associated with the Underground Railroad in New York have worked tirelessly over the last several decades to educate individuals and raise awareness about this important part of our country’s history. The Underground Railroad Consortium of New York State (URCNYS), a non-profit coalition founded in 2015, is the nominating entity for the proposed Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad New York Byway. URCNYS is dedicated to preserving and promoting New York State's pivotal role in the Underground Railroad and the broader struggle to end enslavement.

Since its inception, URCNYS has sought to support organizations that promote and share the history of the Underground Railroad and freedom seekers across the state. In 2022, it formed the Harriet Tubman Byway Committee to manage a grant from the New York State Economic Development Administration to establish a cohesive history trail connecting Underground Railroad sites. URCNYS received a \$519,500 New York State Economic Development Administration (EDA) Post-COVID Tourism Partner Sub-Awards Grant to fund the CMP creation and secure community/ jurisdiction support for the byway. Inspired by similar byways in Maryland and Delaware, the grant aimed to connect Underground Railroad sites with other regional tourism opportunities. The byway strengthens the existing network of historical resources and elevates educational opportunities for travelers to and within New York. The grant permitted the hiring of a byway coordinator in 2023, and contractors to assist with the CMP development. It also funded other URCNYS general marketing initiatives.

The stakeholders involved in the development of the CMP include various groups and individuals:

- ⇒ 42 Members of the Steering Committee representing 16 jurisdictions and state organizations
- ⇒ 20 Committee Members to create the CMP components
- ⇒ Over 75 Advocates/Ambassadors assisting with securing 106 Resolutions of Support (63 jurisdictions for Phase 1 and 43 jurisdictions in Phase 2) for the byway designation.

A complete list of these individuals and organizations is available in *Appendix 1*. Additionally, 128 “Letters of Support” from Individuals, Organizations, and Businesses in 31 jurisdictions in 22 counties were secured. Copies of these letters are available in *Appendix 2*. Copies of the jurisdictions’ Resolutions of Support for the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad New York Byway are provided in *Appendix 3*.

1. BYWAY VISION, GOALS & OBJECTIVES

VISION STATEMENT

As a vehicle for education, preservation, and economic growth, the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad New York Byway fosters community pride, enhances residents' quality of life, preserves its historic and natural assets, inspires visitors to be agents of change, and elevates the authentic stories of Freedom Seekers on their journey to Freedom by providing exceptional and inclusive experiences along its eventual border-to-border route.

TAGLINE: Sharing Authentic Stories of Harriet Tubman, the Underground Railroad, and Freedom Seekers in New York.

BYWAY GOALS & OBJECTIVES

GOAL 1: IDENTIFY AND DOCUMENT INFORMATION ABOUT HARRIET TUBMAN, THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD AGENTS, AND FREEDOM SEEKERS

- ⇒ Objective 1.1: Utilize existing research and continue to document oral histories and additional information of Freedom Seekers, their descendants, Underground Railroad Agents, Harriet Tubman and her relatives, and other stakeholders (including Historic Sovereign Indigenous Nations and Abolitionist Groups) related to the Underground Railroad and their associated places in the New York byway.
- ⇒ Objective 1.2: Conduct byway interpretive training following established and accepted guidelines for interpretation and utilize technology to align with local interpretive sites and guides.
- ⇒ Objective 1.3: Create, update, and maintain digital communication tools for residents, visitors, and byway stakeholders (website, databases, apps, videos)
- ⇒ Objective 1.4: Communicate regularly with corridor residents, communities, and stakeholders.

GOAL 2: PRESERVE & SHARE AUTHENTIC STORIES & PLACES

Preserve and interpret the documented stories and events related to Harriet Tubman, the Underground Railroad, and Freedom Seekers at natural and historic sites along the byway.

- ⇒ Objective 2.1: Expand visitor readiness and interpretation of resources using the arts and innovative engagement methods along the byway.
- ⇒ Objective 2.2: Add new tour programs and events along the byway to showcase and connect the documented stories of Harriet Tubman, the Underground Railroad, and

Freedom Seekers at natural and historic resources along the byway for education from K-12 to lifelong learning.

- ⇒ Objective 2.3: Create and implement a corridor-wide stewardship plan for resources and the byway.
- ⇒ Objective 2.4: Identify and encourage safeguarding strategies for the Cultural Landscapes and Historic Viewsheds.

GOAL 3: DEVELOP NEW AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCES

Develop authentic and informative experiences to engage the byway user in the diverse stories about Harriet Tubman, Freedom Seekers, and agents and abolitionists associated with the Underground Railroad in New York.

- ⇒ Objective 3.1: Develop and/or build upon Regional and Thematic Interpretive Centers and Kiosks to increase visitor awareness and education about Harriet Tubman, the Underground Railroad, and Freedom Seekers in New York.
- ⇒ Objective 3.2: Create multi-modal interpretive programs, activities, and events along the Byway that expand its use among recreational, train, water, and bicycle visitors.
- ⇒ Objective 3.3: Conduct interpretive training (sites, guides) following established interpretation guidelines to expand local education and enrich visitor engagement.
- ⇒ Objective 3.4: Encourage collaboration with communities of African descent and prioritize visibility of Black-owned businesses along the byway to enhance the visitor experience and provide local benefits/economic impact.

GOAL 4: MARKET THE BYWAY

Market the Byway to attract visitors and their spending to communities, sites, and businesses along the route for increased annual economic impact and positive byway brand recognition.

- ⇒ Objective 4.1: Create and deploy innovative marketing tools and strategies to attract domestic and international visitors to the byway year-round.
- ⇒ Objective 4.2: Develop and market adult and school group tour programs to attract and educate school, youth, and adult groups about Harriet Tubman, the Underground Railroad, and Freedom Seekers in New York.
- ⇒ Objective 4.3: Collaborate with other organizations, government agencies, heritage areas, recreational trails, and businesses to promote the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad in New York experiences and expand the brand awareness of the byway.

- ⇒ Objective 4.4: Ensure communities of African descent and businesses are represented, elevated, and leading in product development, interpretation, and marketing to generate social and economic benefits locally.

GOAL 5: SUSTAIN AND GROW THE BYWAY

Cultivate and maintain inclusive byway leadership representing a diversity of perspectives and backgrounds to identify resources, implement, oversee, and evaluate the impact of the corridor management plan.

- ⇒ Objective 5.1: Implement a Byway Management structure to engage stakeholders (including descendants/relatives of Freedom Seekers, Underground Railroad agents, and Harriet Tubman) and residents in programs, activities, and stewardship.
- ⇒ Objective 5.2: Fund byway signage, CMP activities, historical markers, and operations through diverse sources and revenue-generation strategies.
- ⇒ Objective 5.3: Foster leadership opportunities among people of African descent and youth to facilitate the byway's growth, diversity, and sustainability.
- ⇒ Objective 5.4: Collaborate with other organizations, businesses, agencies, and institutions to leverage resources, effectively manage byway activities, and expand educational opportunities.
- ⇒ Objective 5.5: Document, analyze, and communicate the impact of the byway to stakeholders, residents, and funders with a lens on communities of African descent and businesses on or near the byway.

A planning chart with priority tasks, timeline for completion, metrics for success, and the responsible entity for oversight is provided for each CMP component.

2. BYWAY DESCRIPTION & MAPPING

BYWAY NARRATIVE

The Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad New York Byway (HTURB) represents a triumphant story of people seeking freedom from enslavement under their own agency between the early 1800s and the Civil War (1861-1865). This historical focus differs from other traumatic African American stories being told throughout the country. With Freedom Seekers and those who assisted them as the focus when speaking about sites and pathways related to Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad in New York, the stories are of triumph overcoming adversity. The voices of those who sought personal sovereignty are heard along this byway.

Phase 1 of the HTURB journey begins in the City of Auburn, Harriet Tubman's chosen hometown. She purchased a seven-acre site in 1859, and while the original wood-framed home was destroyed by fire, it was rebuilt out of brick between 1881-1882. In 1896, Harriet Tubman purchased the 25 acres abutting her property, which included a still-standing wood-framed house called the Harriet Tubman Home for the Aged and the ruins of a large brick building that once served as a nursing home facility named John Brown Hall. The current site includes a visitor center with interpretive exhibits and offers guided tours of the property.³ The Thompson Memorial AME Zion Church, where Tubman worshiped and where her funeral was held (part of the Harriet Tubman National Historical Park), and her burial site across the street at Fort Hill Cemetery are open to the public. At these historic sites, visitors can also learn how William and Frances Seward and David and Martha Coffin were instrumental in helping Tubman along her journey to freedom and securing the freedom of others. Several other local sites, including the Cayuga County Courthouse, pay tribute to Harriet Tubman and other freedom seekers, as well as Underground Railroad agents in Auburn, and offer information about them.

The Byway continues at the boundary of Seneca County, traveling through Seneca Falls (the home of Thomas and Elizabeth James, recognized as a National Park Service Network to Freedom site) and north through Ontario County (the 1816 Farmington Quaker Meeting House, a NPS Network to Freedom Site listed on the National Register of Historic Places) to Wayne County. Traveling west into Monroe County and the City of Rochester allows visitors to explore where Frederick Douglass lived and his burial site at Mount Hope Cemetery (a Network to Freedom site). A park memorializes Kelsy's Landing, north of the Lower Falls of the Genesee River where, according to the NPS Network to Freedom

³ See National Register report here: [New York MPS Tubman, Harriet, House](#)

program, Frederick Douglass and Harriet Tubman (and other prominent Rochesterians) led enslaved persons onto cargo steamships bound for Canada and Detroit from 1847 to 1859.⁴

Continuing west through Orleans County and the Village of Holley, visitors can experience the Erie Canal (designated a National Historic Landmark in 1960) along the boardwalk at Holley Canal Park or access Holley Falls. The Village of Albion is located on the Erie Canalway Trail, one of the three main segments of the 750-mile Empire State Trail, offering bicyclists and walkers scenic paths.

Entering Niagara County, the Byway continues west to the historic city of Lockport, then south to Erie County. Michigan Avenue has been renamed Tubman Way as an entrance to Buffalo and the home of the historic Michigan Street Baptist Church (established 1845). Freedom Park, formerly known as Broderick Park, is located on the banks of the scenic Niagara River, where the Black Rock Ferry operated, and freedom seekers crossed to freedom between Buffalo, New York, and Fort Erie, Canada, from 1825 through the Civil War and to the middle of the 20th century.⁵ This NPS Network to Freedom site offers scenic views and historical information about the Underground Railroad. Continuing north, the Byway terminates in Niagara Falls at the site of the former Cataract House Hotel, a known Underground Railroad station, and the Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Center, an award-winning experiential museum that is recognized as a NPS “Travel with Tubman” site.

In Phase 2, the sites and towns, as well as cultural and natural landscapes, from New York County along the Hudson River to Albany County and west to Cayuga County, contribute to the story of Harriet Tubman’s own journeys as an Underground Railroad conductor through the state as well as the stories of freedom seekers and the individuals who helped them using the Underground Railroad Network in New York. The richness of this historic byway will be enhanced with the sharing of these important stories and places related to Harriet Tubman, the Underground Railroad, and the freedom seekers who traveled through or settled in New York.

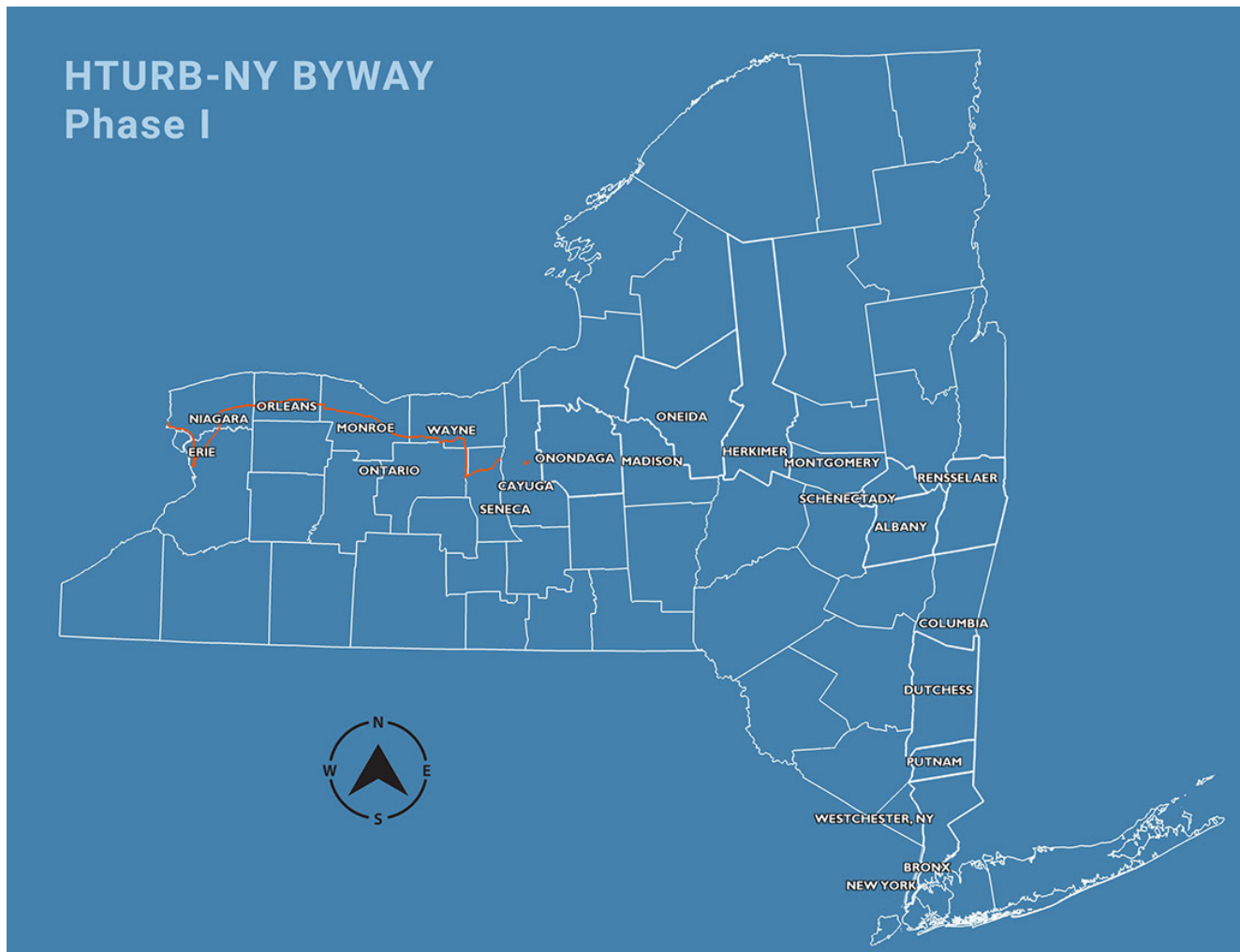
The two segments for designation of the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad New York Byway (Phase 1) comprise a total of 176.76 miles across 63 jurisdictions in eight counties. A link to the Phase 1 route (shown below) is available [here](#).

The Phase 1 segments represent approximately one-third of the total 550-mile border-to-border route spanning 22 counties and 156 jurisdictions from the New Jersey state line to

⁴ Calarco, Tom; Cynthia Vogel. Places of the Underground Railroad. Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2011, p.287 as cited in the National Park Service Network to Freedom Database, <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/undergroundrailroad/ntf-listings.htm>

⁵ National Park Service Network to Freedom Database, <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/undergroundrailroad/ntf-listings.htm>

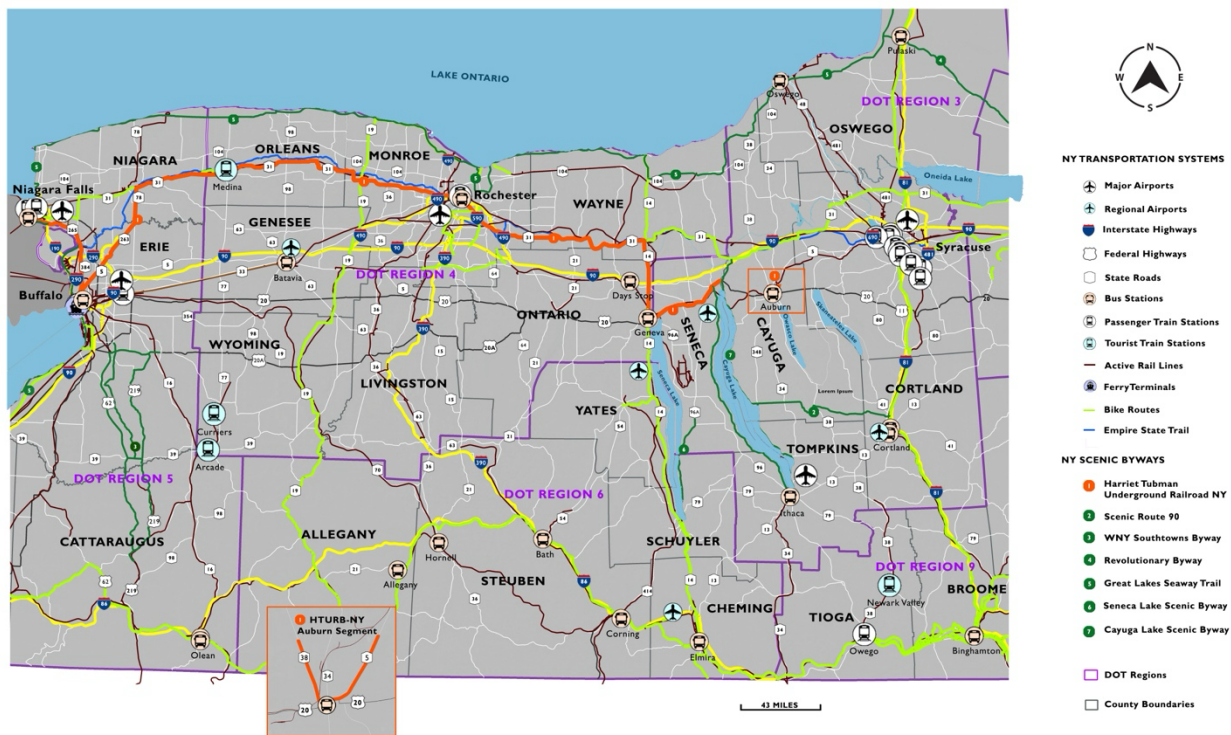
the Canadian border. It is anticipated that during 2026, Phase 2 will complete the contiguous border-to-border byway for designation in 2027.



PHASE 1 BYWAY SEGMENTS		
HARRIET TUBMAN UNDERGROUND RAILROAD BYWAY IN NEW YORK		
Byway Section	Mileage	Route Directions
City of Auburn (Cayuga County)	3.76	NY-9 (Grant Avenue, which becomes Arterial Road) at Auburn city limits to downtown Auburn to the intersection of State Route 38 (State Street) to the boundary of the City Limits of Auburn.
Seneca County	14.40	Route 20 from the Seneca County boundary through the Town of Seneca Falls and Village of Waterloo to the City of Geneva.
Region 3	18.16	16.69 miles on NYSDOT; 1.47 miles on Local Jurisdiction Roads
Ontario County	11.85	West onto Lake Street in the City of Geneva. North on SR-14 (Exchange Street) to the intersection with SR-31 (Forgham Street) in the Town of Lyons. West on SR-31 to the Wayne/Ontario County line.
Wayne County	24.89	West on SR 31 (Pittsford Palmyra Road) to Wayne County Boundary and into Monroe County

Monroe County	36.74	West on SR 31 (Monroe Avenue) to the City of Rochester. Continue on SR 31 to Howell Street onto Chestnut Street to East Broad Street (SR 31). West on East Broad Street (SR 31) through West Broad Street, then West on Main Street (SR 31). Continue NY on West Broad Street (SR 31) to Broad Street to Lyell Avenue. West on SR 31 to Washington Street, then south to the intersection of SR 31 and SR 531. West on SR 41 to the intersection of Redman Road, to north on SR 31 to West on West Avenue (SR 31) to Monroe/Orleans County Line
Orleans County	26.09	West on SR 31 to the Orleans/Niagara County Line
Region 4	99.37	90.22 miles on NYSDOT; 9.15 miles on Local Jurisdiction Roads
Niagara County	31.99	West on SR 31 to the intersection with SR 77 at Chestnut Ridge Road. Continue on Chestnut Ridge Road (SR 31) in the City of Lockport to West on East Avenue to Main Street to West Main Street to South on SR 78 (South Transit Street) to Niagara/ Erie County border. (see section below) From Erie/Niagara County Line: North on SR 384 to SR 265 (River Road), north on SR 265 to SR 384, West on SR 384 to Niagara Street, West on Niagara Street to Whirlpool Street, North on Whirlpool Street to the intersection of Whirlpool Street with Depot Avenue West as terminus of the byway.
Erie County	27.24	Continue to intersection with SR 263, south on SR 263 to US 62, South on US 62 to SR 5. West on SR 5 to Michigan Avenue in the City of Buffalo. South on Michigan Avenue (Tubman Way) to Broadway to Lafayette Square (intersecting with Washington Street) to Court Street to Niagara Square. North on SR 384 to Erie/Niagara County Line.
Region 5	59.23	55.76 miles on NYSDOT; 3.47 miles on Local Jurisdiction Roads
TOTAL SEGMENTS	176.76	

As the map below indicates, Phase 1 of the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad New York Byway complements the 26 state-designated byways, three national byways, and one All-American Road.

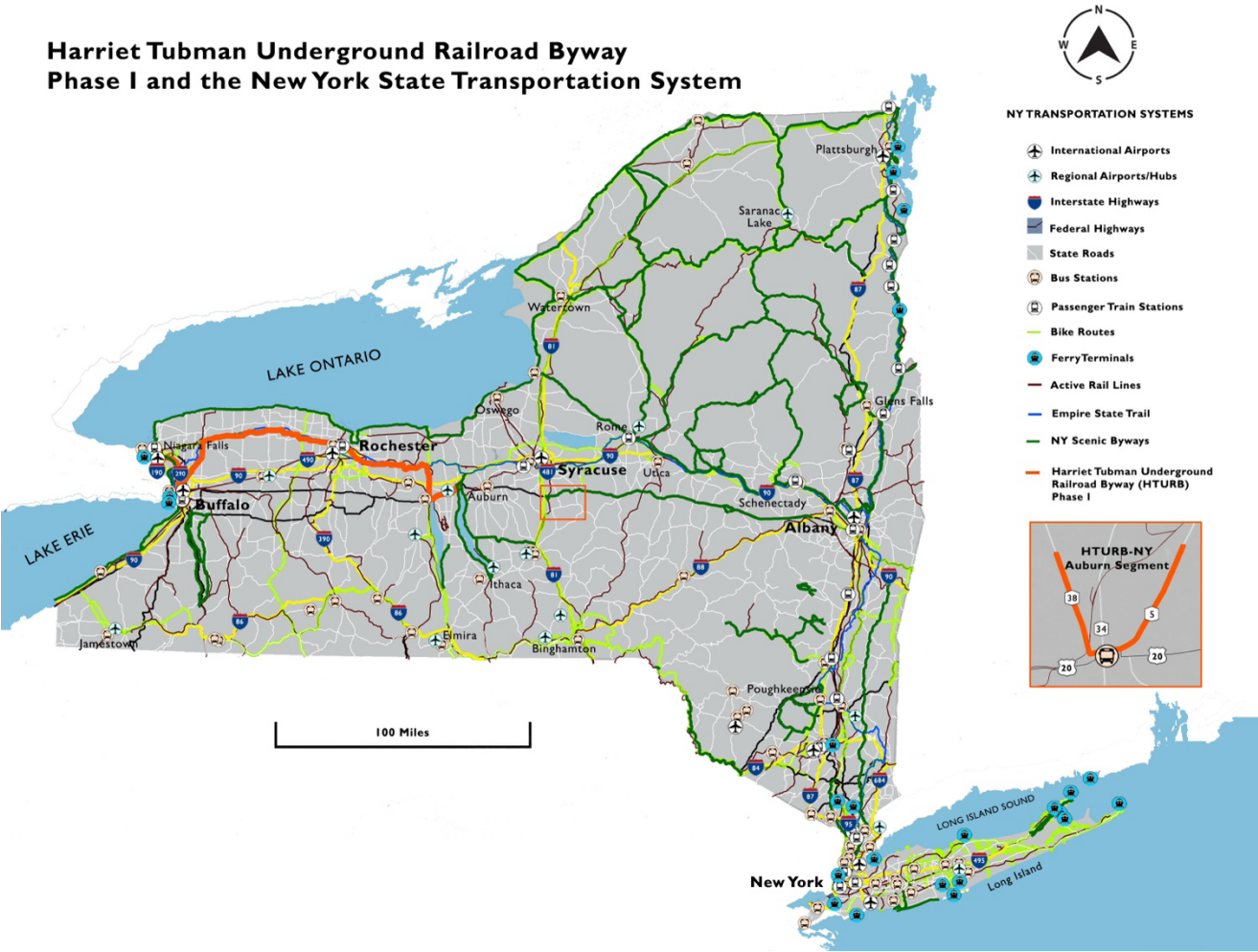


**Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway
Regional Transportation Map**

Additionally, the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad New York Byway (Phase 1) is easily accessed by major interstates, major railway systems, the Erie Canalway and the Empire State Trail.

As the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway expands in Phase 2 to become a border-to-border route, visitors and New York residents will have even greater access to the unique stories and sites located along the byway.

Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway Phase I and the New York State Transportation System



3. INTRINSIC QUALITIES

PRIMARY: HISTORIC

PHASE 1 (City of Auburn, New York, and section from Seneca County to Niagara County)

The historic quality of the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad New York Byway (Phase 1) is evidenced at several locations by the U.S. Department of the Interior's designation of the Harriet Tubman National Historical Park in the City of Auburn, two National Historic Landmarks (William H. Seward House in the City of Auburn and the Erie Canal/New York State Barge Canal in Erie and Wayne Counties), and three sites listed on the National Register of Historic Places (1816 Farmington Quaker Meetinghouse in Ontario County, Mount Hope Cemetery in Rochester/Monroe County, and the Michigan Street Baptist Church in Buffalo/Erie County).

The National Park Service has also included two sites along the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad New York Byway (Phase 1) on its "Travel with Tubman" program⁶, including the Harriet Tubman Home in the City of Auburn, and the Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Center in the City of Niagara Falls, County of Niagara.

Fourteen sites on the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad New York Byway (Phase 1) are recognized by the National Underground Network to Freedom program, administered by the National Park Service. The program was created by the passage of the federal legislation titled the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Act of 1998.⁷ These sites have demonstrated significance and association with Harriet Tubman or the Underground Railroad network.

The individual contributing resources located along the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad New York Byway (Phase 1) are described in more detail in the next section.

PHASE 2 of the proposed Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad New York Byway also includes nationally significant resources recognized by the U.S. Department of Interior's National Park Service (NPS), such as the Gerrit Smith Estate (a National Historic Landmark and designated NPS "Travel with Tubman" site in Peterboro) and the Stephen and Harriet Myers Residence (listed on the National Register of Historic Places and a designated NPS "Travel with Tubman" site in Albany). These and other significant resources associated with Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad Network in New York will be described in the Phase 2 CMP for designation.

Additionally, the CMP will be expanded to include a second intrinsic quality focusing on Recreation. As the byway parallels multiple bodies of water (the Niagara River, two Great

⁶ Travel with Tubman Program, National Park Service, <https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/travel-with-tubman.htm>

⁷ National Underground Network to Freedom Act, Public Law 105-203 (July 21, 1998), <https://www.congress.gov/105/plaws/publ203/PLAW-105publ203.pdf>

Lakes, the Finger Lakes, and the Hudson River), it also intersects with two important historical and recreational routes: the Erie Canal and the Empire State Trail. Other recreational parks are also located along the route. The Phase 2 CMP will identify and locate these resources along the border-to-border byway to demonstrate their significance for the potential national byway designation.

4. Resources and Resource Interpretive Plan

Harriet Tubman, Slavery, and the Underground Railroad in New York (BYWAY PHASE 1 and 2)

Born into slavery in Dorchester County, Maryland in March 1822, Harriet Ross Tubman was the fifth of nine children. Her parents, Ben and Rit Green Ross were enslaved by different people, making it difficult for the family to live and be together. “Slavery,” Tubman would later tell an interviewer, “was the next thing to hell.”⁸

The enslavement of Africans, and the laws and regulations that codified slavery’s existence, evolved slowly over a century and a half in the North American colonies between the early 1600s and 1775. After a brief pause during the American Revolution, the transatlantic slave trade from Africa to the United States continued until it was banned in 1808. By then, nearly 500,000 Africans had been forcibly imported to this country and its territories.⁹

The act of freeing or emancipating an individual or group of enslaved African Americans occurred from the earliest days of slavery in North America. Some enslavers manumitted individuals as an act of religious, political, social, or personal action. During and immediately after the American Revolution, a spike in manumissions reflected a newfound recognition of inalienable rights invested in all human beings. This moment reflected growing anti-slavery sentiment in northern states where, beginning in 1777, several newly established state governments banned imports of enslaved Africans. Vermont took it one step further by abolishing slavery via its constitution; Massachusetts’s 1780 constitution and a 1783 court decision effectively nullified slavery there; and Pennsylvania, after much anti-slavery debate between 1778 and 1780, instituted the first gradual emancipation laws. Rhode Island, New Jersey, and Connecticut followed suit, and so did New York, which gradually abolished slavery with emancipation set for July 4, 1827.¹⁰ By 1804, slavery was abolished in some form in all the states north of the Mason Dixon Line. Free Black communities were established and thrived. By the 1840s, the abolition movement had become quite vocal, attracting tens of thousands of activists eager to end slavery. It would not happen easily. By 1860, four million remained enslaved in southern slave states.¹¹

⁸ Benjamin Drew, *The Refugee: A North-Side View of Slavery*, ed. . rpt. 1969, Tilden G. Edelstein, ed. (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1855). “Mrs. James Seward,” 28-29.

⁹ Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A Global History*, 2014. 109. Ira Berlin, *Generations of Captivity : A History of African-American Slave*, 2004. 36-39.

¹⁰ Berlin, 102-111; and, Manisha Sinha, *The Slave's Cause : A History of Abolition* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2016). Chapter 3.

¹¹ David Eltis, “The Volume and Structure of the Transatlantic Slave Trade: A Reassessment.” *The William and Mary Quarterly* LVIII, 2001 (1):17-46. For recent and accessible contributions to the history and interpretation of the 400th anniversary of the arrival of African people in North America, please see The Washington Post’s *The Dawn of American Slavery* at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/american-slavery/?noredirect=on>; The New York Times’s *The 1619 project* at <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/1619-america-slavery.html>; and USA Today’s *1619: Searching for Answers Project* at <https://www.usatoday.com/in->

Enslaved people had been fleeing from bondage since they first arrived in the Americas in the 16th century, and in British North America in the early 17th century. Eventually, sympathizers and activists formed networks of clandestine routes, safe houses, individuals, and places by which those who attempted to escape to freedom could navigate their way. The network came to be known as the Underground Railroad.

Despite its name, the Underground Railroad was not actually a railroad nor was it underground—it was a network of people who assisted enslaved people escaping to freedom. The National Park Service Network to Freedom Program (NTF) defines the historical Underground Railroad (UGRR) as the “resistance to enslavement through escape and flight, through the end of the Civil War.” In sparsely populated colonial America, enslaved people fled and sought shelter in maroon communities in remote or inhospitable terrain beyond white settlements, or with sympathetic Native American communities. As free Black populations expanded during the late 18th century and into the 19th century, especially in larger cities like Philadelphia, New York City, and Boston, self-liberators achieved freedom by blending into Black neighborhoods. White enslavers and law enforcement called enslaved people who took their own liberty “fugitives” from the law, “runaways,” and “escapees.” Today, we refer to them as “freedom seekers,” “self-liberators,” or “self-emancipators.”

Tens of thousands of enslaved people ran away during the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, most without help. Settlement in free northern states where free Black communities were established and supportive white people also lived made the probability of permanent freedom incentive enough to flee. Notices placed in newspapers or on handbills posted in public places offering rewards for the capture and return of freedom seekers increased rapidly from the early 1700s through the Civil War, making the success of such escapes more difficult and dangerous. Some enslavers hired “slave catchers” to track and capture freedom seekers.

Participation in the Underground Railroad—a term that became popular during the 1830s after the construction of steam powered railroads in the United States—was illegal. The terminology related to actual railroads suited the clandestine networks to freedom, too. Underground Railroad “agents” and “stationmasters” provided food and shelter and arranged for connections to the next “station” on the secret route. “Conductors” like Harriet Tubman, offered transportation or guidance from one station to the next. Underground operatives sometimes called freedom seekers “passengers.” The terminology—not used all the time or universally—reflected the need to shield the business of the Underground Railroad from law enforcement.

Free Blacks and other enslaved people were among the most important members of the increasingly organized networks to freedom. They were at the most risk, too, especially in

[depth/news/nation/2019/08/21/american-slavery-began-1619-project-documents-brutal-journey/1968793001/.](https://www.npr.org/2019/08/21/american-slavery-began-1619-project-documents-brutal-journey/1968793001/))

the South. Free Blacks arrested for aiding in the escape of an enslaved person faced long jail sentences in the North or sale into slavery in the South, unlike whites who could not be enslaved by law. Enslaved agents in the South were subject to torture or death.

African Americans in the North established their own churches, including African Methodist Episcopal Zion (ca. 1800) and African Methodist Episcopal (1816) churches, which became vital resources for self-liberators. Quakers were also among the leading early faith communities involved in helping freedom seekers.¹² In New York, Quakers built meeting houses, like the 1816 Farmington Meeting House in Farmington, NY, where community members could come together from near and far to espouse their beliefs. It was there that Austin Steward found freedom, safety, and community after fleeing slavery in 1815. “When I arrived in Farmington, I felt, for the first time in my life, that I was my own master. I cannot describe to a free man, what a proud and manly feeling came over me, when I hired to Mr. C[omstock], nor when I assumed the dignity of collecting my own earnings.” Frederick Douglass, a former freedom seeker from Maryland and one of the greatest orators and abolitionists of the 19th century, often spoke at the 1816 Meetinghouse and in other churches, public halls, private homes, and outdoor settings across the North, encouraging people to support the cause of freedom.¹³

Few people operated as liberators like Harriet Tubman. She became known as a “conductor” on the Underground Railroad after her own escape from enslavement on the Eastern Shore of Maryland in the fall of 1849. At first, she fled with three of her brothers. Their fear of capture, however, increased after their enslaver posted a \$300 reward for their apprehension and return, forcing them to give up their quest and turn back. Shortly thereafter, Tubman stole away, again, alone. “I had reasoned this out in my mind,” Tubman later said, “there was one of two things I had a right to, liberty, or death; if I could not have one, I would have the other; for no man should take me alive; I should fight for my liberty as long as my strength lasted.”¹⁴

Once Tubman finally crossed the border and into freedom in Pennsylvania, she quickly blended into a large community of free Blacks and freedom seekers in Philadelphia, where she lived precariously as a fugitive of the law. Her fragile freedom did not ensure happiness. “There was no one to welcome me to the land of freedom,” she told an early biographer, “I was a stranger in a strange land; and my home, after all, was down in Maryland; because my father, my mother, my brothers, and sisters, and friends were there.” Tubman experienced the deep, emotionally painful consequences of escape; leaving loved ones behind was the high cost of freedom. She found life without family and friends almost too much to bear. “But I was free, and they should be free.”¹⁵ Tubman’s values, hopes, and dreams were rooted in universal ideals of **Freedom, Family, Faith, and Community**. Everything she did was in pursuit of **freedom**. She returned to Maryland about

¹² Kenneth Carroll, *Quakerism on the Eastern Shore*. Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore. 1970. 132-138.

¹³ <https://farmingtonmeetinghouse.org/equal-rights/#africanamericanrights> ; and Austin Steward, *Twenty-Two Years a Slave and Forty Years a Free Man* (1857).

¹⁴ Sarah Bradford, *Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman*. Auburn, New York: W.J. Moses, 186. 21.

¹⁵ Bradford, *Scenes*. 20.

13 times to rescue **family** and other loved ones. It was her **faith** that sustained and guided her. And it was a vast **community** of people—Black and white, free and enslaved, rich and poor, faithful and agnostic, who protected her, fed her, clothed her, administered medical care, comforted her, and kept her secrets.

These values emboldened Tubman to become one of the most famous freedom fighters of all time. Once she achieved freedom, she continued her fight for equality, justice, and self-determination in a world that would continue to deny her because she was a woman and a person of color. Other freedom seekers' lives were defined by these values, too. Most freedom seekers could not return to rescue loved ones, but they yearned to be reunited with them. In fact, after the Civil War, newspapers published letters, advertisements, and other printed notices from formerly enslaved people looking to reunite with lost family and friends. Freedom seekers in New York and their allies lived in communities, established families, practiced their faith, and lived free.

The prospects for permanent freedom for self-liberators in the North diminished after 1850, just as Tubman was beginning her decade long effort to liberate her loved ones. Frustrated by the rising numbers of escapes, particularly in Border States like Maryland, southern slaveholders rebelled when more liberal politicians from northern states advocated for the admission of California and New Mexico as free states, thus tipping the balance of power in Congress from slaveholder interests to non-slaveholding northern interests. Southerners threatened secession, so Congress enacted the Compromise of 1850, which included an updated Fugitive Slave Act that required federal judges and law enforcement to support the capture and rendition of freedom seekers to their enslavers.¹⁶ Northern abolitionists actively encouraged resistance to this new law, despite heavy fines and prison. Several high-profile public arrests of freedom seekers galvanized Northern resistance. New Yorkers witnessed and participated in numerous conflicts between police officials and freedom seekers and police officials charged with carrying out the law, including the rescue of Charles Nalle in Albany, the Jerry rescue in Syracuse, and more across the state and along the Niagara Falls border with Canada.

Using “her strength and her craft, which was great,” Tubman traveled by night, using the North Star and instructions from white and Black helpers to make her way to Philadelphia.¹⁷ The North Star “was one thing she insisted that she was always sure of,” Tubman later told a friend in Auburn.¹⁸ Tubman was helped first by a white woman, a Quaker to whom she had confided her plans.¹⁹ From Philadelphia, she followed established routes with networks of people and communities dedicated to freedom through Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, New England, and Canada. Her earliest missions included traveling from Philadelphia to Elmira, NY, near the border, and northwest to Rochester, but most of her trips took her on established routes from New York City, where

¹⁶C. Peter Ripley, ed. *The Black Abolitionist Papers, Vols. 1-5* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991). Vol. IV. Sinha, *The Slave's Cause : A History of Abolition*.

¹⁷ Franklin Sanborn, "The Late Araminta Davis: Better Known as 'Moses' or 'Harriet Tubman'"

¹⁸ Earl Conrad, "Interview with Helen W. Tatlock [Mrs. William Tatlock]." In *Earl Conrad/Harriet Tubman Collection*. New York: Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library, 1939.

¹⁹ Sanborn, "Harriet Tubman [1863]." *The Commonwealth*, July 17, 1863." See also, as printed in Bradford, *Scenes*. 76; and Conrad, "Interview with Mrs. William Tatlock."

Louis Napoleon, Sydney Howard Gay, and Oliver Johnson provided help. From there, she followed the Hudson River north to Albany, passing multiple like-minded and supportive Underground Railroad communities along the way. In Albany, Stephen and Harriet Myers, the Mott sisters, and John Hooper operated way stations for freedom seekers coming from the city or from Massachusetts. Tubman then continued west through Central New York to Canada, seeking help in cities, towns, and villages like Peterboro, where Gerrit and Ann Fitzhugh Smith sheltered them, and Syracuse, where Jermain and Caroline Loguen and Reverends Samuel J. May helped. In Auburn, William Henry and Frances Miller Seward, and Martha Coffin and David Wright provided food and protection. In Rochester she sought aid from Frederick and Anna Murray Douglass, J. P. Morris and Amy and Isaac Post, among others to travel by boat across Lake Ontario, or to take a train to Niagara Falls, where the African American employees of the Cataract House, one of the largest hotels in Niagara Falls, assisted freedom seekers like Cecilia Jane Reynolds and Patrick Sneed. From there Tubman traveled across the river to freedom in St. Catharines, in Ontario, Canada. Other self-liberators continued north from Albany into the Adirondacks, where Tubman's friend and colleague John Brown settled, and to Vermont and Canada.

Tubman returned to Maryland about 13 times between 1850 and 1860 to liberate approximately 70 family and friends from the Eastern Shore and Baltimore. She also gave instructions to dozens more from the region who fled independently.²⁰ On Christmas Day, 1854, she rescued her three brothers. When they traveled through the offices of Underground Railroad agent William Still in Philadelphia, the brothers told him that they wanted to take new names. Robert Ross became John Stewart, Henry became William Henry Stewart, and Ben, Jr., became James Stewart. She rescued her parents, Ben and Rit in 1857. Unfortunately, Tubman was unsuccessful in rescuing her sister Rachel, who died in 1859, and Rachel's children, Ben and Angerine remained enslaved.

In 1859, the Swards sold Tubman a seven-acre farm on the outskirts of Auburn, NY. She would eventually bring her family there, where they lived in freedom, practiced their faith, and belonged to a thriving community. She continued to fight for the equality of women and people of color, demand equal justice from the law, and practiced self-determination to live a full life filled with purpose until her death in 1913. The Harriet Tubman New York Underground Railroad Byway will tell these stories and share the inspiration and values that shaped Harriet Tubman, other Freedom Seekers, Abolitionists and Underground Railroad operatives, and their families and communities.

PRIMARY RESOURCE INVENTORY

The following list describes the relevant, documented resources contributing to the historic intrinsic quality of the Phase 1 segments of the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad New York Byway. Where applicable, the National Park Service's Network to Freedom database was used to identify relevant resources in New York and describe the resource's significance.

²⁰ Kate Clifford Larson, *Bound for the Promised Land: Harriet Tubman, Portrait of an American Hero*. Ballantine Books, New York. 2003. 85-152.

The **Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor** has been designated as part of the National Park Service's "Network to Freedom" and is considered a valued contribution to this historic resource inventory.

Byway Segment 1: City of Auburn (Cayuga County)

Cayuga County Courthouse (NPS Network to Freedom Site)

152 Genessee Street, Auburn, NY 13021, 315-237-6450 (42.930244, -76.569158)

<https://ww2.nycourts.gov/courts/7jd/cayuga/Supreme-and-County/index.shtml>

Bronze plaque dedicated to Harriet Tubman in 1914, a year after her death; a bronze plaque dedicated to William H. Seward; photos of the building during the 19th century; a NY State historical marker.

David and Martha Coffin Wright House (NPS Network to Freedom Site)

192 Genessee Street, Auburn, NY 13021 (42.928233, -76.573149)

Martha Coffin Wright was the sister of Lucretia Coffin Mott of Philadelphia. Tubman said that Mott was the first white woman to help her when she reached Philadelphia. Historian Kate Clifford Larson believes Tubman ended up in Auburn because Lucretia's sister, Martha, lived there and could protect Tubman. William Henry Seward, whose wife Frances sold a seven-acre farm on the outskirts of Auburn to Tubman in 1859, was David Wright's law partner.²¹ Wright was also active in the Suffragist movement, as was Tubman in her later years. There is a historical marker out front of this residence, what is now a doctor's office.

Harriet Tubman Burial Site at Fort Hill Cemetery (NPS Network to Freedom Site and Tubman Lantern Trail)

19 Fort Street, Auburn, NY 13021, 315-253-8132 (42.927107, -76.570892)

<http://www.forthillcemetery.net/>

The cemetery where Tubman and her family are buried. William Seward and his family are buried here as well.

Harriet Tubman Home, located within the boundary of the Harriet Tubman National Historical Park (NPS Travel with Tubman and Network to Freedom Site)

180 South Street, Auburn, NY 13021, 315-252-2081, <https://www.harriettubmanhome.com>

Harriet Tubman bought a 7-acre area of land in 1859 in Auburn, New York. There was a barn and a farmhouse, where Harriet Tubman would move her family from St. Catharines, Canada, southeast to Auburn, New York. In 1880, the original wood-frame house burned down when a defective stovepipe sparked a fire in the kitchen. Harriet Tubman and her family constructed a new brick house in 1882 and lived in that building until her passing in 1913.

Thompson Memorial AME Zion Church/Harriet Tubman National Historical Park

(NPS Network to Freedom Site, Travel with Tubman Site)

49 Park Street, Auburn, NY 13021 (42°55'24" N 76°34'34" W)

<https://www.nps.gov/places/thompsonamez.htm>

Built in 1891, the Thompson Memorial African Methodist Episcopal Zion church represented a place of worship and a cornerstone of Auburn's Black community. Harriet Tubman, a prominent member of this community, worshipped at this church alongside her family.

²¹ Larson, Kate Clifford, 7-23-25.

Harriet Tubman's funeral was held here on March 13, 1913. She is buried across the street at Fort Hill Cemetery. Registered as a National Historic Landmark in 1974, the church and the parsonage next door were purchased by the National Park Service in 2017 and, after extensive renovations, opened to the public in 2024.

Harriet Tubman Memorial AME Zion Church (URCNYS Partner)

90 Franklin Street, Auburn, NY 13021, 315-252-2000, (42.93724539, -76.554709)

<https://www.harriettubmanmemorialamez.org/>

This church was dedicated to Harriet Tubman after Tubman's own church, Thompson Memorial AME Zion Church on Parker Street, was sold to the National Park Service in 2017. (Note: This is a modern, post-Tubman's life church; Tubman did not worship here.) The national AME Zion Church is the owning/managing entity of the Harriet Tubman Home. This memorial church site also includes a Harriet Tubman Community Garden.

Seymour Library (NPS Network to Freedom Facility)

176 Genesee Street, Auburn, NY 13021, 315-252-2571 (42.928605, -76.571298)

<https://seymourlibrary.org/contact/>

The Harriet Tubman Collection in the Mary Van Sickle Wait History Discovery Center at Seymour Library includes books, magazines, newspaper clippings, photographs, and documents. Although no original, primary source material is included in the collection, it provides a wide variety of information in a single location.

William and Frances Seward House Museum (NPS Network to Freedom Site, URCNYS Partner)

33 South Street, Auburn, NY 13021, 315-252-1283 (42.929326, -76.565949)

<https://sewardhouse.org/>

The Seward family, along with friends and colleagues Martha Coffin Wright and her husband David Wright, was instrumental in bringing Harriet Tubman to Auburn. The family sold Tubman land on which she built her home. The museum features an exhibit titled, "Forged In Freedom: The Bond of The Seward Tubman Families," which considers the life and legacy of Harriet Tubman through the lens of her relationship with the family of William H. Seward. It also tells the story of Margaret Stewart, a young girl whom Harriet brought from Maryland to Auburn and placed in the Swards' care.

Thomas Elliott and Ann Marie Stewart Elliott House (NPS Network to Freedom Site) –

31 Richardson Avenue, Auburn, NY 13021 (42.919017, -76.560923)

The former home of one of the "Dover Eight" enslaved people who escaped from Dorchester County, Maryland, using instructions from Harriet Tubman. They were captured and jailed in Dover, Delaware, in 1857, but executed an incredible jailbreak and raced to freedom. Thomas Elliott was married to Ann Marie Ross Stewart, the daughter of Harriet Tubman's sister, Soph. This site is part of a documented Underground Railroad tour in Auburn.

Byway Segment 2: Seneca County

Thomas and Elizabeth James House (NPS Network to Freedom Site) – 52 State Street,

Seneca Falls, NY 13148 (42.912654, -76.797801) https://www.co.seneca.ny.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Curriculum_Unit_Thomas_James-ADA.pdf

Thomas James was born enslaved, migrated to Canada, and then returned to settle in Seneca Falls, New York, where he became a barber and a wealthy landowner. In the 1850 federal census, he listed his birthplace as "unknown," with a 13-year-old daughter born in Canada. In 1863, two newspaper articles noted that he was a "fugitive slave" who owned

\$12,000 to \$15,000 worth of real estate in Seneca Falls, including a new brick business block.²² At his death in 1867, executors of his will noted that "Elizabeth James, his widow, and the said Thomas James had no other relatives known to the deponents or either of them, he having formerly been a slave and made, during his lifetime, diligent enquiry for his relatives without effect."²³

Byway Segment 2: Ontario County

1816 Farmington Quaker Meetinghouse (NPS Network to Freedom Site) – 230 Sheldon Road, Farmington, NY 14425, (43.030512, -77.319073)

<https://farmingtonmeetinghouse.org/equal-rights/#africanamericanrights>

Many members of the Farmington Quaker Meeting House were staunch abolitionists and have documented stories of Underground Railroad activity. One example of this is a man named William R. Smith who co-owned and operated a nursery alongside many other Wayne County abolitionists and Quakers. William R. Smith often assisted freedom seekers and would direct them North to the Cuyler family (see below), who would then help boat people across Lake Ontario.²⁴ In 1815, Austin Stewart (author, "Twenty-Two Years a Slave and Forty Years a Free Man" (1857)) was the first freedom seeker to settle in Farmington. Selby and Harriet Howard escaped from Maryland, lived near the Meetinghouse, and are buried in the Farmington cemetery. Frederick Douglass visited Farmington often and spoke in the Meetinghouse.²⁵

Byway Segment 2: Monroe County

Kelsey's Landing (NPS Network to Freedom Site)

89 Maplewood Drive, Rochester, NY 14613, 585-428-5900, (43.182333, -77.629833)

<https://www.cityofrochester.gov/maplewoodpark/>

Kelsey's Landing, a nonextant commercial dock and grain elevator that was located just north of the Lower Falls on the west side of the Genesee River in Rochester, NY, was where Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, and prominent Rochesterians led enslaved persons onto cargo steamships bound for Canada and Detroit from 1847 to 1859.²⁶

Douglass Family South Street Home (NPS Network to Freedom Site)*

999 South Avenue, Rochester, NY 14620 (43.1360241, -77.608782)

Douglass's second home site (1852-1872) in Rochester, formerly School Number 12, was rededicated in 2018 as the Anna Murray-Douglass Academy, with an interpretive exhibit and mural outside. *Additional homes of Frederick Douglass are located in Rochester.

Mount Hope Cemetery (NPS Network to Freedom Site)

²² Walter Gable and Judith Wellman, *Seneca County, NY: A Hotbed of Underground Railroad Activism*, 2006. Pp. 6-7.

²³ NPS Network to Freedom database description, <https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1205/index.htm>

²⁴ Judith Wellman, *Uncovering Sites Relating to the Underground Railroad, Abolitionism, and African American Life in Wayne County, New York, 1820-1880*, 2009, 392.

²⁵ African Americans, 1816 Farmington Quaker Meeting House, downloaded from <https://farmingtonmeetinghouse.org/equal-rights/#africanamericanrights>

* Additional Rochester residences of Frederick Douglass have been documented. These historic resources can be included in future byway asset inventories, interpretation, and marketing as appropriate.

²⁶ Calarco, Tom; Cynthia Vogel. *Places of the Underground Railroad*. Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2011, p.287

50 Montgomery Street, Rochester, NY 14611, 585-428-7999, (43.128056, -77.615782)
<https://www.cityofrochester.gov/mounthope/>
Resting place of several significant Underground Railroad agents and Human Rights leaders, including Frederick Douglass.

Byway Segment 2: Orleans County

Erie Canal

Village of Holley, NY (42.2264 N, -78.0267 W)
Located between Rochester and Niagara County, Holley would have been a waypoint for freedom seekers headed to the Canadian border. Settled in 1812, Holley was a trade and shipping hub on the Erie Canal.²⁷ While it benefited from the system of slavery, the canal also provided a path for freedom seekers to follow on their journeys west to Canada. Rev. Thomas James followed the staked-out path of the canal to Youngstown, where he crossed to Canada.²⁸

THE ERIE CANAL: Built between 1817 and 1825, the original Erie Canal traversed 363 miles from Albany to Buffalo. It was the longest artificial waterway and the greatest public works project in North America. The canal put New York on the map as the Empire State—the leader in population, industry, and economic strength. It transformed New York City into the nation's principal seaport and opened the interior of North America to settlement. The canal brought a flow of people and new ideas. Social reform movements like abolitionism and women's suffrage, Utopian communities, and various religious movements thrived in the canal corridor. The Erie Canal carried more westbound immigrants than any other trans-Appalachian canal. These newcomers infused the nation with different languages, customs, practices, and religions.²⁹ The Erie Canal was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1960.³⁰

Byway Segment 2: Erie County

Erie County:

Freedom Park (NPS Network to Freedom Site), 1170 Niagara Street, Buffalo, NY 14203, (42.915694, -78.899429) <https://friendsoffreedompark.com>
Formerly known as Black Rock Ferry/Broderick Park, Freedom Park is recognized by historians as an historic terminus of the Underground Railroad between the United States and Canada. Located at the foot of Ferry Street on the scenic Niagara River, a plaque in the park pays tribute to the men and women who crossed the water from that point to freedom in Canada. Broderick Park was the location of the Black Rock Ferry, a major transportation link across the Niagara River between Buffalo, New York, and Fort Erie, Canada. The ferry

²⁷ "Village of Holley," Orleans County Tourism. Accessed July 3, 2025, <https://www.orleanscountytourism.com/about-orleans-county/towns-and-villages/village-of-holley>; "The Village of Holley, an American Small Town with a Rich Tradition," Town of Holley. Accessed July 3, 2025, <http://villageofholley.gov/about.cfm>.

²⁸ Thomas James, *Life of Rev. Thomas James, by Himself* (Post Express Printing Co: 1886), 6. <https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/jamesth/jamesth.html>.

²⁹ Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, <https://eriecanalway.org/learn/history-culture>

³⁰ National Park Service, List of National Historic Landmarks by state, <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalhistoriclandmarks/list-of-nhls-by-state.htm>

operated continuously from the Broderick Park location from 1825 until the service was discontinued in the middle of the 20th century. Buffalo's destiny as an important national transportation hub was sealed when it was chosen for the terminus of the Erie Canal in the 1820s. Through the 19th century, Buffalo grew to become a busy inland port and a railroad center. The area around Black Rock Ferry contained the busy Erie Canal, Black Rock Harbor, and other waterfront activities. The dock where the ferry landed and departed for nearby Canada was used as an Underground Railroad station from at least the 1830s until the Civil War.

Michigan Street Baptist Church (NPS Network to Freedom Site)

511 Michigan Avenue, Buffalo, NY 14203, 716-852-2857, (42.886321, -78.867279)

<https://www.michiganstreetbaptistchurch.org>

Led by members and ministers who had escaped from slavery, the Michigan Street Baptist Church, founded in 1836 and built from 1845-49, became a center of Underground Railroad activity and abolitionist activism before the Civil War. Documentary evidence of several escape stories (1835, 1847, 1850s, and 1860) provides clues. So does evidence of ministers, elders, trustees, and members who had escaped from slavery and were active in the Underground Railroad (including Rev. Rufus Perry, enslaved in Tennessee; Rev. J. Sella Martin, enslaved in North Carolina; and trustees Peyton Harris, John Dandridge, and Henry K. Thomas, all from Virginia). Freeborn church members (such as Rev. Duke W. Anderson and Rev. Samuel Davis) were also active in the UGRR. This church has been continuously owned and occupied by African Americans and is now the oldest standing African American church in Buffalo.

Byway Segment 2: Niagara County

Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Center (NPS Travel with Tubman Site)

825 Depot Ave W, Niagara Falls, NY 14305, 716-300-8477, (43.109855, -79.05564)

<https://www.niagarafallsundergroundrailroad.org>

The Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Center is an experiential museum that reveals authentic stories of Underground Railroad freedom seekers and abolitionists in Niagara Falls and inspires visitors to recognize modern injustices that stem from slavery and take action toward an equitable society. It is located in the former 1863 U.S. Customs House, which stands less than 100 feet from the location of the original International Suspension Bridge that Harriet Tubman and other freedom seekers utilized to cross into freedom in Canada.

Crossing to Freedom-The Cataract House and the Underground Railroad (NPS

Network to Freedom Site/ Program) 110 Old Main Street, Niagara Falls, NY 14303
(43.0838328, -79.063074)

Located near Niagara Falls, the Cataract House Hotel was one of the busiest Underground Railroad stations on the US-Canadian border. Directed by head waiter John W. Morrison, the hotel's all-Black waitstaff assisted hundreds of freedom seekers before the American Civil War. The Hotel was a popular destination for Southerners visiting Niagara Falls, and some who fled via this place were enslaved by hotel guests. Freedom seekers were transported, and often transported themselves, across the Niagara River by ferry or in small boats rowed by Cataract House waiters. A historical marker and interpretive panels to explain its significance are located at 2 Buffalo Avenue, Niagara Falls, NY 14303.

RESOURCE INTERPRETATION PLAN

The Interpretive plan is based on the contributing resources identified along the proposed corridor related to Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad from 1800-1860. Initially, the steering committee and internal CMP planning team identified nationally designated historic sites that recognized Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad. The National Park Service's "Travel with Tubman" and "Network to Freedom" contributing sites from New York became the foundation of the original byway route for consideration.

Other historical documents, including books and research from national, local and regional experts in New York state, national parks and historic sites, and heritage resource and interpretive centers like the Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Center, have identified and verified some of the landscapes and travel routes of freedom seekers in New York.

CENTRAL THEMES

The Maryland Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Scenic Byway/ All-American Road and other state byways focus on four central themes: **Faith, Family, Freedom, and Community.** These themes also resonate in New York and provide an opportunity for consistency in interpreting the important elements that drove Harriet Tubman, agents of the Underground Railroad, and Freedom Seekers. As a goal of this byway is to eventually link with other states to provide a multi-state federally-designated (and the potential multi-national) Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Scenic Byway, showcasing how New York contributes to these central themes is important.

Harriet Tubman's life was profoundly shaped by the intertwined values of faith, family, freedom, and community. The interplay of these themes created a powerful synergy that defined Tubman's identity and mission, with each element playing a critical role in her journey from enslavement to becoming a leading figure in the abolitionist movement.

FAITH

Faith was foundational to Harriet Tubman's and other freedom seekers' survival and emancipation. It was at the root of the belief systems of abolitionists and Underground Railroad agents and communities. For Harriet Tubman, her faith was deep, and founded upon strong religious teachings, whether these were specifically Methodist, Catholic, Episcopal, Baptist, or of African origin. Thomas Garrett, a Quaker Underground Railroad agent in Wilmington, Delaware, felt that he "never met with any person, of any color, who had more confidence in the voice of God, as spoken direct to her soul... and her faith in a Supreme Power truly was great."³¹

³¹ Bradford, *Scenes*. 49.

Historical studies reveal that the great majority of enslaved people were stolen and shipped to the Americas from the West African coast stretching from Senegambia and Sierra Leone south to the Gold Coast around present-day Ghana (Walsh, 145). Though few African cultural traditions from those distinct regions survived completely unaltered and intact into the late 19th century and 20th centuries, they served as a source of strength for captive Africans and their descendants well into the antebellum period and beyond. Forced assimilation over time effectively reshaped many cultural and religious traditions through a process of creolization, or a blending of African spiritual and cultural expression with European Judeo-Christian beliefs and cultural practices.³²

African American communities in both the North and the South relied on faith to endure threats to their lives, their family stability, and communities.

While enslaved, Tubman and her family found ways to negotiate the cruelties of slavery and the loss of freedom and self-determination. First generation Africans, like her grandmother Modesty, embodied a living African connection and memory for the Tubman and the Ross family. They managed to blend their adopted Christian beliefs with cultural and religious traditions that survived the middle passage from Africa. They and other enslaved people and communities engaged in a variety of methods of resistance and managed to create private spaces where opportunities for cultural and spiritual practices to sustain their physical, familial, and community identities and relationships. Tubman's religious fervor and trust in God to protect and guide her evolved from a fusion of these traditions. In New York, freedom seekers carried these traditions with them and shared with the free communities that welcomed them. They built churches and schools, community centers, and more.

FAMILY

For descendants of Underground Railroad freedom seekers, family holds a profound significance that extends beyond typical familial bonds. Slavery actively sought to inhibit family formation and made stable family life impossible. Enslaved people could not legally marry, and their relationships were not protected by law. Family separation through sale was a constant threat, and the trauma of family separation left deep emotional scars that have been passed down through generations. Harriet Tubman and her family faced these same threats. When she self-liberated in the fall of 1849, she missed her loved ones and determined she must return and bring them to freedom, too. *"There was no one to welcome me to the land of freedom. I was a stranger in a strange land; and my home, after all, was down in Maryland, because my father, my mother, my brothers, and sisters, and friends were there. But I was free, and they should be free,"* she later told biographer

³² Michel Sobel, *The World They Made Together. Black and White Values in Eighteenth-Century Virginia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987); and, Laurie A. Wilkie, "Secret and Sacred: Contextualizing the Artifacts of African-American Magic and Religion," *Historical Archaeology* 31, no. 4 (1997). See also, Savin Gavin, "How Ezekiel's Wheel Helped Turn African Americans into Christians: Unique Evidence Discovered by Umd Archaeologists," *UMD Right Now* (2016), <https://umdrightnow.umd.edu/news/how-ezekiel%E2%80%99s-wheel-helped-turn-african-americans-christians-unique-evidence-discovered-umd>.

Sarah Bradford. Despite these challenges, enslaved people used family bonds as a vital source of strength, comfort, healing, and resistance against the brutality of slavery.

The Underground Railroad networks across New York and access to freedom empowered freedom seekers with the self-agency to build and rebuild their families, reunite with lost family and friends, define family roles and responsibilities, and formalize relationships through legal marriage. It also enabled them to reclaim their culture and create communities rooted in anchor institutions that helped counter the psychological, geographic, and socioeconomic disruptions caused by enslavement. Harriet Tubman's relationships with fellow Freedom Seekers, Abolitionists, Underground Railroad operatives, and community activists enabled her to buy a home in Auburn, New York, where she could live, work, and worship in freedom with her family, friends, and those in need.

Families living freely created a world apart from the oppression of enslavement, where individuals could now be more than just property, but also fathers, sons, daughters, mothers, entrepreneurs, landowners, and community members. For descendants, discovering and connecting with their family history, including African relatives through genetic genealogy, has been a powerful way to restore their sense of identity and belonging, heal from generational trauma, document and pass down family histories, traditions, cultural practices, ancestral wisdom, and create a sense of cultural continuity.

FREEDOM

The American Revolution resulted in the founding of the United States of America. Our Constitution, ratified and adopted in 1789, begins with the words, "We the People." In its preamble, the founding fathers determined that "in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity," they had to established an entirely new form of federal and state government that would ensure the interests of both the majority and minority rights of "liberty and equality." Despite the establishment of slavery and its protection under the law, the founders believed that individual freedoms and natural rights should be a priority and the foundation of a new world order. But freedom did not extend to the enslaved, and it would take more than sixty years and a Civil War to fully end the legal enslavement of Africans and African Americans in this country.

When Tubman escaped and crossed the Pennsylvania border and into freedom, she was filled with emotion. "When I found I had crossed that line," Tubman later recalled, "I looked at my hands to see if I was the same person. There was such a glory over everything; the sun came like gold through the trees, and over the fields, and I felt like I was in Heaven."³³

Freedom for Harriet Tubman and other freedom seekers meant the ability to live wherever they wanted, to work for pay, be with their families, friends, and communities, to worship freely and without restriction, to marry and have children without the threats of

³³ Bradford, *Scenes*. 19

separation. Freedom means the ability to advocate, protest, fight for and demand equal rights for all people, genders, races, ethnicities, social status, and more. Tubman and women like her were not allowed to vote, or hold public office, and seek self-determination as freely as white men. She fought for it along with other women, like Susan B. Anthony, Ida B. Wells, and thousands more American women. Today, Americans continue to struggle for a “more perfect union” free of discrimination and the barriers that prevent the fulfillment and security of liberty and equality for all.

COMMUNITY

From a very young age, Tubman was separated from her parents and siblings when her enslaver leased her to other white farmers. Long established familial and virtual kinship relationships and networks among free and enslaved people evolved into a community that helped watch over and take care of her and other children like her. Denied an education, those communities provided her lessons on survival. Her classroom became the landscapes of people and places, where she learned how to read the night sky, navigate the marshes, streams and rivers, the dense forests and open fields. She learned foodways and folk medicines from them. In New York, free Black communities, among others, carried on these same traditions, which were renewed with every freedom seeker who arrived. They provided shelter, food, opportunities for employment and self-determination, to practice faith, and help secure freedom.

Like Tubman, many settled in these communities as well as established new ones, where they could continue to build families, fight for equality and justice, and live lives filled with purpose of their own choosing. Tubman and other freedom seekers proved that despite great disadvantages, they could facilitate change and influence a community and beyond. Free and enslaved communities, from the South to New York City, along the Hudson River Valley, in Albany and through Central New York to Peterboro, Syracuse, Auburn, Farmington, Rochester, and Niagara Falls found ways to defy the efforts of those who would deny them freedom.

The history of the Underground Railroad movement embodies and underscores the value and meaning of communities and their commitments to freedom, equality, justice, self-determination, and interracial cooperation, a commitment still exists today.

ADDITIONAL INTERPRETIVE THEMES

Pursuit of Equality

Early in the American Revolution, in June 1776, Thomas Jefferson and other patriot leaders wrote a resolution, stating “...that these united colonies are and of right ought to be free and independent states.” Jefferson went on to write a draft declaring the colonies’ determination to be free from British rule called *The Declaration of Independence*. “We hold these truths to be self-evident,” he wrote, “that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life,

Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness...” The Declaration did not imagine that those words applied to enslaved people, or people of color or any women of any race or ethnicity.

Equality for all would remain a battle ground before, during and long after the Civil War. Harriet Tubman would never experience equality. Though New York State did allow women to own property independently starting in the 1840s and 1850s, which allowed Tubman to purchase her home in Auburn, NY, women could not vote until 1920. The struggle for equality continues across this country and around the world today.

Justice

For African Americans, both in the North and the South after the Civil War, bigotry inequality and injustice lingered. In cities and rural areas across the country African Americans faced daily indignities and resistance to their claims to equality in transportation, education, entertainment, and employment. Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, and Sojourner Truth, for instance, were among many forcibly removed from trains and streetcars because of the color of their skin. Such injustices became codified in state and local laws, creating barriers to achieving justice from people and institutions that denied equal access and the full enjoyment of the freedoms defined in the Constitution. Harriet Tubman hoped to file a lawsuit against the railroad line that forced her out of a train car heading to New York City from Philadelphia, resulting in her being physically thrown onto the ground and breaking her arm. Justice was never served when witnesses could not be found to support her claim.

Self-Determination

While enslaved and then, once free, Harriet Tubman dreamed of the ability to live her life unimpeded by laws and customs that denied her choices and desire for self-determination. Slavery restricted choices of where to live, where to work, who to love and marry, where to raise a family, where and how to worship, to travel, to be equal in the world. After the Civil War, in fits and starts, efforts to foster equality, access to employment, community building, education, and more shaped landscapes across the country and in New York. Tubman succeeded, like many other newly freed people, in establishing her own home, running a business, and having influence in her community. She raised money for schools, medical facilities, took care of family, friends, those in need, and more. She became independent and in control of her destiny. Today, people still dream of these paths to self-determination that will ensure their own independence in the world.

A more expansive historical narrative, reference documents, and a list of additional resources are provided at the end of this document. This relevant information will be foundational for the border-to-border Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway CMP Phase 2. See *Appendix 15*.

INTERPRETIVE PLANNING & OVERSIGHT

Oversight of the quality and accuracy of the interpretation is critical to the historic integrity of the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad New York Byway and its visitor experiences. A History & Interpretation Committee will be a core subcommittee under the Byway Steering Committee (along with Tourism/Development, Stewardship/Outreach, and the Descendants Council). The Chair of the History & Interpretation will serve on the Byway Board of Directors. (For more information on the byway organization, see Section 12.) URCNYS members, county historians, members of historical societies, local public and professional historians, docents at museum sites, scholars, and other experts will be invited to participate in this committee.

This Committee will work with staff, volunteers, and consultants to develop, enhance, and implement any interpretive programs, projects, and exhibits at current historic sites (contributing resources) along the byway, for proposed kiosks and regional experience centers, and events and festivals.

Ongoing History & Interpretation Committee Responsibilities:

In addition to more general oversight related to the byway and CMP implementation, the History & Interpretation Committee is directly responsible for ongoing interpretive oversight:

- ⇒ Maintain a reference guide on approved language for use in interpretation regarding enslavement, the Underground Railroad, freedom seekers, etc.
- ⇒ Encourage use of Tilden's Rules of Interpretation (adopted guidelines for the National Park Service and the National Association of Interpretation)
- ⇒ Confer on and provide direction for other interpretive strategies as recommended for implementation by the byway committees.

INTERPRETIVE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Of the five goals outlined in the CMP, two directly focus on the interpretation at existing resources along the designated Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad New York Byway. A third goal, the focus of the tourism development plan, expands the locations and access to information about Harriet Tubman, the Underground Railroad, and Freedom Seeker stories along the byway. (Strategies for implementation of Goal 3 are included in the Tourism Development Plan of this document.)

The following goals and objectives demonstrate the importance of interpreting the authentic stories, events, and experiences of Harriet Tubman and Freedom Seekers utilizing the Underground Railroad Network on their journey through New York. A comprehensive byway interpretive plan will align priorities and funding. It will also address how each site contributes to a broader, more compelling byway experience, like

linking a string of pearls. The contributions by the Descendants Council will help ensure that the quality and integrity of the messaging and delivery are authentic and representative of the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad New York byway principles, goals, and vision.

GOAL 1: Identify and document information about Harriet Tubman, the Underground Railroad agents, and freedom seekers. Research, document, and share the stories along the byway.

GOAL 1 Objectives	Primary Responsibility	Priority Actions/ Tasks	Timeline (Start-End)	Outcomes	Metrics
Objective 1.1: Utilize existing research and continue to document oral histories and additional information of Freedom Seekers, their descendants, Harriet Tubman and her relatives, and other stakeholders (including Indigenous Peoples) related to the Underground Railroad and their associated places in the New York byway.					
<u>1.1.1</u> Identify historical documents and resources that contribute to the byway themes	History/ Interpretation Committee	Review existing research; investigate additional sources for information	Jan-Dec 2026	Share as inspirational/ triumphant, fact-based stories on the website	Existing research report produced, two new documented stories related to each theme
<u>1.1.2</u> Create a border-to-border interpretation plan for the 550-mile byway and its contributing historical resources	History/ Interpretation Committee; consultant	Identify specific thematic stories. Prioritize projects/ programs to fund and implement	July 2026-Dec 2027	Carry on the themes/ stories interpreted in MD, DE, PA, and NJ (proposed)	Revised calendar with costs for priority projects
<u>1.1.3</u> Host and facilitate annual regional oral history collection workshops	History/ Interpretation Committee, Descendants Council, Universities	Partner with URCNYS, universities, colleges, and cultural institutions. Document related stories and artifacts	2026-2035	Annual workshop	New oral histories of Freedom Seekers descendants or relatives of Harriet Tubman
<u>1.1.4</u> Investigate potential of spurs to enhance the interpretive stories related to Harriet Tubman, Underground Railroad, and Freedom Seekers	History/ Interpretation Committee, URCNYS	Review potential sites near the designated route to enhance	2027	Content for new itineraries, tourism development, events, and tours	Extended length of time spent by visitors on or near the byway

GOAL 1 Objectives	Primary Responsibility	Priority Actions/ Tasks	Timeline (Start-End)	Outcomes	Metrics
		visitor engagement			
<u>1.1.5</u> Investigate water journeys of Freedom Seekers and maritime heritage related to the Underground Railroad	History/ Interpretation Committee	Review existing research; investigate additional sources for information	Jan 2028	Content for interpretation tourism development programs, events, and tours	Three new documented maritime/ water journey URR stories
<u>1.1.6</u> Investigate train travel of Harriet Tubman and Freedom Seekers, along with heritage, transportation, related to the Underground Railroad	History/ Interpretation Committee	Review existing research; investigate additional sources for information	Jan 2028	Use in interpretive programs and events at train stations and as historical content for train travel tours/exhibits	Three new documented rail journey stories for byway
<u>1.1.7</u> Expand content for interpretive storytelling	History/ Interpretation Committee, Staff	Video byway hubs audio tours, and apps to link oral histories, Freedom Seeker profiles, and artifacts	2029-	New content for website, interpretive exhibits, app	Six videos, Three audio tours/ app hubs, three new exhibits or events
Objective 1.2: Conduct byway interpretive training and utilize technology to align with local interpretive sites and guides.					
<u>1.2.1</u> Create glossary of approved terms and interpretive messages	Advisory Council, Descendants Council, History/ Interpretation Committee	Obtain NPS and other agencies, byways, for terms. Review and compile	July - Dec 2026	Post on website as a resource. Distribute to historic sites and stakeholders	Consistent use of terms across the byway (at sites, events, in marketing)
<u>1.2.2</u> Create training manual for interpretive guides	Executive Director, History/ Interpretation Committee	Develop instructive materials; reference guides for docents, utilizing (where	2027	Increased knowledge and factual content to share with visitors	Use Tilden's Interpretive Rules as foundation;

GOAL 1 Objectives	Primary Responsibility	Priority Actions/ Tasks	Timeline (Start-End)	Outcomes	Metrics
		applicable) existing locally developed guides and materials			
<u>1.2.3</u> Host training workshops (virtual and in-person) for docents	History/ Interpretation Committee	Create and host training program to educate guides on interpretive techniques, storytelling	2028	Recognized certification program	15 guides/ docents trained
<u>1.2.4</u> Host hospitality training workshops	Tourism/ Marketing Committee	Conduct annual fam tours or provide a “FAM Pass” of the byway for local hospitality workers	2028	Local Hospitality workers more aware, educated about the byway	Increased visitation due to hospitality workers’ knowledge of byway

GOAL 2: Preserve and share authentic stories & places. Preserve and interpret the documented stories and events related to Harriet Tubman, the Underground Railroad, and Freedom Seekers at natural and historic sites along the byway.

GOAL 2 Objectives	Primary Responsibility	Priority Actions/ Tasks	Timeline (Start-End)	Outcomes	Metrics
Objective 2.1: Expand visitor readiness and interpretation of resources using the arts and innovative engagement methods along the byway.					
<u>2.1.1</u> Hire a contractor to assess the interpretive experiences at each historic resource (site) along the designated byway	Executive Director (input from Advisory Council)	Identify opportunities for enhancing the accuracy of messages, deliver historical content, use of language, and interpretation of stories	May – Dec 2026	Provide a written recommendations report for implementation (and the foundation of an expanded border-to-border byway interpretive plan, connect to other programs in place	One action item for each resource

GOAL 2 Objectives	Primary Responsibility	Priority Actions/ Tasks	Timeline (Start-End)	Outcomes	Metrics
<u>2.1.2</u> Assist current historic resources/ sites with documenting Freedom Seeker stories	History/ Interpretation Committee – Universities, Historians	Provide existing research, enlist expert assistance to investigate documented stories	July 2026 – Dec 2027	Database of research, resources, and documented stories	Five Freedom Seeker stories
<u>2.1.3</u> Identify ways to expand Pathways to Freedom along with site and organizational resources	History/ Interpretation Committee	Research contributing spurs and trails to expand the byway's connectivity to historic sites and locations	2028	Loop itineraries for enhanced byway experiences	Additional contributing resources to interpret, market
Objective 2.2: Add new tour programs and events along the byway to showcase and connect the documented stories of Harriet Tubman, the Underground Railroad, and Freedom Seekers at natural and historic resources along the byway for education from K-12 to lifelong learning.					
<u>2.2.1</u> Identify a group of experts who can serve as guest lecturers and trainer for local tour specialists, events	History/ Interpretation Committee	Convene the group. Develop the interpretive content and templates for presentations, tours, exhibits, and storytelling programs	July 2026 – Dec 2027	Speakers bureau available for byway events, programs. Post on website	Six experts identified and on board
<u>2.2.2</u> Develop a byway educational program for school tour groups and homeschoolers to visit current historic sites along the byway	History/ Interpretation Committee	Explore geocaching, scavenger hunt, or other collections-based curriculum (Ex: John Brown Lives! Program)	2028-2029	Fourth-grade program developed on how to use the byway resources as a learning tool/ experience	Six new school group tours to byway sites
<u>2.2.3</u> Provide guidelines for curriculum development	History/ Interpretation Committee	Use existing education models as foundation	2029	New reference materials, teacher in-service and	NY Teachers informed about HTUR

GOAL 2 Objectives	Primary Responsibility	Priority Actions/ Tasks	Timeline (Start-End)	Outcomes	Metrics
at local historic sites				curriculum learning info for local sites	NY Byway educational resources
<u>2.2.4</u> Align on-site programs at byway sites with the New York state history curriculum for school children	Executive Director, Advisory Council	Identify teachers for both in-school and field trips.	2030	New York state history curriculum uses HTURNYB sites and resources for education	Applicable exhibits or new instruction at six sites
<u>2.2.5</u> Produce interpretive content for cultural viewsheds and natural resources	History/ Interpretation Committee – Erie Canalway Heritage Corridor	Identify viewsheds with historic significance. Document potential pathways of Freedom Seekers, URR, create content	2031	New interpretive viewing sites. New information on website, app	Digital information on three historic landscapes
<u>2.2.6</u> Create video tours of historic resources (current sites) along byway	Marketing Committee (input from History/ Interpretation Committee)	Use expert guides to convey information and share inspiring stories	2031-2035	New video content to refresh stories and byway interpretation – post on website, app	12 new videos

5. STEWARDSHIP PLAN

Oxford Dictionary defines *stewardship* as the “job of taking care of something, such as an organization or property.” For a byway, stewardship means ensuring the route is free of litter (such as organizing annual “clean-ups”), preserving the physical integrity of historic sites important to the byway themes, and maintaining recreational areas and bike and pedestrian paths that provide alternative access.

The resources and vistas along the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad New York Byway are worth stewarding. They are important visual, tangible assets that tell the story(s) of individuals who helped with and sought freedom from enslavement.

Intangible assets, such as the oral histories of Harriet Tubman’s relatives, Underground Railroad agents, and Freedom Seeker descendants, are also important resources to be curated and preserved. (Many of these oral histories are held in archives across the country and in Canada.)

Stewardship of the historic and recreational resources, and the byway corridor itself, is an ongoing responsibility for stakeholders along the designated route and a key goal of the byway organization. As articulated in the goals and objectives set forth by the byway leadership, stewardship is integral to the success and sustainability of the designated corridor.

CURRENT REGULATIONS, PRESERVATION & CONSERVATION PLANS

As a baseline of stewardship practices, the byway stewardship planning committee secured copies of existing regulations and policies at each historic resource, byway jurisdiction preservation and conservation plans, and other relevant documents to review and reference. The planning committee also compiled a contact database of preservation offices, county historians, historical societies, Adopt-A-Highway Coordinators, and other potential stakeholders located along the byway for ongoing engagement. This information will be foundational for byway stewardship and enlisting the support of key stakeholders to preserve the historic integrity and byway aesthetics.

STEWARDSHIP ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

Upon designation, the Byway Organization will invite interested stakeholders (Adopt-a-Highway Coordinators, transportation agencies, local preservation and conservation organizations, civic organizations, and residents/ volunteers who have expressed interest in byway stewardship) to join a Stewardship Outreach Committee that collectively identifies and manages the byway’s stewardship strategies. The primary focus of the Stewardship Outreach Committee includes, but is not limited to:

- ⇒ Annually prioritizing stewardship activities for implementation across the byway.

- ⇒ Working with the Adopt-a-Highway Coordinators in each region.
- ⇒ Educating visitors and residents about the importance of stewardship, and recruiting stakeholders in the voluntary care of the byway and its assets/resources.

The Stewardship Outreach Committee is chaired by a Byway Board member, works with byway staff (as available), regional volunteer stewardship committees, government entities, and other local stakeholders to advise on and implement stewardship activities designed to support and sustain the byway's intrinsic qualities in each jurisdiction.

The Stewardship Outreach Committee:

- May be comprised of government, non-profit, civic organizations, preservation, and conservation representatives, as well as private citizens.
- Assigns specific roles and responsibilities (and where applicable, funding) to regional stewardship committees to achieve desired outcomes for scheduled activities.
- Enlists the support of other entities to ensure the integrity, compliance, and standards for byway sustainability.
- Confers with the implementers to provide periodic updates to the byway stakeholders at large and report (at least semi-annually) to the Byway Board of Directors.

Upon recommendations from the Byway's Board of Directors, the Stewardship Outreach Committee meets quarterly or at least semi-annually to update the work plan of projects and activities to administer along the byway.

ONGOING STEWARDSHIP STRATEGIES

Stewardship is sustainable when all byway stakeholders – visitors, residents, resource entities, and local government/advisory agencies – are involved in the process. Activities and events that encourage this collective engagement are most impactful as they provide tangible outcomes that benefit all involved.

Typically, stewardship includes both regulatory and non-regulatory strategies for stewardship. Regulatory strategies can include establishing conservation districts, National Register Districts, establishing context-sensitive building design standards, density guidelines, and inclusion of specific requirements in comprehensive plans. Non-regulatory strategies include developer incentives, subsidies, technical and financial assistance, purchase of conservation easements, and serving as an information conduit.

Initially, the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad New York Byway will focus on non-regulatory strategies that build a foundation of stewardship and education. Ongoing strategies include:

- ⇒ Champion the continuation of existing regulations, policies, and economic incentives that support the byway's goals and vision.
- ⇒ Engage county historians and/or local history societies and organizations in on-site stewardship and the identification of preservation needs within their jurisdictions.
- ⇒ Engage Adopt-a-Highway coordinators in on-site stewardship and the identification of byway needs within their jurisdiction.
- ⇒ Work with local and regional transportation agencies/offices to identify road improvements for safety and visitor access to byway resources.

Specific stewardship strategies are encouraged to preserve the historic integrity of resources along the byway and care for the cultural landscapes along the route. As the byway's integrity and valued visitor experiences depend on linking and interpreting historic sites and natural areas along the designated route, specific strategies to sustain and enhance these resources are important.

As it is anticipated that the byway will be expanded to create a continuous route from the New York-New Jersey border up the Hudson River Valley and west to terminate at Niagara Falls, at the New York-Canadian border, the strategies are planned for implementation in phases to ensure stewardship of the entire route.

This holistic stewardship plan outlines the overarching strategies needed to safeguard tangible and intangible assets associated with Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad. To accomplish the stewardship required to maintain the historic integrity of the byway, the strategies are designed for local implementation by stakeholder groups along the designated route with oversight by a corridor-wide committee.

GOAL 2: Preserve and share authentic stories and places. Preserve and interpret the documented stories and events related to Harriet Tubman, the Underground Railroad, and Freedom Seekers at historic sites and natural areas along the byway.

GOAL 2 Objectives	Primary Responsibility	Priority Actions/ Tasks	Timeline (Start-End)	Outcomes	Metrics
Objective 2.3: Create and implement a corridor-wide stewardship plan for resources and the byway.					
<u>2.3.1</u> Create a recommended maintenance policy, general preservation procedures manual	Stewardship Committee	Use the Secretary of Interior's Standards as a guide. Use sample guides to create policy manual for distribution	May – Dec 2026	Informed sites and policies to guide preservation, maintenance	2 sites create custom plans
<u>2.3.2</u> Create, adopt, and recommend implementation of curatorial standards	Stewardship Committee	Identify industry best practices and compile into manual for distribution on preserving artifacts and documents	2027	Informed sites and standardized practices of curatorial preservation	Manual on website

GOAL 2 Objectives	Primary Responsibility	Priority Actions/ Tasks	Timeline (Start-End)	Outcomes	Metrics
<u>2.3.3</u> Conduct a needs assessment for byway sites	Executive Director	Visit each site. Work with on-site team to identify and prioritize preservation and maintenance projects.	2027	List of priority projects for each resource	Increase awareness of site stewardship
<u>2.3.4</u> Create and update an annual resource directory (digital)	Stewardship Committee	Identify technical assistance, protocols, policies, and potential funding for historic preservation, restoration, maintenance	2027	Resource manual for reference (online)	Increase awareness of site stewardship
<u>2.3.5</u> Provide technical assistance to historic sites and resources	Executive Director, Staff	Identify funding to Implement individual preservation and maintenance projects.	2029	Enhanced preservation and site maintenance	Increased preservation
Objective 2.4: Identify and encourage safeguarding strategies for the Cultural Landscapes and Historic Viewsheds.					
<u>2.4.1</u> Inventory Adopt-a-Highway sponsorships	Executive Director, Stewardship Committee	Contact DOT Regions to identify byway sections in need of Adopt-a-Highway sponsors (current or renewing in 12 months)	2026-2027	GAP Analysis to identify areas for sponsors	Inventory of existing sponsors to engage in byway stewardship
<u>2.4.2</u> Evaluate the byways cultural landscapes	Executive Director, Stewardship Committee	Hire a contractor to conduct assessment, Conduct on-site assessment of cultural landscapes. Write recommendation report	2028	Define appropriate strategies for safeguarding landscapes.	Written report
<u>2.4.3</u> Organize annual byway “clean-ups.”	Stewardship Committee, Civic Orgs	Recruit Keep America Beautiful, civic orgs to conduct or sponsor annual byway cleanups. Schedule at locations along the byway. Promote events on website and recognize participants.	Spring 2028	Improved aesthetics, new stakeholder engagement, education	3 Annual Cleanups
<u>2.4.4</u> Secure local byway sponsors	Stewardship Committee/ Advisory Council	Identify local and state organizations to support the byway maintenance. Recruit local chapters of Black Cultural Groups (i.e.	2028	Increased byway stewardship	12 Adopt-a-Byway sponsors

GOAL 2 Objectives	Primary Responsibility	Priority Actions/ Tasks	Timeline (Start-End)	Outcomes	Metrics
		NAACP and Black Sororities and Fraternities) and Civic Groups located along the byway to fund byway maintenance			
<u>2.4.5</u> Host voluntourism projects at historic sites to enhance grounds and assist with ongoing maintenance activities	Stewardship Committee	Identify projects at byway sites. Recruit civic orgs to volunteer for site maintenance. Schedule along the byway. Promote events on website and recognize participants	2028	Increased site maintenance and stakeholder involvement	2 Site Events annually; 10 new volunteers
<u>2.4.6</u> Work with educational institutions tied to a specific learning opportunity	Stewardship committee, Colleges, Universities	Identify school class projects (graduating classes, academic or athletic clubs, social studies/history/science classes) that assist with a byway maintenance project	2029	New educational partners, increased awareness, byway maintenance	2 site Events
<u>2.4.7</u> Implement a Byway “Care Fare” campaign	Stewardship/ Marketing Committees	Recruit local gas stations and visitor centers as donation locations. Establish guidelines for contributions and donation collections. Market on website and at byway locations	2030	New partners, increased awareness, byway maintenance	\$25,000 raised for byway stewardship
<u>2.4.8</u> Assist Scout troops and Eagle Scouts interested in stewardship projects to earn their badge	Stewardship Committee	Identify scout troops located along byway. Encourage Eagle Scouts to use the byway as a badge project	2030	New partners, increased awareness, stewardship	One Eagle Scout award annually
<u>2.4.9</u> Identify mitigation strategies to safeguard against threats to the byway integrity	Stewardship Committee	Create list of locations where improvements are needed for enhanced visitor experience. Encourage creative placemaking activities and projects	2031	Priority list for development	Project list for next five years

GOAL 2 Objectives	Primary Responsibility	Priority Actions/ Tasks	Timeline (Start-End)	Outcomes	Metrics
		to maintain byway aesthetics and historic integrity of sites. Provide incentives for sustainable tourism development and management			
<u>2.4.10</u> Offer annual grants to assist with preservation or conservation projects at historic sites or other locations along the byway	Executive staff with input from Stewardship Committee	Establish annual grant fund and guidelines. Identify funding entity or source for annual grants. Market to byway sites, resources, organizations. Open application round and invite participants. Award grants and monitor projects	2031 - 2035	Increased preservation, conservation	Enhanced stewardship and visitor experiences (positive feedback)
<u>2.4.11</u> Recognize National Significance	Stewardship Committee, History/ Interpretation Committee	Encourage listing of eligible sites on the NPS Network to Freedom, State and National Register of Historic Places and/or National Historic Landmark designation	2031	Increased national recognition	Significant designations
<u>2.4.12</u> Foster byway aesthetics and integrity	Stewardship Committee	Provide community economic development agencies and local developers with compatible infill strategies and recommend new development guidelines to ensure consistent aesthetics and integrity of the entire byway	2032	Increased awareness, importance of aesthetics to sense of place	Byway conservation

The Stewardship Outreach Committee will continuously monitor the byway to identify stewardship needs to maintain the historic integrity. The annual stewardship work plan will be updated and modified, as needed, to ensure the byway retains its integrity. A list of county comprehensive plans and other documents for reference is included in *Appendix 5*.

6. MARKETING AND PROMOTION PLAN

According to Tourism Economics, the state of New York hosted a record 306.3 million visitors in 2023, generating \$88 billion in direct spending.³⁴ The 13 counties for the three initial sections of the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad New York Byway (and ultimately the 22 counties for the entire border-to-border route) already receive visitation. Local and regional tourism promotion agencies promote travel to existing experiences. The Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad New York Byway offers another incentive to visit these counties and opportunities for specific tourism marketing activities to enhance visitation and tourist spending.

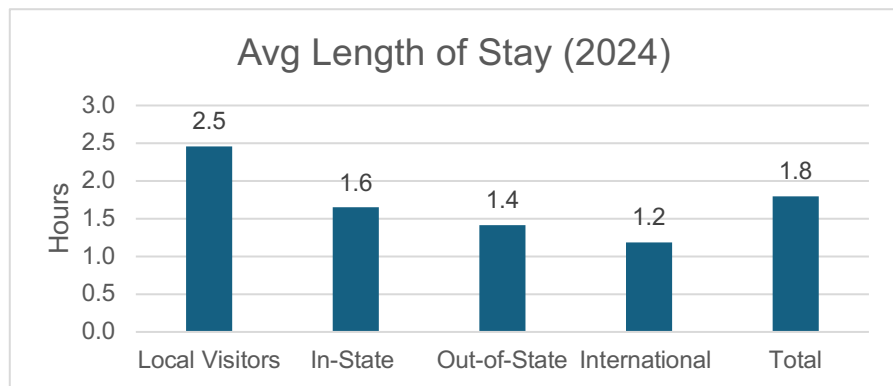
CURRENT BYWAY VISITATION

In May 2025, the research firm Azira used mobile device tracking to produce a baseline data report comparing visitation in 2023 and 2024 for the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway. This data serves as a benchmark for future analysis. Below are some baseline statistics for reference; a full set of data points for the byway is available upon request.

The opportunity to increase the visitor's length of stay is great, and byway marketing must offer compelling information and education to help the traveler understand the experiences, activities, and services available along the designated route. Getting visitors to extend their trip (more hours) on the byway also enhances the potential for overnight stays in the region, thereby increasing the economic impact of tourism, particularly to lesser-visited places. With a higher potential of rural visitation, the economic benefits become even more impactful and sustainable.

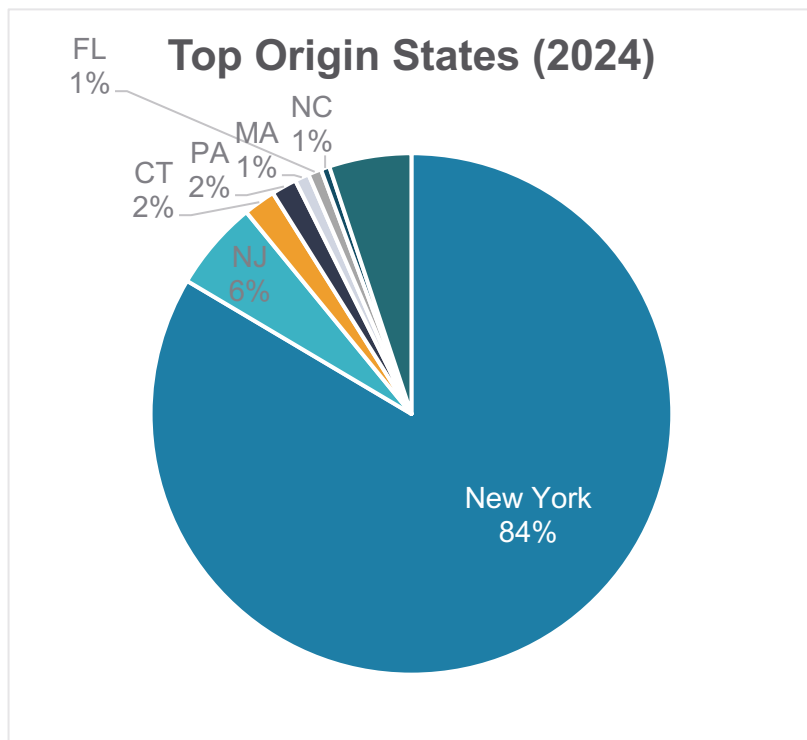
The increase in repeat visitation (as evidenced by this year-over-year market comparison graph from 2023 to 2024) demonstrates the appeal of the byway experiences. However, to maintain this steady increase, sites must also provide reasons to return through new, enhanced, or evolving products, services, or events.

New Yorkers are currently the primary audience for the byway. Out-of-state audiences are from the surrounding states, including New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, and



³⁴ "Economic Impact of Visitors in New York 2023" (August 2024) Tourism Economics, <https://esd.ny.gov/sites/default/files/media/document/Central-New-York-New-York-Tourism-Economic-Impact-2023.pdf>

Massachusetts. International audiences, particularly from Canada, will also be a focus. The byway also attracts visitors from Florida and North Carolina.



Top Origin Metropolitan Service Areas (MSAs) include New York City (56%), Rochester (14%), Syracuse (12%), Buffalo (4%), Albany (2%). Utica (NY), Boston (MA), Hartford (CT), and Philadelphia (PA) each contributed 1% of visitors to the byway in 2024.

VISITATION TO CURRENT HISTORIC ATTRACTIONS

Since the byway already sees visitation to its historic attractions, the baseline data in the next table offers a foundation for future comparison and benchmarks for increasing the traveler's length of stay at each location. Obtaining similar data

from other sites is necessary to ensure the byway comparison is available for all counties. Additional data specific to group tours, particularly school bus tours, is necessary for a baseline of future comparison.

Many of the resources contributing to the byway's historic quality are seasonal, operate on small budgets, and are often run by volunteers or minimal staff. Expanding access to these sites will be important to the educational/ visitation goals.

Byway Resources: 2024 Mobile Data (Source: Azira)	Avg Length of Stay (hours)	Percent of Device Sample	Mobile Devices Detected
PHASE 1			
Harriet Tubman Home/National Historic Park	1.8	1%	142
Seward House Museum	3.5	8%	1,947
Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Center	2.3	4%	907
PHASE 2			
Gerrit Smith Estate National Historic Landmark	2.3	0%	75
National Abolition Hall of Fame and Museum	2.4	1%	134
Madison County Historical Society	2.1	1%	175
Walkway Over The Hudson-Dutchess County	1.5	42%	9,694
Walkway Over The Hudson-Ulster County	1.2	24%	5,486
Philipsburg Manor State Historic Site	2.3	1%	179

MARKETING & PROMOTION: BYWAY OVERSIGHT AND IMPLEMENTATION

Upon designation, the Byway Organization will appoint a Tourism/ Marketing Committee that collectively creates and implements the byway's marketing plan. The Tourism/Marketing Committee comprises tourism industry and marketing professionals located within, or responsible for, the promotion of the byway jurisdictions. A list of Tourism Promotion Agencies (TPAs) along the current segments for designation and the entire border-to-border byway is attached as *Appendix 6*.

The primary focus of the Tourism/ Marketing Committee includes, but is not limited to:

- ⇒ Annually prioritizing the marketing activities for implementation.
- ⇒ Overseeing the collection and analysis of market research to measure the economic and social impact of the byway (CMP Objective 5.5).
- ⇒ Identifying and collaborating with partners to leverage resources and enhance awareness of the byway brand and visitation.

The Tourism/ Marketing Committee is chaired by a Byway Board member and works with byway staff (as available), regional volunteer marketing committees, government entities, and other local stakeholders to advise on and implement marketing activities designed to increase awareness of and visitation to the byway. Duties of the Tourism/ Marketing Committee also include:

- Requesting promotional support from county tourism offices, chamber of commerce, attractions, and businesses along the byway and I LOVE NY to leverage and extend the reach of the HTURB marketing.
- Assigning specific roles and responsibilities (and, where applicable, funding) to regional marketing committees or specialized teams (digital, events, public relations) to achieve desired outcomes for scheduled activities.
- Conferring with the implementors to provide periodic updates to byway stakeholders at large and report (at minimum biannually) to the Byway Board of Directors.

Upon recommendations from the Byway's Board of Directors, the Tourism Marketing Committee meets quarterly to create/refine the work plan of projects and activities to promote the byway as part of the broader integrated long-term marketing plan.

The Maryland Office of Tourism Development encouraged the use of the name, Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway, in New York and other states seeking to create a similar byway to allow for multi-state designation by the Federal Highway Administration, the government agency responsible for approving/managing National Scenic Byways and All-American Roads.

However, the New York State Byway needed a different logo to represent the byway. One of the first activities of the Tourism/ Marketing Committee included working with the

Steering Committee and the Descendants Council to create a byway logo for use on signs and promotional materials. The logo is included below as Figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1.



MARKETS OF FOCUS

Byways traditionally attract “drive” markets (persons traveling by auto, RV. Motorcycle) interested in exploring more local experiences via a designated route that provides

thematic and often scenic experiences. For byways focusing on historic intrinsic qualities, the audience segments expand to include educational adult and student groups, cultural heritage travelers, and multigenerational groups.



The July 2025 *American Travel Sentiment Study* on Road Trip Travel reports that, despite concern about rising gas prices, half (56%) of travelers have spent at least one night following a touring route or scenic/historic highway in the last five years. The top three interests while on touring routes are great local restaurants, cafes, and dining (40%); wonderful outdoor scenery (40%), and historical

sites/attractions (36%). Source: [American Travel Sentiment Study Wave 98](#), Longwoods International.

Because of its focus and location, the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad New York Byway will also attract Black/African American travelers, New York residents, and international visitors (particularly Canadians) interested in American history. According to Tourism Economics' report on the *Economic Impact of Visitors in New York 2023*, "domestic visitor spending remains the dominant force for New York's visitor economy." The report noted that "spending growth from Canadian and overseas visitors outpaced that of domestic (travel)."³⁵ While declines in Canadian (and other international) visitation to the U.S. have been recorded in 2025, this market is expected to rebound in the coming years and should be maintained as a key market.

Multi-modal travel is also important to the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway, especially with its proximity to the Erie Canal, Empire State Bicycle Trail, Amtrak/rail system, and the Hudson River (as a source of interpretation for the New York Underground Railroad).

KEY AUDIENCES FOR THE BYWAY

The **African American Traveler**: According to the *Portrait of Black Travelers in America* survey conducted by MMGY in Fall 2024 and data extracted from DK Shifflet's *2023 Travel Performance/Monitor™* of the overall U.S. leisure travel market, the U.S. Black leisure travel audience spent \$145 billion on travel in 2023. The U.S. Black leisure travel market totaled 184.12 million visitors, accounting for 11% of the U.S. leisure market.³⁶ U.S. Black leisure travelers tend to be younger, are more likely to be employed, and are more likely to have children in the household. A majority of U.S. Black leisure travelers (79%) took trips by car,

³⁵ "Economic Impact of Visitors in New York 2023" (August 2024) Tourism Economics, <https://esd.ny.gov/sites/default/files/media/document/Central-New-York-New-York-Tourism-Economic-Impact-2023.pdf>

³⁶ "Portrait of Black Travelers in America" (February 2025) MMGY, <https://mmgyintel.com/u-s-black-travel-market-is-now-a-145-billion-audience-according-to-new-research/#:~:text=Black%20leisure%20travelers%20are%20somewhat,of%20247%20miles%20one%20way.>

averaging 247 miles one way.³⁷ Creating memories, relaxing, and exploring new destinations while feeling safe are paramount for this audience. Word-of-mouth recommendations from friends and family remain the primary driver for travel planning decisions, particularly for Boomers. Therefore, key influencers of this market include:

- ⇒ African American church groups and travel groups
- ⇒ Black Travel Alliance members
- ⇒ National Council of Black Meeting Planners (NCBMP)
- ⇒ University and HBCU alumni groups
- ⇒ Black parent groups (Jack and Jill)
- ⇒ Black social groups (the Links, Divine Nine)

Nearly half (46%) of African American leisure travelers are members of Black travel groups, such as Black Travel Movement and Black Women Travels, which foster a sense of community and provide culturally tailored experiences. Millennials are particularly motivated to visit destinations that celebrate Black culture and seek opportunities to engage in cultural experiences and support Black-owned businesses. Affordability is more important to Gen Zers and Boomers alike, reinforcing the desire for memorable, high-value travel experiences.³⁸

For more than three decades, the **Cultural Heritage Traveler** has been a desired market for byways and destinations because they typically stay longer and spend more while visiting, travel more frequently, and are not season-dependent compared with the general U.S. leisure traveler. A 2022 study conducted by Young Strategies for Hargrove International and the Educational Travel Consortium revealed the following profile of the post-pandemic cultural heritage traveler (defined not by race, ethnicity, or sex, but by their travel preference/motivation for engaging in historic and cultural attractions/experiences):

- ⇒ *Trending younger: 56% are 30-49 years old; 17% are aged 50-59; 12% are aged 70-79*
- ⇒ *More Educated: 54.4% have a college or advanced degree*
- ⇒ *Still affluent: 26% have a household income of \$100,000-\$250,000, and 7% have a household income of more than \$250,000.*
- ⇒ *Household Composite:*
 - *Couples working with dependents* 28.6%
 - *Single working/living alone* 21.6%
 - *Couples working with no dependents* 13.8%
 - *Retired: single/couple* 11.9%

³⁷ "Portrait of Black Travelers in America" (February 2025) MMGY, <https://mmgyintel.com/u-s-black-travel-market-is-now-a-145-billion-audience-according-to-new-research/#:~:text=Black%20leisure%20travelers%20are%20somewhat,of%20247%20miles%20one%20way.>

³⁸ "Portrait of Black Travelers in America" (February 2025) MMGY, <https://mmgyintel.com/u-s-black-travel-market-is-now-a-145-billion-audience-according-to-new-research/#:~:text=Black%20leisure%20travelers%20are%20somewhat,of%20247%20miles%20one%20way.>

The average spending of cultural heritage travelers is \$1,182.00 per trip. That amount is down slightly from the record \$1,319 in 2013 but is up from the 2009 spending of \$994.00 per trip (per Mandala Research). According to the 2022 Young Strategies report, these leisure travelers often engage in more than one heritage activity during their visit.³⁹

Motivations for cultural heritage travel that have not changed post-pandemic include:

- ⇒ 71.3% want to “learn something new/different”
- ⇒ 67% said it was important or very important to “immerse (yourself) in the culture of a destination”
- ⇒ 65% want to “uncover the heritage of a place”
- ⇒ Desire for/seek out little-known destinations nearby, “off the beaten path,” or nostalgic locations
- ⇒ Prefer to shop for items they can’t find at home (67%) or in a unique shopping atmosphere (52%).

Given its historic quality of experiences, the Harriet Tubman Underground New York Byway is a prime destination for this audience.

Canadian Leisure Travelers: According to the U.S. Travel Association, Canada is the top source of international visitors to the United States, with 20.4 million visits in 2024, generating \$20.5 billion in spending.⁴⁰ New York is the fourth most visited state for Canadian leisure travelers arriving by air. In 2023, nearly 4 million Canadians visited the state (via auto and air), contributing over \$1.7 billion in spending. In the fourth quarter of 2023, Canadian residents spent an average of \$954 per trip to the United States and the average length of trips to the United States was 3.8 nights.⁴¹

Canadian leisure travelers are increasingly seeking diverse and multi-experience trips, often combining urban, beach, and cultural activities.

- Canadian leisure travelers value quality accommodations, affordability, and interesting attractions.
- Canadian travelers under 45 often prioritize family-friendly and outdoor adventures, while those over 45 value local hospitality.⁴²

Given its proximity to Canada, particularly the Ontario province as a neighbor to Niagara Falls and the historic connection to St. Catharines, the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad New York Byway has a unique opportunity to attract Canadian leisure travelers to

³⁹ “Profile of Post-Covid Cultural Heritage Traveler” (2022) Young Strategies for Hargrove International, Inc.

⁴⁰ “Potential Results of Decline in Canadian travel to United States” (February 2025), U.S. Travel Association, <https://www.ustravel.org/press/potential-results-decline-canadian-travel-united-states#:~:text=Canada%20is%20the%20top%20source,spending%20and%2014%2C000%20job%20losses.>

⁴¹ National Travel Survey-fourth quarter 2023 (May 24, 2025) Statistics Canada, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/240524/dq240524c-eng.htm>

⁴² Sorsroutomo, Cindy, “Profiling the Canadian traveler: What they want, where they’re going, and who they’re booking with,” Travelweek Canada (April 2018), <https://www.travelweek.ca/news/profiling-the-canadian-traveller-what-they-want-where-theyre-going-and-who-theyre-booking-with/#:~:text=“Canadian%20travellers%20report%20that%20quality,to%20booking%20airfare%20and%20accommodations.>

its sites and businesses, even with anticipated visitor declines due to the recent changes in federal policies.

MARKETING & PROMOTION ACTION PLAN

GOAL: Market the Byway to attract visitors and their spending to communities, sites, and businesses along the route for increased annual economic impact and positive byway brand recognition.

This marketing plan outlines a phased, multi-channel strategy to promote the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Scenic Byway via its four specific objectives. With a focus on storytelling, narrative of historic preservation, and community engagement, the plan leverages digital platforms, partner networks, and traditional media to enhance awareness, drive visitation, increase visitor spending, and build long-term sustainability.

GOAL 4 Objectives	Primary Responsibility	Priority Actions/ Tasks	Timeline (Start-End)	Outcomes	Metrics
Objective 4.1: Create and deploy innovative marketing tools and strategies to attract domestic and international visitors to the byway year-round.					
<u>4.1.1</u> Branding & Visual Identity	Marketing contractors with input from Tourism, Marketing Committee	Logo Graphic Standards Manual, Window Clings and Decals, Presentation Templates, Branded Merchandise	Jan – Dec 2026	Visual Identity for Byway	Increased on-site awareness, revenue generation from sales merchandise
<u>4.1.2</u> Social & Digital Marketing	Executive Director with input from Tourism, Marketing Committee, Advisory Council	Launch/maintain byway website, create blog & website content, use free tools to optimize search, post to Instagram, Facebook, create and publish integrated event calendar, create QR codes for use at site locations, signage	March 2026 -	Central info source for byway, trip planning, and partners	Increased visitor, awareness for byway
<u>4.1.3</u> QR Codes	Marketing Committee, Attractions, Regional organizations	Develop interactive digital products accessible via QR code-enabled physical	2026-	Increase time spent on byway	Expand on-site length of stay and access to other byway sites, services

GOAL 4 Objectives	Primary Responsibility	Priority Actions/ Tasks	Timeline (Start-End)	Outcomes	Metrics
		signage (or other comparable technology) at byway resources (historic sites) and visitor centers to provide travelers access to additional regional and trip-planning information to connect the byway with regional destination amenities and services			
<u>4.1.4</u> Collateral Material	Executive Director with input from Tourism, Marketing Committee	Produce general rack card, banners, pop-up exhibit for use at historic sites along the byway, and other distribution/ promotional outlets	2026-2027	Increased awareness and branding	Distribution of 10K brochures
<u>4.1.5</u> Byway reference guide	Marketing Committee	Dynamic digital and physical guide for use by visitor center and heritage site staff	2026	Educational reference guide re: byway	Increased on-site visitor education of byway
<u>4.1.6</u> Digital App	Marketing Committee, History/ interpretation Committee	Create, update, and expand a digital app to enhance story access for byway travelers	2026 -	More in-depth visitor education	Education of visitors about HT, URR, FS in New York
<u>4.1.7</u> Promotions	Executive Director with input from Tourism/ Marketing Committee	Organize Byway Signage Unveiling, Special Event and National Tourism Week promotions	2026 -	Increase local awareness of byway sites and events	Increased publicity, increased attendance, stakeholder engagement

GOAL 4 Objectives	Primary Responsibility	Priority Actions/ Tasks	Timeline (Start-End)	Outcomes	Metrics
<u>4.18</u> Events	Tourism/ Marketing Committee, Descendants Council	Coordinate scheduled Black History Month, Juneteenth, and International UGRR History Month events at Byway Resources to encourage visitation	2026 -	Increase coordination	Increased publicity, increased attendance, stakeholder engagement
<u>4.1.9</u> Public Relations	Tourism, Marketing Committee, Staff, Board	Host Familiarization Tours (journalists), issue press releases, give speeches/ presentations	2026 -	Increase positive publicity about the byway, historic sites and stories	6 articles, 3 speeches, and 3 press releases annually
<u>4.1.10</u> Create itineraries to expand visitation	Tourism Marketing Committee	Work with local sites to enhance opportunities for visitors to explore beyond the byway boundaries and engage with other relevant, related attractions	2027	Increase “stop while there” opportunities for visitors	Increased time spent by visitors on the byway and in nearby communities
<u>4.1.11</u> Market Research	TPAs on Byway, staff, Tourism Marketing Committee	Gather relevant visitation info and data; establish annual marketing benchmarks	June 2026 -	Annual analysis report	Increase year-over-year impact
<u>4.1.12</u> Advertising	Staff	Purchase digital, traditional media advertisements, expand posting on social media, build email marketing	2028 -	Enhanced ROI from Marketing	Increase in digital, social and print responses
<u>4.1.13</u> Translation	Staff	Work with I Love NY, Brand USA, and Visit USA Committees to translate byway	2029	Translated materials to attract international visitors	Criteria for All-American Road designation

GOAL 4 Objectives	Primary Responsibility	Priority Actions/ Tasks	Timeline (Start-End)	Outcomes	Metrics
		& site information into key market languages for trip planning and education			
<u>4.1.14 Byway Research</u>	Staff	Conduct resident and business attitude sentiment study	2030	Analysis of byway knowledge, value, appreciation	Improved attitudes about byway impact, importance
<u>4.1.15 Byway Impact</u>	Staff	Conduct 10-year impact report to demonstrate value of byway	2035	Documented impact, baseline for future	Articles along byway promoting its value
Objective 4.2: Develop and market adult and school group tour programs to attract and educate school, youth, and adult groups about Harriet Tubman, the Underground Railroad, and Freedom Seekers in New York.					
<u>4.2.1 Group Tours</u>	Executive Director, TPAs, Tourism Committee	Create database of group travel-ready byway sites and businesses. Compile database of group tour operators, create profile sheets, create group tour itineraries. Attend group tour conferences (2028)	2027 -	Cultivate group tours for byway and historic sites	Increase of 6 group tours annually on byway by 2030
<u>4.2.2 Student Youth Tours</u> (See 2.2.2)	Exec Director, Tourism Committee, coordinate with History/ Interpretation Committee	Create database of student tour-ready sites. Compile database of group tour operators, schools to cultivate for tours.	2027 -	Cultivate student tours for byway and historic sites	Increase of six student tours on byway by 2030
<u>4.2.3 Specialty tours</u>	Tourism, Marketing Committee	Cultivate specialty tour operators	2028	Increased awareness of unique	Increased visitation at restaurants,

GOAL 4 Objectives	Primary Responsibility	Priority Actions/ Tasks	Timeline (Start-End)	Outcomes	Metrics
		focusing on food, music, and other cultural elements along the byway		assets along the byway	entertainment venues, etc.
Objective 4.3: Collaborate with other organizations, government agencies, heritage areas, recreational trails, and businesses to promote the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad in New York experiences and expand the brand awareness of the byway.					
<u>4.3.1</u> Solicit Partners	Tourism, Marketing Committee	Encourage NHA, Erie Canal NHC, I Love NY, Empire State Trail, and other entities to promote byway via their channels	2026	Extended reach	Lead generation increases from other origin sites
<u>4.3.2</u> Collaborate on promotions	Tourism, Marketing Committee	Work with I Love NY, Brand USA, TPAs, and other entities to increase awareness (through hosted fam tours, publicity, etc.)	2027	Increased awareness with key tourism influencers	Earned media in 12 national, int'l travel trade, or consumer publications (NY Times, Chicago Tribune, WSJ, Washington Post, etc.)
<u>4.3.3</u> Hotel and outfitter packages	Tourism, Marketing Committee	Partner with local hotels, TPAs, attraction, RV clubs, recreational programs to increase overnight, multimodal visits	2028	New package experiences along the byway	Increased overnight stays (+5%)
<u>4.3.4</u> Historical Documentaries	Tourism, Marketing Committee, History/ Interpretation Committee	Secure Documentary or special educational series produced by the <i>History Channel</i> , <i>National Geographic</i> , or streaming	2030	High-profile recognition of byway assets	Increased visitation resulting from national publicity

GOAL 4 Objectives	Primary Responsibility	Priority Actions/ Tasks	Timeline (Start-End)	Outcomes	Metrics
		services to showcase the byway and its historic assets			
Objective 4.4: Ensure African American communities and businesses are represented and elevated in product development, interpretation, and marketing to generate social and economic benefits locally.					
<u>4.4.1</u> Promote African American businesses	Tourism, Marketing Committee	Develop list of Black-owned and operated businesses (restaurants, retail, services) along the byway and communities. Post on byway website	June 2026	Increased awareness of African American assets on the byway	Increased patronage at these businesses
<u>4.4.2</u> Recognize African American businesses	Tourism, Marketing Committee	Create a certification program for locally-owned and managed African American businesses on the byway. Provide window clings to recognize their byway significance	2027	Increased awareness of African American assets on the byway	Increased patronage at these businesses
<u>4.4.3</u> Profile African American byway leaders	Tourism Marketing Committee, Descendants Council, Advisory Council	Create and publish profiles of business owners, community leaders, and other prominent African Americans along the byway on the website	June 2027	Increased awareness of African American assets on the byway	Increased patronage at these businesses
<u>4.4.4</u> Byway Passport	Tourism Marketing Committee	In partnership with Black Travel Alliance, develop and distribute a byway passport	2028	New product to promote, distribute	Increased awareness, patronage of African American businesses on/near byway

GOAL 4 Objectives	Primary Responsibility	Priority Actions/ Tasks	Timeline (Start-End)	Outcomes	Metrics
<u>4.4.5</u> Increase economic impact	Tourism Marketing Committee	Offer opportunity for businesses to sell branded merchandise. Split profits.	2028	Expand byway brand through signature merchandise	Increased revenue generation
<u>4.4.6</u> Event locations	Staff	Encourage local organizations to use the byway's historic sites, attractions, businesses and interpretive centers as event locations	2028 -	Expand local stakeholder engagement with byway assets	Increased patronage, visitation to byway assets

As stated above, the final phase of this byway management plan also concentrates on documenting the byway's economic, social, and marketing impact on its jurisdictions and assets.

Additionally, the byway marketing committee will evaluate the performance of its tools and specific activities against the byway goals and objectives. This analysis will help frame recommendations and discussion points for updating the byway CMP in its next phase.

7. TOURISM PLAN

In 2023, visitors to New York contributed \$88 billion across the state. According to Tourism Economics' annual report, *Economic Impact of Tourism in New York 2023*, (released August 2024), visitor spending increased by more than \$9 billion from \$79 billion in 2022. The direct visitor spending impact of \$88 billion generated a total economic impact of \$137 billion (including indirect and induced impacts). This total economic impact generated \$11 billion in state and local tax revenues in 2023.⁴³

As evidenced by the table below, the counties along the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad New York Byway already experience a substantial economic impact from tourism. The following table demonstrates the current economic impact of tourism in the initial eight counties in Phase 1 of the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway and the remaining 14 counties in the Byway's Phase 2 to designate a border-to-border route from New Jersey to Canada.

Economic Impact of Visitors to New York (2023)					
County	Visitor Spending (Millions)	Lodging (Millions)	Food & Bev (Millions)	Jobs	Local Tax (Millions)
PHASE 1					
Cayuga	\$157	\$62	\$36	1,110	\$9,397
Seneca	\$86	\$23	\$33	792	\$5,538
Ontario	\$341	\$98	\$138	3,382	\$21,134
Wayne	\$45	\$5	\$19	636	\$3,326
Monroe	\$1,492	\$480	\$517	13,065	\$100,948
Orleans	\$42	\$3	\$15	578	\$3
Erie	\$2,423	\$455	\$1,033	28,650	\$144
Niagara	\$1,082	\$193	\$343	15,918	\$60
TOTAL	\$5,668	\$1,319	\$2,143	64,131	\$140,550
PHASE 2					
New York	\$37,618	\$12,640	\$8,896	161,191	\$2,882,200
Bronx	\$1,007	\$128	\$385	8,091	\$90,419.00
Westchester	\$2,161	\$518	\$785	15,196	\$140,509
Putnam	\$86	\$10	\$35	1,056	\$5,816
Dutchess	\$756	\$212	\$230	7,096	\$53,220
Columbia	\$253	\$61	\$61	1,778	\$13,961
Rensselaer	\$177	\$35	\$79	1,292	\$10,595

⁴³ Tourism Economics, "Economic Impact of Visitors to New York 2023" (August 2024), Statewide Report, page 4, <https://esd.ny.gov/esd-media-center/reports/2023-tourism-economics>

Economic Impact of Visitors to New York (2023)					
Albany	\$1.07	\$321	\$318	9,752	\$79,186
Schenectady	\$416	\$30	\$248	5,164	\$24,712
Montgomery	\$79	\$19	\$22	669	4,364
Herkimer	\$152	\$50	\$31	1,448	\$9,381
Oneida	\$3,739	\$1,781	\$477	16,644	\$161,301
Madison	\$138	\$33	\$52	1,515	\$9,314
Onondaga	\$1,256	\$415	\$411	11,151	\$84,844
TOTAL (Phase 1 and 2 of Byway)	\$47,463	\$14,878	\$12,491	242,311	\$3,320,859

It is anticipated that the designation to create a contiguous byway will attract visitors and enhance the economic impact from tourism. The marketing plan outlines specific strategies to attract visitors to the byway, promote thematic programs and events, and champion it to New York residents, domestic travelers, and international visitors.

A direct benefit of the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad New York Byway designation is enhanced economic growth from tourism. Growth metrics defined by the Byway Tourism Committee include, but are not limited to:

- Increased spending from visitors
- Increased local sales tax generated from spending
- Increased stays in local hotels
- Increased patronage in businesses (restaurants, retail, tour companies, and others), particularly Black-owned or operated, along the byway
- Increased employment at current and new businesses
- New entrepreneurship opportunities

An additional metric for future measurement of the byway's impact is the tax savings per household. This amount, which currently ranges from \$283 to \$6,289, indicates the benefit of tourism to residents, reflecting how much each household would have to pay in additional taxes without visitation to the New York byway counties. Increasing this amount in each county over the decade can be one of the strongest economic impacts and benefits of the byway designation for residents along the route.

Tourism development is important to creating, expanding, and refreshing desired byway experiences for visitors. Ongoing tourism development and enhancement also ensure that experiences for byway visitors contribute to tourism's positive economic impact in each jurisdiction along the designated route.

Tourism management is also important to the byway's sustainability and success, to safeguard against the negative impacts of overuse or lack of education about appropriate visitor engagement. Monitoring tourism development and hosting is an important strategy to carry out across the designated byway.

TOURISM PLANNING & OVERSIGHT

Each of the 22 counties representing the jurisdictions for Phase 1 and proposed Phase 2 of the designated byway has tourism promotion agencies (TPAs) actively involved in the development and marketing of their destination's assets. The byway will be an additional focus for developing new and enhancing current tourism products and services to attract and host visitors in their respective counties and along the byway. Local economic development agencies and civic and nonprofit organizations will also be tapped to help with these enhancements, event planning, and new business recruitment to expand tourism experiences for greater economic impact from visitor spending.

Initially, the TPAs, along with other industry leaders and businesses, will be invited to serve as a byway tourism/marketing committee.

Ultimately, three regional committees will be formed to align with byway staffing and oversight (see Byway Management section). The tourism/ marketing committee will be responsible for implementing the strategies outlined in this plan. The tourism marketing committee will report to and have oversight from a Byway Committee Chair serving on the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad New York Byway Organization's Board of Directors. The committee's efforts will be supported or assisted by the byway's organizational staff as available.

Ongoing Tourism/Marketing Committee Responsibilities:

- ⇒ Assess byway experiences (annually) to identify areas for improvement, on-site issues regarding capacity management, and recommendations for enhancing, expanding, and/or refreshing byway resources for increased visitor value and impact.
- ⇒ Maintain an updated inventory of visitor accommodations and tourist services (locations of public restrooms, parking, ATMs, electric car charging stations, etc.) available along the byway for listing on the byway website and as a reference for Visitor Information Centers, byway businesses, and attractions.
- ⇒ Identify other needs of byway visitors, including but not limited to infrastructure improvements, public restrooms, and other amenities to enhance the byway experience. Convey these needs to the byway organization for action.

Specific tourism development strategies are recommended to achieve byway goals for increasing tourism's economic impact and the education of visitors.

TOURISM STRATEGIES TO ACHIEVE GOAL 3 AND ATTAIN THE BYWAY VISION

The following goals and strategies support the consistent development and management of quality, appropriate tourism products and experiences along the designated Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad New York Byway.

Goal 3 of the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway focuses on *developing new, authentic, and informative experiences* to engage the byway user in the diverse stories about Harriet Tubman, Freedom Seekers, and the Underground Railroad in New York.

GOAL 3 Objectives	Primary Responsibility	Priority Actions/ Tasks	Timeline (Start-End)	Outcomes	Metrics
Objective 3.1: Develop Regional and Thematic Interpretive Centers and Kiosks to increase visitor awareness and education about Harriet Tubman, the Underground Railroad, and Freedom Seekers in New York.					
<u>3.1.1</u> Gap Analysis	Executive Director	Identify where visitor services are needed to provide a consistent byway experience	2026-2028	Map, strategy for future dev	New byway economic dev and information opps
<u>3.1.2</u> Investigate options for thematic spurs	History/ Interpretation Committee	Identify potential sites or locations that enhance the thematic experience for byway visitors	2027	Map, determine visitor readiness and interpretive links to enhance thematic experiences	Additional thematic visitor experiences
<u>3.1.3</u> Interpretive kiosks	History/ Interpretation Committee	Identify current or new locations, interpretive content, funding	2028 - 2031	Planned Kiosks in each region (tent: Poughkeepsie, Albany, Rochester)	Plans for content, construction funding
<u>3.1.4</u> Interpretive art trail	Tourism/ Marketing Committee (with History/ Interpretation Committee)	Identify locations, content, and funding for creative placemaking using the arts in byway interpretive storytelling to complement existing activities by URCNYS and other organizations	2028-2031	Planned art in each NY Tourism region	Plans for content, construction funding
<u>3.1.5</u> Regional Interpretive Experience Centers	Tourism Committee, History/ Interpretation Committee	Identify current or new locations, or places where content can be	2029-2035	Draft plans for new exhibits at existing visitor	At least 12 access points (4 each region) across the

GOAL 3 Objectives	Primary Responsibility	Priority Actions/ Tasks	Timeline (Start-End)	Outcomes	Metrics
		added, potential funding		centers. Add byway gateway centers (as needed) in three regions (existing or new sites)	byway for information
3.1.6 Expand branded merchandise sales	Tourism Development/ Marketing Committee	Identify new distribution outlets for byway merchandise (including current historic site stores). Identify other unique, locally-made products for sale at area stores and museum gift shops (particularly at Black-owned businesses) to enhance the opportunities for purchases by byway travelers	2029-2035	Increased sale of local merch	Increased revenue generation from byway visitors
Objective 3.2: Create multi-modal Interpretive Programs, Activities, and Events along the Byway that expand its use among recreational, train, water, and bicycle visitors.					
3.2.1 Expand Rail Access	Executive Director, Tourism Marketing Committee	Partner with Amtrak and Metro Transit Authority (Metro North, LIRR) and depot owners to provide byway information at their stations along the Hudson River, particularly in Peekskill and Poughkeepsie (Phase 2)	2028	Information posted, available in rail stations	Increased byway visitation via rail
3.2.2 New Comfort Stations	Staff, Tourism Committee	Develop comfort stations (rest rooms), as needed, along the route.	2030	Additional services for visitors	Increased accessibility

GOAL 3 Objectives	Primary Responsibility	Priority Actions/ Tasks	Timeline (Start-End)	Outcomes	Metrics
<u>3.2.3</u> Water tours	Staff	Recruit local boat tour operators to establish a new water infrastructure and experiences on the Hudson River focusing on Harriet Tubman/Freedom Seekers/Underground Railroad, highlighting the maritime aspect of the Underground Railroad.	2030	Additional access, experiences for byway visitors	Increased publicity, increased tour options
<u>3.2.4</u> Expand Recreation	Staff	Work with recreational outfitters, campgrounds, RV parks, and other outdoor and hospitality businesses to encourage engagement with byway experiences Identify other opportunities and events to engage recreational visitors in the byway experience including hiking, birding, camping, or other outdoor recreational practices	2030	Additional access, experiences for byway visitors	Increased overnight, excursion options along the byway
<u>3.2.5</u> New Business Opportunities	Staff, Economic Development agencies	Identify business opportunities along the byway for entrepreneurs to expand visitation and spending. Provide incentives for new businesses, event planners, and tour guides to expand tourism products along the byway	2031	Expanded local impact	New businesses, entrepreneur opps, jobs

GOAL 3 Objectives	Primary Responsibility	Priority Actions/ Tasks	Timeline (Start-End)	Outcomes	Metrics
<u>3.2.6</u> Broadband	Staff, Advocacy Committee, Planning Agencies	Advocate for broadband coverage across the byway	2032	Greater access for apps, online tools	Increased accessibility
Objective 3.3: Conduct interpretive training (sites, guides) to expand local education and enrich visitor engagement					
<u>3.3.1</u> <u>Investigate current training programs</u>	Executive Director, History/ Interpretation Committee	Identify training needs of sites, educational forums for guides and volunteers, and desired format for enhancing local education (partner with NAI)	2028	Annual guide training program	Certified NAI guides
<u>3.3.2</u> Use instruction from visitor experience assessments to help enrich engagement	History/ Interpretation Committee, Tourism Committee	Identify best practices in visitor engagement and experience delivery. Host a forum for historic sites to learn trends and techniques for engagement	2028	Annual Heritage Tourism/ Experience Dev Forum	Increase in net promoter scores (referrals for good experiences)
Objective 3.4: Encourage collaboration with African American communities and prioritize visibility of Black-owned businesses along the byway to enhance the visitor experience and provide local benefits/economic impact					
<u>3.4.1</u> Promote Black-owned businesses along the byway	Executive Director, Tourism Marketing Committee	Create a directory of Black-owned or managed businesses, post on website and encourage TPAs to share with visitors Encourage businesses to use HTURB decal at their location, sell merchandise developed by and approved by HTURB Organization	2028	Increased awareness, patronage	Increase in promotion, publicity

GOAL 3 Objectives	Primary Responsibility	Priority Actions/ Tasks	Timeline (Start-End)	Outcomes	Metrics
<u>3.4.2</u> Create a “Green Book” for the byway in partnership with the Green Book Global	Tourism Marketing Committee	Create a “passport” of Black businesses along the byway to encourage visitation	2029	New tourism product for distribution to byway travelers	100 distributed at local sites, visitor centers, media outlets
<u>3.4.3</u> Provide business, community improvement grants	Staff, Tourism Marketing Committee, Board	In partnership with local EDA, Main Streets, and TPAs, identify business and community enhancement strategies to improve curb appeal along the byway	2030	Enhanced products	10 Black businesses or communities benefit from enhance grants

These strategies depend on funding and prioritization of byway tour product development and enhancement. These development and enhancement strategies should also be implemented to complement other byway activities, including resource interpretation, marketing, and stewardship. The Tourism/Marketing Committee, with oversight from the Byway Board of Directors and input from staff (where applicable), will monitor and prioritize the most appropriate projects, programs, and activities based on visitor needs and desired experience outcomes. A list of current visitor services located along the designated sections of the byway is available in *Appendix 7*.

8. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

Public involvement has been integral to the CMP process. Since the project's inception, numerous opportunities have been provided for stakeholders to give input on the CMP and to learn about the byway designation process.

1. From April 2024 to June 2025, the Internal Planning Committee hosted 14 public meetings along the proposed route. These meetings, which were widely promoted through public notices and invitations via news outlets, social media, newsletters, and shared on the project website, educated over 200 residents on the byway and its designation process. The objective of these meetings was to inform residents about the proposed byway and its approval process while also providing an opportunity for attendees to review and discuss the byway's route and identify potential goals and benefits. Examples of public notices and invitations are in *Appendix 8*; a detailed log of meeting dates and attendees is in *Appendix 9*.
2. Throughout the planning process, attendees reviewed draft materials, discussed route details, and provided feedback on the CMP via surveys and an online comments tab on the original project website (<https://harriettubmancorridorny.com>).
3. Stakeholders were also encouraged to submit letters of support and sign up for updates through the website. As of 8-6-25, the CMP includes 127 Letters of Support from citizens, churches, towns, elected officials, businesses, nonprofit organizations, and tourism entities in support of the full 22-county byway designation (Phases 1 and 2).
4. Input obtained during public meetings, surveys, and comments submitted via the project website was instrumental in shaping the goals and objectives of the HTURB, as outlined in this Corridor Management Plan. The Committee aimed to ensure that adequate measures and public input were incorporated into the CMP as it progressed.
5. A four-day bus tour in March 2025, organized by New York State 56th Assembly District Representative Stephanie Zinerman and URCNYS, commemorated Harriet Tubman Day and further raised awareness. The tour took 25 New Yorkers from Brooklyn to St. Catharines, Ontario, spotlighting the proposed 550-mile route and Harriet Tubman's legacy.
6. Six public meetings, held across the state from June 29 – July 2, 2025, garnered further support for the byway designation with attendance from 81 elected officials, representatives from historical societies, government agencies, tourism entities, religious institutions, civic organizations, and residents.

Byway Leadership:

Given the byway's historical significance, an early consensus emerged that input was vital to build local support, foster civic pride, and ensure future stewardship.

- The 42-member Steering Committee comprises representatives from URCNYS, tourism bureaus, historic sites, local history organizations, heritage areas, nationally-recognized historians, local communities and businesses, and public land agencies overseeing the CMP's governance and framework, and reviewing public input to shape the byway's vision and goals. Subcommittees expanded opportunities for local stakeholders to contribute information and advice on key CMP components.
- A Descendants Council was formed to include Harriet Tubman's relatives and descendants of Underground Railroad agents and Freedom Seekers.
- The Internal Planning Team includes the URCNYS President/ Administrator for the New York State EDA Tourism Sub-Awards Grant, the Byway Coordinator, a Tourism Industry Leader representing Harriet Tubman sites, and the contractor hired to facilitate the CMP development. The entity led the day-to-day oversight and implementation of the CMP planning process.
- A consulting team, in addition to dozens of volunteer stakeholders across the 550-mile route, advocated for designation and secured passage of 121 resolutions of support from jurisdictions along the proposed border-to-border byway.⁴⁴
- A marketing consultant worked with the Internal Planning Team, URCNYS, and the Tourism/Marketing Committee to develop a byway logo approved by the Descendants Council and the New York Department of Transportation.

To ensure long-term oversight and development of the byway, the Steering Committee authorized the formation of the HTURNYBO. After designation and with administrative support by the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area or other contracted administrative agency, the HTURB Organization will continue the committee's work, managing governance and stewardship moving forward, and continuing to develop the longer and more inclusive byway.

BYWAY ORGANIZATION:

Goal 5 (Sustain and Grow the Byway) focuses on cultivating and maintaining inclusive byway leadership to identify resources, implement and oversee the corridor management plan, and evaluate its impact. Several objectives relate to the structure and responsibilities of the byway organization and operations.

⁴⁴ As of 7-25-25: 97 have been received/ filed with 20 awaiting receipt of notarized copy

- ⇒ Objective 5.1: Implement a Byway Management structure to engage stakeholders (including descendants/relatives of Freedom Seekers, Underground Railroad agents, and Harriet Tubman), historic sites and history organizations, and residents in programs, activities, and stewardship.
- ⇒ Objective 5.2: Fund byway signage, CMP activities, and operations through diverse sources and revenue-generation strategies.
- ⇒ Objective 5.3: Foster leadership opportunities among people of African descent and youth to facilitate the byway's growth, diversity, and sustainability.
- ⇒ Objective 5.4: Collaborate with other organizations, businesses, agencies, and institutions to leverage resources, effectively manage byway activities, and expand educational opportunities.
- ⇒ Objective 5.5: Document, analyze, and communicate the impact of the byway to stakeholders, residents, and funders with a lens on communities of African descent.

Several partner organizations and local stakeholders have pledged support for the oversight of the byway and implementation of the Corridor Management Plan. Below is a list of the principal partners who will lead/assist the organization both as a volunteer organization and when the entity has paid staff.

Support and Implementation

As this byway focuses on history and people, particularly one representing the size and scope of the proposed Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad New York Byway, the participation needs to be diverse. Several stakeholder groups are important to maintaining the byway's integrity and oversight:

- ✓ Descendants and relatives of Freedom Seekers, Underground Railroad agents, and Harriet Tubman
- ✓ County, Professional, and Public Historians and Researchers, Historical Societies, Educational and Cultural Institutions
- ✓ Heritage Area and National Park Service leadership
- ✓ Tourism Industry, represented by Tourism Promotion Agencies in each designated county, plus private businesses, recreational activities, other historic and cultural attractions, and visitor services located along the byway or in nearby communities
- ✓ Local, state, and federal government agencies
- ✓ Civic and religious organizations or institutions with historical ties or interest in Harriet Tubman, the Underground Railroad, and Freedom Seekers.

- ✓ Recreational businesses and major landowners located along the byway.

KEY PARTNERS:

Niagara Falls National Heritage Area: The Niagara Falls National Heritage Area is one of 62 National Heritage Areas in the United States. Designated by the United States Congress in 2008, the heritage area’s mission is to preserve, protect, and promote the historic, natural, and cultural resources of the area stretching from Niagara Falls to Old Fort Niagara in Youngstown, New York.

When the byway is designated, the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad New York Byway Organization (HTURNYBO) will be housed during the first stages of operation in the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area (NFNHA), based in Niagara Falls, New York. The NFNHA will serve as the byway’s fiscal agent, provide administrative and executive staffing support, and offer its historical expertise to the organization. The on-loan Byway Executive Director (September 2025 – December 2026) will oversee the implementation of the CMP, formation of its volunteer leadership to govern the byway, and work with the Advocacy Committee to secure additional jurisdictional support to expand the current segments to a border-to-border route from New Jersey to the Canadian border, and seek funding for implementation for Phase 2 operations and implementation.

When the byway organization receives sufficient funds to hire staff, the NFNHA is willing to continue to serve as the entity’s fiscal sponsor and offer other operational support as needed. The NFNHA will work in collaboration with the other National Heritage Areas in New York State along the Byway route – Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area, and the future Finger Lakes National Heritage Area – to identify opportunities for collaboration and support. An official letter outlining the commitment from the Niagara Falls National Heritage is attached as *Appendix 10*.

Contact Details:

Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad New York Byway
c/o Niagara Falls National Heritage Area
PO Box 1940

Niagara University, NY 14109

Tax-Exempt Status Number: 46-1240940

A copy of the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area Bylaws is provided in *Appendix 11*.

HARRIET TUBMAN UNDERGROUND RAILROAD BYWAY ORGANIZATION – PHASE 1 Additional Commitment of Resources	
Entity	Commitment
Cayuga County Office of Tourism	Active and engaged ally to the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area; assist, collaborate, and support direct management responsibilities of the byway as needed
Destination Niagara USA	Promote community events along the byway; share marketing expertise and outreach;

	contribute volunteer hours for maintenance projects, clean-up days and other byway stewardship initiatives; explore funding opportunities; and help raise awareness
Discover Seneca	Organize community events, contribute volunteer hours for byway projects, coordinate educational programs, offer marketing expertise
Equal Rights Heritage Center	Organize collaborative events, help with promotional materials, engage visitors in stewardship, coordinate educational programs
Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor	Provide marketing expertise and promote community events, assist with historical information, help develop educational programs (particularly K-12 materials promoted through the Erie Canal Learning Hub), participate in committees, and support fundraising through various grant programs for events, amenities infrastructure, and K-12 field trips.
Finger Lakes Visitors Connection (Ontario County)	Support the byway through organic promotion, engage in byway initiatives that promote connection to history, culture, inclusion
Harriet Tubman National Historical Park	Organize community events along the byway, coordinate educational programs, and provide research/ historical support
Inside Out Tours	Organize heritage based walking and bus tours, contribute historical research and interpretive content, support promotional campaigns
Mid-Hudson Antislavery History Project	Research and educational programming; promote the important history of enslavement and freedom in New York
New York Canal Corporation	Work the byway to protect, preserve, and promote unique resources, and support tourism, revitalization, and development of the canal system
New York State Tourism Industry Association (NYSTIA)	Multi-media marketing initiatives, travel show and trail promotions.
NY Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation	Support the byway and its stewardship of historic and natural resources
Orleans County Tourism	Organize collaborative events along the byway
Visit Buffalo-Niagara	Promote the byway on the TPA website and social media platforms, and include the byway organization in the TPA Certified Travel Ambassador program

Visit Rochester	Provide marketing expertise and outreach (brochures, social media, informational displays); contribute volunteer support and hours (for maintenance projects and other stewardship initiatives); promote educational programs; encourage residents and visitors to appreciate (visit) and preserve the area
Underground Railroad Consortium of New York State	Offer knowledge and deep interpretations of the history of the institution of enslavement in New York State; provide sites, activities, events, and programs for rich learning opportunities; collaborate with community members to develop new opportunities for engagement
Wayne County Tourism	Organize byway events, provide marketing expertise, support the historical/interpretation committee with information.

Individual letters of commitment for the organizations listed above are included in *Appendix 12*.

BYWAY OPERATIONS:

To achieve Objective 5.1. (Implement a Byway Management structure to engage Byway stakeholders and residents in programs, activities, and stewardship), byway operations will evolve with the expansion of the byway route designation.

PHASE 1 (Fall 2025 – March 2027) for Designation of the Two Segments (Auburn to Niagara Falls):

- ⇒ Secure participants for and establish the Volunteer Board of Directors, Advisory Council, Advocacy Committee, and Sub-Committees (History/Interpretation, Stewardship, Tourism/Marketing, Descendants Council). Host initial meetings and establish priorities for 2026.
- ⇒ Create the website with public-facing documents to increase awareness and legislative support for the proposed Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad New York Byway, and other informational materials to promote byway designation.
- ⇒ Secure funding to implement initial CMP marketing, interpretation, and tourism projects.

PHASE 2 (Fall 2025–March 2027) for Expanded Route Designation:

Resolutions of support for the byway have been secured from XX jurisdictions in XX counties for the proposed border-to-border byway. The Advocacy Committee, Board of

Directors, and Executive Director will work to complete the collection of resolutions of support from the remaining XX jurisdictions.

Once the resolutions for the route are secured, the byway organization will also make any necessary adjustments to the route to accommodate the resolutions of support and update the corridor management plan to reflect these additions/changes. Additionally, the Byway Leadership and Advocacy Committee will secure legislation for the expanded byway in the 2027 legislative session.

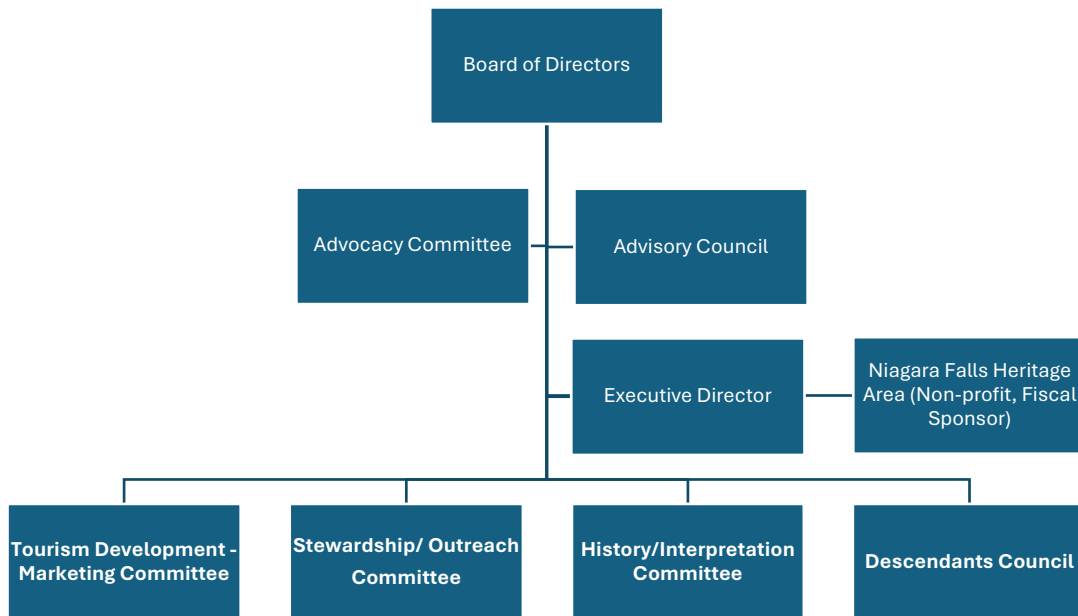
Funding will be secured to transition the executive director from staff-on-loan (from the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area) to an independent paid position by January 2027, and seed future operations and capacity building.

PHASE 1 & 2: Byway Organizational Structure (Fall 2025 – March 2027)

(Subsidiary of Niagara Falls National Heritage Area)

The following organizational structure to lead the implementation of the corridor management plan.

- A Board of Directors with diverse representation will serve as the strategic leadership of the organization, with elected officials and committee chairs.
- An Advisory Board will be comprised of two representatives each from four key constituent groups: historians, the Descendants Council, the New York Department of Transportation, and the Tourism Industry.
- An Advocacy Committee comprised of local stakeholders is responsible for obtaining additional jurisdictional support for future byway segments and securing support from elected officials for passage of byway legislation.
- Three Committees (Tourism/Marketing, Stewardship, and History/Interpretation) to oversee specific CMP components.
- A Descendants Council (as relatives or descendants) to Harriet Tubman, Underground Railroad Agents, or Freedom Seekers will provide connections to the namesakes and contribute to the byway vision.



Although the two byway segments span the western part of the state, the HTURNYBO will coordinate with the other designated heritage areas in New York (the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area and the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor) to implement the corridor management plan's intent. Phase 1 designation will also afford the byway organization to seek funding, begin marketing, and implement the CMP.

HTURNYBO Board of Directors

A Board of Directors is elected from residents located in the municipalities of the designated New York Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway and/or individuals representing significant association with Harriet Tubman and Freedom Seekers in New York.

Duties: The Board of Directors is responsible for monitoring the performance of the Corridor Management Plan. Additionally, the board of directors is responsible for:

- ⇒ Supporting the Advocacy Committee in securing the designation of the remaining sections of the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad New York Byway.
- ⇒ Serving as advocates for the byway.
- ⇒ Helping secure the financial resources necessary to complete the CMP and manage the byway.
- ⇒ Leading the engagement of stakeholders and implementation of priorities through committees and programs.
- ⇒ Participating as a “working” board rather than a “governing” board to ensure maximum engagement by and leverage the resources of stakeholders.

- ⇒ Periodically reviewing the performance of the Executive Director.

Composition: Up to 17 stakeholders representing the byway constituents will serve as its leadership. The board will meet at least four times annually (virtually and/or in person).

- ⇒ Executive Committee (4): The Board of Directors will elect a President, Vice President (for Succession to President), Secretary, and Treasurer to serve as the Executive Committee. After the first year of operation, the Past President will also serve on the Executive Committee to provide continuity and institutional knowledge. The Executive Committee will meet at least bi-monthly and give counsel to the Executive Director as needed.
- ⇒ Committee Chairs (3): Three board members will chair the Tourism/Marketing, Advocacy/Outreach, and History & Interpretation Committees (composed of local, regional, and state participants). These board members should have an interest and expertise in their particular committee.
- ⇒ Descendants Council Representation (2): The board shall include two members representing Harriet Tubman relatives or descendants of Freedom Seekers and Underground Railroad agents (one of these board members will serve as the Chair of the Descendants Council).
- ⇒ At-Large Byway Stakeholders (up to 8): The board of directors will include up to eight byway supporters who will serve a three-year term of office. The persons may be invited, self-nominated, or appointed. Ideally, they are located in one of the current or proposed jurisdictions on the byway. They may represent the tourism industry, marketing organizations, historic sites, government, civic/ community groups, historical societies, preservation/ conservation entities, economic development, and/or other state agencies. They may also be residents interested in supporting the byway through leadership or a freedom seeker descendant/ Harriet Tubman relative.

The board of directors will serve a three-year term, with the option to renew an additional term, if requested. Additionally, leadership appointments (service on the Executive Committee) are exempt from the term of service. A board member may serve a maximum of two terms, with one year off the board before being eligible to rejoin the Byway Board of Directors.

Advisory Council

Duties: The Advisory Council will provide advice on the byway activities to the Board (and Staff) and guide specific projects along the byway. In addition, the Advisory Council will advise the organization on byway management, compliance, and evaluation of the CMP implementation.

Composition: Nine members representing various constituent groups and expertise will serve in an advisory capacity to the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad New York Byway leadership and staff. The Advisory Council will meet at least quarterly. A Chair and Vice Chair will be appointed to conduct meetings.

- ⇒ Two historians or representatives of historical organizations located in New York, preferably located in one of the counties along the byway route.
- ⇒ Two of Harriet Tubman's Relatives or Freedom Seeker Descendants.
- ⇒ Two representatives from the tourism industry, preferably located in one of the counties along the byway route.
- ⇒ Representative from the New York State Department of Transportation.
- ⇒ Representative from the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area (as fiscal sponsor)
- ⇒ President of URCNYS.

Advocacy Committee

As public engagement is such a crucial aspect in the designation process, members of the current Steering Committee will be tapped to become an expanded Advocacy Committee, working in tandem with the Byway Executive Director. Additional stakeholders and volunteers from the byway jurisdictions will be asked for support and participation.

Duties:

- ⇒ Secure legislative support for the Phase 1 byway designation (two segments)
- ⇒ Secure additional jurisdictional support for the expanded border-to-border route with subsequent legislation for the byway.

The Advocacy Committee will meet at least four times per year, or more frequently as it deems necessary to carry out its responsibilities. Members may decide to transition to the Stewardship/Outreach committee once the entire border-to-border byway is designated, or join another committee of choice.

Descendants Council

The Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad New York Byway has a distinct goal to include representation of and benefit for communities of African descent along the byway.

The Descendants Council will be expanded to identify and convene relatives of Freedom Seekers in New York and relatives of Harriet Tubman. These individuals will be tapped to work with the byway leadership and other committees to ensure the realization of the CMP goals and objectives. The Descendants Council will also:

- ⇒ Work with the other committees to support the development of and adherence to the byway's guiding principles, and
- ⇒ Discuss strategies to maximize the economic and social impact while minimizing the commodification of Black heritage, inappropriate branding/ commercialization

and interpretation of Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad, and other negative messaging or exploitation.

⇒ Confer with other committees and byway leadership to ensure proper allocation of credit and recognition of storytelling and message delivery.

⇒ Support the outreach and participation of Black communities, organizations, and businesses along the byway.

A board/council/committee job description is attached in *Appendix 13 for reference*.

PHASE 3: Byway Organizational Structure (April 2027 and beyond)

Phase 3 of the Byway Operations is proposed once the entire border-to-border route is designated (April 2027), and funding is secured to have paid staff with diverse working committees and regional representation. A complete description of operations with an organizational chart is attached as *Appendix 14*.

BYWAY MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES & TASKS

GOAL 5 Objectives	Primary Responsibility	Priority Actions/ Tasks	Timeline (Start-End)	Outcomes	Metrics
Objective 5.3: Foster leadership opportunities among people of African descent and youth to facilitate the byway's growth, diversity, and sustainability.					
<u>5.3.1</u> : Identify additional descendants, relatives to engage in the byway	Descendants Council, Board of Directors	Compile a list of individuals to contact	2026	Increased participation; educational outreach	New Council members, byway volunteers
<u>5.3.2</u> Identify opportunities for volunteers	Committees	List of projects and tasks that can engage volunteers	2026	Expanded capacity	New volunteers
<u>5.3.3</u> Work with local schools, HBC, Black Sororities and Fraternities	Committees	Create a database of schools, organizations to engage in byway programs and events. Solicit their participation.	2027	Increased education and outreach	New organizational partners and stakeholders
<u>5.3.4</u> Create a Youth Leadership Council	Board	Establish a forum for youth (particularly of African descent) to learn more about HTURR Byway, opportunities for engagement	2029	Youth Leadership Forum	Increased education and awareness

GOAL 5 Objectives	Primary Responsibility	Priority Actions/ Tasks	Timeline (Start-End)	Outcomes	Metrics
Objective 5.4: Collaborate with other organizations, businesses, agencies, and institutions to leverage resources, effectively manage byway activities, and expand educational opportunities.					
5.4.1. Compile list of potential partners for byway projects	Staff, Advisory Council	Identify opportunities for collaboration, including in-kind activities. Conduct outreach for byway education	2026	More informed, engaged Chambers of Commerce, Educational Institutions, Businesses	List of potential byway companies, organizations, institutions
5.4.2 Solicit sponsorships for byway events and activities	Staff, Advisory Council	Create a sponsor packet for stewarding, developing and promoting byway activities, projects, events	2026 (update bi-annually)	Itemized opportunities for supporting the byway	New local / corporate funding for byway projects
5.4.3 Create MOUs with NHAs and other regional partners	Staff, Board	Establish partnership agreements or MOUs between organizations to support goals	2027 -	Documented outreach and engagement	New collaborations to leverage resources, opportunities
Objective 5.5: Document, analyze, and communicate the impact of the byway to stakeholders, residents, and funders with a lens on communities of African descent.					
5.5.1 Identify metrics for measurement	Staff, Board	Determine credible sources of data for measurement	2026	Defined benchmarks, foundation of measurement	Defined metrics
5.5.2 Collect and analyze data (see 4.1.10: Market Research)	Staff, Board, Tourism/ Marketing Committee	Conduct analysis of byway impact	July 2026 (then annually)	Annual Report	Annual analysis of impact
5.5.3 Byway Impact (see 4.1.13)	Staff	Conduct 10-year impact report to demonstrate value of byway	2035	Documented impact,	Articles along byway promoting its value, increased funding and support

9. TRAFFIC AND SAFETY PLAN

The Traffic and Safety Plan includes content from local, regional, and state transportation agencies to document and support the byway's designation. These agencies must also contribute to the development of the Traffic and Safety Plan with usage and safety records, and design and maintenance standards/guidelines.

THIS INFORMATION WILL BE ADDED BY NYDOT IN THE FINAL CMP.

10. SIGNAGE PLAN

A signage plan typically includes three components: Sign inventory, Jurisdiction compliance (see Appendix 3), and signage management and maintenance. NYDOT will provide this information in the final CMP.

11. Financial Resources

The Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad New York Byway has received extensive state financial support through grants for the creation and marketing of resources related to the Underground Railroad. The byway organization also received extensive pro bono technical assistance and support from numerous historians, industry experts, and National Heritage Areas in New York. Additionally, local stakeholders have volunteered exhaustive hours to create this plan for designation. Throughout this development process, the byway organization has identified and pursued additional funding to develop and implement the proposed projects outlined in this plan. A five-year budget is provided at the end of this section.

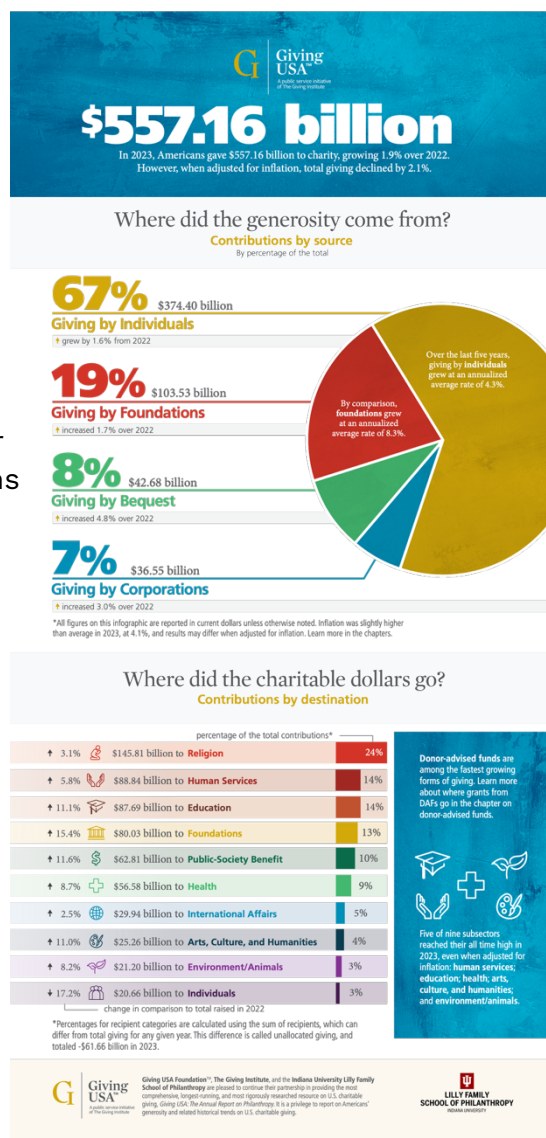
THE FUNDING LANDSCAPE

In 2024, U.S. charitable giving saw a 1.9% increase in current dollars, reaching \$557.16 billion according to Giving USA. While overall giving increased, donor numbers have seen a decline.⁴⁵ Recent giving trends indicate that individual donors are aging out, smaller donors are giving less, or are establishing foundations as an alternative control mechanism for contributions.

Key sectors that saw major boosts in giving include arts, culture, and humanities (+11%), public society benefit (+ 7.2%), and education (+6%).⁴⁶ This is good news for a history-centric byway focusing on educational experiences.

Byways and other non-profit organizations are also utilizing creative revenue-generation opportunities, such as voluntary contribution programs, sales and licensing of products/merchandise, events, charity and online auctions, crowdfunding, and matching gifts. Capital campaigns and endowments are often the preferred strategies for large-scale projects.

Preliminary investigation of potential funding sources for the byway includes three major categories:



⁴⁵ Giving USA 2024 Report, <https://givingusa.org/5-takeaways-and-next-steps-from-the-giving-usa-2024-report/#:~:text=The%202023%20Giving%20USA%20report,give%20just%20once%20or%20sporadically.>

⁴⁶ Ibid.

- 1) Government grants, loans, technical assistance programs
- 2) Private Foundation grants
- 3) Corporate sponsorships

The HTURB Board of Directors will initially be responsible for identifying, cultivating, and securing funds for the CMP's implementation. As resources become available, staff will be hired to further develop and deploy fundraising efforts, including grants, sponsorships, planned giving (bequeaths), voluntary contribution campaigns, and special events to raise dedicated project revenue or fund operations.

FEDERAL FUNDING

In early 2025, executive orders paused or eliminated notable federal funding sources. Several of these agencies provided relevant grant or technical assistance opportunities, such as:

- ⇒ The [Institute of Museum & Library Services](#)' grants for African American History and Culture, INSPIRE! Grants for Small Museums, and Museums for America's Community Engagement Program.
- ⇒ The [National Endowment for the Arts](#)' Our Town creative placemaking grant program funds projects that integrate arts, culture, and design activities into activities to strengthen communities.
- ⇒ The [National Park Service](#) Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program supports locally-led conservation and outdoor recreation projects.

Some agencies and departments are still funding programs and services at the state and local levels. The [US Department of Agriculture](#) offers loans and grants for rural infrastructure and economic development. Whether the Community Facilities Program, Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant programs, Strategic Economic and Community Development Program, or Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program, USDA continues to support many programs and initiatives outlined in the CMP.

While the Federal Highway Administration does not have current funding cycles open for byways, the [U.S. Department of Transportation](#) does offer various funding opportunities, such as the Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) Grant Program with \$2 billion in appropriated funds still available through 2026. Although the HTURB may not be ready for this funding opportunity, US DOT and other federal agencies should be monitored for potential grants that fit the infrastructure and community needs/improvements along the byway in the future.

NATIONAL FUNDING

[African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund](#)

National Trust for Historic Preservation

- ⇒ Action Fund National Grant Program
- ⇒ Descendant and Family Stewardship Initiative: supported by Mellon Foundation, this initiative supports descendant community and family-led organizations to be

leaders in the physical preservation, interpretative programming, management and governance of historic African American places.

⇒ Preserving Black Churches

African American Heritage Preservation Foundation

Preservation, maintenance, and awareness of endangered or little-known African American historical sites.

National Fund for Sacred Places, Partners for Sacred Places

National Trust for Historic Preservation

Providing training, planning, and capital grants for congregations of all faiths.

PRIVATE FOUNDATIONS

In researching the Foundation Center's Foundation Directory, six major New York-based foundations are potential funders of sizable donations for the Harriet Tubman Underground New York Byway because of their profile for giving (African American heritage, arts and culture, community and economic development, and human rights):

- ⇒ The Ford Foundation
- ⇒ The Mellon Foundation
- ⇒ The New York Community Trust
- ⇒ Fidelity Investments Charitable Gift Fund
- ⇒ Donor Advised Charitable Giving, Inc.
- ⇒ North Star Fund

Other foundations support some of the goals and initiatives outlined in the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad NY CMP, including:

- ⇒ The American Express Foundation funds the growth and sustainability of small businesses and small restaurants across the U.S.
- ⇒ Charles Stewart Mott Foundation has funded the Harriet Tubman Center in Detroit, Michigan
- ⇒ The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation funds leadership development, community organizing, and economic justice.
- ⇒ The Groundswell Fund has funded education, arts and culture, human rights, and community and economic development.
- ⇒ Tides Foundation funds human rights and community and economic development, particularly in underserved neighborhoods.

CORPORATE GIVING

Several New York-based corporations offer community funding programs. Here is a preliminary list of companies to investigate as to their potential to support the byway:

- Rich Production (Donation, Resources)
- M&T Bank (Donation, Resources)
- Citizen's Bank (Donation, Resources)
- Wegman's

- Bank of Utica

STATE FUNDING

The State of New York offers several grant and funding programs to aid in economic development, tourism, marketing, historic preservation, and conservation. While some state agencies receive funds from the federal government to distribute as grants to non-profits and local entities, several programs are appropriated by the state legislature or executive branch to support/enhance key goals and initiatives.

The state border-to-border byway winds through 22 counties and more than 174 jurisdictions.

Counties	Empire State Development	New York DOT	I New York
PHASE 1			
Cayuga	Finger Lakes	Central NY	Finger Lakes
Seneca	Finger Lakes	Central NY	Finger Lakes
Ontario	Finger Lakes	Genesee Valley	Finger Lakes
Wayne	Finger Lakes	Genesee Valley	Finger Lakes
Monroe	Finger Lakes	Genesee Valley	Finger Lakes
Orleans	Finger Lakes	Genesee Valley	Finger Lakes
Erie	Western NY	Western NY	Greater Niagara
Niagara	Western NY	Western NY	Greater Niagara
PHASE 2			
New York	New York City	New York City	New York City
Bronx	Mid-Hudson	Hudson Valley	New York City
Westchester	Mid-Hudson	Hudson Valley	Hudson Valley
Putnam	Mid-Hudson	Hudson Valley	Hudson Valley
Dutchess	Mid-Hudson	Hudson Valley	Hudson Valley
Columbia	Capital	Hudson Valley	Hudson Valley
Rensselaer	Capital	Capital District	Capital-Saratoga
Albany	Capital	Capital District	Capital-Saratoga
Schenectady	Capital	Capital District	Capital-Saratoga
Montgomery	Mohawk Valley	Mohawk Valley	Central New York
Herkimer	Mohawk Valley	Mohawk Valley	Central New York
Oneida	Mohawk Valley	Mohawk Valley	Central New York
Madison	Central New York	Mohawk Valley	Central New York
Onondaga	Central New York	Central New York	Finger Lakes

Specific state funding opportunities include the following:

Empire State Development (ESD)

- ⇒ Market New York grant program to strengthen tourism by promoting destinations, attractions, and special events. Funding is also available for tourism marketing initiatives. (\$7 million available in FY 25-26; minimum request of \$50,000 with a 50% match requirement)
- ⇒ Tourism Capital Projects (NEW): Funding introduced in May 2025 through the Regional Council Capital Funds Program for a minimum grant request of \$100,000 or more (\$8 million available for tourism projects in FY 25-26, formerly offered through the Market New York Capital Grant program).
- ⇒ Tourism Matching Funds Program, which provides funding for tourism marketing initiatives, including the development of new products or experiences. (\$3.45 million to TPAs to market their destination.)
- ⇒ Path Through History, administered through Empire State Development and I LOVE NY, promotes historic sites and events officially enrolled in the state's thematic heritage tourism [program](#).

Environmental Protection Fund (EPF)

- ⇒ Provides grants for capital projects that protect the environment and enhance communities, including land acquisition, infrastructure improvements, and historic site restoration.

Other agencies to investigate include the New York State Canal Corporation, New York Humanities, Erie Canalway/NYS Canal Corporation Events Grants, and I Love NY marketing grants.

LOCAL FUNDING

Community Foundations represent a substantial opportunity for dedicated, ongoing funding for the byway. Focusing on a specific geographic area, community foundations pool donations to address community needs and support local nonprofits. They offer various types of programs, including grantmaking, donor-advised funds, scholarships, and field-of-interest funds. They also manage endowments, provide technical assistance to nonprofits, and lead community initiatives.

Every county in the proposed byway is represented by at least one community foundation. This affords the HTURB a unique opportunity to collaborate/ partner with multiple community foundations to secure funding for the entire designated route.

During the CMP development process, members of the URCNYS/Byway Planning Committee have already had initial conversations with a few community foundations, banks (community giving programs), and state agencies about potential funding.

This initial research provides a strong foundation for securing additional revenue once the border-to-border route is designated.

County	Community Foundation
PHASE 1	
Cayuga	Central NY CF
Seneca	Tiffin CF
Ontario	Rochester Area CF
Wayne	Rochester Area CF
Monroe	Rochester Area CF
Orleans	CF for Greater Buffalo
Erie	CF for Greater Buffalo
Niagara	CF for Greater Buffalo
PHASE 2	
New York	North Start Fund, Stonewall CF, NY Community Trust
Bronx	Bronx CF
Westchester	Westchester County CF
Dutchess	Berkshire Taconic CF, North Star Fund CF of the Hudson Valley
Putnam	CF of the Hudson Valley
Columbia	Berkshire Taconic CF, North Star Fund CF for the Greater Capital Region, Inc.
Rensselaer	CF for the Greater Capital Region, Inc.
Albany	CF for the Greater Capital Region, Inc.
Schenectady	CF for the Greater Capital Region, Inc.
Montgomery	CF for the Greater Capital Region, Inc.
Herkimer	CF of Herkimer and Oneida Counties, Inc.
Oneida	CF of Herkimer and Oneida Counties, Inc.

Success and sustainability will require a diversified funding strategy mixing both private contributions with public funds and affording opportunities for sponsorships as well as capital campaigns to increase revenue generation from multiple sources.

FUNDING THE BYWAY MANAGEMENT AND CMP IMPLEMENTATION

The following budget reflects the byway priorities for the next five years, to achieve initial Phase 1 and 2 implementation of the CMP.

HARRIET TUBMAN UNDERGROUND RAILROAD PHASE 1 FIVE-YEAR BUDGET

CATEGORY	YEAR	YEAR	YEAR	YEAR	YEAR
REVENUES (Proposed)	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Federal Grants		\$50,000	\$50,000	\$100,000	\$100,000
State Grants	\$100,000	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$500,000
Community Foundations		\$50,000	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$50,000

Other Revenue (Donations, Sponsorships, Tours, Merchandise)	\$50,000	\$100,000	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$500,000
Niagara Falls NHA (in-kind)	\$250,000	\$100,000	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$50,000
Other In-kind (documented)	\$20,000	\$100,000	\$150,000	\$150,000	\$150,000
TOTAL	\$470,000	\$900,000	\$1,300,000	\$1,350,000	\$1,350,000

EXPENSES (Proposed)	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Byway Designation					
Phase 1 Advocacy - Legislation					
Phase 1 Byway Designation Celebration	\$10,000				
Phase 2 Advocacy - Resolutions	\$10,000				
Phase 2 CMP Update (resources, route, maps)	\$75,000				
Phase 2 Byway Designation Celebration		\$10,000			
Phase 3 (spurs) Advocacy - Resolutions				\$10,000	
Phase 3 (spurs) CMP Update				\$75,000	
Management of the Byway					
Create new non-profit organization		\$20,000			
Executive Director	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$120,000	\$125,000	\$130,000
Grant Writer	\$36,000	\$36,000	\$36,000	\$36,000	\$36,000
Support Staff (AA, Regional Reps)			\$180,000	\$190,000	\$200,000
Administrative Expenses	\$25,000	\$50,000	\$60,000	\$60,000	\$60,000
Travel	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$20,000	\$30,000	\$30,000
Developing, Interpreting the Byway					
Hire Interpretive Planner	\$75,000				
Historic Overview		\$75,000	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000
Interpretation Signage		\$150,000	\$150,000	\$50,000	\$50,000
Site Improvements (grants)		\$25,000	\$75,000	\$100,000	\$200,000
Interpretive center(s)*					
Interpretive kiosks with road pull-offs			\$400,000	\$500,000	\$400,000
Interpretive Training		\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000
Landscaping			\$25,000		\$25,000
Marketing the Byway					
Website design, content, and maintenance	\$30,000	\$15,000	\$35,000	\$20,000	\$20,000
Brand strategy and guide	\$15,000				
Promotions (Exhibit, banners, advertising, events)	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000
Social media	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000

Print (brochures/rack cards)	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$20,000
Branded merchandise	\$25,000	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$50,000
Site banners, window clings, other on-site branding	\$10,000			\$15,000	
Market research		\$10,000	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$20,000
TOTAL	\$483,026	\$626,000	\$1,281,000	\$1,306,000	\$1,331,000

*Separate Capital Funding & Budgets

To meet budget projections, the byway organizations (including leadership and staff) will need to prioritize activities and tasks to leverage resources and maximize opportunities. The following chart demonstrates the key actions necessary to generate funds.

GOAL 5 Objectives	Primary Responsibility	Priority Actions/ Tasks	Timeline (Start-End)	Outcomes	Metrics
Objective 5.2: Fund byway signage, CMP activities, and operations through diverse sources and revenue-generation strategies					
<u>5.2.1</u> Finalize detailed budget	Staff, Board Treasurer	Itemize schedule of expenses and prioritize for funding	2026	Budget for use in planning, fundraising	Cost of byway business
<u>5.2.2</u> Seek support from Community Foundations	Staff, Board	Schedule follow-up meetings with community foundations representing the byway counties.	2026	Operational funding secured	New sources of funding identified, educated about byway
<u>5.2.3</u> Create a development plan	Staff, Board Treasurer	Identify potential funding sources, schedule for grants, donations, and requirements (match) to determine priority list to pursue	2026	Plan for fundraising	Revenue generation amounts and sources identified
<u>5.2.4</u> Solicit funds	Staff, Board, Stakeholders	Write and pitch proposals for funding	Ongoing	Funds for budgeted priorities	New funds generated
<u>5.2.5</u> Collaborate with state partners	Staff, Board, Advisory Board	Identify state agencies and partners that can collaborate with the byway or endorse funding Proposals	2026	Expand opportunities to leverage resources	New partnerships identified
<u>5.2.6</u> Identify and secure alternative	Staff, Committee Chairs	Identify strategies to raise funds for various byway priorities: Branded merchandise, licensing, Events, Tours, Sponsorships,	2027 -	Grants, donations, fundraising events, merchandise sales	Budget reflects diverse funding sources

GOAL 5 Objectives	Primary Responsibility	Priority Actions/ Tasks	Timeline (Start-End)	Outcomes	Metrics
sources of revenue		Revolving Loan Fund, Adopt-a-Highway, In-kind/Volunteers			
<u>5.2.7</u> Establish HTURB Trust	Staff, Board	Establish the Byway Trust to receive charitable contributions and establish the organization for future grant programs	Fall 2027	Entity for dedicated donations	Dedicated entity to collect funds on behalf of the byway
<u>5.2.8 Hire development director</u>	Staff	Hire person dedicated to identifying, soliciting, and managing donations	2028		
<u>5.2.9</u> Host regional fundraising workshops	Staff	Advance the capacity of local nonprofit organizations and improve the grant award success rate	2028		
<u>5.2.10</u> Establish peer giving program	Staff	Design and launch a grass-roots peer-to-peer giving program to fund initial projects, research, and special events	2028	New donor cultivation program	Revenue vehicle for individual stakeholders to support the byway
<u>5.2.11 Capital Campaign for Byway projects</u>	Staff, Board, Committees	Create and launch a capital campaign to fund major projects including regional interpretive centers and kiosks	2029		
<u>5.2.12</u> Annual Fundraising event	Staff, Stewardship/ Outreach Committee	Organize event to attract a diverse collection of donors from across the byway jurisdictions, from special interest groups interested in Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad, and businesses/civic organizations wanting to support the byway programs and services	2030		
<u>5.2.12</u> Planned giving program	Staff	Encourage donors to support the byway	2031	New forum for donations	

GOAL 5 Objectives	Primary Responsibility	Priority Actions/ Tasks	Timeline (Start-End)	Outcomes	Metrics
<u>5.2.13</u> Expand sales	Staff, Tourism/ Marketing Committee	Expand licensing and branded merchandise sales	2032	New sales vehicles	\$500,000 annually
<u>5.2.14</u> Update funding plan	Staff	Identify funding needs of new products and services, operations, marketing refresh, and preservation/interpretation programs	2033	Updated budget for priority projects	Plan for use in grants, funding proposals

12. SUMMARY

Phase 1 of the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad New York Byway marks the launch of a statewide strategy to recognize individuals seeking freedom from enslavement through their own agency and to acknowledge those who aided their journeys from the early 1800s to the Civil War. The sites associated with Harriet Tubman, the Underground Railroad network, and freedom seekers provide exceptional, authentic place-based experiences that tell New York's distinctive stories from this important era of American history. Freedom seekers and participants in the Underground Railroad Network had perseverance and commitment to a cause that serves as a testament for all byway visitors to be agents of positive change.

The byway also offers a unique opportunity to showcase the various methods of travel used by freedom seekers more than a century ago – water, rail, and trailways – and are available to travelers today. Engaging in recreational activities along the Erie Canalway and Empire State Trail affords travelers unique perspectives, past to present, and access to the byway.

The designation of Phase 1 of the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad New York Byway helps focus attention on the importance of this era of history, its relevance to America today, the educational value for visitors traveling to the contributing sites, and the potential economic impact for local communities and businesses. The designation of the Phase 1 Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway provides an impetus for completing Phase 2 to provide a contiguous route for eventual multi-state designation that further elevates New York's history on a national and international stage.

13. APPENDICES

1. List of Byway Leadership and Stakeholders Involved in the CMP Process
2. Letters of Support for Byway Designation
3. Letters of Resolution for Byway Designation
4. Historical Narrative: Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad in New York
5. Database of Comprehensive Plans
6. List of TPAs for the Byway Segments (Phase 1)
7. Current List of Visitor Services along the Byway Segments (Phase 1)
8. Public Meeting Notices and Invitations
9. Public Meeting Dates and Attendees
10. Niagara Falls National Heritage Area Letter of Commitment
11. Niagara Falls National Heritage Area Bylaws
12. Additional Letters of Commitment for Byway Implementation (Phase 1)
13. Post-designation Board/Council Description
14. Future Byway Management
15. Expanded Historical Narrative, Bibliography, and Other Resources
 - a. Expanded Narrative – Truth is of No Color
 - b. Nineteenth Century Gerrit Smith at Peterboro
 - c. Bibliography of Wellman UGRR Reports
 - d. Border-to-Border Inventory
 - e. Hamlet of Peterboro UGRR Sites
 - f. Chenango County UGRR Sites
 - g. Madison County UGRR Sites
 - h. Otsego County UGRR Sites
16. Niagara Falls National Heritage Area: Additional Information