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## On The Bright Side: Grants to blaze Oneonta trails

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Planning for new trails along the Susquehanna River in Oneonta and beyond got a boost this week with the recent announcement of a grant from a statewide organization.

The Otsego County Conservation Association has been selected by Parks & Trails New York to receive a technical and planning grant, said OCCA Executive Director Erik Miller. It is expected to help efforts to extend the four miles of trails already built by the city of Oneonta.

The grant is part of the Parks & Trails' Healthy Trails, Healthy People program. It is aimed at helping New Yorkers develop more active communities and an enhanced quality of life through multi-use trails, according to a media release.

Several groups are working on continuing the project. This included the city, through its Oneonta Susquehanna Greenway Committee, the town of Oneonta, the state parks department and Department of Transportation, as well as Hartwick College and State University of New York at Oneonta, Miller said.

The trail would connect the city's Neahwa Park with the town's Fortin Park, he said. It would eventually extend to Riddell State Park in the towns of Davenport and Milford, where it could connect with rail lines and continue into the village of Milford, he said.

"We will assist them to realize the vision," said Parks & Trails director of program and policy, Fran Gotcsik.

While no money is involved, "our staff has many years of assistance with trail development," she said.

"It's a great opportunity," Miller said.

The grant will provide the expertise to help everyone work together and make sure there are no duplication of services, he said. This, he added, will help provide valuable advice in resolving issues such as landowner disputes and helping communities working together.

In his letter supporting the effort to Parks & Trails, Oneonta Mayor John Nader said, "This project will assist in connecting the city of Oneonta and its residents to cultural, historical and natural resources along the Susquehanna River."

This was an objective put forth in the Greenway feasibility study conducted by the city several years ago, Nader said.