



## Fort Stanwix National Monument: *Transportation Study*



Fort Stanwix National Monument

Source: Volpe Center (June 2019)

PMIS No. 210648  
June 30, 2020



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## Report notes

This report was prepared by the U.S. Department of Transportation John A. Volpe National Transportation Systems Center, in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The project team included Emma Vinella-Brusher and Heather Richardson of the Transportation Planning Division, and Scott Gilman and Madison Burke of the Policy Analysis and Strategic Planning Division.

This effort was undertaken in fulfillment of PMIS 210648.

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## Definitions

The following terms are used in this report:

AADT	Annual Average Daily Traffic
DRI	Downtown Revitalization Initiative
EV	Electric Vehicle
FOST, the park	Fort Stanwix National Monument
HOCTS	Herkimer-Oneida County Transportation Study
NPS	National Park Service
NYS	New York State
NYSDOT	New York State Department of Transportation
RV	Recreational Vehicle
TNC	Transportation Network Company
Volpe Center	U.S. Department of Transportation Volpe National Transportation Systems Center
Willett Center	Marinus Willett Center Collections Management and Education Center



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## Executive Summary

The Fort Stanwix National Monument Alternative Transportation Feasibility Study is an update to the 2006 and 2010 U.S. Department of Transportation's National Transportation Systems Center (Volpe Center) transportation studies. The purpose of the study is to evaluate the current transportation conditions at the park—including pedestrian and bicycle access, public transit, and parking—and assess the feasibility of potential solutions to improve transportation conditions. This study is not a plan and will not result in a decision or project without further planning and stakeholder engagement. However, this study provides Fort Stanwix (FOST, the park) and the National Park Service (NPS) with information and analysis to better understand the current state of transportation access to the park from the nearby area and the feasibility of potential enhanced access. This report is a result of the study, which is a partnership between Fort Stanwix, the NPS, and the Volpe Center.

The primary findings and recommendations from this report are summarized below:

### *Existing Conditions*

Due to its location in Rome, New York's city center, FOST experiences transportation challenges related to wayfinding, safety, connectivity, alternative modes, and parking. As a result, the park is seeking potential strategies to manage these challenges at the site. Most visitors arrive by personal vehicle from nearby I-90. FOST does not own a parking facility or have designated spaces for visitors, but free parking is available in the nearby Fort Stanwix (Liberty James) Garage, owned by the City, and on-street parking adjacent to the park. Downtown's Rome parking spaces are underutilized; however, visitors report a perceived lack of available parking due to unclear signage. FOST is also served by a number of multi-use trails, bus stops, and Amtrak train service, though few visitors report using these options.

The park's primary transportation challenges are summarized below:

- The downtown area and region lack sufficient signage and information to help visitors, including drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists, navigate to the park.
- Pedestrian access and safety improvements are needed in and around the park.
- Visitors report a perceived lack of nearby parking, including bus and recreational vehicle (RV) parking.
- The seven nearby electric vehicle (EV) charging stations may soon prove insufficient to meet demand.
- Few visitors arrive on foot, bike, bus, or using other alternative transportation modes.

### *Recommendations*

- Consistent signage throughout the city, county, and region
- Increased utilization of Fort Stanwix Parking Garage
- Parking space striping along N. James Street
- Additional EV charging stations for visitors
- Updated information on large vehicle parking availability
- Enhanced pedestrian and cyclist wayfinding on trails
- Redesigned Spaghetti Junction
- Encouragement of micro-mobility and Transportation Network Company (TNC) options
- Updated website information on train, bus, and bicycling options for visiting FOST
- Expanded visitor transportation survey
- Programming in conjunction with trail expansions and the 2026 Semiquincentennial
- Pamphlet of regional tourist sites

## Introduction

Fort Stanwix National Monument is located in the City of Rome, Oneida County, along the main east-west transportation corridor of New York State (NYS). This corridor was initially developed along natural river systems, reinforced through construction of the Erie Canal, and later, railroads and the NYS Thruway (Interstate 90). The NPS site sits in the heart of downtown Rome, and includes the archeological remains of Fort Stanwix, the fort reconstruction, the Marinus Willett Collections Management and Education Center (Willett Center), and a half mile of trails.

Due to its location in the city center, the park experiences transportation challenges related to wayfinding, safety, connectivity, alternative modes, and parking. As a result, FOST is seeking potential strategies to manage these challenges at the site.

This Transportation Study documents the existing conditions and related planning efforts affecting FOST and the City of Rome, and considers the feasibility of a range of strategies to enhance visitor transportation options. The report includes the following sections:

1. Introduction: Explains the purpose of the study and the park's transportation goals.
2. Overview and Setting: Provides information on the park's location and planning context.
3. Existing Conditions: Documents the existing conditions and related planning efforts related to transportation near the park.
4. Recommendations: Presents a range of potential actions to improve transportation conditions at the park.
5. Conclusion: Presents a summary of the strategies that best meet the park's transportation goals and a list of potential next steps.

## *Study Purpose*

The purpose of the Fort Stanwix Transportation Study is to evaluate the current transportation conditions at the park and the surrounding area and evaluate the feasibility of a range of potential infrastructure, operations, or traveler information actions to improve transportation conditions. These may include enhanced wayfinding, better marking management, improved regional connectivity, and other potential infrastructure or operational changes. The purpose of this study is to guide the park in determining the best options for managing transportation while meeting park goals and visitor needs in the area.

## Overview and Setting

### *Park Foundation Statement*

As defined by the park's Foundation Document, the purpose of Fort Stanwix National Monument is to “preserve the location, resources, and stories associated with the military, political, and cultural events that occurred at and around the site of Fort Stanwix and to provide opportunities for visitor understanding, appreciation, and stewardship.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> National Park Service, Foundation Document: Fort Stanwix National Monument (2016), [https://www.nps.gov/fost/upload/FOST\\_Foundation-Doc.pdf](https://www.nps.gov/fost/upload/FOST_Foundation-Doc.pdf)

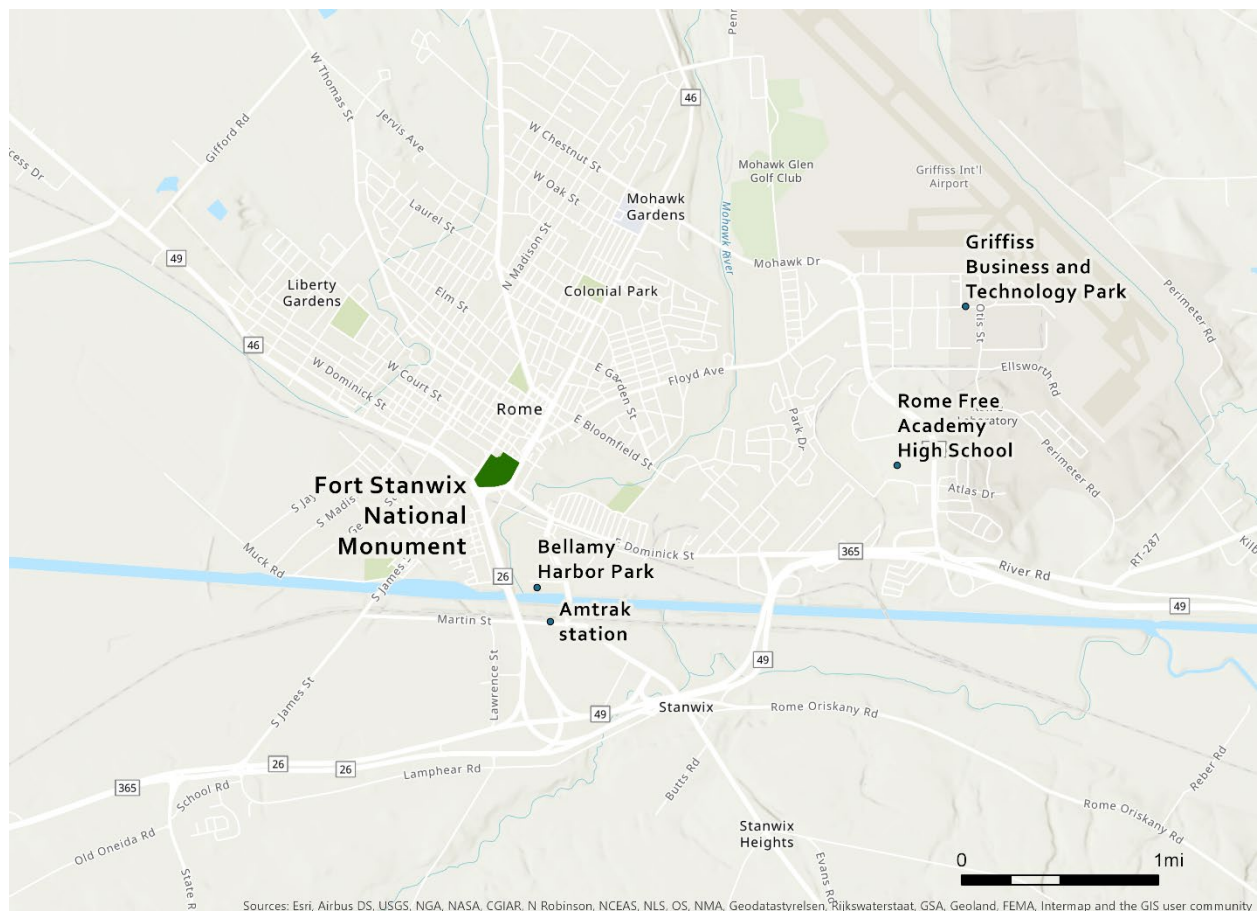
## Location

FOST occupies 16 acres in downtown Rome, New York (population 32,204) within Oneida County (population 228,671)<sup>2</sup>. The park is located within a day's drive of a number of major U.S. and Canadian cities, including New York City, Montreal, Toronto, and Boston. Syracuse, the nearest large city, is 35 miles away.

The park is bordered by main thoroughfares surrounded by a mixture of commercial, residential, light industrial, and institutional land uses (Figure 1). The site of the fort, but not the reconstructed structure, is listed in the National Register of Historic Places and is recognized as a National Historic Landmark for its role in the American Revolution. The site includes the archeological remains of Fort Stanwix, the reinforced reconstruction of the site completed in 1976, the Willett Center built in 2005, and a half mile of trails. Many modes connect to the park including canals, rail line, trails and roads. Most visitors travel by automobile and take advantage of the free street and garage parking around the park. Two bus pullouts serve the park. Alternative transportation options are becoming increasingly popular as local and regional trail systems become more connected and prevalent.

**Figure 1: Fort Stanwix within the City of Rome**

Source: Volpe Center, Esri



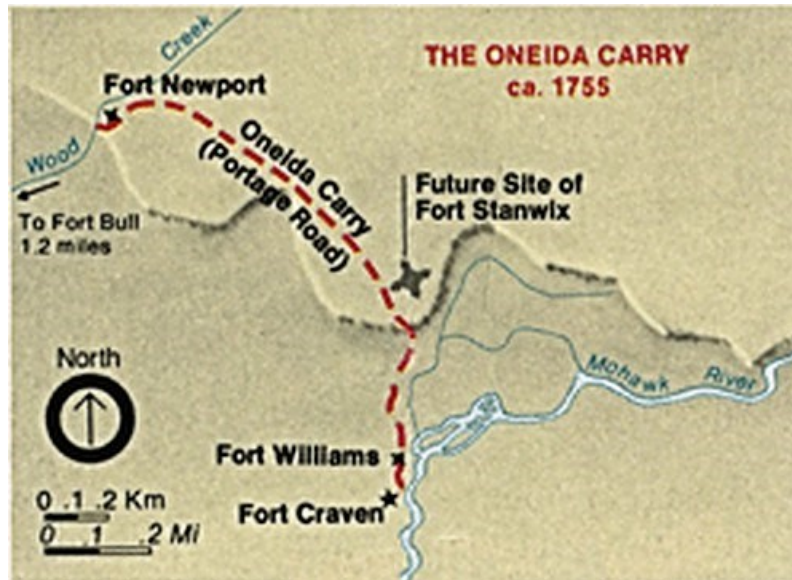
<sup>2</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, QuickFacts: Oneida County, New York; Rome city, New York (2019), <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/oneidacountynewyork,romecitynewyork/PST045219>

## History

The British built Fort Stanwix in 1758 during the French and Indian War to protect the “Oneida Carrying Place,” a portage that was a vital link in water transportation between the Atlantic Ocean and Great Lakes (Figure 2). After being abandoned by the British, the Continental Army rebuilt the fort in 1776. In 1781, a fire destroyed part of the fort and it was decommissioned. As the city of Rome began to develop, evidence of the fort began to disappear and was leveled by 1830.

**Figure 2: The Oneida Carry**

Source: NPS



The site was established as a national monument in 1935, but fort reconstruction did not begin until 1974, when the NPS completed an archeological study. Five square blocks of downtown Rome were demolished to clear the site for the reconstruction. The reconstructed fort opened to the public in 1976. The site of the fort, not including the reconstructed structure, is listed in the National Register of Historic Places and is a National Historic Landmark, significant for the events that transpired there and its role in the American Revolution.

## Area Attractions

### Bellamy Harbor Park

Situated on the banks of the Erie Canal less than a mile south of downtown Rome, Bellamy Harbor Park (Figure 3) serves both local residents and travelers along the Canal. The park consists of two sections: Bellamy Park West is owned by the NYS Canal Corporation and managed by the City of Rome under a use, occupancy, and maintenance agreement; Bellamy Park East is owned and operated by the City of Rome. A component of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, the park features a large boat dock, picnic area, concrete promenade, pedestrian paths, and a pedestrian bridge over the Mohawk River. The Rome Navigation Center, an information and wayfinding center for Canalway visitors, was built in 2017, along with updated facilities and signage and newly installed green infrastructure that supports innovative stormwater management.



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**Figures 3 and 4: Bellamy Harbor Park (left) and Oriskany Battlefield State Historic Site (right)**

Source: Volpe Center



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**Oriskany Battlefield State Historic Site**

Oriskany Battlefield State Historic Site (Figure 4) is located a little over five miles southeast of FOST. The NPS and the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation work cooperatively to support and provide programming of the site during the summer months. The Battle of Oriskany played an important role in the siege of Fort Stanwix, and this cooperative agreement allows the NPS to provide programming and services that better connect the two sites. Currently there is no signed vehicle, bicycle, or pedestrian route that connects the two sites, but FOST offers organized bike tours to the Battlefield.

**Steuben Memorial State Historic Site**

Similar to Oriskany Battlefield, the NPS and the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation work cooperatively to provide support and programming at the Baron von Steuben Memorial State Historic Site. Located approximately eighteen miles northeast of Rome in Remsen, New York, the memorial honors Baron von Steuben for his Revolutionary War contributions. The site includes a re-constructed log cabin, a sacred grove, and a large monument marking Steuben's grave. There is currently no signed vehicle, bicycle, or pedestrian connection between the two sites.

**Fort Bull/Wood Creek State Historic Site**

Fort Bull/Wood Creek State Historic Site is located on the edge of Rome, and marks the site of the former Fort Bull at the Oneida Carry. A small monument marks the spot where the fort was burned to the ground in 1756 in the Battle of Fort Bull. Public access to the site must be arranged through the Rome Historical Society, and walking tours are offered throughout the year. The site is located a short distance off the Erie Canalway Trail, providing bicycle and pedestrian access, but requires passing through private property to be reached.

**Delta Lake State Park**

Delta Lake State Park is located approximately 7 miles north of FOST, on a peninsula extending into Delta Reservoir. The park draws visitors year-round from outside the local area, and features picnic areas, hiking and nature trails, camping, and pavilions and tents for hosting events.

**Pixley Falls State Park**

Pixley Falls State Park is a picturesque park featuring a 50-foot waterfall, located approximately 18 miles north of FOST. The park features a nature trail and pavilion, and is part of the Black River Environmental

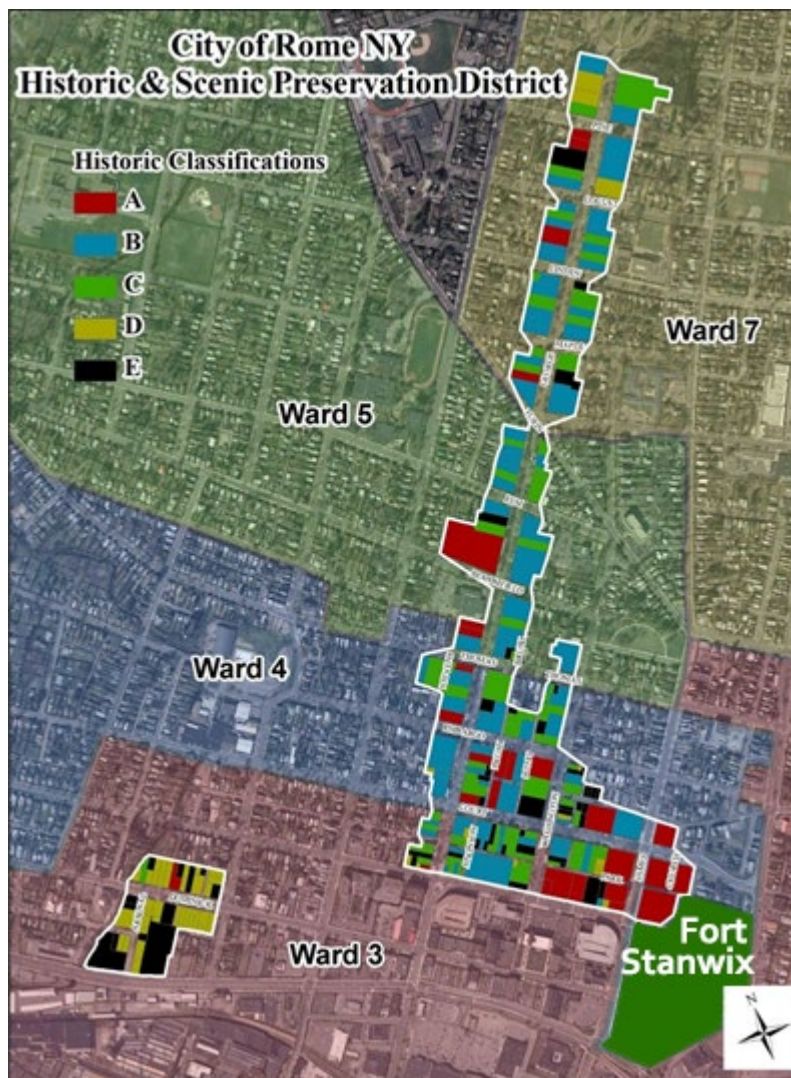
Improvement Association trail system. The trail is popular for horseback riding, mountain biking, and hiking, and is groomed for Nordic skiing during the winter.

### City of Rome Historic & Scenic Preservation District

The City of Rome Historic District ensures the protection, enhancement, and perpetuation of a historic district in the city in order to promote the economic, cultural, educational, and general welfare of the public and its heritage. The city maintains an inventory of historic district properties, including a number of buildings directly adjacent to the park deemed “highly significant, good condition, minimal alteration” (Classification A in Figure 5).

**Figure 5: City of Rome, New York Historic & Scenic Preservation District**

Source: City of Rome, Volpe Center



### Heritage Corridors and Scenic Byways

Rome is part of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor. The 388-mile canal connects the Hudson River with Lake Erie, and the corridor includes the off-road Erie Canalway Trail, which will be 365 miles in length upon completion. The Heritage Corridor’s Preservation and Management Plan includes

management goals, such as the protection of the corridor’s historic sense of place and natural resources, provision of recreation opportunities, promotion of economic growth and heritage development, and the attraction of American and international visitors.

Three NYS Scenic Byways are connected to the Rome area. These byways include the Black River Trail that connects Rome to Ogdensburg, the Central Adirondack Trail that connects Rome to Glen Falls, and the Revolutionary Trail that connects Albany to Lake Ontario. The Scenic Byways Program produces road maps listing scenic attractions and lodging recommendations for drivers using the scenic routes. A small sign for the start of the Central Adirondack Trail is located on the FOST boundary along Black River Boulevard amongst a number of other signs.

## Existing Conditions

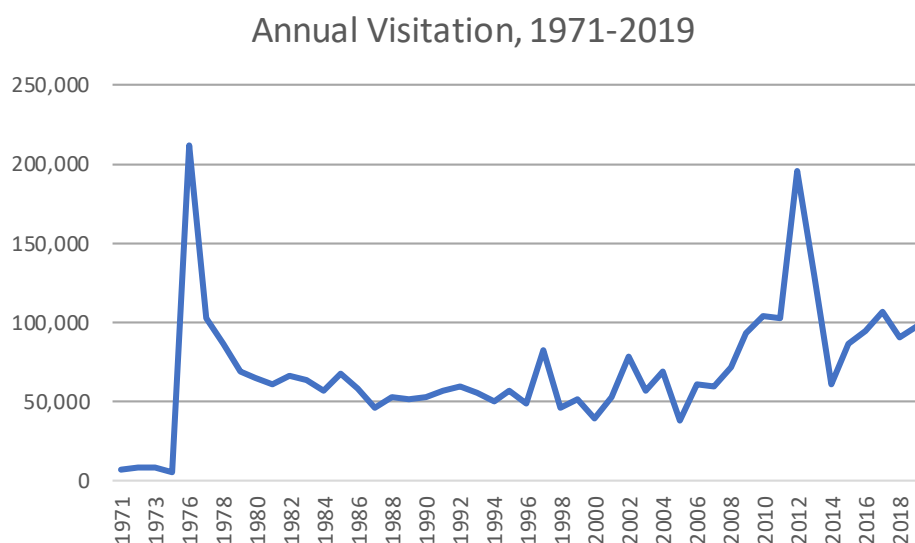
Since the completion of the 2006 Transportation Summary Report<sup>3</sup> and the subsequent 2010 Alternative Transportation Study, a number of factors have changed, including new reports, projects, and trends that are transforming transportation and park access. The purpose of this section is to inventory and identify existing conditions that may inform the future of transportation at FOST and the surrounding area.

### *Use and Visitation*

Visitation has steadily increased since the park opened, with spikes surrounding the 1976 United States Bicentennial and a 2012 increase (Figure 6). Over the last decade, visitation has averaged just over 100,000 visitors annually, with a large peak during the summer months as seen in Figure 7.

**Figure 6: Annual Visitation, 1971-2019**

Source: NPS, Volpe Center



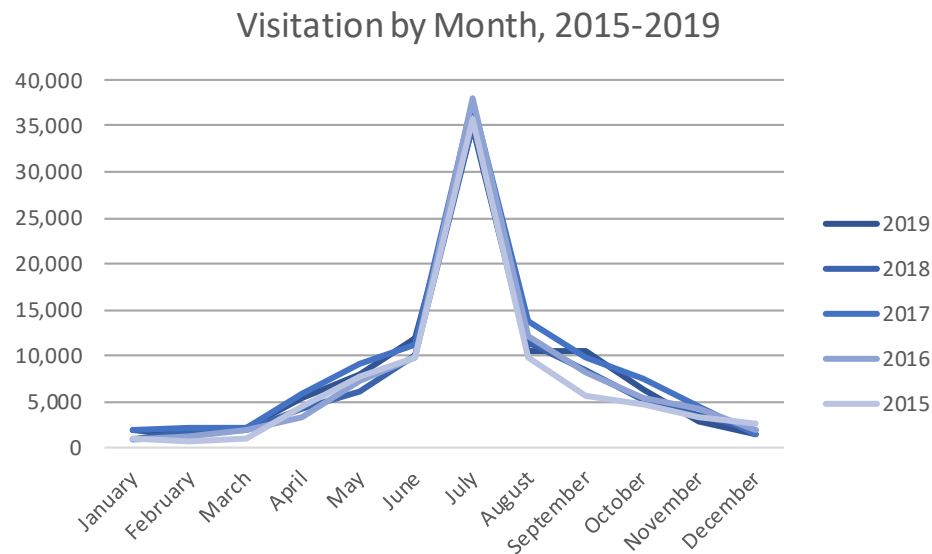
<sup>3</sup> National Park Service and U.S. Department of Transportation, Fort Stanwix National Monument: Transportation Summary Report (2006), <https://rosap.nsl.bts.gov/view/dot/8947>



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**Figure 7: Visitation by Month, 2015-2019**

Source: NPS, Volpe Center



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FOST is open year-round except for New Year's Day, Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas Day, and has two main buildings for visitors. The Willett Center is the park's main visitor center. It is located on the southwest portion of the park property and open from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM daily during the summer season and Tuesday-Saturday during the winter months. The reconstructed fort itself is generally open from 9:30 AM to 4:30 PM during the summer, and closed during inclement weather in the winter. An overview program is offered at 10:00 AM and 2:00 PM daily, and a number of additional talks and special programs are offered throughout the year.

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**Figure 8: A School Group Participates in Park Programming**

Source: Volpe Center





The park has increased the number of events throughout the year, offering programming related to military reenactments, historical weaponry, Native American culture, and colonial era life. During the summer months, the park frequently hosts family-oriented educational events that are free to the public (Figure 8). Many of these events engage the local community, including bicycle tours, escape room challenges, and movie nights. On the Fourth of July, the park presents public readings of the Declaration of Independence and formal weapon salutes. The park's biggest event of the year is the Honor America Days Celebration in late July, which features a parade and symphony concert. On August 6, the park puts on events related to the 1777 British Siege, including participating in a ceremony to commemorate the Battle of Oriskany. On August 25, the park hosts Founder's Day, which includes programs and junior ranger activities. In the fall and winter, the park hosts candlelight tours and other holiday programming.

## *Existing Transportation Conditions*

### **Traffic, circulation, and wayfinding**

The vast majority of visitors to FOST arrive by personal vehicle, and most arrive on the NYS Thruway (I-90). Few signs exist to guide drivers between I-90 and downtown Rome, and depending on which exit visitors take, signage may not be available to help direct them to FOST. Once visitors enter downtown Rome, several wayfinding signs are situated along James Street and Black River Boulevard, but directions to parking or pull out areas are few. Visitors may have to circle around or double back to ultimately find an appropriate parking space.

Existing signs are small and often clustered with several attractions on one pole, and frequently attempt to communicate too much information (Figure 9). The City of Rome is currently implementing its 2006 Wayfinding Plan, including piloting new directional signage at key locations throughout the city. Despite difficulties that a visitor might have finding their way to FOST or downtown Rome, NPS signage for the park itself is easily visible when passing by the site on any of the major travel corridors.

**Figure 9: Examples of Rome Wayfinding Signage**

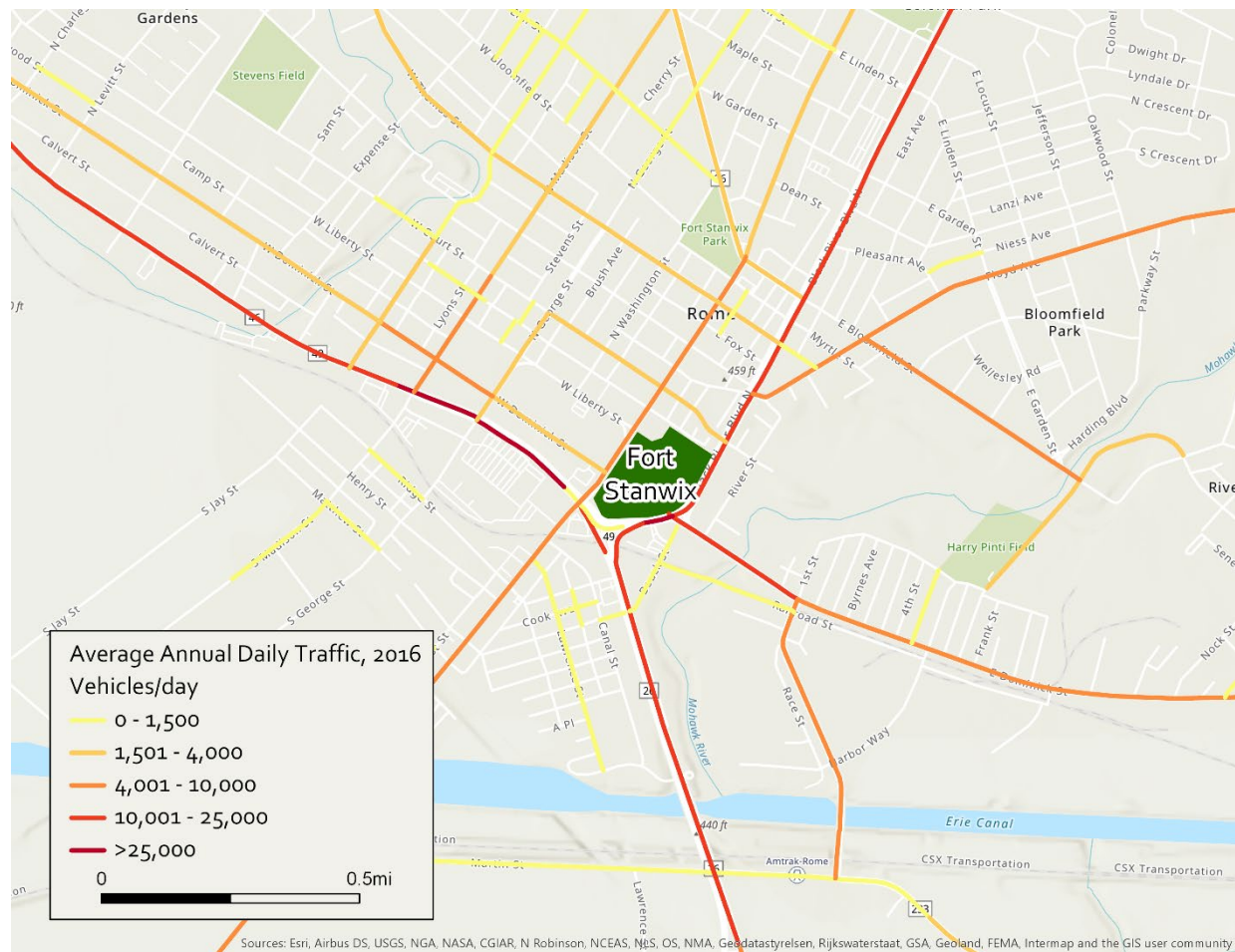
Source: Volpe Center



Traffic levels throughout the area have increased recently, reaching over 25,000 vehicles per day on many of the streets surrounding the park. Figure 10 shows annual average daily traffic (AADT), based on counts conducted between August 29 and September 2, 2016. Two of the arterials that border FOST are heavily traveled: Erie Boulevard and Black River Boulevard. The “Spaghetti Junction” at the convergence of these two arterials is confusing for drivers and difficult for pedestrians and bicyclists to cross. Although the city has had discussions with NYS Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) officials about addressing this intersection, there has not been much progress over the last decade.

**Figure 10: AADT near Fort Stanwix, 2016**

Source: NYSDOT, Esri, Volpe Center



The park’s website provides driving directions from the west, east, northeast, and northwest, though the directions are complicated by both the physical structure of the road network and the changing route numbers and road names. The website also includes information on vehicle parking and bus parking and unloading.

## Parking

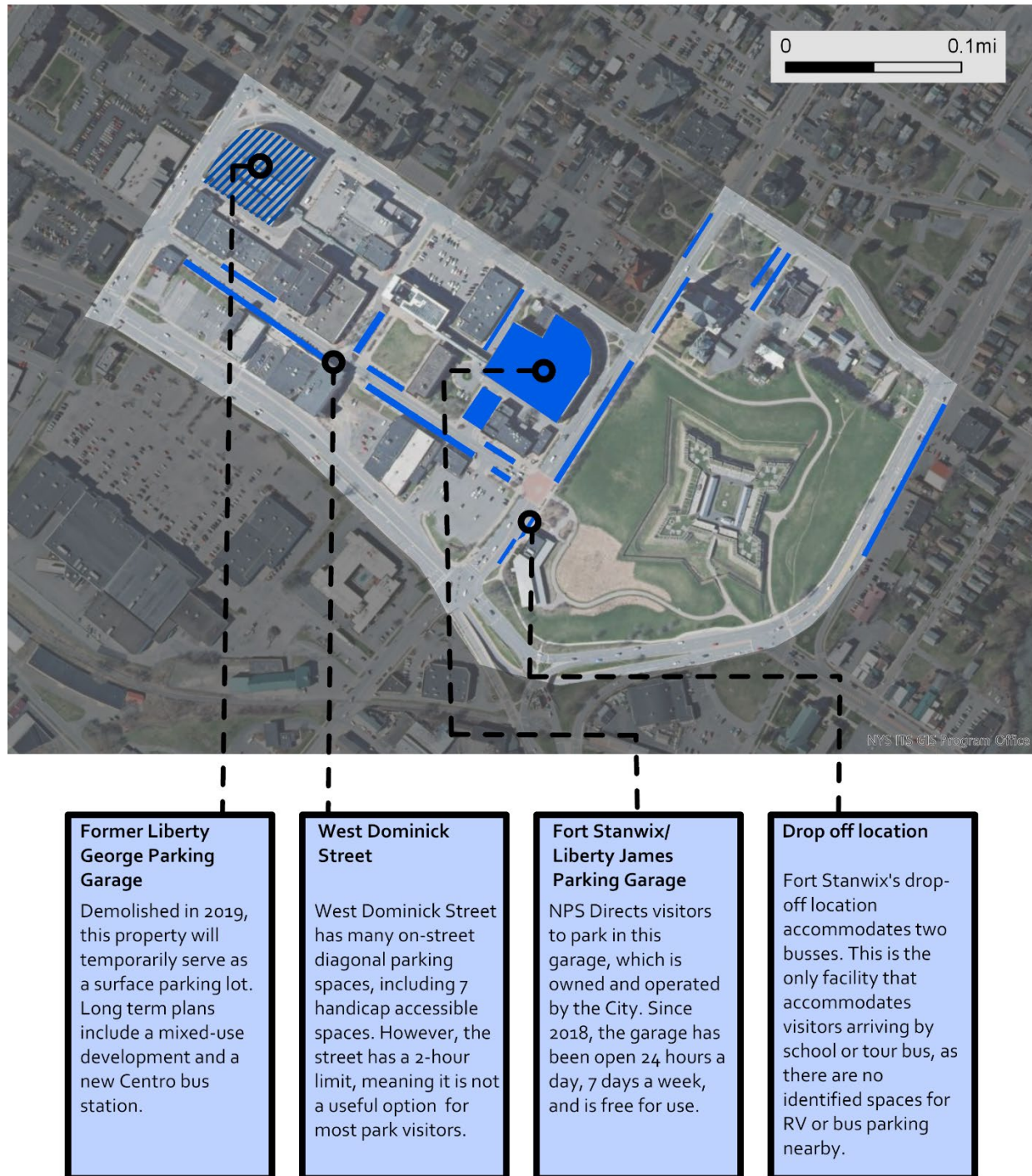
FOST does not own a public parking facility, nor does it have designated spaces for visitors in nearby lots. Figure 11 shows visitor parking options available near the park. The NPS directs visitors to the Fort Stanwix Parking Garage, which is owned and operated by the City (Figure 12). Historically, the garage was closed in the evening and on the weekends. Since 2018, the garage has been open 24 hours a day for seven



days a week and is free for use, but is not well utilized by visitors despite its convenient proximity to the park.

**Figure 11: Parking Near Fort Stanwix**

Source: Google Maps, NYSDOT, Volpe Center



**Figure 12: Fort Stanwix Parking Garage**

Source: Volpe Center



In a January 2019 parking analysis conducted by the city, only 20 percent of the 545 parking garage spots were full during the weekday, and 3 percent on the weekend.<sup>4</sup> This trend is reflective of overall parking conditions in downtown: occupancy data shows that parking is underutilized, both on- and off-street, during morning (10:00 AM), midday (1:00 PM), afternoon (4:00 PM), and evening (7:00 PM) time periods. However, many residents have noted in stakeholder engagement processes that parking can be challenging, especially when events are taking place downtown or there are major productions at the Capitol Theatre. This suggests that periods of higher utilization caused by downtown events—possibly including programming during peak season at FOST—are not reflected in the parking studies. It also highlights the importance of residents' perceptions of limited parking, which affects their parking and transportation decisions far more than actual utilization rates, and suggests a need to better communicate the availability of parking in downtown.<sup>5</sup> As part of the city's ongoing Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI), the city plans to make major aesthetic and operation improvements to the garage in an effort to increase utilization.

Another nearby parking garage, Liberty George, was demolished in June 2019 and has been partially restored to a public surface parking lot. The City anticipates releasing a request for expressions of interest for redevelopment of the site in 2020.

In addition to the parking garage, several on-street parking spaces are located on North James Street a short walking distance to the park entrance and visitor center, and the Rome Historical Society building. There is also street parking along West Dominick Street, but the two-hour time limit along that street compromises the amount of time a visitor can spend visiting the park.

A lack of adequate signage makes it unclear as to where visitors should park once they have reached FOST. While one sign on northbound Erie Boulevard directs visitors to turn right onto North James Street to park, no additional sign shows visitors that they can park in the parking garage. Visitors may have to circle around or double back to ultimately find an appropriate parking space.

A drop off location, which can accommodate two buses, is located along North James Street near the park entrance. Another smaller drop-off is located on the Southeast side of the park along Black River Boulevard, but is not often used due to its distance from the visitor center. The park tries to manage the

<sup>4</sup> City of Rome, Downtown Rome Supplemental Parking Analysis, Off-Street – January 2019 (2019)

<sup>5</sup> City of Rome and New York State, Downtown Revitalization Initiative Strategic Investment Plan (2018), [https://www.ny.gov/sites/ny.gov/files/atoms/files/Rome\\_DRI\\_Plan.pdf](https://www.ny.gov/sites/ny.gov/files/atoms/files/Rome_DRI_Plan.pdf)

arrival of large groups so that the immediate drop off location is available; however, it can become congested quickly during the busy season. Previously, the Rome Savings Bank parking lot across the street on North James Street was available for large vehicle parking, but the construction of a new business removed these spots. The closest remaining identified parking for RVs and buses is located at Bellamy Harbor Park East, located about a 15-minute walk from FOST.

South of the park and along Black River Boulevard, there are several private parking lots; however, pedestrians must cross several busy lanes of traffic to reach the park entrance. Finally, there are a number of public parking lots between Erie Boulevard and West Dominick Street. The lots vary in size, occupancy rate, access, and connectivity to the park and other destinations. None of these lots provides the same or better access than that of the parking garage.

The closest handicap-accessible parking spaces are located on W Dominick Street. Five on street, diagonal spaces are located between N James St and N Washington St, and two additional spaces are in a public lot off W Dominick St. There are ten marked accessible spaces in the Fort Stanwix Garage, spread over the second and third floors.

EVs are a growing segment of vehicle ownership. Instead of gas stations, EVs rely on the availability of public and private charging stations where they park for recharging. Those travelling long distances in EVs are especially reliant on public charging stations, since they cannot charge overnight at their residence. As of December 2019, there were 378 EVs registered in Oneida County (103 battery EVs and 275 plug-in hybrid EVs/extended-range EVs).<sup>6</sup> There are currently 47,000 registered EVs across New York, and the State's goal is to increase this to two million by 2030. To serve this growing segment, the City of Rome has installed several public charging stations, including four stations in the Fort Stanwix Garage on the second level, and two units at the City Hall parking lot.

### **Bus Service**

Public transportation in Rome is operated by Centro of Oneida, part of the Central New York Regional Transportation Authority. Centro operates fixed route buses and includes demand response service within the city. Centro's six Rome routes provide access to FOST, the Amtrak train station, Griffiss Business and Technology Park, shopping, and the hospital (Figure 13). Each route travels within a block of the park. There is a bus stop by the Rome Savings Bank for four routes, and a major transfer site at 200 West Liberty Street is three blocks northwest of the park.

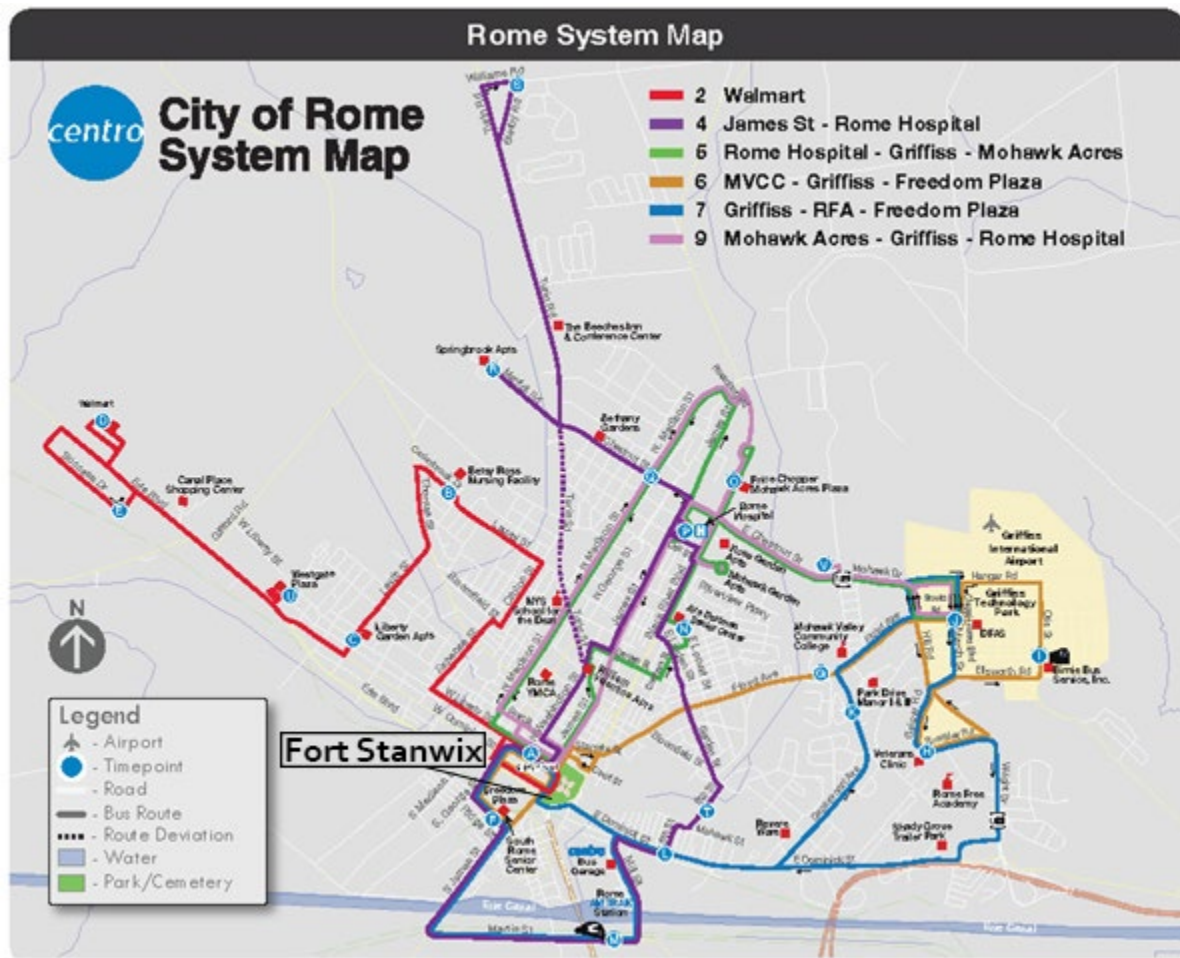
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<sup>6</sup> Atlas Public Policy, EValueateNY (2019), <https://atlaspolicy.com/rand/evaluateny/>



**Figure 13: Centro City of Rome System Map**

Source: Central New York Regional Transportation Authority



Due to the demolition of the Liberty George Parking Garage, the Centro hub has been moved to a new transfer station located at the corner of West Liberty and North Washington Street. The buses run weekdays, with a limited schedule on Saturdays, and do not operate on Sundays and select holidays. In addition to the main routes, demand response service is provided to passengers with disabilities.

Eight Centro bus stops serving all six Rome routes are located within a half mile of FOST, with three within a five-minute walk (Table 1)<sup>7</sup>. Despite the close proximity to the park, NPS staff are presently unaware of any visitors arriving to the site via bus.

<sup>7</sup>The stop located at E Dominick St & River St did not receive any ridership during the time period measured.

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**Table 1: Centro Bus Ridership for Stops Closest to FOST, October 1- November 4, 2018**

Source: Centro, Volpe Center

Stop ID	Stop Name	Distance from fort (on foot)	Boardings Per Day	Alightings Per Day	Stop Ranking (out of all Rome stops)
14122	Dominick St & River St	.1 mi (4 min)	1.3	0.5	50
14390	N James St & Dominick St	.2 mi (5 min)	18.9	4.2	3
14229	James St & Erie Blvd	.2 mi (5 min)	0.1	0	74 (tie)
14395	E Court St & Steuben St	.3 mi (7 min)	0	0.2	75 (tie)
14057	N James St & E Park St	.4 mi (8 min)	10.0	1.8	7
14360	N James St & W Park St	.4 mi (8 min)	0.1	0	74 (tie)
14055	Liberty St & Washington St	.5 mi (9 min)	150.8	130.8	1

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## Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities

### *Urban Streets*

Due to FOST's central location in downtown Rome, sidewalks and pathways can be found both in and around the park, and entrances are well-marked with recognizable NPS signage. The park's location affords fairly safe and direct access from the city-designated development corridors (West Dominick Street, North James Street, and East Dominick Street), but access from the south is more difficult, and bicyclists often walk their bikes or ride on the sidewalk to avoid biking on streets (Figure 14). As mentioned previously, the complex Spaghetti Junction intersection at Erie and Black River Boulevards presents a safety hazard and a barrier to accessing the park.

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**Figure 14: Bicyclists Riding on Sidewalk to Avoid Spaghetti Junction**

Source: Volpe Center



Visitors parking in the Fort Stanwix Parking Garage or arriving from the west are able to cross at the intersection of North James and West Dominick Street, to access the Willett Visitor Center and park entrance. The intersection consists of textured and colored pavement in the shape of the star fort as well as pedestrian crossing caution signs in the middle of the road (Figure 15). This represents a clear crossing location for pedestrians.

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**Figure 15: North James and West Dominick Streets Pedestrian Crosswalk by Park Entrance**

Source: Volpe Center



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Pedestrian access and safety improvements in and around FOST are necessary to improve visitor safety and circulation, as well as to enhance the overall experience of visiting the park and surrounding areas of downtown Rome. By improving pedestrian-oriented infrastructure, particularly at major intersections, park entrances, and along sidewalks and pathways, the park will improve the experience of its visitors and promote safe pedestrian access to and from adjacent streets and neighborhoods. The city owns the sidewalks along North James Street that connects the park entrance to downtown Rome. In recent years, the city has installed new lighting and light post banners to help identify the neighborhood.

#### *Multi-use trails*

A number of multi-use trails exist within Rome and in the surrounding region (Figure 16). These include the Erie Canalway Trail, the Mohawk River Trail, the Griffiss International Sculpture Garden and Trail, and multiple on-road NYS Bike Routes.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Herkimer-Oneida Counties Transportation Study, Bicycle & Pedestrian Trail Guide 2016: Herkimer & Oneida Counties (2016), <https://ocgov.net/oneida/sites/default/files/hoctsmo/Bicycle/BikeAtlas2016Final.pdf>



**Figure 16: Rome Multi-Use Trails**

Source: HOCTS, Volpe Center



As previously mentioned, Rome is part of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor. The 388-mile Erie Canal connects the Hudson River with Lake Erie, and the corridor includes the off-road Erie Canalway Trail (shown above in orange), which will be 365 miles in length upon completion. The paved and crushed stone trail runs fourteen miles southeast from Rome to Utica, and thirty-six miles southwest to Dewitt. Walking, bicycling, horseback riding, snowmobiling, and cross country skiing are the most common activities along the trail.

The majority of the Erie Canalway Trail consists of off-road multi-use paths. However, while the trail has been completed from both the east and west sides of town, central Rome is one of the few gaps remaining where the trail is on-road. Between 2014 and 2016, two new off-road segments were constructed to fill in 2.5 miles of this gap. One segment connects the existing trailhead in the Town of Stanwix to South James Street in Rome, and the second connects the Erie Canal Village to Bellamy Harbor Park, providing a connection to downtown and FOST via the Mohawk River Trail. The remaining on-road segment is on West Erie Boulevard immediately east of the park, and signs instruct trail users to navigate city streets to

connect to the next portion of the trail. Due to the proximity of the Spaghetti Junction, many trail users find the on-street section through Rome less safe to navigate.

The Mohawk River Trail<sup>9</sup> (Figure 17 and in pink in Figure 16) is a multi-use trail that connects Bellamy Harbor Park to historical sites, commercial districts, public services, local schools, city parks, the Griffiss Business and Technology Park, and residential neighborhoods north of Rome's waterfront. The trail connects multiple greenways throughout the city, and includes an on-road section that curves around FOST along Black River Boulevard and Brook Street, before becoming an off-road route that heads northeast along the Mohawk River. The trail provides a direct bicycle and pedestrian connection to FOST from both Bellamy Harbor Park and destinations farther north.

**Figure 17: The Mohawk River Trail through Rome**

Source: City of Rome



<sup>9</sup> City of Rome, The Mohawk River Trail (2015), <https://romenewyork.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Mohawk-River-Trail.pdf>

The trail at the Griffiss International Sculpture Garden is located within the 3,500 acre Griffiss Business and Technology Park in Northeast Rome near the Griffiss International Airport. The mile-long nature trail features an outdoor sculpture garden, and caters to pedestrians and cyclists in the nearby area.

FOST is also linked to several nearby NYS Bike Routes through multiuse trails and connecting routes. These routes are shared roadways and typically utilize road shoulders as bicycling infrastructure. Speed limits are typically 55 mph, and are therefore intended for experienced adult cyclists. NYS Bike Route 5 is a major route on Rome Oriskany Road/NY-69 that passes south of the Erie Canal and downtown Rome. It connects to FOST via the Erie Canalway and Mohawk River Trails. NYS Bike Route 365 is located on East Dominick Street to the east of FOST and downtown. The official NYS Bike Route designation terminates approximately one mile east of the park, however, the rest of East Dominick Street leading to the park and downtown is designated as a Connecting Roadway.

### *Signage and Wayfinding*

Currently, signage is not oriented toward pedestrians and bicyclists arriving to the park from the multi-use trails or downtown Rome. There is no signage at Bellamy Harbor highlighting the vicinity to the park. Once visitors are near the park, the approach to the grounds of FOST is clear from James Street and from Black River Boulevard. Two large NPS signs adjacent to the sidewalks direct visitors to the Willett Center and park, and two bicycle racks – one just outside of the Willett Center and the other just outside the fort itself – are available to visitors. A bicycle rack is also available at Oriskany Battlefield.

### **Amtrak Rail Service**

The Rome Amtrak station is about a mile south of FOST on Martin Street (Figure 18). Two Centrobus routes connect the Amtrak station to downtown Rome, with service approximately every 45 minutes during the week. 6,516 passengers utilized the Rome station during 2018, with an average trip length of 195 miles. 57.4 percent of riders traveled over 200 miles to/from the station, with New York City, Rochester, and Buffalo being the top city pairs by ridership.<sup>10</sup>

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**Figure 18: Rome Train Station**

Source: Volpe Center



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<sup>10</sup> Rail Passengers Association, Amtrak Service in Rome, NY (2019), <https://www.railpassengers.org/site/assets/files/2411/rom.pdf>



The station is on the Empire Service line between New York City and Niagara Falls, and the Maple Leaf line between New York City and Toronto. The Maple Leaf line offers a Trails and Rails program between Albany-Rensselaer and Syracuse in partnership with the Erie Canal Way National Heritage Area and the park. The program covers the history of the Mohawk Valley, including the significance of the Canal and FOST.<sup>11</sup> The program is made possible with additional guidance from the Mohawk Valley Heritage Corridor, the NYS Canal Corporation, and NYSDOT. One-way fares from Albany to Rome are approximately \$29. One-way fares from Penn Station in New York City to Rome are generally \$66. Three passenger trains depart daily from Rome to New York City. Previous efforts have been made to develop a high-speed rail line across the state, but the project is currently stalled in environmental review.

## Aviation

Griffiss International Airport, owned by the Oneida County, is a user-fee airport with fixed-base operations provided by a private company. The airport is located in the northeast part of the city at the former Griffiss Air Force Base, which closed in 1995.

## Alternative Transportation

### *Bikeshare*

The Rome, NY bikeshare system, run through a partnership between Zagster and Positively Rome, opened in August 2016 and lasted for two seasons (Figure 19). Funding for the program came from The Outdoor Foundation, Griffiss Park Landowner Association, and The Community Foundation of Herkimer & Oneida Counties.

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**Figure 19: Zagster Bike Share Station Outside Willett Center**

Source: City of Rome



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The system consisted of 16 bikes (including one trike and one two-person side-by-side bike), spread out over three stations: FOST, Bellamy Harbor Park, and Griffiss International Sculpture Garden. Rides could be purchased through the free Zagster app, and cost \$1 for the first hour (free for annual pass-holders), and \$3 per hour after that. Riders entered each bike's unique number into the app to obtain a single-use

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<sup>11</sup> Amtrak, Maple Leaf (2020), <https://www.amtrak.com/maple-leaf-train>

code, or obtained a code via text message to open the lockbox on the back of the bike. A key tethered to the lockbox allowed each bike to be locked and unlocked throughout the ride, to allow for rider flexibility.

The bikeshare program was generally successful: the three-rack system totaled over 900 rides in its first season of operation.<sup>12</sup> However, ridership was not high enough for it to be sustainable (around 20 users monthly throughout summer 2018), and Zagster did not continue the program for a third season.

### *Water Transportation*

Though uncommon, visitors to Rome occasionally arrive via boat on the Erie Canal, one of Rome's most unique amenities. First completed in 1825, the canal is now used primarily by recreational boaters. The 524-mile NYS Canalway Water Trail is an initiative to establish a coordinated "trail" with boat launches and campsites along the NYS Canal System, encouraging more types of motorized and non-motorized boaters to explore this historic resource. Though limited freight transport still occurs on the canal, demand for outdoor recreational access to the canal has increased in the past decade. Park staff report that very few visitors to FOST arrive by boat, but those that do are met with difficulty docking and moving from the harbor north into town, due to limited pedestrian access.

### *Rideshare/Transportation Network Companies*

Ridesharing began in Rome with the introduction of TNCs Uber and Lyft in June 2017.<sup>13</sup> Due to a lack of bus, bikeshare, and other transportation options in certain parts of Rome, TNCs are often the only transportation option for visitors without a personal vehicle. Taking advantage of rideshare can also help solve some of the last-mile challenges in areas such as the waterfront and the train station, which are difficult to get to from downtown.

## *Related Planning Efforts*

### **Rome Downtown Revitalization Initiative**

In 2017, the City of Rome was selected to receive a \$10 million grant through NYS's DRI. The Rome DRI includes several projects in downtown Rome in close proximity to FOST.

Under the Rome DRI, the Liberty George Garage has been demolished and temporarily replaced by a surface parking lot. Long-term plans for the property include a mixed-use development with several levels of garage parking, a new Centro bus station, and commercial and residential space.

The Liberty James/Fort Stanwix Garage is also slated for renovations under the DRI. The upgrades will include rehabilitating the elevated walkway to City Hall and the Rome Mall Apartments, replacing storefronts, updating wayfinding, lighting, elevators, and stairwells, repairing concrete decks, ramps, and drainage systems, improving security camera monitoring, installing automated ticketing and card access system, and refinishing the façade to tie it into the context of the adjacent FOST, Old City Hall, Zion Church, and St. Peters Church.

The city also identified a downtown transportation center as an immediate need, and allocated DRI<sup>14</sup> funds to construct an interior bus shelter featuring climate controlled seating (Figure 20). The anticipated completion date for the transfer station is July 2020.

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<sup>12</sup> The Urban Phoenix, Numbers Are In: Upstate Bike Share Rolls to Successful First Year (2017), [https://theurbanphoenix.com/2017/01/06/bike\\_share\\_success/](https://theurbanphoenix.com/2017/01/06/bike_share_success/)

<sup>13</sup> Rome Sentinel, Uber, Lyft Begin Today (2017), <https://romesentinel.com/stories/uber-lyft-begin-today.18902>

<sup>14</sup> City of Rome and NYS, Downtown Revitalization Initiative Strategic Investment Plan (2018)

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**Figure 20: Downtown Centro Transportation Center**

Source: City of Rome



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**Downtown Wayfinding Strategy**

With funding through the NYS Brownfield Opportunity Area Program, the City of Rome developed a 2017 Downtown and Waterfront Wayfinding Strategy and Design Plan, which identified the implementation of a cohesive vehicular and pedestrian wayfinding system as a key component of revitalizing Downtown Rome and the waterfront<sup>15</sup>.

The city prioritized implementation of the downtown wayfinding signage revitalization project, and has proposed new signage that is compliant with the Manual on Uniform Traffic Downtown Control Devices for Streets and Highway (Figure 21). The signs have been delivered, and installation in the downtown area is expected to begin in spring 2020.

The City expects that an effective wayfinding system, coupled with the other DRI initiatives, will entice residents and visitors to explore using all modes of transportation. An appropriately designed system with unified, consistent signage will function as the connective tissue of Downtown Rome, linking its major destinations, historic sites, trail systems, and other resources together in a cohesive wayfinding network. Well-placed signage will improve wayfinding at intersections and inform motorists where to travel to access the park and other key area attractions.

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<sup>15</sup> Rome Rises, Downtown and Waterfront: Wayfinding Strategy and Design Plan Draft Report (2018), [http://www.romerises.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Rome-Wayfinding\\_6.26.18pdf.pdf](http://www.romerises.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Rome-Wayfinding_6.26.18pdf.pdf)

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**Figure 21: City of Rome Employee with New Signage**

Source: City of Rome



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### Empire State Trail Initiative

As part of Governor Cuomo’s Empire State Trail initiative, which would form a continuous 750-mile trail from New York City to the Canadian border, the City of Rome and the NYS Canal Corporation are collaborating to fill the remaining gap in the Erie Canalway Trail in Rome. Two plans were proposed to accomplish this objective. The City of Rome Department of Public Works has started developing an off-road route, but funds are still needed to construct a footbridge across Mud Creek. The City will petition the Canal Corporation to designate this route as the official Canalway Trail once the bridge is complete. The second option would consist of a multi-use path along Erie Boulevard West from South Charles Street to West Dominick Street, approximately at the southwestern corner of FOST. It would include a safe crossing at the boulevard for cyclists and pedestrians. The City put out a request for proposals to construct this trail in 2017, however funding has not yet been allocated to complete the project.

There are also plans to extend the Mohawk River Trail from its current terminus at East Chestnut Street 4.5 miles north to the Delta Dam. Phase II (up to Wright Settlement Road) has construction dollars allocated, and is expected to be completed in 2021. Funding is still outstanding for the final Phase III.

### Transit Access Improvements

The Herkimer-Oneida Counties Transportation Study (HOCTS) Metropolitan Planning Organization began a study in 2019 to enhance bus transit options in Rome and the surrounding area. The System-Wide Analysis for Transit Based Transportation Connections aims to create transit linkages between the rural and urban areas of Oneida County, and includes an assessment of current transit services and demand for these services. <sup>16</sup> The goal of the project is to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of regional/rural and

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<sup>16</sup> Herkimer-Oneida Counties Transportation Study, Unified Planning Work Program 2020-2021 Draft (2020), <https://ocgov.net/oneida/sites/default/files/hoctsmo/UPWP/2020-2021/HOCTS%20UPWP%202020-21%20w%20Budget%20Tables.pdf>



urban transit services in the Metropolitan Planning Area to identify capital projects necessary to improve transit service in the two counties.

### *Site Visit Summary*

From July 18-19, 2019, the Volpe Center project team conducted a site visit to FOST and the City of Rome. During this visit, the team observed transportation conditions and conducted a series of meetings with project stakeholders, as summarized below.

The project team conducted the following site observations:

- FOST Willett Center and site grounds
- Bellamy Harbor Park, Griffiss Business & Technical Park, Griffiss International Airport, and Rome train station
- Downtown Rome
- Regional sites of historical and recreational interest

Information gathered during this site visit is used throughout the analysis of this report. During the site visit, the project team also identified available data sources that support this analysis.

### **Summary of Stakeholder Feedback**

During the June 18-19 site visit, the project team conducted a series of meetings with project stakeholders. The summary below reflects what the team heard from stakeholders throughout the site visit.

These comments were gathered from various meetings with project stakeholders, including:

- Meeting and site visit with FOST staff
- Stakeholder meeting with staff from HOCTS, NYSDOT, City of Rome, and Mohawk Valley Edge
- Meeting with City of Rome Mayor and Chief of Staff

### *Wayfinding and Safety*

- The park is surrounded by sidewalks and confusing, fast-moving roads including the Spaghetti Junction, which can make non-vehicular access difficult and potentially dangerous.
- There is a need for better signage and interpretation in Downtown Rome and the surrounding areas, including on the freeways entering the city, to assist visitors in locating the park.
- There is not an easy connection to the park for visitors arriving by train or via the water.

### *Coordination and Connectivity*

- Many potential solutions and recommendations for improving transportation to the park will require coordination with partners such as the City of Rome, Oneida County, and NYS.
- There is an opportunity to enhance regional tourism by better connecting the park to the surrounding network of historical sites and trails.
- The city's downtown revitalization, pedestrian safety, and wayfinding efforts may present an opportunity for partnership and shared goals.

### *Data and Information Needs*

- There is limited information about how visitors are arriving to the park, and there are not currently systems in place to gather this information.



### *Transportation Options and Challenges*

- Although the Zagster bike share system was not financially viable, there is a desire to bring an alternative transportation option to Downtown Rome, Griffiss Business and Technical Park, and other popular areas.
- Parking is the primary challenge facing the park, particularly for larger vehicles such as buses and RVs.
- The parking garage next to the park is now free and open 24/7. However, the structure is underutilized and only reaches capacity during special events.
- TNCs are necessary to address last-mile challenges in the area, particularly for visitors arriving without a personal vehicle.

### *Fort Stanwix Transportation Problem Statements*

The project team developed the following problem statements based on observations during the June 2019 site visit, communication with relevant stakeholders, and review of existing data. These problem statements are meant to articulate the primary issues affecting transportation access to FOST and will inform the discussion of recommendations for improving access in the next section.

#### **Connectivity**

- Sufficient infrastructure and signage is needed to provide a safe and clear approach to the park for all modes, while also providing connections to surrounding amenities.

#### **Safety**

- Pedestrian access and safety improvements in and around FOST are needed in order to improve visitor experience and promote safe pedestrian access to and from adjacent streets and neighborhoods.

#### **Wayfinding**

- Current signage is not oriented toward pedestrians and bicyclists arriving to the park from the multi-use trails or Downtown Rome. Clear and consistent signage is needed to support visitor wayfinding in the nearby area.

#### **Parking**

- Residents report perceptions of limited parking, despite measured low utilization rates. Parking availability can be confusing in the downtown area, and there are no identified spaces for RV or bus parking.
- There are no identified spaces for RV or bus parking and no designated TNC drop-off zone adjacent to the park.
- Given New York's aggressive EV targets, the number of visitors arriving in EVs will likely grow in the next ten years and the seven charging stations in proximity to the park may soon prove insufficient.

#### **Transit and Multi-Modal Transportation**

- There are a number of multi-modal trails in the vicinity of the park, but cyclists report needing to dismount and walk their bicycles in order to get to the park. Few visitors report arriving on foot or by bike.
- A number of bus routes run within a couple blocks of the park, but very few visitors report arriving this way.

- Visitors reported enjoying bikeshare as an option, but Rome’s previous bikeshare model was not financially sustainable.

## Recommendations

### *Signage and Wayfinding*

- **Consistent signage throughout the city, county, and region.** The City of Rome is rolling out new signage to help visitors navigate throughout the city and to/from areas of interest, including FOST. Additional signage is needed across the county and region that includes the park, particularly on I-90 at exits 31 through 33. FOST can work with NYSDOT and the NYS Tourism Board to implement this.

### *Parking*

- **Increased utilization of Fort Stanwix Parking Garage.** The garage is rarely at capacity, despite offering free, 24/7 parking to residents and visitors. An educational campaign about parking availability across the city, coupled with the planned structural and aesthetic improvements could increase utilization and free up additional street spaces for drop-off locations. Additional information on the park website could also encourage visitors to park there.
- **Parking space striping and signage.** FOST and the city could consider adding striping and signage to roads surrounding the park, in order to designate individual parking spaces.
- **Additional EV charging stations.** As a potential destination for visitors driving long distances, FOST could advocate for more charging stations to make sure that tourists have reliable access to charging stations in Rome. Additionally, the park could include information about the locations of nearby public EV charging stations on its website for the benefit of visitors.
- **Updated information on bus and RV parking.** The closest available parking for large vehicles is located at nearby Bellamy Harbor Park. FOST could use its website and other informational means to ensure visitors are aware of this.

### *Pedestrian and Bicycle Access*

- **New pedestrian and cyclist trail wayfinding.** Since the park is adjacent to the on-road portion of the Erie Canalway trail, FOST could work with the City of Rome to ensure that there is adequate signage leading trail users to the park, including on-trail maps. In addition to basic wayfinding, the park could also consider creating content on the historical connection between the park and the nearby trails for interpretive displays.
- **Updated bicycling website section.** FOST could add updated information on the new Erie Canalway Trail and new sections of the Mohawk Trail to its website. The park could also use search engine optimization techniques to ensure that the park appears in web searches for attractions along the Canalway Trail.
- **Redesigned Spaghetti Junction.** NYSDOT has considered redesigning the existing intersection as a double roundabout, which would make it much safer for pedestrians and cyclists. The park could communicate with NYSDOT to ensure they are aware of the benefits that this redesign would have for improving visitor safety and experience.

### *Bus and Train Transportation*

- **Updated website information on train and bus options.** To promote the use of these public transportation options for visiting the park, FOST could update their website to include information on reaching the park from the Amtrak station, and the location of nearby Centro bus stops.

- **Visitor transportation survey.** More accurate data on how visitors travel to the park will help FOST better meet transportation needs. The park could investigate the feasibility of adding a question on arrival mode to the annual visitor survey it administers through the NPS. Any additional questions will need pre-authorization before they can be added.
- **Programming in conjunction with trail expansions.** Upcoming additions to the existing trails through the downtown area represents a significant opportunity to increase bicycle visitation and highlight trail connections to other historical sites. The park could consider collaborating with other trail stakeholders to develop programming and publicity targeted at bicyclists and pedestrians.
- **2026 Semiquincentennial programming.** FOST could partner with the city and other nearby historical sites to design events and activities around alternative modes to celebrate the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the United States. This programming could also incorporate the nearby trails, since both the Mohawk Trail and Erie Canalway Trail have significance in early American history.
- **Pamphlet of regional tourist sites.** The park could collaborate with Oneida County Tourism and local historic sites and attractions to publish a resource for tourists to the region that would encourage cross-visitation of trails and points of interest.

### *Alternative Transportation*

- **Micro-mobility, including bike share or scooter share.** A bike share or scooter share program would provide visitors with additional options for visiting the park and strengthen the connections with other attractions and amenities accessible by bike or scooter. FOST could advocate for micro-mobility options by informing local regulatory agencies of the potential positive impact on visitors to both FOST and Downtown Rome, and/or partnering to submit a grant application for a relevant Federal grant program.
- **Transportation Network Companies.** For visitors arriving to the city or park without a private vehicle, TNCs can facilitate movement. The information related to this mode could be better shared with visitors. The park could also consider designating a TNC drop-off zone, at either the existing bus pullout or another curbside location on North James Street.

## **Conclusion**

The purpose of the Fort Stanwix Transportation Study is to evaluate the current transportation conditions at the park and the surrounding area and evaluate the feasibility of a range of potential infrastructure, operations, or traveler information actions to improve transportation conditions. The park's location at the intersection of several driving, bicycling, pedestrian, and tourism corridors has the potential to attract additional visitors already traveling along these routes. However, due to existing transportation challenges such as insufficient wayfinding information, unsafe biking and pedestrian infrastructure, perceived lack of parking, and limited alternative transportation options, the park may have difficulty attracting new visitor groups.

The project team identified a number of strategies that may help FOST address these transportation challenges. These include the following recommendations:

- Consistent signage throughout the city, county, and region
- Increased utilization of Fort Stanwix Parking Garage
- Parking space striping along N. James Street
- Additional EV charging stations for visitors
- Updated information on large vehicle parking availability
- Enhanced pedestrian and cyclist wayfinding on trails
- Redesigned Spaghetti Junction

- Encouragement of micro-mobility and TNC options
- Updated website information on train, bus, and bicycling options for visiting FOST
- Expanded visitor transportation survey
- Programming in conjunction with trail expansions and the 2026 Semiquincentennial
- Pamphlet of regional tourist sites

The bulk of these recommendations involve partnerships with stakeholders such as the City of Rome, Oneida County, NYSDOT, and Oneida County Tourism. FOST should discuss the strategies in this report with its partners to identify opportunities to work together for mutual benefit.



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