

MEMORANDUM

TO: GTC Planning Committee Members & Alternates
FROM: James Stack, Executive Director JS
DATE: May 22, 2025
SUBJECT: Accepting reports as evidence of completion of UPWP Tasks / Proposed Council Resolution 25-08

The following item is provided for your consideration:

- 1. Proposed Resolution 25-08** (Accepting the *Ontario County Freight Rail Corridor Development Plan: Area 2* as evidence of completion of UPWP Task 8622) and the **Executive Summary** of the project.

Ontario County staff have completed UPWP Task 8622, *Ontario County Freight Rail Corridor Development Plan: Area 2*, and will discuss it at the May 29, 2025 Planning Committee meeting.

Recommended Action:

Recommend action by the GTC Board on proposed Council Resolution 25-08.

GENESEE TRANSPORTATION COUNCIL

RESOLUTION

Resolution 25-08 *Accepting the Ontario County Freight Rail Corridor Development Plan: Area 2 as evidence of completion of UPWP Task 8622*

WHEREAS,

1. The *FY 2025-2026 Unified Planning Work Program* includes Task 8622, Ontario County Freight Rail Corridor Development Plan: Area 2, for the purpose of developing an implementation strategy to create shovel-ready sites for freight related industries along Finger Lakes Railway in four municipalities in northeast Ontario County;
2. Said Task included an inventory of land use, zoning, environmental considerations, transportation infrastructure, and freight rail conditions within the study area predominantly adjacent to the rail line and the out of service portion of the Norfolk Southern line; a corridor suitability analysis of parcels adjacent to the railroad to identify locations well suited for industrial rail-enabled development; recommendations for potential development sites, rail-enabled growth opportunity sites, the relocation and/or mitigation of the Finger Lakes Rail Yard and the corresponding relocation of the Finger Lakes rail lines in the City of Geneva; and an implementation matrix; and three rounds of public engagement to solicit feedback; and
3. Said Task has been completed and has resulted in the *Ontario County Freight Rail Corridor Development Plan: Area 2*, which includes an analysis of opportunities and constraints for rail-enabled development, including identifying locations suited for development or redevelopment, and a high-level analysis of the existing Finger Lakes Railway Rail Yard in the City of Geneva to either relocate the Rail Yard to a new location or optimize conditions at the existing location; and
4. Said Plan has been reviewed by GTC staff and member agencies through the GTC committee process and has been found to be consistent with the goals, objectives, and recommendations of the Long Range Transportation Plan.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED

1. That the Genesee Transportation Council hereby accepts the *Ontario County Freight Rail Corridor Development Plan: Area 2* as evidence of completion of UPWP Task 8622; and
2. That this resolution takes effect immediately.

CERTIFICATION

The undersigned duly qualified Secretary of the Genesee Transportation Council certifies that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of a resolution adopted at a legally convened meeting of the Genesee Transportation Council held on June 12, 2025.

Date _____

CHRISTOPHER T. REEVE, Secretary
Genesee Transportation Council

Executive Summary

The creation of the Ontario County Freight Rail Corridor Development (FRCD) Area 2 Plan included the vital participation of the Ontario County Planning Department, Genesee Transportation Council, the project steering committee, and dedicated participation by members of the public during three public meetings.

The planning process included two technical memorandums which laid the foundation for the concepts and recommendations resulting from the plan. Technical Memorandum #1 included an inventory and analysis of the rail corridor within the study area, including a focus on environmental and cultural resources, the history of the rail, and a detailed analysis of the railroad network, operations, and users. This technical memorandum resulted in thirteen key takeaways that formed the basis for the corridor level suitability analysis

conducted in Technical Memorandum #2.

Technical Memorandum #2 utilized the findings from Technical Memorandum #1 to develop a Corridor Level Suitability Analysis which began with an economic profile for Ontario County and for the region. The economic profile helped to identify key industries which would benefit from utilizing the rail, primarily light industrial and agricultural industries. The Technical Memorandum then analyzed the rail corridor for potential rail-enabled development sites based on seven components of the NYS Shovel Ready Checklist, including:

- Parcel Size
- Water availability
- Sewer availability
- Electricity availability
- Gas availability
- Roadway Access
- Zoning

This analysis resulted parcels along the rail corridor

being classified into seven tiers of viability for future development.

The project team analyzed the parcels in these tiers with the data identified during the inventory and analysis phase to find sites that were considered "shovel ready" (i.e., within Tiers I-III of the corridor level suitability analysis) and which were minimally constrained by factors such as potential flooding, sensitive environmental resources, potential environmental remediation concerns, and/or sensitive cultural resources. One "greenfield" (i.e. currently undeveloped) site was selected for further concept development, which is presented in Chapter 5. Five additional sites, some of which are comprised of multiple parcels, were identified as "Rail Enabled Growth Opportunity Sites." These are sites that already consist of some level of development, but which currently underutilize their proximity to the rail line,

include buildings which are vacant and need rehabilitation, and/or include portions of the site which may be further developed to utilize the connection to the rail.

In addition to these technical memorandums, the project team conducted an analysis of the rail yard and rail lines in the Study Area. The existing rail yard is located in the City of Geneva, and has been identified in previous planning studies as posing a barrier to access between Downtown Geneva and Seneca Lake. Throughout the planning process, some members of the public expressed concerns about the existing rail yard, including concerns about safety, accessibility, and environmental and public health concerns. Other members of the public expressed concerns that moving the rail yard from its current location may create unintended impacts on taxes and property values, and that funding to clean

up the existing rail yard may not be readily available. In response to the detailed and nuanced feedback received during public engagement efforts, the project team created a potential concept for future relocation of the rail yard. In addition, four options for relocation of rail lines in the City of Geneva, Town of Geneva, and Town of Phelps were developed which would accommodate the proposed future rail yard relocation. These concepts included preliminary, high-level cost estimates for the rail yard and rail line relocations, and reconfiguration of the existing rail yard. Notably, even if the rail yard was removed from the City of Geneva, one rail line would remain in its current location along the rail yard that could not be moved, posing an ongoing connectivity barrier that would need to be resolved.

Implementation strategies are presented in Chapter 5, and include various

recommendations for improving rail in the study area divided into three categories: safety, rail access / optimization, and aesthetic / impact minimization. These recommendations are categorized into short-term, medium-term, and long-term projects, as some will require significantly more coordination, funding, and study before implementation is possible.