

MARYLAND

ROUTE

The Great American Rail-Trail route across Maryland consists of two key trails: the towpath of the C&O Canal National Historical Park and the Great Allegheny Passage. The two trails meet in Cumberland, Maryland, creating a well-used connection between Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and Washington, D.C.

RTC found and reviewed 17 plans in Maryland to better understand the state's trail priorities. A full list of these plans can be found in Appendix A.

TABLE 4 GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL STATISTICS IN MARYLAND

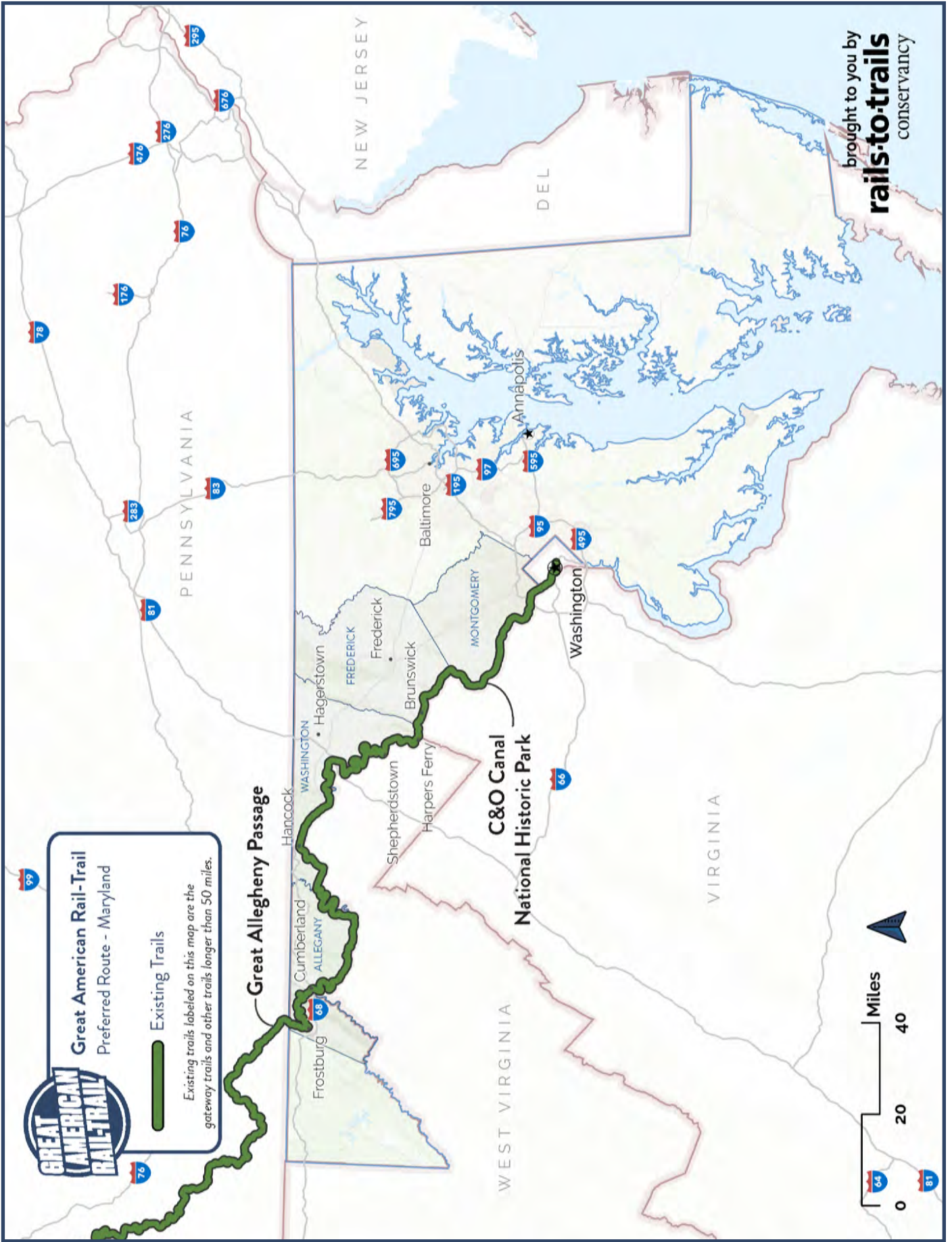
Total Great American Rail-Trail Existing Trail Miles in Md. (% of Total State Mileage)	200.3 (100%)
Total Great American Rail-Trail Trail Gap Miles in Md. (% of Total State Mileage)	0 (0%)
Total Trail Gaps in Md.	0
Total Great American Rail-Trail Miles in Md.	200.3

TABLE 5 GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE THROUGH MARYLAND

Existing Trail Name	Length in Md. Along Great American Rail-Trail (in Miles)
C&O Canal National Historical Park	179.8
Great Allegheny Passage	20.5
Total Miles	200.3
Existing Trail Miles	200.3
Trail Gap Miles	0.0

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT

MAP 2: MARYLAND



GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT MARYLAND

C&O CANAL NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

Total Length (in Miles)	184.5
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Md. (in Miles)	179.8
Trail Type	Canal
Surface Type	Crushed stone, dirt, gravel
Trail Manager	National Park Service
Website	nps.gov/choh/index.htm, canaltrust.org
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/chesapeake--ohio-canal-national-historical-park/

Entering Maryland from Washington, D.C., the C&O Canal Towpath² will host the Great American Rail-Trail for almost 180 miles to the Towpath’s western terminus in Cumberland, Maryland. The National Park Service owns and maintains the towpath, though its budget has been decreased over the last several years. Trail users report ruts, potholes, muddy sections, vegetation and root encroachment and a central grass strip along the towpath. To formally document the surface condition along the C&O Canal Towpath, the Allegheny Trail Alliance commissioned a safety assessment in the fall of 2016.³ The condition of the entire 184.5 miles along the towpath was broken down into the following four categories:

- “Very Good” – roughly 3 miles (2%)
- “Good” – roughly 42 miles (23%)
- “Fair/Poor” – roughly 89.5 miles (48%)
- “Poor” – roughly 50 miles (27%)

To elevate the surface condition of the towpath, the Allegheny Trail Alliance’s safety assessment made eight recommendations: 1) remove the center grass strip, 2) correct ruts and potholes, 3) remove dangerous roots, 4) remove dead trees along the towpath, 5) correct informal paths across the towpath, 6) develop criteria to standardize surface material, 7) resurface the towpath and 8) amend routine maintenance practices.

In recent years, the C&O Canal National Historical Park was only able to resurface about 1 to 3 miles of the towpath annually. The Allegheny Trail Alliance’s safety assessment recommends a five-year towpath repair program to address 79.1 miles, including most of the worst sections of the trail. The estimated total cost to address these 79.1 miles was \$8,945,101. The C&O Canal National Historical Park has adopted the five-year repair program and sought funds to complete this resurfacing effort through its annual operating budget and funding applications through the Transportation Alternatives (TA) program administered by the state of Maryland.⁴

The National Park Service has also identified several other ongoing maintenance needs for the C&O Canal Towpath that will need additional funding to maintain the long-term integrity of the trail. These maintenance needs include:

- Conducting a hydrology study to assess the condition of the 150 to 200 culverts that pass underneath the towpath, as well as their ability to convey the volume of water that flows through them.
- Shoring up and removing trees that have grown into the stone revetment walls that help keep the towpath from eroding into the Potomac River.
- Filling in some of the locks on the canal side to prevent further erosion of the trailbed.

² The Frederick County Bikeways and Trails Plan, adopted in 2018, recommends several smaller multiuse trails that would connect to Maryland Area Regional Commuter (MARC) rail stations in Point of Rocks and Brunswick. Both towns are also along the C&O Canal Towpath and would benefit from additional trails that allow users town access from the main stem of the towpath. The Bikeways and Trails Plan also recommends the construction of the “City of Frederick to C&O Towpath Connector,” a side path that would connect Frederick, Maryland—a major population center and the county seat—to the C&O Canal Towpath at Nolands Ferry along New Design Road.

³ Because the towpath connects to the Great Allegheny Passage (which falls under the ownership and management of the Allegheny Trail Alliance) to create a well-traveled, seamless trail route between Washington, D.C., and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, the Allegheny Trail Alliance has a keen interest in keeping the C&O Canal Towpath in good condition and thus committed its own resources to this study.

⁴ Year 1 of the five-year resurfacing effort cost an estimated \$2,800,000 to resurface 20 miles of trail between Brunswick, Maryland, and Shepherdstown, West Virginia, as well as areas around White’s Ferry and Edward’s Ferry. The state of Maryland provided \$1,000,000 of the Year 1 funds through the TA program, and the National Park Service was recently notified that the state awarded \$1,250,000 to fund Year 2 of this effort to complete roughly 10 miles of resurfacing between Brunswick, Maryland, and Nolands Ferry, Maryland. The National Park Service intends to complete the remaining three years of this resurfacing effort by supplementing its operating budget with TA program funding applications to resurface 10 to 15 miles each year.

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT MARYLAND



C&O Canal Towpath in Maryland | Photo by M.J. Clingan, courtesy C&O Canal Trust

GREAT ALLEGHENY PASSAGE

Total Length (in Miles)	150.0
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Md. (in Miles)	20.5
Trail Type	Rail-trail, rail-with-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt, crushed stone
Trail Manager	Allegheny Trail Alliance, Allegany County, Mountain Maryland Trails
Website	gaptrail.org
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/great-allegheny-passage/

The C&O Canal Towpath connects to the Great Allegheny Passage (GAP) at Cumberland. The GAP is an iconic trail that runs nearly 150 miles from Cumberland, Maryland, to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and was built by a mix of private and public partners, nonprofit entities, and local trail groups and volunteers working in concert as the Allegheny Trail Alliance. RTC selected the GAP for the Rail-Trail Hall of Fame in 2007.

Cumberland and Frostburg are the major towns along the Maryland portion of the GAP. For much of the 16 miles of trail between Cumberland and Frostburg, the trail parallels the active Western Maryland Scenic Railroad, making this the first rail-with-trail section of the Great American Rail-Trail. This section of the GAP itself was constructed on the former Western Maryland Railway, which began operations between Cumberland, Maryland, and Connellsville, Pennsylvania, in 1912.

The Great Allegheny Passage will host the Great American Rail-Trail for 20.5 miles through Maryland. The remaining 124.3 miles of the GAP that carry the Great American Rail-Trail travel through Pennsylvania and are described in more detail in the Pennsylvania chapter of this report.