

MONTANA



Celebrating the announcement of the Great American Rail-Trail route in Three Forks, Montana | Photo courtesy Three Forks Voice

ROUTE

The Great American Rail-Trail route through Montana will connect many of the communities known for their outdoor recreation opportunities throughout the state. Trails are popular assets in such Montana communities as Livingston, Bozeman, Three Forks, Butte and Missoula, which are all along the route of the cross-country trail. The Great American Rail-Trail will travel through many iconic Montana landscapes and enter into Idaho through the beautiful Lolo National Forest.

TABLE 22 GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL MILEAGE IN MONTANA

Total Great American Rail-Trail Existing Trail Miles in Mont. (% of Total State Mileage)	98.5 (23.5%)
Total Great American Rail-Trail Trail Gap Miles in Mont. (% of Total State Mileage)	321.0 (76.5%)
Total Trail Gaps in Mont.	13
Total Great American Rail-Trail Miles in Mont.	419.5

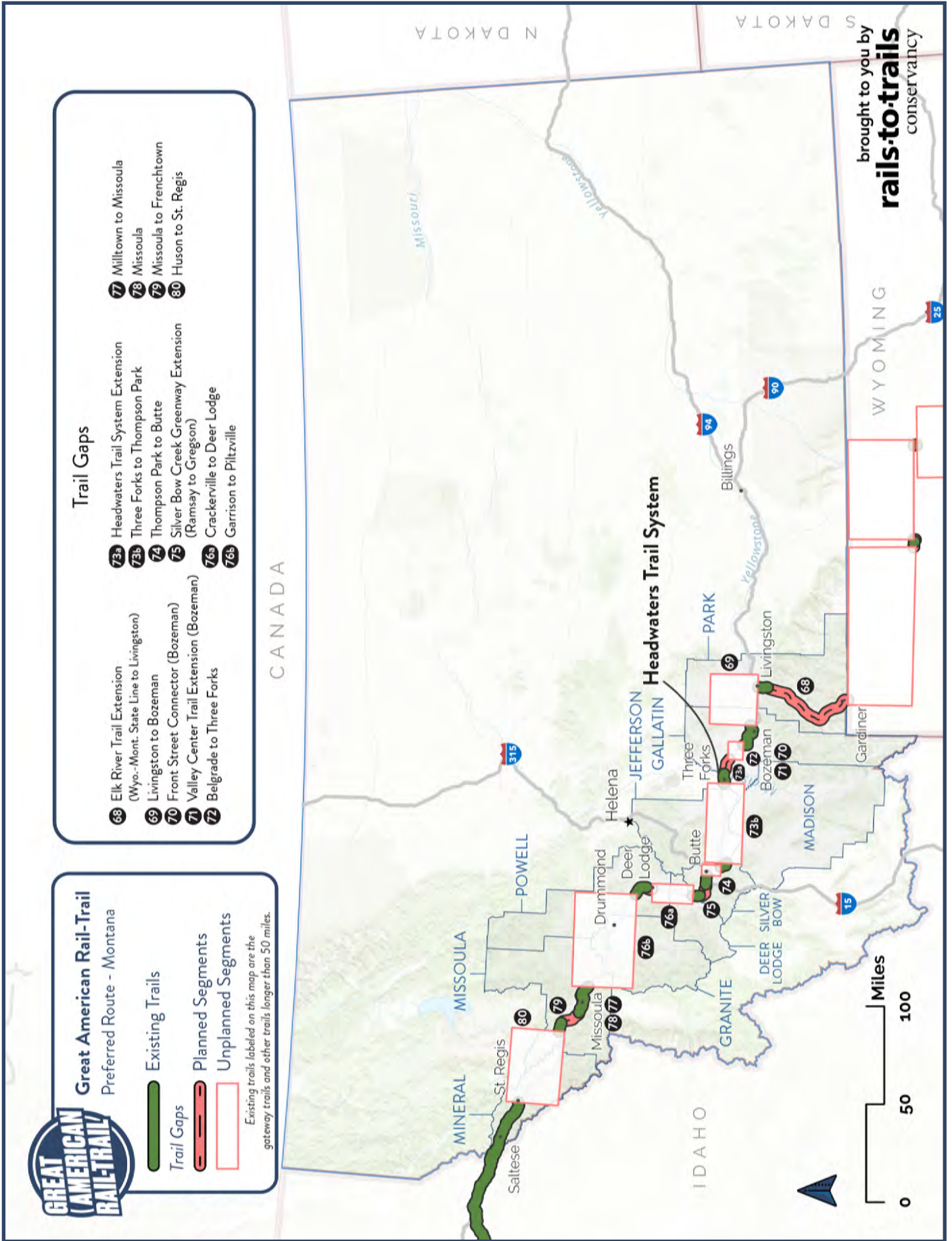
GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT
MONTANA

TABLE 23 GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE THROUGH MONTANA

Existing Trail or Trail Gap Name	Length in Mont. Along Great American Rail-Trail (in Miles)	Existing Trail or Trail Gap Name	Length in Mont. Along Great American Rail-Trail (in Miles)
TRAIL GAP 68 – Elk River Trail Extension (Wyo.–Mont. State Line to Livingston)	52.5	TRAIL GAP 74 – Thompson Park to Butte	10.9
Highway 89 South Pedestrian Trail	4.3	Silver Bow Creek Greenway (Butte to Ramsay)	5.7
Livingston Depot Center Trail	1.5	TRAIL GAP 75 – Silver Bow Creek Greenway Extension (Ramsay to Gregson)	8.8
TRAIL GAP 69 – Livingston to Bozeman	26.1	Silver Bow Creek Greenway (Gregson to Crackerville)	1.5
Bozeman to Bridger Mountains Trail/Path to the “M” and Drinking Horse	2.3	TRAIL GAP 76a – Crackerville to Deer Lodge	27.3
Story Mill Spur	1.0	Old Yellowstone Trail	7.5
TRAIL GAP 70 – Front Street Connector (Bozeman)	0.3	TRAIL GAP 76b – Garrison to Piltzville	60.2
Oak Street Trail	1.5	Piltzville Trail	3.3
North 19th Avenue Trail	1.3	Bonner Streetcar Trail	1.8
Valley Center Trail (North 19th Avenue to Catamount Street)	0.3	TRAIL GAP 77 – Milltown to Missoula	2.0
TRAIL GAP 71 – Valley Center Trail Extension (Bozeman)	1.4	Canyon River Trail	0.8
Valley Center Trail (East Valley Center Spur to Jackrabbit Lane)	4.5	Milwaukee Trail	5.9
Jackrabbit Lane Shared-Use Path	2.0	TRAIL GAP 78 – Missoula	1.8
TRAIL GAP 72 – Belgrade to Three Forks	18.9	Mullan Road Trail	2.2
Headwaters Trail System (Madison Road to Three Forks High School)	2.9	TRAIL GAP 79 – Missoula to Frenchtown	11.5
TRAIL GAP 73a – Headwaters Trail System Extension	0.5	A.J. Hoyt Memorial Trail	4.7
Headwaters Trail System (North Montana Street to Jefferson River)	2.3	TRAIL GAP 80 – Huson to St. Regis	52.8
TRAIL GAP 73b – Three Forks to Thompson Park	46.0	Route of the Olympian	22.7
Milwaukee Road Rail-Trail (Thompson Park)	4.1	NorPac Trail	14.4
		Total Miles	419.5
		<i>Existing Trail Miles</i>	98.5
		<i>Trail Gap Miles</i>	321.0

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT

MAP 11: MONTANA



brought to you by
rails-to-trails
conservancy

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT MONTANA



Paradise Valley in Montana | Photo by Kevin Belanger, courtesy Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

TRAIL GAP 68 – ELK RIVER TRAIL EXTENSION (WYOMING–MONTANA STATE LINE TO LIVINGSTON)

From the Wyoming–Montana state line, a trail can be connected to the north entrance of Yellowstone National Park at Gardiner, Montana. Park County, Montana, has long-term goals that include completing a trail along an abandoned rail line and the Old Yellowstone Trail north into Livingston to connect to the Highway 89 South Pedestrian Trail. In all, Trail Gap 68 connects about 52.5 miles of new trail.

Park County intends to complete the 49 miles of trail from Gardiner north to Livingston by either acquiring easements along the abandoned rail corridor where property owners are amenable or, where easements cannot be obtained, building trail along U.S. 89 or the Old Yellowstone Trail.

In early 2020, Park County completed the Old Yellowstone Trail South Corridor Study, a planning-level review of safety, operational and geometric conditions, and environmental resources to identify needs and constraints along a portion of the corridor. The study reviewed approximately 21 miles of the old road and trail of the same name adjacent to U.S. 89 from Roosevelt Arch in Gardiner north to the landform referred to as Point of Rocks. The report includes several options for filling this gap, all of which include some type of separated trail spanning the length of the corridor.

RTC and Park County secured a \$50,000 grant from the Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation to complete a similar study for the remaining length of corridor from Point of Rocks north to the current terminus of the Elk River Trail, just south of Livingston. Currently, that funding is being leveraged to secure the remaining funds needed to complete the study. Following completion of the study, construction can begin on this segment of trail.

HIGHWAY 89 SOUTH PEDESTRIAN TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	4.3
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Mont. (in Miles)	4.3
Trail Type	Greenway, rail-trail, rail-with-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	City of Livingston, Park County
Website	livingstontrailsrx.com/highway-89-south-bike-path.html
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/highway-89-south-pedestrian-trail

The Highway 89 South Pedestrian Trail begins at the northern terminus of Old Yellowstone Trail North Road and continues 2.7 miles into Livingston to connect to the Livingston Depot Center Trail. The Highway 89 South Pedestrian Trail is a combination of rail-trail, rail-with-trail and trail built into the shoulder of U.S. 89 where space is constrained. The trail follows the initial Northern Pacific Railway corridor between Gardiner and Livingston that served agricultural communities in Paradise Valley and brought tourists south into Yellowstone National Park. The existing portions of the trail will be resurfaced in the summer of 2021.

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT MONTANA



Ribbon cutting of the Bozeman to Bridger Mountains Trail in October 2019 | Photo courtesy Gallatin Valley Land Trust

LIVINGSTON DEPOT CENTER TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	3.0
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Mont. (in Miles)	1.5
Trail Type	Rail-trail, rail-with-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt, concrete
Trail Manager	City of Livingston
Website	livingstondepot.org
TrailLink Map	trailink.com/trail/livingston-depot-center-trail

The Livingston Depot Center Trail will host a 1.5-mile section of the Great American Rail-Trail from the connection of the Highway 89 South Pedestrian Trail to Highway 10 West/I-90 in Livingston. The trail continues west toward Livingston Depot Center, a former train station that now houses a railroad museum open in the summer.

TRAIL GAP 69 – LIVINGSTON TO BOZEMAN

Heading 26.1 miles west from Livingston, a trail could be constructed toward the city of Bozeman following an active rail corridor or various low-volume rural roads. The valley that contains the active rail line and I-90 is narrow in many spots and likely requires a detour to enter Bozeman. An option to head north toward the small community of Wilsall along an abandoned rail corridor and then southwest toward Bozeman is also being discussed.

BOZEMAN TO BRIDGER MOUNTAINS TRAIL/PATH TO THE “M” AND DRINKING HORSE

Total Length (in Miles)	2.3
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Mont. (in Miles)	2.3
Trail Type	Greenway
Surface Type	Asphalt, concrete
Trail Manager	City of Bozeman, Gallatin Valley Land Trust
Website	flh.fhwa.dot.gov/projects/mt/mtrail
TrailLink Map	trailink.com/trail/bozeman-to-bridger-mountains-trail

The Bozeman to Bridger Mountains Trail (also known as the Path to the “M” and Drinking Horse) was completed in the fall of 2019, making an important connection for pedestrians and cyclists between the city of Bozeman and the Bridger Mountains. In the east, the trail begins near the College M Trailhead and Picnic Area off of state Route 86/Bridger Canyon Road. Just 0.3 mile southwest of the picnic area is the Drinking Horse Mountain Trailhead. The “M” Trail and Drinking Horse Mountain Trail are two of the easier and more popular out-and-back hiking trails in the Bridger Mountain foothills.

The 2.3-mile Bozeman to Bridger Mountains Trail parallels state Route 86/Bridger Canyon Road heading west in the mountains. It crosses Bridger Creek via a newly constructed bridge before switching to the south side of state Route 86/Bridger Canyon Road. The trail ends at Story Mill Community Park, a new recreation amenity in Bozeman offering 60 acres of restored wetlands, playgrounds, sports fields and hiking trails.

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT MONTANA

STORY MILL SPUR

Total Length (in Miles)	1.7
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Mont. (in Miles)	1.0
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Dirt, gravel
Trail Manager	City of Bozeman
Website	gvlt.org/trails
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/story-mill-spur

The preferred route of the Great American Rail-Trail enters Bozeman on state Route 86/Bridger Drive, which intersects the Story Mill Spur trail on Story Mill Road. The Story Mill Spur is named for Nelson Story, who, in the 1880s, built a flour mill near the East Gallatin River. As mayor of Bozeman, Story was instrumental in convincing the first railroad through Montana to route through Bozeman. The short rail line was the Gallatin Valley's largest and most used industrial rail spur until the flour mill's decline in the 1960s. The trail is 1.7 miles long and begins to the north at the decaying Story Mill flour mill.

The Story Mill Spur will host about 1 mile of the Great American Rail-Trail, starting at the intersection of state Route 86/Bridger Drive and Story Mill Road and heading south to a historical depot at Front and East Tamarack streets. The Story Mill Spur passes over the East Gallatin River and through a tunnel beneath I-90.

TRAIL GAP 70 – FRONT STREET CONNECTOR (BOZEMAN)

There is a small gap in the trail network through Bozeman that could connect the Story Mill Spur to the Oak Street Trail. The Gallatin Valley Land Trust is partnering with the city of Bozeman to complete a 0.3-mile connector along Front Street between L Street and Rouse Avenue. This project is partially funded by the Bozeman Trails, Open Space, and Parks Bond Project. The Front Street Connector was also awarded a \$45,000 grant from the Montana Recreational Trails Program. The project is now fully funded and is expected to be completed in 2021.

OAK STREET TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	1.5
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Mont. (in Miles)	1.5
Trail Type	Greenway
Surface Type	Concrete
Trail Manager	City of Bozeman
Website	gvlt.org/trails
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/oak-street-trail-

In Bozeman, the Oak Street Trail follows Oak Street 1.5 miles west from North Rouse to North 19th avenues. The trail begins on the south side of West Oak Street at North Rouse Avenue/state Route 86 and crosses to the north side of the street at North 7th Avenue.

NORTH 19TH AVENUE TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	1.3
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Mont. (in Miles)	1.3
Trail Type	Greenway
Surface Type	Concrete
Trail Manager	City of Bozeman
Website	gvlt.org/trails
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/north-19th-avenue-trail-

The North 19th Avenue Trail connects to the Oak Street Trail at West Oak Street and continues north along North 19th Avenue for 1.3 miles. There is a small, 250-foot gap in the trail along North 19th Avenue between East Baxter Lane and Rawhide Ridge Road. The trail switches from the east to the west side of North 19th Avenue at Cattail Street.

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT MONTANA

VALLEY CENTER TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	4.8
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Mont. (in Miles)	4.8
Trail Type	Greenway
Surface Type	Concrete
Trail Manager	City of Bozeman
Website	gvlt.org/trails
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/valley-center-trail-

The North 19th Avenue Trail ends at East Valley Center Road, where a trail begins about 500 feet to the northwest along the northeast side of the road. The Valley Center Trail is open in two segments:

Segment 1 – About 0.3 mile in length from North 19th Avenue to just north of Catamount Street.

Segment 2 – About 4.5 miles in length, from East Valley Center Spur to Jackrabbit Lane in Bozeman.

TRAIL GAP 71 – VALLEY CENTER TRAIL EXTENSION (BOZEMAN)

There is a roughly 1.4-mile gap in the Valley Center Trail along East Valley Center Road in Bozeman between Catamount Street and East Valley Center Spur. The city of Bozeman intends to complete this trail gap in pieces as the area continues to develop. Trail users can use East Valley Center Road itself as an interim on-road connector to help bridge this gap in the meantime.



Headwaters Trail System in Montana | Photo by Scott Stark

⁹ The Milwaukee Road was a Class 1 railroad that stretched from Chicago to Seattle. By the 1980s, most of the corridor had become abandoned and was reverted to adjacent landowners. Therefore, while the corridor remains largely undeveloped in Montana, most of it is no longer in public ownership. However, if the state can rally around the project and reacquire significant portions of the corridor, the Milwaukee Road could have the potential to serve as a major portion of the Great American Rail-Trail route in Montana.

JACKRABBIT LANE SHARED-USE PATH

Total Length (in Miles)	5.7
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Mont. (in Miles)	2.0
Trail Type	Greenway
Surface Type	Asphalt, concrete
Trail Manager	City of Belgrade
Website	ci.belgrade.mt.us/parks
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/jackrabbit-lane-shared-use-path-

There is a 5.7-mile long section of trail along Jackrabbit Lane connecting Four Corners north to the area just south of Belgrade. The Jackrabbit Lane Shared-Use Path will host the Great American Rail-Trail for 2 miles, heading north onto Jackrabbit Lane from East Valley Center Road. The trail was completed from the community of Cowan north to Frank Road in the summer of 2018. A future extension could take the trail all the way into Belgrade.

TRAIL GAP 72 – BELGRADE TO THREE FORKS

The Galla10 Alliance for Pathways has been working with Gallatin County and the community of Belgrade for many years to study a trail connection along Frontage Road to connect Bozeman to Belgrade via trail. There are existing trail options that could take people between the two communities, but none is as scenic or direct as a trail along Frontage Road would be. Gallatin County and Galla10 Alliance for Pathways submitted a joint BUILD application to the U.S. Department of Transportation for \$150,000 in planning assistance for a connection along Frontage Road, though the effort was not selected for funding. The Great American Rail-Trail will utilize the trails identified above to travel between Bozeman and Belgrade. However, if a trail along Frontage Road becomes viable in the future, the route could shift to take advantage of that direct corridor.

From Belgrade, local partners are interested in extending a trail 18.9 miles west to Three Forks, where there is an existing network of trails called the Headwaters Trail System. Such a trail could either continue to follow Frontage Road to Three Forks or connect to the former Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad (Milwaukee Road) corridor at the town of Manhattan and connect to Three Forks via a potential future rail-trail.⁹ A group in Manhattan has identified a 7-mile corridor utilizing the former railroad corridor and other linear features to connect Manhattan to the Headwaters Trail System in Three Forks. The Manhattan Planning Board approved the concept, the town council endorsed it, and the Gallatin County Commission was briefed in early 2021. The project is making progress toward construction, which may be a few years away.

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT MONTANA

HEADWATERS TRAIL SYSTEM

Total Length (in Miles)	11.8
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Mont. (in Miles)	5.2
Trail Type	Greenway, rail-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	City of Three Forks
Website	threeforksmontana.com/business/headwaters-trail-system-2
TrailLink Map	trailink.com/trail/headwaters-trail-system

The Headwaters Trail System is a paved network of trails, portions of which run along the former Milwaukee Road corridor and through the city of Three Forks to Missouri Headwaters State Park, where the Missouri River originates at the confluence of the Jefferson, Madison and Gallatin rivers.

Currently, the portion of the Headwaters Trail System that will host the Great American Rail-Trail is divided into two segments of existing trail with a gap between them:

Segment 1 – 2.9 miles of trail from Madison Road to Three Forks High School.

Segment 2 – 2.3 miles of trail from North Montana Street to Drouillard Fishing Access on state Route 2.

The gap between these segments is discussed in Trail Gap 73a, below.

TRAIL GAP 73a – HEADWATERS TRAIL SYSTEM EXTENSION

The city of Three Forks is in the fundraising process for completing a 0.5-mile connection along Jefferson Street that will connect the two segments of the Headwaters Trail System mentioned above. The city has received Montana Recreational Trails Program funding as well as a Trail Grant Program grant from RTC to help complete this section in 2021 or 2022.

TRAIL GAP 73b – THREE FORKS TO THOMPSON PARK

The former Milwaukee Road corridor connects Three Forks to the existing Milwaukee Road Rail-Trail in Thompson Park in the city of Butte. However, the rail corridor is now primarily in private ownership. For long stretches, the former Milwaukee Road rail corridor follows state and county highways as well as the path of an active Montana Rail Link line. The rail corridor remains visible in aerial photography for the majority of its route.

While a feasible, off-road multiuse trail option connecting Three Forks 46 miles west to Thompson Park continues to be explored, an interim on-road connector can be made using various low-volume county roads in Gallatin, Madison, Jefferson and Silver Bow counties.

MILWAUKEE ROAD RAIL-TRAIL (THOMPSON PARK)

Total Length (in Miles)	4.1
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Mont. (in Miles)	4.1
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Grass, gravel, sand
Trail Manager	Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest – Butte Ranger District, Butte-Silver Bow Parks & Recreation
Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> co.silverbow.mt.us/453/Thompson-Park fs.usda.gov/recarea/bdnf/recarea/?re-cid=81782
TrailLink Map	trailink.com/trail/milwaukee-road-rail-trail-(thompson-park)

Just a few miles south of Butte, the Milwaukee Road Rail-Trail through Thompson Park offers a 4.1-mile journey through two tunnels and across a trestle of the former Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad, also known as the Milwaukee Road. One of the tunnels is 550 feet long, while the other is 1,110 feet. The trestle is 600 feet long and rises 130 feet above the valley floor.

This section of railroad was one of the first in the country to be electrified—Thomas Edison even came out to Butte to ride the Milwaukee Road. The trail currently ends just 100 yards from the 2,300-foot-long Pipestone Pass tunnel, which is closed to the public, but trail users can walk up to its entrance. The trail runs through Thompson Park, a Congressionally Designated Area managed by the City and County of Butte-Silver Bow. In addition to enjoying the 25 additional miles of trail that connect through Thompson Park, trail users can also connect to the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail, a rugged trail connecting Canada to Mexico along the Western Continental Divide.

TRAIL GAP 74 – THOMPSON PARK TO BUTTE

The Milwaukee Road Rail-Trail turns into Janney Road at the northern end of Thompson Park, and the abandoned Milwaukee Road corridor continues west toward Basin Creek. Just north of Basin Creek, the rail corridor becomes active again through the city of Butte. The Silver Bow Creek Greenway Service District reports that BNSF Railway maintains service on this corridor twice a week to access an industrial park around the Parkmont area off Basin Creek Road. Local efforts have been strong to keep this line active, with a tax increment financing project surrounding the rail line. Efforts to utilize the abandoned and active rail corridors for trail development should be explored in more detail.

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT MONTANA

A more viable option may be to find an on-road connection where an adjacent shared-use path could be completed to connect to the existing trail system in Butte. The Ulrich-Schotte Nature Trail (also known as the Blacktail Creek Trail) begins at Father Sheehan Park in the Floral Park neighborhood and extends west toward downtown Butte near the Civic Center Ball Field.

The Silver Bow Creek Greenway Service District and other local groups are also interested in connecting the Silver Bow Creek Greenway (described below) to the Blacktail Creek Trail through Butte, and there may be opportunity for a trail along Blacktail Creek in the future as well. An on-road route could connect the Ulrich-Schotte Nature Trail to the BA&P Hill Trail on the north side of town, just west of the Berkeley Pit, which connects directly into the Silver Bow Creek Greenway in the Butte suburb of Rocker. Further research should be completed into the viability of connecting these existing trails through Butte. An official route connecting the 10.9 miles between Thompson Park and Butte will not be identified until further research is completed.

SILVER BOW CREEK GREENWAY

Total Length (in Miles)	7.2
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Mont. (in Miles)	7.2
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	Silver Bow Greenway Service District
Website	co.silverbow.mt.us/433/Silver-Bow-Creek-Greenway-Trails
TrailLink Map	trailink.com/trail/silver-bow-creek-greenway

The Silver Bow Creek Greenway runs 7.2 miles through Silver Bow and Deer Lodge counties. It is currently built in two separate segments:

Segment 1 – 5.7 miles between Santa Claus Road outside of Butte to Frontage Road in Ramsay, a settlement west of Butte.

Segment 2 – 1.5 miles from Fairmont Road in Gregson to Crackerville Road in Crackerville.

Silver Bow Creek was heavily contaminated after decades of mining and smelting in the area. The state settled with Atlantic Richfield Company for statewide natural resource damages grant funds of \$23 million, which have paid for restoration work along the creek as well as trail construction, access features and easements. Construction on the trail began in 2005 and continues today. The Greenway Service District, which oversees the trail, is a multijurisdictional service district with representatives from both Silver Bow and Deer Lodge counties.

TRAIL GAP 75 – SILVER BOW CREEK GREENWAY EXTENSION (RAMSAY TO GREGSON)

The City and County of Butte-Silver Bow plans to complete this 8.8-mile gap in the Silver Bow Creek Greenway gradually over time. The first section of this extension heading west from Ramsay will continue to follow Silver Bow Creek until it reaches Durant Canyon. There, the trail will veer away from the creek and follow the former Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad (Milwaukee Road) corridor along a bench in the canyon for the remaining miles to Segment 2 of the existing trail starting at Fairmont Road.

The entirety of the Silver Bow Creek corridor is a Superfund site. The Montana Department of Environmental Quality is currently completing remediation work within Durant Canyon. Once the remediation is complete (anticipated in 2022), trail building can commence to close this gap. Funding is in place to complete this segment of the Silver Bow Creek Greenway, and negotiations with property owners are ongoing.

A 1-mile segment of the Silver Bow Creek Greenway will be completed in 2021 from its current terminus in Gregson south toward Finlen.

TRAIL GAP 76a – CRACKERVILLE TO DEER LODGE

In 2021, an additional 2 miles of trail will be constructed heading north from the existing end of the Silver Bow Creek Greenway in Crackerville toward the community of Opportunity at the Montana Highway 1/Pintler Veterans Memorial Scenic Highway rest area. From Opportunity, a trail could connect north toward Deer Lodge using various alignments along the I-90 corridor.

At the city of Deer Lodge, Powell County intends to develop a roughly 4-mile extension of the Old Yellowstone Trail, beginning at Washington Street and West Milwaukee Avenue and heading north through and adjacent to the Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site, a working ranch run by the National Park Service. This extension is also planned for construction in 2021.

OLD YELLOWSTONE TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	7.5
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Mont. (in Miles)	7.5
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Crushed stone, dirt
Trail Manager	Powell County
TrailLink Map	trailink.com/trail/old-yellowstone-trail

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT MONTANA

The Old Yellowstone Trail follows the right-of-way of the Milwaukee Road. Powell County purchased this section of corridor in 2017 using funds from Montana’s Natural Resource Damage Program to build a trail from Deer Lodge north to Garrison. In 2020, the first 7.5 miles of trail heading south from Garrison were completed. A second phase of construction will close the gap to Deer Lodge through the Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site.

TRAIL GAP 76b – GARRISON TO PILTZVILLE

There are no immediate plans to head west from the northern end of the Old Yellowstone Trail at Garrison, which is just over 60 miles from Piltzville. From the small community of Clinton, a trail could travel west from the northeastern side of the Clark Fork River to the eastern terminus of the Piltzville Trail.

PILTZVILLE TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	3.3
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Mont. (in Miles)	3.3
Trail Type	Greenway
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	Missoula County
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/piltzville-trail-

The 3.3-mile Piltzville Trail connects Piltzville to Bonner-West Riverside at Milltown State Park. The trail parallels Old Highway 10 east and provides a separated trail connection for travel east of the city of Missoula.

BONNER STREETCAR TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	1.8
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Mont. (in Miles)	1.8
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	Missoula County
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/bonner-streetcar-trail

The Bonner Streetcar Trail follows a former electric streetcar line of the Missoula Street Railway Company, which ran between Milltown and Missoula from 1910–1932. The Bonner Streetcar Trail begins just south of the Blackfoot River, loosely paralleling state Route 200 from Laguna Street to Tamarack Road.

TRAIL GAP 77 – MILLTOWN TO MISSOULA

Missoula County has completed significant engineering designs for a 2-mile trail alignment that would close Trail Gap 77 following state Route 200 around the bend in the Clark Fork River to County Road 533/Deer Creek Road. Plans for highway redevelopment show that the trail will need to be on the mountain side of the highway. This project is expected to be ready for funding in one to two years.

CANYON RIVER TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	1.9
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Mont. (in Miles)	0.8
Trail Type	Greenway
Surface Type	Asphalt, crushed stone
Trail Manager	Canyon River Golf Club
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/canyon-river-trail-

The Canyon River Trail travels roughly along the banks of the Clark Fork River through the Canyon River Golf Club. The trail is open to the public. There are safe crossings beneath I-90 on both ends and beneath an active Montana Rail Link line on the western end. Missoula spent \$355,000 in 2016 to complete a 1,300-foot connection between the Canyon River Trail and the eastern terminus of the Milwaukee Trail (described below) beneath I-90. The project was completed in 2018 and provides a seamless transition between the two trails. The Great American Rail-Trail will utilize 0.8 mile of the Canyon River Trail.

MILWAUKEE TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	5.9
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Mont. (in Miles)	5.9
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt, crushed stone
Trail Manager	City of Missoula
Website	ci.missoula.mt.us/207/maps
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/milwaukee-trail

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT MONTANA

The Milwaukee Trail travels approximately 5.9 miles through Missoula along the former Milwaukee Road rail corridor. The Milwaukee Trail is the combined name of the Milwaukee Trail and the former Kim Williams Nature Trail. The trail travels from just south of the Canyon River Golf Club, following the banks of the Clark Fork River and passing the University of Montana campus, downtown Missoula and several public parks. Near downtown Missoula, the Milwaukee Trail intersects the Bitterroot Trail, which offers trail users an approximately 50-mile continuous paved path south through the Bitterroot Valley to the city of Hamilton. The Milwaukee Trail continues westward through Missoula, mostly along the historical Milwaukee Road route.

The Milwaukee Trail receives a high volume of year-round use, with an average of 1,800 to 3,000 trips per day. The trail is well-maintained by Missoula's greenways and horticulture unit. Because of the popularity of the trail, the city intends to widen the trail to a 14-foot standard in the urban core. As the trail ages, Missoula will be focusing on pavement preservation. Missoula is currently constructing a separate grade crossing at a portion of North Russell Street. The reconstruction project will elevate North Russell Street and allow the trail to cross underneath, providing a safer, grade-separated crossing.

TRAIL GAP 78 – MISSOULA

Missoula County's Long-Range Transportation Plan (2016) lists extending the Milwaukee Trail westward as a priority. From the western end of the Milwaukee Trail at North Grove Street, the trail is intended to continue 1.8 miles along the former Milwaukee Road corridor west toward Mullan Road. The trail will cross over the Clark Fork River and continue west to Mullan and Schmidt roads. From here, the Milwaukee Trail may continue to follow the former rail corridor or head north to connect to the existing Mullan Road Trail. The city of Missoula and Missoula County continue to work together to acquire property and finalize plans to make this connection possible. Plans exist for a series of bridges that will span the Clark Fork River, which await funding in the next several years.

MULLAN ROAD TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	2.7
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Mont. (in Miles)	2.2
Trail Type	Greenway
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	Missoula County Parks, Trails, and Open Lands Program
Website	missoulacounty.us/government/culture-recreation/parks-trails
TrailLink Map	trailink.com/trail/mullan-road-trail

A 2.7-mile-long trail was constructed on the north side of Mullan Road in 2010. The trail heads west from Flynn to Cote lanes and provides for safe, separated walking and biking along a busy two-lane county road. The project cost approximately \$600,000 to complete, the majority of which was provided through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The Mullan Road Trail will host the Great American Rail-Trail for approximately 2.2 miles, traveling westward toward Frenchtown.

TRAIL GAP 79 – MISSOULA TO FRENCHTOWN

The preferred option to continue the trail 11.5 miles westward from the Mullan Road Trail to Frenchtown is to link up with the Milwaukee Road corridor. That may not be possible in several places, so completing a trail in the existing right-of-way of Mullan Road may be the necessary compromise until the trail would reach the A.J. Hoyt Memorial Trail in Frenchtown. The Missoula Airport owns a 3-mile stretch of the former Milwaukee Road corridor, and has been in talks with the city of Missoula to transfer that into public ownership. This land transfer could help to complete Trail Gap 79.

A.J. HOYT MEMORIAL TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	11.0
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Mont. (in Miles)	4.7
Trail Type	Greenway
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	Missoula County Parks, Trails, and Open Lands Program
Website	missoulacounty.us/government/culture-recreation/parks-trails
TrailLink Map	trailink.com/trail/aj-hoyt-memorial-trail

A side path runs along Frenchtown Frontage Road for 4.7 miles: the A.J. Hoyt Memorial Trail. This trail provides a crucial trail connection outside of Missoula. Frenchtown Frontage Road parallels I-90, traveling around Frenchtown Pond State Park and ending in the community of Huson. The A.J. Hoyt Memorial Trail was rebuilt in the summer of 2018.

TRAIL GAP 80 – HUSON TO ST. REGIS

Several trail advocates out of Mineral County formed the Mineral County Resource Coalition to discuss the completion of a trail through the Clark Fork River Valley. Representatives are in discussions with the nearby Lolo National Forest and other organizations to discuss opportunities for such a trail. This group should be consulted for potential route options connecting the 52.8 miles between Missoula and St. Regis, Montana. As the valley is narrow and physically constrained by the river, mountains, highway and private development, creative solutions should be considered.

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT MONTANA



NorPac Trail, headed toward Mullan, Idaho | Photo by TrailLink user cstineyb

ROUTE OF THE OLYMPIAN

Total Length (in Miles)	31.0
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Mont. (in Miles)	22.7
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Gravel
Trail Manager	U.S. Forest Service (Lolo National Forest – Superior Ranger District)
Website	friendsofcdatrails.org/route-of-the-olympian
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/route-of-the-olympian

The 31-mile-long Route of the Olympian, heading west from St. Regis and following the St. Regis River for most of its length, was constructed on the former Milwaukee Road corridor through the Lolo National Forest. At its western terminus, the route directly connects to the Route of the Hiawatha to the south and the NorPac Trail to the north. The Dominion tunnel and trestle are located near the midpoint of the trail, and the trailbed from the eastern terminus to the trestle is a sparsely traveled, two-lane road of fine gravel. West of the trestle, the trail turns into a single-lane gravel road with loose surface rock.¹⁰

NORPAC TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	22.2
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Mont. (in Miles)	14.4
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Concrete, dirt, gravel
Trail Manager	U.S. Forest Service (Lolo National Forest – Superior Ranger District)
Website	friendsofcdatrails.org/northern-pacific-trail
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/norpac-trail

The 22.2-mile-long NorPac Trail follows the old right-of-way of the Northern Pacific Railway in western Montana and the Idaho Panhandle, crossing Lookout Pass. The trail runs from the town of Saltese past the East Portal of the Route of the Hiawatha (south of Taft), connecting to the Trail of the Coeur d’Alenes in the city of Mullan, Idaho. The U.S. Forest Service owns and maintains this trail. The NorPac Trail will host the Great American Rail-Trail for its entirety, including the 14.4 miles of the trail in Montana. The remaining 7.8 miles of the NorPac Trail are discussed in more detail in the Idaho chapter of this report.

¹⁰ Cyclists and walkers share the trail with motorized vehicles from St. Regis west to Saltese, as the route provides popular locations for fishing and a local transportation alternative to the busy I-90, which can be difficult to access. Portions of the route are technically marked as county roads, though they see very little traffic. From Memorial Day to Labor Day, the western 8.6 miles of trail from the tiny community of Saltese to the Route of the Hiawatha connection at the town of Taft are restricted to non-motorized use only. In 2020, the U.S. Forest Service (Lolo National Forest – Superior Ranger District) applied for \$85,650 from the Montana Recreational Trails Program for the implementation of travel management on 16.5 miles of the Route of the Olympian between Haugan and Taft to minimize travel conflicts.