

ILLINOIS

In Illinois, the preferred route of the Great American Rail-Trail® is poised to stretch across the northern part of the state from the Chicago metropolitan area to the Mississippi River. Existing trails that host a majority of the route include the Hennepin Canal Parkway, which still contains many of the old locks and aqueducts from its namesake, the early-20th-century Hennepin Canal, and the Illinois & Michigan Canal State Park Trail, which traverses the I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor, designated in 1984 as the first National Heritage Area in the United States. Toward the end of the Great American route in Illinois, the Great River Trail features the river communities along the mighty Mississippi—including the Quad Cities of East Moline and Rock Island.



Old Plank Trail; Photo courtesy Traillink user antonlove1

In Illinois, the trail is expected to generate annually:

\$2.3M
in new
tax revenue

\$15.3M
GDP contribution

\$18.8M
in visitor
spending

2,100,000
trips

200
new jobs

\$9.6M
in labor income

Western Illinois is home to two iconic trails: the Hennepin Canal Parkway and the Illinois & Michigan Canal State Trail, crossing historic locks and bridges and passing picturesque farms. A gap of 15 miles between the trails remains to be completed.

“With the rewatering of the I&M canal, the city of Ottawa has greatly increased the amount of bikes and hikers coming to our town. Any revitalization of the I&M canal and connecting trails would be essential to the promotion of economic development and tourism in our community.”

Wayne A. Eichelkraut Jr.
Commissioner of Finance
City of Ottawa