

# MONTANA



Headwaters Trail System in Montana | Photo by Kevin Belanger, courtesy Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

## ROUTE

The Great American Rail-Trail route through Montana will connect many of the communities known for their outdoor recreation assets 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.

RTC found and reviewed 29 plans in Montana to better understand the state's trail priorities. A full list of these plans can be found in Appendix A.

## TABLE 22 GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL STATISTICS IN MONTANA

Total Great American Rail-Trail Existing Trail Miles in Mont. (% of Total State Mileage)	86.9 (20.2%)
Total Great American Rail-Trail Trail Gap Miles in Mont. (% of Total State Mileage)	342.4 (79.8%)
Total Trail Gaps in Mont.	13
Total Great American Rail-Trail Miles in Mont.	429.3

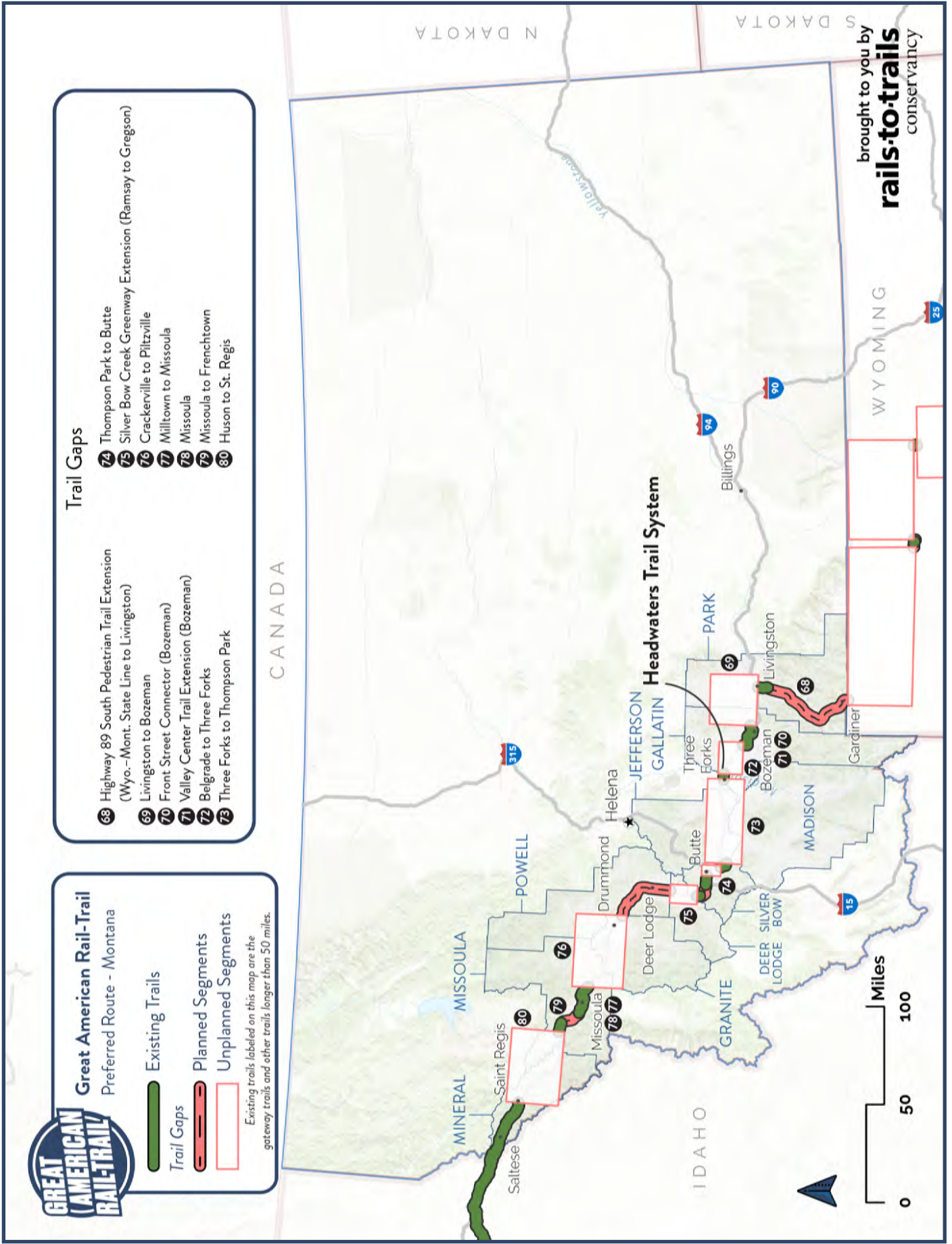
GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT  
MONTANA

**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 – Highway 89 South Pedestrian Trail Extension (Wyo.–Mont. State Line to Livingston)	52.5	Silver Bow Creek Greenway (Butte to Ramsay)	5.7
Highway 89 South Pedestrian Trail	4.3	TRAIL GAP 75 – Silver Bow Creek Greenway Extension (Ramsay to Gregson)	8.8
Livingston Depot Center Trail	1.5	Silver Bow Creek Greenway (Gregson to Crackerville)	1.5
TRAIL GAP 69 – Livingston to Bozeman	26.1	TRAIL GAP 76 – Crackerville to Piltzville	104.7
Bozeman to Bridger Mountains Trail/Path to the “M” and Drinking Horse	2.3	Piltzville Trail	3.3
Story Mill Spur	1.0	TRAIL GAP 77 – Milltown to Missoula	3.9
TRAIL GAP 70 – Front Street Connector (Bozeman)	0.3	Canyon River Trail	0.8
Oak Street Trail	1.5	Milwaukee Trail	5.9
North 19th Avenue Trail	1.3	TRAIL GAP 78 – Missoula	1.8
Valley Center Trail	0.3	Mullan Road Trail	2.2
TRAIL GAP 71 – Valley Center Trail Extension (Bozeman)	1.4	TRAIL GAP 79 – Missoula to Frenchtown	11.5
Valley Center Trail	4.5	A.J. Hoyt Memorial Trail	4.7
Jackrabbit Lane Shared-Use Path	2.0	TRAIL GAP 80 – Huson to St. Regis	52.8
TRAIL GAP 72 – Belgrade to Three Forks	18.9	Route of the Olympian	22.7
Headwaters Trail System	2.9	NorPac Trail	14.4
TRAIL GAP 73 – Three Forks to Thompson Park	48.8		
Milwaukee Road Rail-Trail (Thompson Park)	4.1		
TRAIL GAP 74 – Thompson Park to Butte	10.9		
		Total Miles	429.3
		<i>Existing Trail Miles</i>	86.9
		<i>Trail Gap Miles</i>	342.4

# GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT

## MAP 11: MONTANA



# GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT MONTANA



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

## TRAIL GAP 68 – HIGHWAY 89 SOUTH PEDESTRIAN 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 with 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.

Park County is currently reviewing opportunities to complete a similar study for the remaining length of corridor from Point of Rocks north to the current terminus of the Highway 89 South Pedestrian Trail, just south of Livingston.

## 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	<a href="http://livingstontrailsrx.com/highway-89-south-bike-path.html">livingstontrailsrx.com/highway-89-south-bike-path.html</a>
TrailLink Map	<a href="http://traillink.com/trail/highway-89-south-pedestrian-trail">traillink.com/trail/highway-89-south-pedestrian-trail</a>

The Highway 89 South Pedestrian Trail begins at the northern terminus of the Old Yellowstone Trail North 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.

# 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 to the Highway 89 South Pedestrian Trail to U.S. 10 West 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.

## 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. The asphalt trail begins at Story Mill Community Park, another new recreation amenity in Bozeman offering 60 acres of restored wetlands, playgrounds, sports fields and hiking trails.

From Story Mill Road, the trail parallels Bridger Canyon Road (state Route 86) heading east to the mountains. It switches to the north side of Bridger Canyon Road and crosses Bridger Creek via a newly constructed bridge. The trail then continues to the College M Trailhead and Picnic Area. An underpass under Bridger Canyon Road connects users to the Drinking Horse Mountain Trailhead. These are two of the easier and more popular out-and-back hiking trails in the Bridger Mountain foothills.

# 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	<a href="http://gvlt.org/trails">gvlt.org/trails</a>
TrailLink Map	<a href="http://traillink.com/trail/story-mill-spur">traillink.com/trail/story-mill-spur</a>

The preferred route of the Great American Rail-Trail enters Bozeman on 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 Bridger Drive and Story Mill Road and heading south to a historical depot at Front and East Tamarack streets. The Story Mill Spur passes through a tunnel beneath I-90 and over the East Gallatin River.

## 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 total cost for the project is estimated at \$215,000, and it should be completed in the near future, following Montana Department of Transportation improvements at Oak Street and Rouse Avenue. Gallatin Valley Land Trust requested \$45,000 in 2020 from the Montana Recreational Trails Program to assist with the installation of a pedestrian and bicycle bridge over Bozeman Creek to help fill this trail gap.

## 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	<a href="http://gvlt.org/trails">gvlt.org/trails</a>
TrailLink Map	<a href="http://traillink.com/trail/oak-street-trail-">traillink.com/trail/oak-street-trail-</a>

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	<a href="http://gvlt.org/trails">gvlt.org/trails</a>
TrailLink Map	<a href="http://traillink.com/trail/north-19th-avenue-trail-">traillink.com/trail/north-19th-avenue-trail-</a>

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	<a href="http://gvlt.org/trails">gvlt.org/trails</a>
TrailLink Map	<a href="http://traillink.com/trail/valley-center-trail-">traillink.com/trail/valley-center-trail-</a>

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, ending at 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 the future 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.

## 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	<a href="http://ci.belgrade.mt.us/parks">ci.belgrade.mt.us/parks</a>
TrailLink Map	<a href="http://traillink.com/trail/jackrabbit-lane-shared-use-path-">traillink.com/trail/jackrabbit-lane-shared-use-path-</a>

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 Gallat10 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 Gallat10 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 Milwaukee Road corridor at the town of Manhattan and connect to Three Forks via a potential future rail-trail.<sup>30</sup> The city of Three Forks has applied for funding to continue extending the Headwaters Trail System eastward from the existing terminus on Frontage Road, but funding has not yet been allocated for such a project.

<sup>30</sup> The Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad (Milwaukee Road) was a Class I railroad that stretched from Chicago to Seattle. By the 1980s, most of the corridor had become abandoned. While much of the corridor remains undeveloped in Montana, it reverted to adjacent landowners when it was abandoned, thus most of the corridor 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.

# 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)	2.9
Trail Type	Greenway, rail-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	City of Three Forks
Website	<a href="http://threeforksmontana.com/business/headwaters-trail-system-2">threeforksmontana.com/business/headwaters-trail-system-2</a>
TrailLink Map	<a href="http://trailink.com/trail/headwaters-trail-system">trailink.com/trail/headwaters-trail-system</a>

The Headwaters Trail System is a paved network of trails, portions of which run along the former Milwaukee Road corridor, 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.

The Great American Rail-Trail will connect to the Headwaters Trail System at its eastern terminus in the community of Carpenter at the intersection of Madison and Frontage roads, just north of I-90. The northern leg of the Headwaters Trail System travels along the former Milwaukee Road corridor and currently ends at Three Forks High School. The former rail depot lies just to the southwest along Frontage Road, where the Three Forks Chamber of Commerce operates out of an old Milwaukee Road railcar at the Headwaters Railroad and Trident Heritage Center. The former rail corridor itself has since been developed upon. While a creative solution to continue a trail westward out of Three Forks will need to be developed, the rich rail history of the town should not be lost in the process.

## TRAIL GAP 73 – THREE FORKS TO THOMPSON PARK

The city of Three Forks has a long-term vision to expand the Headwaters Trail System westward. The Headwaters Trail System requested \$69,999 in 2020 in Montana Recreational Trails Program funding to construct 1.4 miles of asphalt trail on the west side of Three Forks, to be called the Jefferson Street Loop Trail. 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 48.8 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"> <li><a href="http://co.silverbow.mt.us/453/Thompson-Park">co.silverbow.mt.us/453/Thompson-Park</a></li> <li><a href="http://fs.usda.gov/recarea/bdnf/recarea/?re-cid=81782">fs.usda.gov/recarea/bdnf/recarea/?re-cid=81782</a></li> </ul>
TrailLink Map	<a href="http://trailink.com/trail/milwaukee-road-rail-trail-(thompson-park)">trailink.com/trail/milwaukee-road-rail-trail-(thompson-park)</a>

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 the 25 additional miles of trail that connect through Thompson Park, it is here where 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, and 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 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, and 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	<a href="http://co.silverbow.mt.us/433/Silver-Bow-Creek-Greenway-Trails">co.silverbow.mt.us/433/Silver-Bow-Creek-Greenway-Trails</a>
TrailLink Map	<a href="http://traillink.com/trail/silver-bow-creek-greenway">traillink.com/trail/silver-bow-creek-greenway</a>

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. At Durant Canyon, 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, 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.

## TRAIL GAP 76 – CRACKERVILLE TO PILTZVILLE

To connect the 104.7 miles from the end of the Silver Bow Creek Greenway to Piltzville, just outside of Missoula, a trail could follow the old Milwaukee Road rail line north from Crackerville to the town of Opportunity. From Opportunity, a trail could then continue north through Powell County, which recently purchased a 107-acre property that contains 7.5 miles of the old Milwaukee Road corridor. Powell County intends to complete Phase 1 of a project to convert this corridor into a trail in the spring and summer of 2019 from Garrison southward. Phase 2 of this project will connect south into the city of Deer Lodge near the Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site. A Powell County Trails Master Plan was completed and approved by county commissioners in 2016.

There are no immediate plans to head west from Garrison. At Clinton, a trail could travel from the northeastern side of the Clark Fork River to 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	<a href="http://traillink.com/trail/piltzville-trail-">traillink.com/trail/piltzville-trail-</a>

# GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT MONTANA

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.

## TRAIL GAP 77 – MILLTOWN TO MISSOULA

There is a 3.9-mile gap between the Piltzville Trail and the Canyon River Trail through Milltown State Park. There are two potential options to fill this gap:

**Option 1** – Milltown State Park is currently in a redevelopment process that could continue to increase trails through the park and across the Clark Fork River. Future trail building to the east could open the trail from multiple angles. A potential bridge crossing the Clark Fork River could connect to the entryway of a tunnel that once took a railroad beneath a cliff along the Clark Fork River. Montana State Parks received a Recreational Trails Program grant in 2018 to work to reopen the tunnel. If the tunnel is reopened, the Piltzville Trail would continue west to Deer Creek Road, where it could head north, crossing under I-90 into the Canyon River Golf Club to connect to the Canyon River Trail.

**Option 2** – The second option uses the existing Bonner Streetcar Trail along state Route 200. Missoula County has completed 30% of the designs on a trail alignment that would continue to follow state Route 200 around the bend in the Clark Fork River to Deer Creek Road. The trail could cross the Clark Fork River at Deer Creek Road and connect to the Canyon River Trail.

Both options are in various stages of planning.

## 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	<a href="http://traillink.com/trail/canyon-river-trail-">traillink.com/trail/canyon-river-trail-</a>

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 Milwaukee Trail (described below) and the Canyon River Trail 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 at least 0.8 mile of the Canyon River Trail, depending on where it enters Missoula from the west.



Milwaukee Trail in Montana | Photo by Kevin Belanger, courtesy Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

## 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	<a href="http://ci.missoula.mt.us/207/maps">ci.missoula.mt.us/207/maps</a>
TrailLink Map	<a href="http://traillink.com/trail/milwaukee-trail">traillink.com/trail/milwaukee-trail</a>

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. The Milwaukee Trail intersects the Bitterroot Trail near downtown Missoula (where trail users can enjoy an approximately 50-mile continuous paved path up the Bitterroot Valley to the city of Hamilton) and continues westward mostly along the historical Milwaukee Road route.

# GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT MONTANA

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, and 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 existing Milwaukee Trail at North Grove Street, the trail is intended to continue along the former Milwaukee Road corridor west toward Mullan Road. The trail will cross over the Clark Fork River and continue west to Schmidt Road. From here, the Milwaukee Trail may continue to follow the former rail corridor or head north to connect to the existing Mullan Road Trail. Currently, there are no detailed plans on exactly how and when to complete this gap, nor are there cost estimates. However, the city of Missoula and Missoula County continue to work together to acquire property to make this 1.8-mile connection a reality.

## 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	<a href="http://missoulacounty.us/government/culture-recreation/parks-trails">missoulacounty.us/government/culture-recreation/parks-trails</a>
TrailLink Map	<a href="http://traillink.com/trail/mullan-road-trail">traillink.com/trail/mullan-road-trail</a>

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 Reinvestment and Recovery Act.<sup>31</sup> The Mullan Road Trail will host the Great American Rail-Trail for approximately 2.2 miles, traveling westward toward Frenchtown, Montana.

<sup>31</sup> The Mullan Road Trail can be used by people wishing to travel along the Great American Rail-Trail to safely continue west from Missoula into Missoula County. The Milwaukee Road corridor is in private ownership and has been developed between Schmidt Road in Missoula and Frenchtown, so the Mullan Road Trail and a trail continuing along Mullan Road to Frenchtown are the best options to complete the connection through this part of Missoula County.

## 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.

## 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	<a href="http://missoulacounty.us/government/culture-recreation/parks-trails">missoulacounty.us/government/culture-recreation/parks-trails</a>
TrailLink Map	<a href="http://traillink.com/trail/aj-hoyt-memorial-trail">traillink.com/trail/aj-hoyt-memorial-trail</a>

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 Superior, Montana, recently formed a group 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, the mountains, the highway and private development, creative solutions should be considered.

# GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT MONTANA



Missoula Bridge on the Milwaukee Trail in Montana | Photo by Kevin Belanger, courtesy Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

## 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	<a href="http://friendsofcdatrails.org/route-of-the-olympian">friendsofcdatrails.org/route-of-the-olympian</a>
TrailLink Map	<a href="http://trailink.com/trail/route-of-the-olympian">trailink.com/trail/route-of-the-olympian</a>

The 31-mile-long Route of the Olympian was constructed on the former Milwaukee Road corridor through the Lolo National Forest. The route directly connects with the Route of the Hiawatha to the south and the NorPac Trail to the north and follows the St. Regis River for most of its length. 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.<sup>32</sup>

## NORPAC TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	14.4
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	<a href="http://friendsofcdatrails.org/northern-pacific-trail">friendsofcdatrails.org/northern-pacific-trail</a>
TrailLink Map	<a href="http://trailink.com/trail/norpac-trail">trailink.com/trail/norpac-trail</a>

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 with 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.

<sup>32</sup> 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 connection to the Route of the Hiawatha at the town of Taft to the tiny community of Saltese 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.