

KICKAPOO RAIL TRAIL EXTENSION

Urbana, Illinois

Creating Connections and Conserving Illinois' Prairie



Kickapoo Rail Trail trestle | Photo by Chris Bucher

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Kickapoo Rail Trail in Illinois is a planned 24.5-mile project designed to increase connectivity in Champaign and Vermilion counties, specifically from Urbana east to the 2,800-acres-plus Kickapoo State Park in Danville. At present, 6.7 miles of the trail are developed; the planned extension at the trail's current western terminus will stretch along the University Avenue corridor in Urbana, eventually intersecting with the Boneyard Creek Path and providing new, safe nonmotorized transportation routes through downtown and the area's many parks, schools and job centers.

Of note, the trail will also assist in protecting Illinois' immense biodiversity, including woodlands, wetlands and some of the last tallgrass prairie in the state. The Kickapoo trail will eventually connect to the Heartland Pathways, completing a network aimed at preserving the grasslands that once flourished across Central Illinois and much of the Midwest.¹

As part of the Champaign-Urbana Long Range Transportation Plan 2045, the Kickapoo Rail Trail plays a critical role in the regional active-transportation system, with links to countless regional destinations. The extension is being coordinated across the Champaign County Forest Preserve District and the Vermilion County Conservation District in coordination with the City of Urbana and the Urbana Park District, who are currently exploring opportunities to expand the trail past the railbed into Champaign.

SOURCES

¹ Elizabeth Striano, "Saving America's Prairies," *Rails-to-Trails*, Winter 2016.

² Estimated at 17 jobs per \$1 million spent, according to a study commissioned by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) on American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) job creation; jobs in terms of full-time equivalents.

³ Striano, "Saving America's Prairies."

CAMPAIGN OVERVIEW

LEAD AUTHORITY:	Champaign County Forest Preserve District, Vermilion County Conservation District, Urbana Park District, and the City of Urbana
TOTAL PROJECT COST:	\$1,458,000 for Urbana extension
FUNDING PLEDGED TO DATE:	\$0
FEDERAL:	\$0
STATE:	\$11,200,000 currently allocated for full 24.5-mile trail completion
LOCAL AND PRIVATE:	\$0
SHOVEL-READY:	Three years or less; partial land acquisition needed
TYPE:	Urban, rural

TRANSFORMATIVE IMPACT

JOB CREATION

An estimated 25 jobs directly²

TRANSPORTATION

When complete, the Kickapoo Rail Trail will be nearly 25 miles and provide safe alternatives to driving for residents of both rural and urban communities across Champaign and Vermilion counties.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

The Kickapoo Rail Trail ends in downtown Urbana, supporting the growth and economic development of the main street. Upon completion, the trail will connect to the Boneyard Creek trail near the University of Illinois, providing safe, car-free connections for students and university employees between campus and downtown.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

The trail allows for the reduced reliance on cars, thus decreasing emissions, while providing a significant opportunity to conserve the environmentally sensitive tallgrass prairie—some of the last of its kind in Illinois. The prairie is home to countless species and serves as a "stop-over" for many migratory bird species, making the trail a destination for nature and nature-lovers alike.³