



rails-to-trails conservancy

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Apr. 8, 2022

CONTACT: Patricia Brooks, patricia@matchmapmedia.com, 202.351.1757

Significant Milestones Build Momentum for the Great American Rail-Trail® in the West

On the western end of the Great American Rail-Trail, progress is marked with the grand opening of the Beverly Bridge in Washington, closing a major gap in the 285-mile Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail.

In Nebraska, a historic vote by the state legislature funds \$8.3 million to construct the MoPac Trail between Lincoln and Omaha.

WASHINGTON—Progress made this week to advance the Great American Rail-Trail® is reason to celebrate, according to Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC), the nation’s largest trails advocacy organization and the lead organizers in the effort to connect the cross-country multiuse trail across 3,700 miles and 12 states plus the District of Columbia.

In Washington State, the former Milwaukee Road railroad bridge that provides the only trail crossing over the Columbia River has been restored. In 2014, a fire made the bridge unsafe for passage. Construction on the 3,000-foot bridge began in 2020, and the renovation was made possible through \$5.575 million in state funding from 2019 to 2021.

RTC staff joined Governor Jay Inslee, Washington State Parks, members of the Wanapum Tribe (on whose ancestral grounds the bridge resides), the Palouse to Cascades Trail Coalition and more than 100 supporters, trail users and advocates [at the grand opening of the Beverly Bridge](#) at 1 p.m. Pacific on April 8. The bridge opening closes a critical gap in the 285-mile Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail, creating more than 50 continuous miles of the Great American Rail-Trail in Washington State.

“The opening of the Beverly Bridge marks a long-awaited milestone for trails in Washington and for the entire Great American Rail-Trail,” said Marianne Fowler, RTC’s senior strategist for policy advocacy and a long-time advocate for the Great American Rail-Trail. “Washington and the Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail have been forebearers of the rail-trail movement for decades. The promise the bridge holds for the region carries forward their legacy of trail leadership and the potential to bring health and economic opportunity to the dozens of communities the trail serves on the east and west sides of the river.”

In Nebraska, April 7 marked a historic vote for trail funding and a significant boost for the Great American Rail-Trail. The [Nebraska Legislature voted to override Governor Ricketts’ veto](#) of LB 1013, restoring \$8.3 million in funding to construct the gap in the MoPac Trail between Lincoln and Omaha.

“It will take tireless advocacy, sustained investment, partnership and promotion to complete the Great American Rail-Trail,” said Kevin Belanger, project manager for the Great American Rail-Trail. “What we just saw in Nebraska embodies all of what it takes to build momentum and connect this trail across the country. We’ve worked closely with our friends at Bike Walk Nebraska, the Nebraska Trails Foundation, the Great Plains Trail Network and the Northwest Nebraska Trails Association to help demonstrate the economic and tourism potential of completing the Great American Rail-Trail. Their hard work has paid off with this state funding, and strong support from the legislature, to close a critical gap in Nebraska’s route.”

In a [statement](#), Brittany Helmbrecht, president of the Northwest Nebraska Trails Association said, “Nebraska has the most mileage of any state for the Great American Rail-Trail, which stretches from Washington, D.C., to Washington State. Getting the MoPac Trail connected in the eastern part of the state will complement our work to get the Cowboy Trail completed in northwest Nebraska. Eventually, people will be able to ride across the state from Omaha to Chadron, which will increase bicycle tourism in many rural communities.”

In December, [RTC announced](#) that 2021 marked the highest annual investment made to date in Great American Rail-Trail projects, with an estimated \$15.6 million in public and private funds. Since the trail was announced in 2019, more than \$42 million has been invested nationwide in projects that fill critical gaps along the route. [Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission](#) was part of a press conference on the significant impact of connections like the Renslow Trestle and the Beverly Bridge on the Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail. The Beverly Bridge opening follows the most recent announcement of the official opening of the Tekoa Trestle near the Idaho border last Friday.

The Great American will serve 50 million people living within 50 miles of the trail, as well as millions of additional visitors from around the world. Explore the Great American at greatamericanrailtrail.org, and connect with the #GRTAmerican via social media @greatamericanrailtrail.

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy is the nation’s largest trails organization—with a grassroots community more than 1 million strong—dedicated to building a nation connected by trails, reimagining public spaces to create safe ways for everyone to walk, bike and be active outdoors. Connect with RTC at railstotrails.org and @railstotrails on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).