

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL®

ROUTE ASSESSMENT REPORT
MAY 2023



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conservancy

Great American Rail-Trail

More Than 3,700 Miles Between Washington, D.C., and Washington State

When Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC) was founded in 1986, just a handful of rail-trails dotted the landscape. Today, there are nearly 25,000 miles of rail-trails crisscrossing the countryside and another 8,000 miles of rail-trails ready to be built—making the Great American Rail-Trail viable for the first time. Analyses implemented in the past few years of open rail-trails and out-of-service rail corridors show the potential to build a rail-trail that spans from Washington to Washington. Hundreds of conversations with state agencies and local trail managers confirm that this is a realistic pursuit.

This map shows the preferred route of the Great American Rail-Trail, including the 150+ rail-trails, greenways and other multiuse paths that make the route more than 54% complete. The trail gaps that will connect those existing trails are divided into two categories: planned segments, with specific routes that are already identified for completion; and unplanned segments, where potential routes are identified and planning work is ongoing to confirm specific routes.



- Existing Trails
- Trail Gaps
 - Planned Segments
 - Unplanned Segments



For more information, visit:
greatamericanrailtrail.org.

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ABOUT RAILS-TO-TRAILS CONSERVANCY

RTC is the nation's largest trails organization—with a grassroots community more than 1 million strong—dedicated to connecting people and communities by creating a nationwide network of public trails, many from former rail lines. RTC serves as the national voice for the nation's 40,000+ miles of rail-trails and multiuse trails, and 8,000+ miles of potential rail-trails ready to be built, with the goal of creating more walkable, bikeable communities in America. Connect with RTC at railstotrails.org and [@railstotrails](https://www.facebook.com/railstotrails) on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

View the trails along the route at traillink.com/great-american-rail-trail and learn more about the Great American Rail-Trail at greatamericanrailtrail.org and RTC's network-building initiative at trailnation.org. Follow the Great American Rail-Trail at [@greatamericanrailtrail](https://www.facebook.com/greatamericanrailtrail) on Facebook and Instagram.

* Trail developments have been provided as of April 2023.

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GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL VISION

Imagine pedaling across the entire country on a safe, seamless and scenic pathway—or walking a local trail that connects you to historic routes from coast to coast. You're enthralled in the experience of exploring America's heritage—its potential, its beauty and bounty, its people and places. Consider the intimacy of taking in all the country has to offer from the most personal vantage point: the trail.

Spanning more than 3,700 miles, the Great American Rail-Trail promises an all-new American experience. The trail travels through 12 states and the District of Columbia, connecting trail users and communities from Washington to Washington, and possibly someday from the Atlantic to the Pacific. As the first cross-country trail of its kind, the “Great American” will be hosted primarily by rail-trails—public paths created from former railroad corridors—as well as other multiuse trails, offering a route across the nation that is completely separated from vehicle traffic. Upon its completion, the Great American will serve more than 50 million people within 50 miles of its route, as well as the millions from across the country and the world who will explore America's diverse places via the trail.

The potential for a trail of this magnitude has been on Rails-to-Trails Conservancy's (RTC's) radar since the early days of RTC, some three decades ago, when co-founder David Burwell first dreamed of a trail for the nation. It would not be long before this dream would transform into vision, as RTC began to track rail-trail development in the 1980s, and the skeleton for a cross-country trail began to take shape. While the team at RTC “always knew” the potential for this trail, it also knew the significant undertaking and commitment required to get it done, thus setting two criteria for determining the trail's potential: a viable route that was more than 50% complete, and a pathway across the west.

Washington, D.C.—as the nation's capital and the home to RTC's national headquarters—had always been earmarked as the eastern terminus for a cross-country trail. In 2016, RTC staff traveled to Wyoming and Montana to explore route solutions in the west, as traversing the rugged mountains presented the same challenges to trail development as to the railroads that came before. In 2017, preliminary GIS analyses revealed multiple potential cross-country route options between Washington, D.C., and Washington State that were more than 50% complete. It was then that RTC knew the Great American Rail-Trail had the potential to become reality. Since then, the team at RTC has met with hundreds of trail partners along the preferred route for the trail as well as state agencies to align this vision with state and local trail priorities.

The Great American Rail-Trail marks RTC's most ambitious trail project to date and the single greatest trail project in the history of the country; its future is possible thanks to the hard work of the local trails community and countless volunteers, as well as the support and enthusiasm of each of the states it crosses.

THE “GREAT AMERICAN” IMPACT

Now—and at an even grander scale when complete—the Great American Rail-Trail will magnify the economic, social and community benefits that trails have delivered to people and places for decades. For example, a study conducted by RTC in 2014 found that Pennsylvania's Three Rivers Heritage Trail—a trail along the route of the Great American—generates an estimated \$8.3 million annually as a result of outdoor tourism and local business patronage. As a large-scale, cross-country trail network, the Great American has the potential to generate billions of dollars a year for communities along its route by increasing trail connectivity between places, catalyzing new investment in trailside businesses and commercial opportunities, and enhancing tourism as well as outdoor recreation, which, according to a report by the Outdoor Recreation Roundtable, is currently the fastest-growing industry in the country.

As new trails and connecting corridors are developed, communities along the Great American route will also gain safer walking and biking access to the places they want to go—like jobs, public transportation and shopping centers. All who enjoy the Great American will have better access to the outdoors as the trail intersects with green space within communities and connects to public lands along the route.

THE PREFERRED ROUTE OF THE “GREAT AMERICAN”

With RTC's commitment to complete the Great American Rail-Trail, efforts have focused on working with trail partners and states to confirm a route across the country that would provide the highest-quality experience for all types of trail users—from bicyclists to hikers and everyone in between.

To this end, RTC embarked on a 12-month assessment of route options using its GIS database of more than 34,000 miles of existing, multiuse trails nationwide, and analyzing more than 300 state and local trail plans to identify planned future trails. RTC also met and worked with more than 200 local trail partners and more than 50 state agencies representing the trails along the route, shaping criteria to ensure safe, non-motorized travel on a route that is entirely walkable and bikeable. These trail criteria specify that the Great American Rail-Trail be one contiguous route that is preliminarily more than 80%, and ultimately entirely, off-road and separated from vehicle traffic; comprise existing trails to the extent possible; be reasonably direct from Washington to Washington; be amenable to the state and local jurisdictions through which it will cross; and serve as a catalyst for local economic development, including providing services for long-distance travelers.

Through the assessment, RTC and its partners have defined the preferred route of the Great American Rail-Trail as more than 3,700 miles—with approximately 2,057 miles of existing trails (trails along the route that are built and maintained by dedicated teams of local staff and volunteers) and 1,696 miles of identified trail gaps (sections of trail that still need to be developed).

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TABLE 1 GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL MILEAGE

	Total Miles	Existing Miles	Gap Miles	% Complete	Trail Gaps
D.C.	7.5	7.5	0	100%	0
Md.	200.3	200.3	0	100%	0
Pa.	171.9	162.1	9.8	94.3%	1
W.Va.	8.7	4.6	4.1	52.9%	1
Ohio	335.3	235.3	100.0	70.2%	10
Ind.	214.7	119.0	95.7	55.4%	9
Ill.	193.5	168.3	25.2	87.0%	4
Iowa	468.0	255.3	212.7	54.6%	19
Neb.	590.5	307.3	283.2	52.0%	10
Wyo.	509.4	17.2	492.2	3.4%	6
Mont.	425.9	106.6	319.3	25.0%	12
Idaho	89.6	79.1	10.5	88.3%	1
Wash.	538.5	394.6	143.9	73.3%	10
TOTAL	3,753.8	2,057.2	1,696.6	54.8%	83

While there are more than 1,600 miles of trails to complete along the route of the Great American Rail-Trail, each trail gap has one or more future trail options identified as possible trail connections. Many of these gaps and proposed future trails are already identified in public plans that have been adopted at the state and local levels. Insight from local trail partners and states has helped to identify the preferred alignment that best corresponds with their priorities, with the intention of maximizing existing trail momentum as the Great American Rail-Trail is connected across the country.

STATE-BY-STATE SNAPSHOT

WASHINGTON, D.C., AND MARYLAND

The trail route through Washington, D.C., and Maryland is the only section of the Great American Rail-Trail that is currently 100% complete. The route begins at the steps of the U.S. Capitol and picks up at the Capital Crescent Trail in Georgetown, which flows into the towpath of the Chesapeake and Ohio (C&O) Canal National Historical Park. With the C&O stretching from Washington, D.C., to Cumberland, Maryland, the route then meets up with the Great Allegheny Passage (gaptrail.org).

PENNSYLVANIA

The route through Pennsylvania connects several existing trails and includes a gap of fewer than 10 miles between Pittsburgh and Coraopolis. By connecting the trail through Pittsburgh, the Great American Rail-Trail also connects to the Industrial Heartland Trails Coalition (IHTC), a 1,500-mile network of trails that is part of RTC's TrailNation™ portfolio. The IHTC network will stretch across 51 counties in four states—Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Ohio and New York—from the shores of Lake Erie to the confluence of the three rivers in Pittsburgh and on to the Ohio River and Appalachian foothills.

WEST VIRGINIA

Traveling through the Northern Panhandle and along the Ohio River, the Great American Rail-Trail's path through West Virginia contains the least number of miles of any state across the route. As such, West Virginia has the smallest portion of trail to develop, with a 4.1-mile trail gap from the end of the Panhandle Trail in Weirton to the Market Street Bridge to cross the Ohio River into Steubenville, Ohio. Like Pennsylvania, the route through West Virginia is also along the Cleveland to Pittsburgh corridor of the proposed 1,500-mile IHTC trail network.

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

OHIO

Several iconic trails make up the route across Ohio, which is already more than two-thirds complete. The Ohio & Erie Canalway Towpath Trail connects New Philadelphia to Cleveland, providing a rich history and unique experience along the way. Instead of following the Ohio & Erie Canalway Towpath Trail all the way north to Cleveland, however, the Great American Rail-Trail will branch off at Clinton and head southwest on the Ohio to Erie Trail, which travels to Cincinnati through Columbus.

INDIANA

RTC met with Indiana state officials early in the Great American Rail-Trail process, recognizing that the route through Indiana would have a significant impact on the potential routes through its neighboring states. After analysis, two routes were presented: a shorter one across the north of the state and a longer diagonal one from Richmond, Indiana, toward the Chicago metropolitan area. State officials were excited about the potential of the Great American and asked RTC to consider including as many miles as possible in Indiana by using the longer diagonal route. To complete the preferred route through Indiana, about 95 miles of trail gaps will need to be addressed. With the state's commitment to its Next Level Connections program—a \$1 billion investment in infrastructure projects, including at least \$150 million for trails—there is great optimism for the necessary development to be completed.

ILLINOIS

The route through Illinois incorporates the majority of the northern leg of the Great Illinois Trail between Lansing, Illinois, and the Quad Cities. The iconic Illinois & Michigan Canal State Trail and Hennepin Canal Parkway make up almost 75% of the existing miles that the Great American Rail-Trail will use to cross the state. Strategic investments will be required to develop just over 25 miles of trail gaps and fully connect the Great American across Illinois.

IOWA

The Great American Rail-Trail travels through Iowa from Davenport to Council Bluffs at the western end of the state. Iowa has a rich network of trails, and on-the-ground trail partners are critical to its thriving trail culture and the development of the Great American in the state. While there are currently more than 212 miles of trail gaps to develop, support for the Great American was mentioned in the 2018 Iowa Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, showing statewide support for the completion of the route through Iowa.

NEBRASKA

The Great American Rail-Trail crosses into Nebraska on the iconic Bob Kerrey Pedestrian Bridge before weaving through the urban areas of Omaha and Lincoln. The Cowboy Recreation and Nature Trail (the “Cowboy Trail”) takes trail users almost 40% of the way across Nebraska, with more miles set for construction in the near future. With over 283 miles of trail gaps to develop along the preferred route through Nebraska, completing the Cowboy Trail will go a long way toward making the Great American a reality.

WYOMING

Wyoming has the potential to be an incredible section of the Great American Rail-Trail, with its unique landscapes and outdoor recreation assets. However, because of Wyoming's topography, any route through the state will require sizable grade increases at several locations, and currently, there are not significant miles of multiuse trail available to route a trail across the state. As a result, Wyoming has more trail gaps to develop—at just over 492 miles—than any other state along the Great American route. RTC reviewed mapping data, as well as various plans in Wyoming, identifying potential routes through Yellowstone National Park that could present opportunities for the Great American. In addition, the Wyoming Bicycle and Pedestrian System Task Force Report suggests that the Wyoming Legislature consider providing funding for the Great American as part of a recommended initiative to enhance the safety and function of long-distance bicycle tourism routes.

MONTANA

The Great American Rail-Trail route through Montana will connect many of the state's communities known for outdoor recreation assets—including Livingston, Bozeman, Three Forks, Butte and Missoula—which are all along the preferred Great American route. There are currently 319 miles of trail gaps to be developed in Montana, including an off-road 50-mile-plus multiuse trail option connecting Gardiner to Livingston in Park County.

IDAHO

The Great American Rail-Trail travels through the northern Panhandle of Idaho, primarily along developed rail-trails. Idaho has just one trail gap to complete, a connection from the city of Plummer to the Idaho–Washington state line. The state of Idaho and local officials will need to continue to work with landowners through the Lovell Valley to find an opportunity to complete the 10.5-mile connection between the Trail of the Coeur d'Alenes and the Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail.

WASHINGTON

The Washington section of the Great American Rail-Trail begins with the Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail, which travels approximately 250 miles, from the Idaho–Washington state line to the community of Cedar Falls. The largest gap in the Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail is 37.8 miles between the city of Warden and the unincorporated community of Smyrna, ultimately traveling to the city of Othello. Creative solutions that include the rail line and highway rights-of-way between Warden and Othello should be considered to help fully close this large gap in the trail.

The Great American Rail-Trail will continue west through King County and Seattle, crossing Puget Sound via ferry to Bainbridge Island. The burgeoning Sound to Olympics Trail and Olympic Discovery Trail will complete a trip to the Pacific Ocean at the town of La Push on the Quileute Reservation.

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE “GREAT AMERICAN” EXPERIENCE

The preferred route of the Great American Rail-Trail will highlight the diverse communities, breathtaking landscapes, and rich cultural and historical treasures that—together—make America special. A few highlights include:

- National Mall and Rock Creek Park – In Washington, D.C., the trail will begin a stone’s throw from the National Mall, which boasts iconic landmarks such as the Capitol Building, the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial. The trail then heads north along the Rock Creek Park Trails, located in the oldest and largest urban park in the national park system.
- C&O Canal Towpath at Fletcher’s Cove Boathouse – Along the Great American Rail-Trail route in Maryland, trail users can take in the sites and relics of the historical C&O Canal, which operated for more than 100 years, and once transported ships carrying various goods down the waterway to market. Today, visitors can experience the rich history of the canal through many original features, including locks, lockhouses and aqueducts.
- Holmes County Amish Country – A portion of the Great American Rail-Trail picks up on the Ohio to Erie Trail in Fredericksburg, Ohio, and follows it for about 150 miles across the state. Along this route, trail users will encounter the Holmes County Trail (a part of the Ohio to Erie Trail), which is located in the heart of Amish Country and was the first recreational trail in the country designed to accommodate Amish buggies.
- High Trestle Trail Bridge – In Iowa, the Great American Rail-Trail will utilize 16.2 miles in the middle of the High Trestle Trail, famous for its 130-foot-tall High Trestle Bridge, which boasts an art installation along—and above—the trail, wrapped in 43 twisting, diamond-shaped steel ribs, some lined with LED lights.
- Fort Robinson State Park – Great American Rail-Trail users will experience the White River Trail in Nebraska, which runs along a former Chicago and North Western Transportation Company corridor for 2.8 miles, ending at Fort Robinson State Park. Fort Robinson encompasses the fort and military camp that was home to the Red Cloud Agency in the 1870s. The agency served as an issuing point for supplies to the Oglala Lakota tribe of the Great Sioux Nation, as well as the Northern Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes, authorized in exchange for land ceded to the United States in 1868. It is also the site of Crazy Horse’s surrender and death in 1877, and visitors can find a historical plaque that marks the location.

- Coeur d’Alene Tribal History – Inducted by RTC into the Rail-Trail Hall of Fame in 2010, the Trail of the Coeur d’Alenes covers 71.3 miles of paved rail-trail along the Great American Rail-Trail, through Idaho’s scenic mountains and valleys. The area has a rich mining, railroad and Native American history, as the Coeur d’Alene Tribe was instrumental in the development of the trail. The trail originates in Mullan and terminates in the west in the city of Plummer in a public park with interpretive signage on the tribal history of the Schitsu’umsh people.

THE PATH TO THE GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL

The Great American Rail-Trail marks an unprecedented commitment by RTC and its public and private partners to create an iconic piece of American infrastructure that will connect more than 3,700 miles of rail-trail and other multiuse trails from Washington, D.C., to Washington State. This ambitious project will provide ample benefits to the communities, people and places it touches, while creating new connections to the American landscape for all who use the trail.

While the work to complete the Great American Rail-Trail is significant, RTC and its partners along the route have created a blueprint for the trail’s development; the route assessment provides important guidance to local planners, trail managers, state agencies and national partners that is based in the reality of existing plans and priorities. And while the ultimate completion of the Great American Rail-Trail is likely decades away, the 54% complete today is ready for the world to enjoy, and the momentum behind it will bring new segments onboard year after year.

ABOUT RAILS-TO-TRAILS CONSERVANCY

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy is the nation’s largest trails organization—with a grassroots community more than 1 million strong—dedicated to connecting people and communities by creating a nationwide network of public trails, many from former rail lines. Founded in 1986, the organization currently serves as the national voice for the trails movement, advocating for the country’s 40,000+ miles of rail-trails and multiuse trails, and 8,000+ miles of potential rail-trails ready to be built, with a goal of creating more walkable, bikeable communities in America. Connect with RTC at railstotrails.org and [@railstotrails](https://www.facebook.com/railstotrails) on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

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GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

A TRAIL FOR AMERICA

Picture yourself ... pedaling across the entire country on a safe, seamless and scenic pathway—or walking a local trail that connects along historic routes. The experience of exploring America's heritage, its potential, its beauty and bounty, its people and places.

This vision and these experiences will become a reality thanks to the Great American Rail-Trail, a signature project of Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC) and our most ambitious venture yet.

IMAGINE WHAT'S POSSIBLE

A family takes their children out on their neighborhood trail every weekend. The youngest is learning how to ride his bicycle without training wheels so he can keep up with his big sister, who is always a few steps ahead. Imagine the wonder in their minds the first time they discover that the trail in their backyard connects to trails in the next town, the next county, the next state—and all the way across America.

A small industrial community once served by a booming railroad is looking for new economic development opportunities. Imagine the potential for commerce generated by the thousands of trail users who visit the town each year and spend money on food, lodging and the many charms offered in this revitalized trail town.

Imagine a cross-country trail that connects us all, highlighting the diverse history, geography and cultural treasures that make each community special.

The possibilities are endless.

THE STORY

IT BEGAN AS A DREAM

For more than 30 years, RTC has recognized the potential for a multiuse trail that connects the nation.

As railroads gave way to new forms of transportation in the mid-20th century, thousands of miles of rail lines were disused across the country—giving rise to the rail-trail movement and RTC's formal establishment in 1986 to preserve these priceless corridors. The 1983 Railbanking Statute had helped lay a foundation for rail-trail development, and by 1989, an estimated 200 known rail-trails were on the ground in American communities.

As the movement took hold, RTC Co-Founder David Burwell dreamed of a trail that would connect the vast North American continent just as the railroads did—envisioning that rail-trails would one day be “America's Main Street.”

Almost from its earliest beginnings, RTC would see the dream transform into possibility. Rail-trails—tracked on a large U.S. wall map at RTC's headquarters in Washington, D.C.—began to hint at a single route forming from east to west as the 1980s gave way to the early 1990s. Using pins to mark new and completed rail-trail projects, the staff watched as more and more pins were added and the skeleton of a cross-country rail-trail slowly, but surely, began to take shape.

The seeds of the Great American Rail-Trail had been planted.

The prospect of completing such an ambitious project was exciting in its possibilities, but daunting at a time when RTC was still in its infancy. Realizing the coordination and resources needed for such a massive effort, RTC focused efforts on strengthening the organization and the national trail movement, including: advocating for new funding streams for trails and walking and biking infrastructure; supporting trail development nationwide; and increasing public support for rail-trails—drawing attention to the health, transportation, economic, environmental and social benefits they provide for their communities and the people who use them.

As RTC moved forward, aspirations of completing the iconic American route became an internal drumbeat for the organization for the next three decades.

BUILDING A MOVEMENT—AND A VISION

RTC continued to monitor the route's progress toward 50% completion—the milestone identified as the threshold for committing to the project as a national organization.

In 1991, the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) established two new federal programs for trails: Transportation Enhancements (known today as Transportation Alternatives) and the Recreational Trails Program. By October 1998, the United States reached 1,000 rail-trails, and that number continued to grow steadily as more communities demanded these vital assets.

Washington, D.C.—as our nation's capital and the home of RTC's national headquarters—had always been earmarked as the eastern terminus for a cross-country trail. A potential terminus in the West remained elusive, however, as RTC endeavored to find solutions for traversing the rugged mountains and vast open spaces without a density of multiuse trail connections.

As the eastern half of the United States was making rapid progress on trail development, the western half was challenged by multiple factors, including less density of railroads, a lower volume of rail line abandonments and lower population densities in communities along the corridors.

In 2007, with 15,000 miles of rail-trails on the ground in the United States, RTC commissioned a study of the old “Milwaukee Road” (Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad), a legendary line connecting Chicago and Seattle that had fallen entirely into disuse by

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT

INTRODUCTION

1980. In 1982, Washington State purchased a portion of the corridor to create the Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail, which—at more than 220 miles and growing—is now one of the longest rail-trails in the country.

Investments made by King County, Washington, and trail developers in the Seattle area would result in thriving trail networks just farther west of the Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail, making the state a viable western terminus for a cross-country rail-trail.

EXPLORING NEW POSSIBILITIES

Just west of the Mississippi River, Iowa built momentum early, becoming the first state in the nation to take advantage of the national Railbanking Statute in the early- to mid-1980s. Nearby in Nebraska, rail-trails would also begin to pop up in increasing numbers.

Because much of the Milwaukee Road outside of Washington State had been lost to private landowners, RTC began to explore other potential routes in Montana and Idaho, eventually completing two comprehensive corridor assessments and related feasibility studies that helped identify new trail opportunities across both states.

By early 2016, RTC had amassed more than 160,000 members and supporters and helped secure federal funding streams that supported thousands of trail projects nationwide. With more than 22,000 miles of rail-trails on the ground—just three decades after David Burwell first dreamed of a multiuse trail across the country, and with renewed enthusiasm—RTC was poised and ready to commit to making the Great American Rail-Trail a reality.

Under the leadership of then-president Keith Laughlin, RTC embarked on a new exploratory effort to determine the feasibility of the route, as it had evolved since the late 1980s. In December 2016, three staff members traveled to Wyoming and Montana to explore options for a rail-trail route through the mountains. In 2017, preliminary geographic information system (GIS) analyses revealed multiple potential routes that were more than 50% complete for a cross-country route connecting Washington, D.C., and Washington State.

In February 2017, RTC began a formal route assessment across 12 states and the District of Columbia (detailed in the Methodology section of this report), which included meeting with hundreds of state and local officials, as well as local trail managers, and collecting mapping data and information for 130 trails. The results of this study are outlined in the State-by-State Route Analysis in this report. It's with pleasure that we invite you now to explore the preferred route of this iconic American trail in the making.

RTC revealed the preferred route of the Great American Rail-Trail in May 2019, celebrating the launch of this transformational project through a series of events with partner organizations across the country. RTC and our partners are tracking the march toward completion of the route by celebrating milestones large and small, including the completion of new trail segments, major maintenance efforts, new funding acquired and everything in between.

GREAT AMERICAN BENEFITS

The creation of the Great American Rail-Trail will help amplify the benefits—on a mass scale—that trails have provided across the project footprint for decades. The cross-country route will serve as a catalyst for new investment in trailside businesses and commercial opportunities that have the potential to generate billions of dollars a year for communities through outdoor tourism and local business patronage.

As new trails and connecting corridors are developed, the Great American Rail-Trail will open up access to safe places for physical activity and outdoor recreation—promoting health and wellness and encouraging every American to make new authentic connections to their neighborhoods and environments. These connections will bridge the gaps within, and between, our diverse communities, creating safe walking and biking access to jobs, green space, transit, shopping centers and the cultural treasures that make each place unique.

The Great American Rail-Trail will encourage millions of people to form closer connections to nature and promote a sense of stewardship and conversation in their neighborhoods and beyond.

And as people explore and discover the iconic places and diverse geographic beauty along this epic multiuse trail, they'll be joined together by a sense of pride and an understanding that out of many, we become one on the Great American Rail-Trail.

United, we trail.

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

USING THIS REPORT

This report serves as a snapshot in time on this exciting project to connect the country by trail. Routing choices are likely to change over time as new opportunities and challenges are presented.

This report is divided into two main sections. The **Methodology** outlines the process used to arrive at a preferred route for the Great American Rail-Trail, including the various selection criteria, the state strategy, the plan review, the selection of existing trails along the route and the exploration of the trail gaps.

The **State-by-State Route Analysis** walks readers through the route of the Great American Rail-Trail from east to west—Washington, D.C., to Washington State. Each state chapter includes a discussion of the existing trails along the route and any trail gaps that need to be developed to create a contiguous trail.

Following these two main sections, you'll find an appendix that defines important terminology used in this report.

It's important to note that RTC and our partner organizations are in the beginning stages of bringing the Great American Rail-Trail to life. This report is intended to outline the preferred route as the next step toward completing this shared vision and is not intended as a final planning document.

In conversations with trail managers and state officials across the project footprint, several common challenges were identified related to funding, maintenance, signage and trail amenities. RTC looks forward to continued future dialogue about these important issues and the formulation of shared solutions to make the Great American Rail-Trail a reality.

METHODOLOGY

After deciding to set our vision on completing the Great American Rail-Trail, RTC created a plan for success in the initial phase of the project. The initial methodology identified five important preliminary steps, which are discussed in this section:

1. Route Selection Criteria – making consistent routing decisions.
2. State Strategy – gaining support and endorsement of the trail within each state by lead state officials, securing commitment to work collaboratively with RTC.
3. Plan Review – reviewing the adopted state, county and local plans along the potential route across the country to understand current and future trail development.
4. Existing Trails – identifying the existing trails that could create the spine of a fully protected multiuse trail across the country.
5. Trail Gaps – identifying the gaps between the existing trails and exploring viable alternatives to fill the gaps with future trails.

GATEWAY TRAILS

The full route of the Great American Rail-Trail will connect 150+ rail-trails, greenways and other multiuse paths. The route includes 12 iconic “gateway” trails that make possible this grand vision of a nation connected by trails. These trails have been built through the hard work and ingenuity of the trails community—nonprofit partners, state agencies and volunteers who have rolled up their sleeves to protect and preserve these priceless corridors. These trails were highlighted in the winter 2019 issue of the Rails to Trails magazine. RTC thanks the following trails for agreeing to be gateway trails for the Great American Rail-Trail:

1. Washington, D.C.: Capital Crescent Trail (Page 17)
2. Maryland: C&O Canal National Historical Park (Page 21)
3. Pennsylvania and West Virginia: Panhandle Trail (Page 27, 30)
4. Ohio: Ohio to Erie Trail (Page 36)
5. Indiana: Cardinal Greenway (Page 48)
6. Illinois: Hennepin Canal Parkway (Page 57)
7. Iowa: Cedar Valley Nature Trail (Page 65)
8. Nebraska: Cowboy Recreation and Nature Trail (Page 85)
9. Wyoming: Casper Rail Trail (Page 92)
10. Montana: Headwaters Trail System (Page 102)
11. Idaho: Trail of the Coeur d'Alenes (Page 110)
12. Washington: Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail (Page 114)

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

ROUTE SELECTION CRITERIA

RTC determined the following route selection criteria to identify a feasible preferred route for the Great American Rail-Trail that ensures a high-quality experience for future users.

1. Provide for safe, non-motorized travel on a route that is entirely walkable and bikeable.

The Great American Rail-Trail shall be accessible to walk or bike along its entirety. Other types of uses are welcome and encouraged where local regulations allow, but this effort focuses on identifying a route that is entirely walkable and bikeable. The trails along the route do not need to be paved. However, the surface of the trails along the route should be smooth enough to accommodate trail users of all types, including asphalt, concrete, crushed stone and natural earth surfaces that are well maintained. Early railroad trains were capable of traveling at a maximum grade of 5%. The Great American Rail-Trail should stick to this maximum grade where possible to provide for a reasonable route for trail users. The average grade along the entire preferred route of the Great American Rail-Trail is 5.1%, which includes several steep sections of Wyoming and Montana. Removing those aberrations, the average grade along the preferred route is 3.9%.

2. Create one contiguous route.

RTC will identify one contiguous spine of the Great American Rail-Trail. Trails should seamlessly connect to each other as well as connect at state borders. RTC will focus its energy on identifying and facilitating the completion of one contiguous route rather than attempting to connect various trail spurs into the main spine of the trail. However, towns, cities and counties are encouraged to create trail connections into the main spine of the Great American Rail-Trail.

3. Provide a route that is entirely off-road in the long-term, making short-term detours for on-road routes where an off-road route has not yet been identified but is still reasonably feasible in the long term.

The main goal of the Great American Rail-Trail is to provide an entirely off-road walking and bicycling experience to help alleviate the stress of interacting with automobile traffic. Unfortunately, there currently is no simple way to connect a trail across the country without sharing some right-of-way with roads. The route as identified in this report is 80% to 90% off-street. The remaining 10% to 20% of the route will be co-located alongside road right-of-way, and will be separated from traffic to the extent possible. As the project is built out and gains momentum, additional trail opportunities will likely become viable to transition more of the route from road right-of-way to a more traditional trail experience.

Realistically, there are some places where an entirely off-street trail is unlikely due to the constraints of topography and land development. Where the trail must use roads open to vehicular traffic, the route needs to be as safe as possible, making use of such measures as low-volume or low-speed roads, wide shoulders and separated bike lanes. These roads are to be thought of as “interim on-road connections” with the goal of identifying and completing off-street trail opportunities as they become viable.

4. Utilize existing trails in the route to the extent possible.

RTC’s vision for the Great American Rail-Trail would not be possible without the hard work and dedication of planners, trail managers and volunteers who have developed and continue to maintain tens of thousands of miles of existing multiuse trails across the country. RTC wants to celebrate these existing trails by including as many of them in the route as possible. RTC initially identified 130 existing trails that made up the initial route of the Great American Rail-Trail, and the number has grown to more than 150.

5. Provide a route that is reasonably direct across the country.

RTC explored several route options to connect a trail across the country. The route that presented itself to us as the preferred route, as outlined in this report, was the most direct route to connect Washington, D.C., to Washington State that also included the greatest number of existing trails and future trail opportunities.

6. Follow a route amenable to the state and local jurisdictions through which it will cross.

State and local jurisdictions will be instrumental in completing the route across each state, so it is imperative that they are comfortable with and excited about the chosen route. It is also imperative that the states, counties and towns that currently are not connected by trail work together across boundaries to ensure greater connections with each other via trails.

7. Use the Great American Rail-Trail as a catalyst for local economic development, including providing services for long-distance travelers.

The trails along the Great American Rail-Trail are already great community assets. It is RTC’s vision that people will use the new and existing trails along the Great American Rail-Trail for a variety of purposes, from morning walks to weekend family excursions to once-in-a-lifetime cross-country journeys. Everyone using the route will require services to some degree, including water, restrooms, parking lots, food, lodging and camping, mail services and more. Route choices were made to include areas with either existing resources or the potential for the development of these services at reasonable intervals for travelers. That said, the Great American Rail-Trail traverses several areas where basic services are currently scarce, thus making the rail-trail a tremendous opportunity for local economic development. RTC will work with partners to fill trail gaps in ways that will route trails through populated areas to capitalize on the economic development opportunities of trail tourism.

In 2022, RTC completed an economic impact analysis of the Great American Rail-Trail. More information from this analysis can be found in the appendix.

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

STATE STRATEGY

The Great American Rail-Trail should be viewed as 13 cross-state trails, each exploring unique landscapes, heritages and people, and each connecting at state lines to the trails of adjacent states. RTC's goal is to have each state embrace the Great American Rail-Trail and commit to working with RTC on its completion within its borders. To this end, RTC held meetings in each state with a range of public agencies, elected officials and advocacy organizations. Securing each state's support is an ongoing, increasingly successful process. The driving advocacy and resources that RTC brings to the project, as well as each state's self-interest and commitment, create the synergy necessary for the success of this great endeavor.

PLAN REVIEW

To better understand the existing and planned trails and goals for walking and bicycling in states and communities along the route, RTC initially reviewed more than 300 adopted state and local plans that pertained to the route across the 12 states and Washington, D.C.

The most common types of plans that came up during the plan review included:

- Bicycle and Pedestrian Plans
- Trail Plans
- Comprehensive Plans
- Transportation Plans
- Park, Recreation and Open Space Plans
- Rail Plans
- Economic Development Plans
- Master Plans

Plans were not found for every community along the route, and many rural communities and counties did not always have applicable plans that were available to the public for review. However, RTC is confident that the plan review for this project was thorough and provides a solid background for understanding the active transportation and recreation goals of the communities along the route. RTC incorporated knowledge learned from the plan review to both the route and the discussion of existing trails and trail gaps in this report's State-by-State Route Analysis. RTC continues to advocate for the inclusion of the Great American Rail-Trail and policies that support its success in new and updated plans.

EXISTING/OPEN TRAILS

To identify the existing/open trails that host the Great American Rail-Trail, RTC applied the route selection criteria outlined above to all known existing trails across the country. Based on our review of existing long-distance trails, it became clear that Washington, D.C., and Washington State made the most sense as the eastern and western ends of the Great American Rail-Trail. After deciding upon these two endpoints, RTC staff began narrowing down the route options to connect them.

The data behind RTC's TrailLink™ platform (TrailLink.com) helped form the basis for mapping existing trails for potential inclusion in the route. When we had identified what we believed to be all route options through each state that would fit the route selection criteria, RTC staff presented these ideas to state and local officials to explore their possibilities. These state and local officials were instrumental in helping identify the most viable route options.

After the route was narrowed down, RTC staff contacted trail managers representing each existing trail to partake in an introductory webinar, followed by individual interviews in the summer and fall of 2018. Through these interviews, RTC made connections with trail managers and gathered information on each trail. The information gleaned from these interviews is included in the discussion of each existing trail in the State-by-State Route Analysis.

TRAIL GAPS

More than 2,057 miles of existing trails are identified in this report to form the Great American Rail-Trail. The remaining approximately 1,696 miles to connect these trails to each other and complete a cross-country trail have not yet been built. These trail gaps are equally as important to identify and explore as the existing trails.

Trail gaps were explored in great detail through the plan review and trail manager interviews. The plan review helped confirm trail gaps, while the interviews offered background on past, current and future efforts to fill these gaps.

Planned and proposed trails identified throughout our research played a large part in informing our final route decisions. Where no planned or proposed trails were identified in any given trail gap, RTC used additional information to explore other possibilities, including geographic information system (GIS) data from the Federal Railroad Administration to illustrate potential routes along abandoned and active rail corridors.

Only planned and proposed trails identified in approved planning documents are included in the mapping of the official Great American Rail-Trail route. Potential future trails that are not in approved public plans are discussed in the text of each trail gap, but not shown in the official Great American Rail-Trail route mapping. The trail gap distances included throughout this document are the result of either the actual planned trail distance or an on-street distance between two existing trails, which will be modified as actual trail projects are identified to fill the gaps.

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY



*The Beverly Bridge opened for trail use across the Columbia River in Washington State along the Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail in April 2022.
Photo by Kevin Belle, courtesy Rails-to-Trails Conservancy*

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT

STATE-BY-STATE ROUTE ANALYSIS

STATE-BY-STATE ROUTE ANALYSIS

As discussed in the Methodology, until the Great American Rail-Trail is fully connected between Washington, D.C., and Washington State, discussion of the route will need to be broken into two categories:

- “Existing Trails” – the trails already in existence that make up the route and are built and maintained by dedicated teams of local staff and volunteers.
- “Trail Gaps” – sections of trail that still need to be built to connect the existing trails in one contiguous route across the country.

This section of the report is broken into 13 chapters, one for each state or district that is part of the Great American Rail-Trail. Each chapter will outline details about each existing trail, including routing, detours and known maintenance needs. The chapters also will describe the history of each existing trail and accredit the organizations and jurisdictions that developed them and work to keep them maintained. At this initial stage of the project, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC) has identified more than 150 existing trails that form the approximately 2,057 miles of trails along the route of the Great American Rail-Trail. RTC attempted to be as thorough as possible in identifying and crediting the trail managers listed for each of the existing trails.

Likewise, many of the existing trails have their own websites with more information. Where available, those links can be found at each trail’s TrailLink page and are provided in this report.

The trail gaps in each state are also detailed. One or more future trail options are presented to fill each gap. Where appropriate, a preferred alignment is recommended. RTC’s initial analysis identified 96 gaps (there are currently 83 as of May 2023) in the route across the country. Many of these gaps and proposed future trails are already identified in public plans that have been adopted at the state and local levels. Some of these public plans also have incorporated some sort of public involvement process driven by the state or local government. Where that is the case, we have typically selected those future trails as the preferred alignment. Where there have been discussions on ways to fill a particular gap, but there has been no formal adoption of a proposed future trail project at a local level, RTC has opted to only describe these options in the text without showing them on a map.

It is our hope that this State-by-State Route Analysis acts as a blueprint for completing the Great American Rail-Trail. With RTC’s national vision and the hard work and dedication of trail developers across the country, we can work together to make a cross-country trail a reality.



Kokosing Gap Trail in Ohio, part of the developing 326-mile Ohio to Erie Trail | Photo by Eli Griffen, courtesy Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT STATE-BY-STATE ROUTE ANALYSIS

Table 1 describes the preferred route of the Great American Rail-Trail through mileage and completion status. The preferred route, as identified in this report, is 3,770 miles long, with 2,057 miles of existing trails to be connected by 1,696 miles of trail gaps. The entire route is 54.8% complete. The routes through Washington, D.C., and

Maryland are complete, and routes through several other states are over 75% complete (Pennsylvania, Illinois and Idaho). Wyoming and Montana have the most trail gap mileage to be completed, while Iowa has the largest number of individual trail gaps to be completed to connect existing trails.

TABLE 1* GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL MILEAGE

	Total Miles	Existing Miles	Gap Miles	% Complete	Trail Gaps
D.C.	7.5	7.5	0	100%	0
Md.	200.3	200.3	0	100%	0
Pa.	171.9	162.1	9.8	94.3%	1
W.Va.	8.7	4.6	4.1	52.9%	1
Ohio	335.3	235.3	100.0	70.2%	10
Ind.	214.7	119.0	95.7	55.4%	9
Ill.	193.5	168.3	25.2	87.0%	4
Iowa	468.0	255.3	212.7	54.6%	19
Neb.	590.5	307.3	283.2	52.0%	10
Wyo.	509.4	17.2	492.2	3.4%	6
Mont.	425.9	106.6	319.3	25.0%	12
Idaho	89.6	79.1	10.5	88.3%	1
Wash.	538.5	394.6	143.9	73.3%	10
TOTAL	3,753.8	2,057.2	1,696.6	54.8%	83

*Table reprinted from page 2.

WASHINGTON, D.C.

ROUTE

A journey westward along the Great American Rail-Trail will begin at the steps of the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C. The trail will travel among some of the most iconic landmarks in the nation’s capital along the National Mall, including the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial, where the trail heads north along the Rock Creek Park Trails. The route then picks up the Capital Crescent Trail in Georgetown, which flows into the towpath of the Chesapeake and Ohio (C&O) Canal National Historical Park stretching from Washington, D.C., to Cumberland, Maryland.



C&O Canal National Historical Park traveling under the Capital Crescent Trail | Photo by Alice Crain

TABLE 2 GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL MILEAGE IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

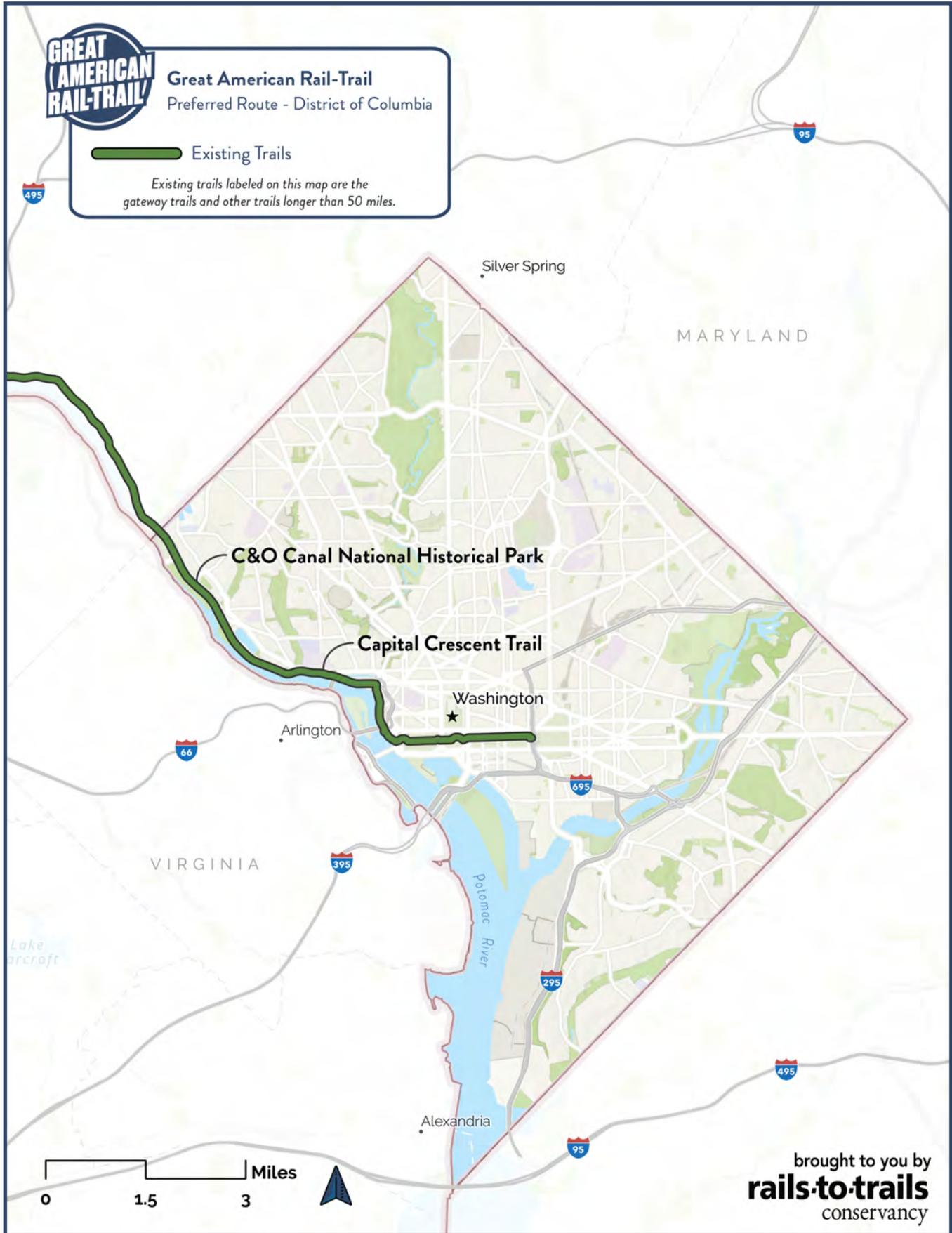
Total Great American Rail-Trail Existing Trail Miles in D.C. (% of Total State Mileage)	7.5 (100%)
Total Great American Rail-Trail Trail Gap Miles in D.C. (% of Total State Mileage)	0 (0%)
Total Trail Gaps in D.C.	0
Total Great American Rail-Trail Miles in D.C.	7.5

TABLE 3 GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE THROUGH WASHINGTON, D.C.

Existing Trail Name	Length in D.C. Along Great American Rail-Trail (in Miles)
National Mall Trails	2.4
Rock Creek Park Trails	0.7
K Street/Water Street Cycle Track	0.6
Capital Crescent Trail	2.3
C&O Canal National Historical Park	1.5
Total Miles	7.5
Existing Trail Miles	7.5
Trail Gap Miles	0.0

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT 2023

MAP 1: WASHINGTON, D.C.



GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT WASHINGTON, D.C.



Ian Mackay and his team depart on an adventure on the Great American Rail-Trail in the summer of 2022. | Photo by Anthony Le, courtesy Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

NATIONAL MALL TRAILS

Total Length (in Miles)	5.0
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in D.C. (in Miles)	2.4
Trail Type	Greenway
Surface Type	Concrete, dirt
Trail Manager	National Park Service
Website	nps.gov/nama/index.htm

Beginning at the steps of the U.S. Capitol, the Great American Rail-Trail will travel west from this eastern extent along the National Mall. The National Mall has a series of trails owned and maintained by the National Park Service that are popular with tourists traveling east and west around the monuments and museums. Bicycles are allowed on the trails, but because the trails are frequently crowded, cyclists should take caution and proceed through the National Mall Trails slowly.

The District Department of Transportation (DDOT) installed wayfinding signage along the circle surrounding the Lincoln Memorial to direct cyclists toward the Rock Creek Park Trails into the Georgetown neighborhood of Washington, D.C.¹ The trail crosses the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway (also known as Rock Creek Parkway) before heading north along the Potomac River. The trail hugs the river, then merges with the Rock Creek Park Trails. The National Mall Trails will host the Great American Rail-Trail for 2.4 miles.

¹ The District of Columbia Bicycle Master Plan includes a recommendation that DDOT “work with [the National Park Service] to designate major bicycle routes in the Mall area with distinctive signs and pavement markings.” DDOT has already begun installing wayfinding signs along the National Mall and Rock Creek Park Trails. To highlight the start of the Great American Rail-Trail, these signs and other potential future signage and markings could extend to the beginning of the Capital Crescent Trail, described on page 17.

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT WASHINGTON, D.C.

ROCK CREEK PARK TRAILS

Total Length (in Miles)	8.5
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in D.C. (in Miles)	0.7
Trail Type	Greenway
Surface Type	Asphalt, dirt
Trail Manager	National Park Service
Website	nps.gov/rocr/planyourvisit/hiking.htm
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/rock-creek-park-trails

The Rock Creek Park Trails connect to the National Mall Trails along the banks of the Potomac River near the Theodore Roosevelt Bridge (which carries Interstate 66, or I-66). The Rock Creek Park Trails travel 8.5 miles in total in Washington, D.C., from just south of the Theodore Roosevelt Bridge along Rock Creek Parkway north to the intersection of Oregon Avenue Northwest and Wise Road Northwest, with a several-mile gap in the middle through Rock Creek Park.

Rock Creek Park is the oldest and largest urban park in the national park system. The portion of the Rock Creek Park Trails system through Rock Creek Park in Washington, D.C., is owned and maintained by the National Park Service. Future plans are anticipated to widen this southern section of the Rock Creek Park Trails to accommodate the heavy trail usership. The Rock Creek Park Trails will host the Great American Rail-Trail for 0.7 mile.



Ian Mackay on the first leg of his tour on the Great American Rail-Trail in the summer of 2022 | Photo by Suzanne Matyas, courtesy Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

K STREET/WATER STREET CYCLE TRACK

Total Length (in Miles)	0.6
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in D.C. (in Miles)	0.6
Trail Type	Greenway
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	DDOT

The Rock Creek Park Trails create a connection to a protected bike lane, or cycle track, along K Street/Water Street in the Georgetown neighborhood of Washington, D.C. (accessible via a ramp from K Street Northwest to Rock Creek Parkway). DDOT installed the two-way protected bike lane in 2018 along the length of K Street/Water Street, underneath the elevated Whitehurst Freeway, between 30th and 34th streets Northwest. The two-way protected bike lane was extended all the way to the entrance of the Capital Crescent Trail in 2022.

The K Street/Water Street Cycle Track will host the Great American Rail-Trail for 0.6 mile.

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT WASHINGTON, D.C.



Capital Crescent Trail in Washington, D.C. | Photo by Milo Bateman, courtesy Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

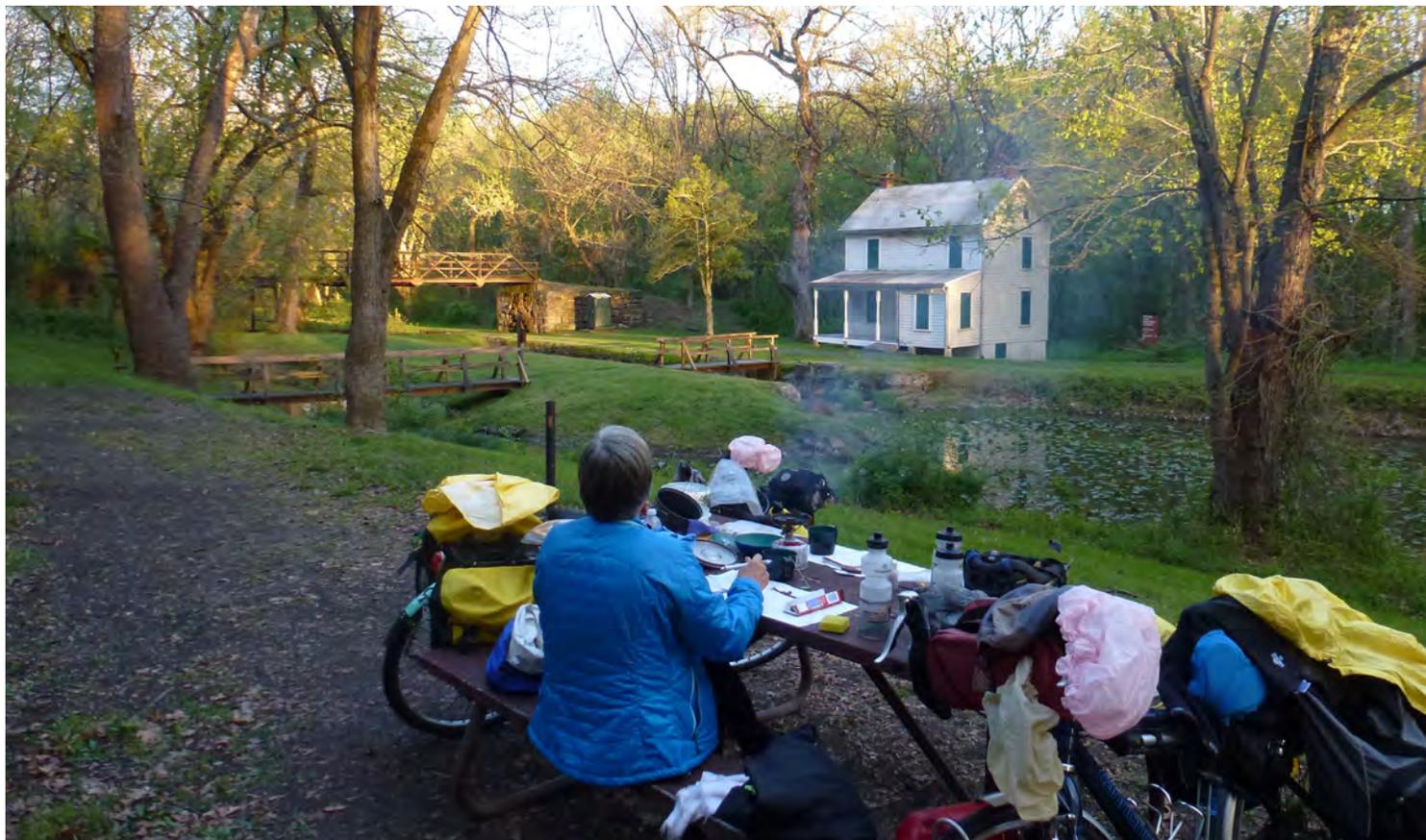
CAPITAL CRESCENT TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	11.0
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in D.C. (in Miles)	2.3
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt, crushed stone
Trail Manager	DDOT, Montgomery County Department of Transportation, National Park Service
Website	cctrail.org
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/capital-crescent-trail

At the end of Water Street, the Great American Rail-Trail reaches the first rail-trail along the route as it heads west from Washington, D.C., onto the Capital Crescent Trail. This 11-mile trail uses the right-of-way of the former Georgetown Branch of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, which was abandoned in the mid-1980s. The trail begins by traveling underneath the remnants of the former Alexandria Aqueduct. The paved Capital Crescent Trail is sandwiched between the Potomac River on the left and the C&O Canal on the right. After about 2.8 miles, the Capital Crescent Trail arcs northward toward Bethesda, Maryland, and crosses over the C&O Canal Towpath at the Arizona Avenue Bridge. Trail users continuing on the Great American Rail-Trail can find a connection to the historical C&O Canal Towpath at Fletcher's Cove Boathouse 0.5 mile before the Arizona Avenue Bridge.

The National Park Service operates and manages the Capital Crescent Trail as part of its upkeep of the C&O Canal Towpath. Montgomery County, Maryland, and Washington, D.C., also contribute to the ongoing maintenance of this trail, as it is one of the most heavily used trails in the region and sees significant year-round usage.

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT WASHINGTON, D.C.



Lock 8 along the C&O Canal Towpath in Maryland | Photo courtesy Bill and Ann Testerman

C&O CANAL NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

Total Length (in Miles)	184.5
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in D.C. (in Miles)	1.5
Trail Type	Canal
Surface Type	Crushed stone, dirt, gravel
Trail Manager	National Park Service
Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · nps.gov/choh/index.htm · canaltrust.org
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/chesapeake--ohio-canal-national-historical-park

The C&O Canal National Historical Park, also known as the C&O Canal Towpath, follows the route of the Potomac River for 184.5 miles between Washington, D.C., and Cumberland, Maryland. The canal, which operated for more than 100 years, transported ships carrying various goods down the waterway to market. Today, visitors can still see the rich history of the canal through many of its original features, including locks, lockhouses and aqueducts.

The towpath itself was historically used to assist ships as they floated down the canal. Now, the towpath is a well-used trail that sees more than 5 million visitors annually. The number of visitors has increased significantly in the last 25+ years; visitor counts were closer to 1 million in 1996.

The C&O Canal Towpath will host the Great American Rail-Trail for 181.3 miles, about 1.5 miles of which are in Washington, D.C. As the remaining 179.8 miles are in Maryland, the towpath will be discussed in more detail in the Maryland chapter.

MARYLAND

ROUTE

The Great American Rail-Trail route across Maryland consists of two key trails: the towpath of the C&O Canal National Historical Park and the Great Allegheny Passage. The two trails meet in Cumberland, Maryland, creating a well-used connection between Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and Washington, D.C.

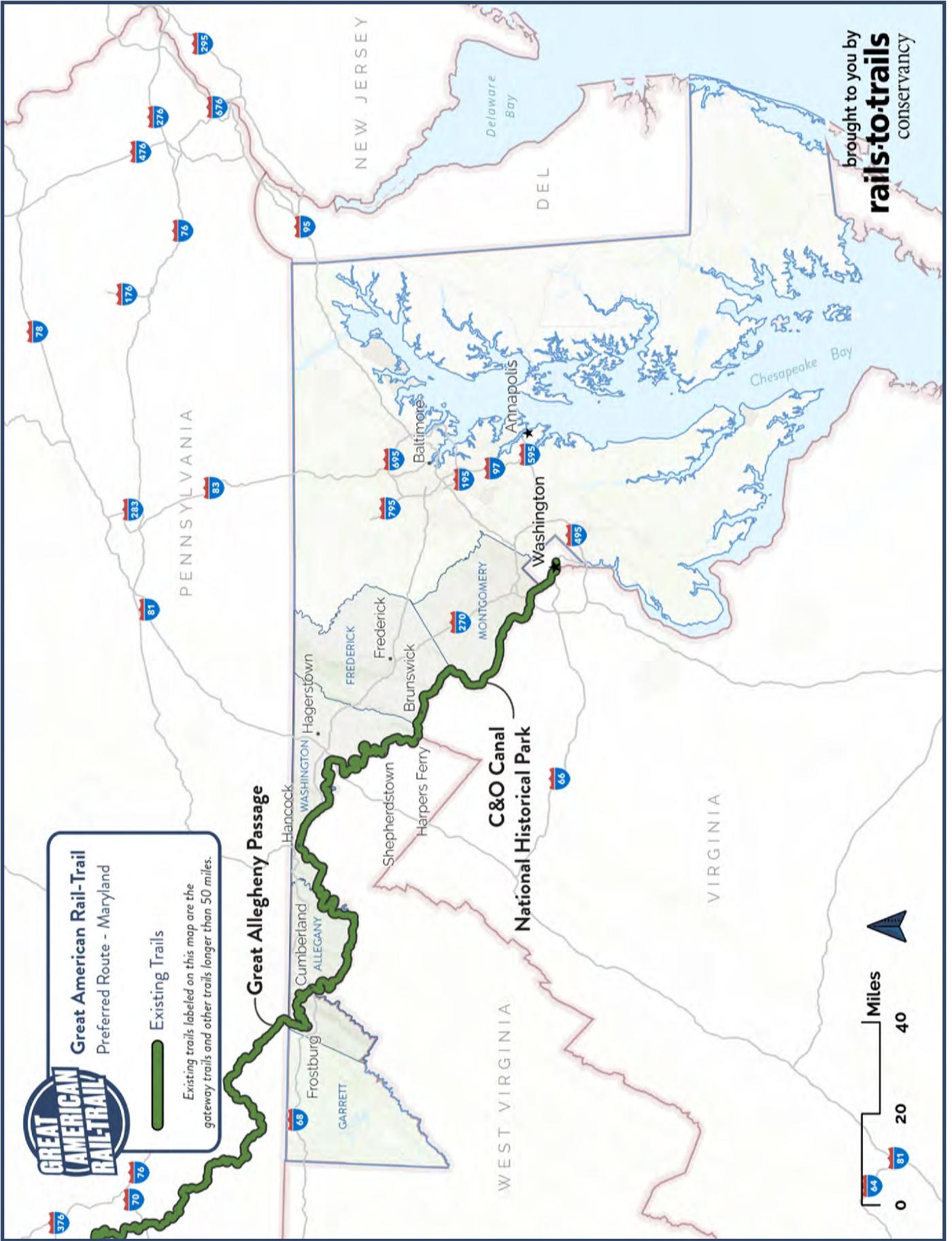
TABLE 4 GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL MILEAGE IN MARYLAND

Total Great American Rail-Trail Existing Trail Miles in Md. (% of Total State Mileage)	200.3 (100%)
Total Great American Rail-Trail Trail Gap Miles in Md. (% of Total State Mileage)	0 (0%)
Total Trail Gaps in Md.	0
Total Great American Rail-Trail Miles in Md.	200.3

TABLE 5 GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE THROUGH MARYLAND

Existing Trail Name	Length in Md. Along Great American Rail-Trail (in Miles)
C&O Canal National Historical Park	179.8
Great Allegheny Passage	20.5
Total Miles	200.3
Existing Trail Miles	200.3
Trail Gap Miles	0.0

**GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT 2023
MAP 2: MARYLAND**



GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT MARYLAND

C&O CANAL NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

Total Length (in Miles)	184.5
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Md. (in Miles)	179.8
Trail Type	Canal
Surface Type	Crushed stone, dirt, gravel
Trail Manager	National Park Service
Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · nps.gov/choh/index.htm · canaltrust.org
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/chesapeake--ohio-canal-national-historical-park

Entering Maryland from Washington, D.C., the C&O Canal Towpath will host the Great American Rail-Trail for almost 180 miles to the towpath’s western terminus in Cumberland, Maryland. The National Park Service owns and maintains the towpath, though its budget has been decreased over the last several years. Trail users report ruts, potholes, muddy sections, vegetation and root encroachment and a central grass strip along the towpath. To formally document the surface condition along the C&O Canal Towpath, the Allegheny Trail Alliance commissioned a safety assessment in the fall of 2016. The condition of the entire 184.5 miles along the towpath was broken down into the following four categories:

- “Very Good” – roughly 3 miles (2%)
- “Good” – roughly 42 miles (23%)
- “Fair/Poor” – roughly 89.5 miles (48%)
- “Poor” – roughly 50 miles (27%)

To elevate the surface condition of the towpath, the Allegheny Trail Alliance’s safety assessment made eight recommendations: 1) remove the center grass strip, 2) correct ruts and potholes, 3) remove dangerous roots, 4) remove dead trees along the towpath, 5) correct informal paths across the towpath, 6) develop criteria to standardize surface material, 7) resurface the towpath and 8) amend routine maintenance practices.

In recent years, the C&O Canal National Historical Park was only able to resurface about 1 to 3 miles of the towpath annually. The Allegheny Trail Alliance’s safety assessment recommends a five-year towpath repair program to address 79.1 miles, including most of the worst sections of the trail. The estimated total cost to address these 79.1 miles was \$8,945,101. In 2019, the C&O Canal National Historical Park adopted the five-year repair program and sought funds to complete this resurfacing effort through its annual operating budget and funding applications through the Transportation Alternatives (TA) program administered by the state of Maryland.

The fifth phase of the five-year resurfacing effort was completed in 2022, resulting in 71.1 miles of newly resurfaced trail. The National Park Service will continue to monitor the towpath and update and maintain the surface as needed.

The National Park Service has identified several other ongoing maintenance needs for the C&O Canal Towpath that will require additional funding to maintain the long-term integrity of the trail. These maintenance needs include:

- Conducting a hydrology study to assess the condition of the 150 to 200 culverts that pass underneath the towpath, as well as their ability to convey the volume of water that flows through them. Funding was allocated for this culvert study in the fall of 2021, and results are expected by the spring of 2023. At that point, attention will pivot to allocating sufficient resources to complete necessary repairs that were identified in the study.
- Shoring up and removing trees that have grown into the stone revetment walls that help keep the towpath from eroding into the Potomac River.
- Filling in some of the locks on the canal side to prevent further erosion of the trailbed.

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT MARYLAND



The Great Allegheny Passage at the Eastern Continental Divide in Maryland | Photo by David Ni

GREAT ALLEGHENY PASSAGE

Total Length (in Miles)	150.0
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Md. (in Miles)	20.5
Trail Type	Rail-trail, rail-with-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt, crushed stone
Trail Manager	Allegheny County, Allegheny Trail Alliance, Mountain Maryland Trails
Website	gaptrail.org
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/great-allegheny-passage

The C&O Canal Towpath connects to the Great Allegheny Passage (GAP) at Cumberland. The GAP is an iconic trail that runs nearly 150 miles from Cumberland, Maryland, to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and was built by a mix of private and public partners, nonprofit entities, and local trail groups and volunteers working in concert as the Allegheny Trail Alliance. RTC selected the GAP for the Rail-Trail Hall of Fame in 2007.

Cumberland and Frostburg are the major towns along the Maryland portion of the GAP. For much of the 16 miles of trail between Cumberland and Frostburg, the trail parallels the active Western Maryland Scenic Railroad, making this the first rail-with-trail section of the Great American Rail-Trail. This section of the GAP itself was constructed on the former Western Maryland Railway, which began operations between Cumberland, Maryland, and Connellsville, Pennsylvania, in 1912.

The GAP will host the Great American Rail-Trail for 20.5 miles through Maryland. The remaining 124.3 miles of the GAP that carry the Great American Rail-Trail travel through Pennsylvania and are described in more detail in the Pennsylvania chapter of this report.

PENNSYLVANIA

ROUTE

The Great American Rail-Trail route through Pennsylvania connects several existing trails with one trail gap just west of Pittsburgh. By connecting the trail through Pittsburgh, the Great American Rail-Trail also connects to the Industrial Heartland Trails Coalition (IHTC), a vision for a 1,500-mile network of trails that is part of RTC’s TrailNation™ portfolio. The IHTC network will stretch across 51 counties in four states— Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Ohio and New York—from the shores of Lake Erie to the confluence of the Three Rivers in Pittsburgh and on to the Ohio River and Appalachian foothills.

TABLE 6 GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL MILEAGE IN PENNSYLVANIA

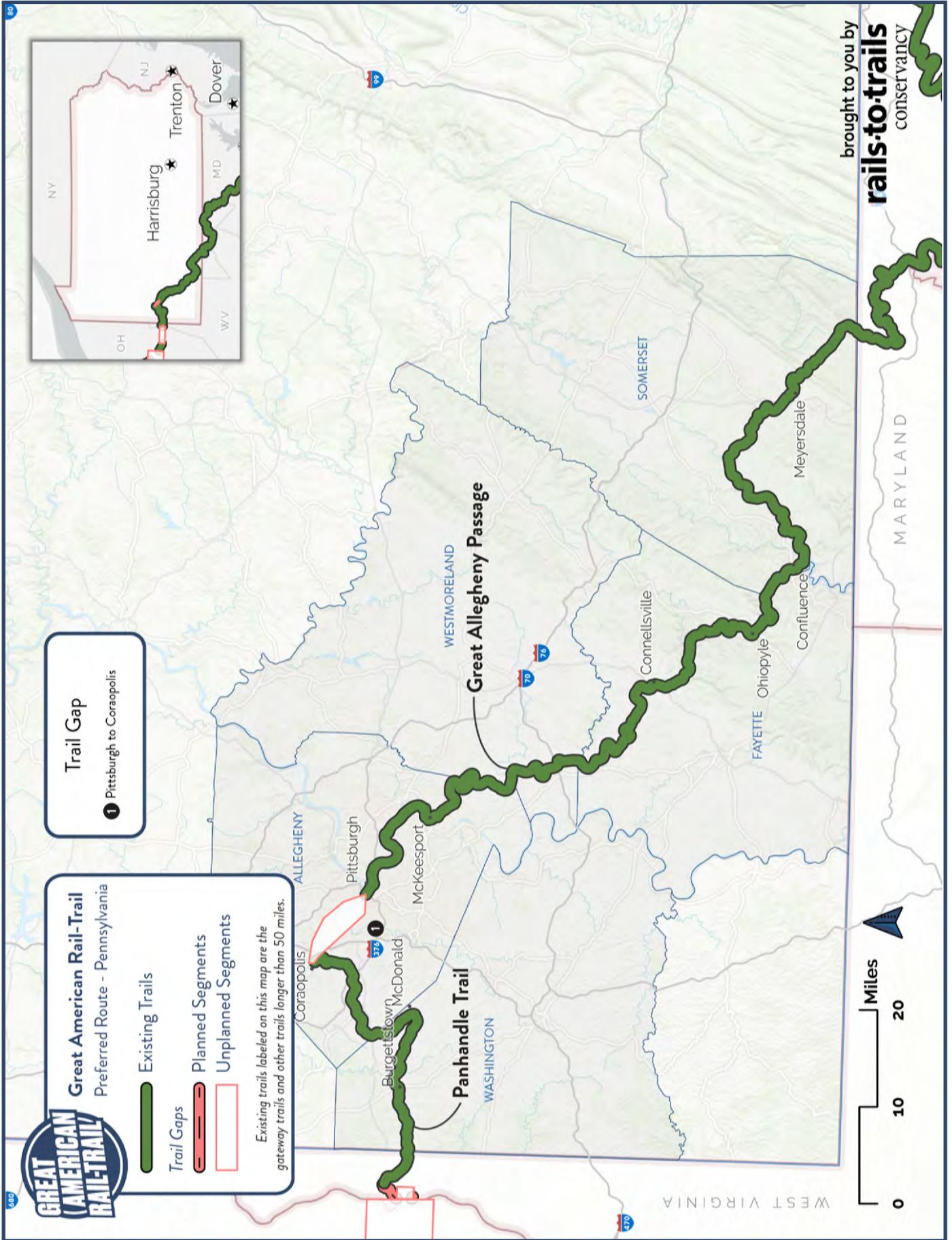
Total Great American Rail-Trail Existing Trail Miles in Pa. (% of Total State Mileage)	162.1 (94.3%)
Total Great American Rail-Trail Trail Gap Miles in Pa. (% of Total State Mileage)	9.8 (5.7%)
Total Trail Gaps in Pa.	1
Total Great American Rail-Trail Miles in Pa.	171.9

TABLE 7 GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE THROUGH PENNSYLVANIA

Existing Trail or Trail Gap Name	Length in Pa. Along Great American Rail-Trail (in Miles)
Great Allegheny Passage	124.3
Three Rivers Heritage Trail	3.6
TRAIL GAP 1 – Pittsburgh to Coraopolis	9.8
Montour Trail	18.3
Panhandle Trail	15.9
Total Miles	171.9
Existing Trail Miles	162.1
Trail Gap Miles	9.8

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT 2023

MAP 3: PENNSYLVANIA



GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT PENNSYLVANIA



Great Allegheny Passage (gaptrail.org) in Pennsylvania

GREAT ALLEGHENY PASSAGE

Total Length (in Miles)	150.0
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Pa. (in Miles)	124.3
Trail Type	Greenway, rail-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt, crushed stone
Trail Manager	Allegheny County, Allegheny Trail Alliance, City of Pittsburgh, Friends of the Riverfront, Ohiopyle State Park, Point State Park, Regional Trail Corporation (Yough Trail Council, Whitsett-Fayette Yough Trail Council, McKeesport Trail Commission and Steel Valley Trail Council), Somerset County, Somerset County Rails-to-Trails Association
Website	gaptrail.org
TrailLink Map	trailink.com/trail/great-allegheny-passage

The GAP enters Pennsylvania just north of Frostburg, Maryland, and it hosts the Great American Rail-Trail through Pennsylvania for 124.3 miles through rolling hills and forestland to Pittsburgh. The GAP is a compilation of several trails built on the former corridors of the Western Maryland Railway, Pittsburgh and Lake Erie Railroad and Union Railroad. The Allegheny Trail Alliance and its partners oversee trail development, enhancements, promotion, interpretation and maintenance of the GAP.

Just after crossing into Pennsylvania from Maryland, the GAP reaches the Eastern Continental Divide at 2,392 feet above sea level. The GAP features several great engineering feats, including the newly restored 849-foot-long Pinkerton Tunnel; the 101-foot-high Salisbury Viaduct, which spans more than 1,900 feet; and the 3,294-foot-long Big Savage Tunnel, and passes through the trail towns of Meyersdale, Rockwood, Confluence, Ohiopyle, Connellsville, West Newton and Boston.

At McKeesport, Pennsylvania, the GAP follows the Monongahela River through the region's "Steel Valley" communities of Duquesne, Munhall, Homestead and West Homestead. Once in Pittsburgh, the GAP will host the Great American Rail-Trail route along a shared corridor with the Three Rivers Heritage Trail.

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT PENNSYLVANIA

THREE RIVERS HERITAGE TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	25.0
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Pa. (in Miles)	3.6
Trail Type	Greenway, rail-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt, concrete
Trail Manager	Friends of the Riverfront
Website	friendsoftheriverfront.org
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/three-rivers-heritage-trail

Since its inception in 1991, Friends of the Riverfront has been a pioneering organization working to protect and restore the Pittsburgh region's rivers and riverfronts after decades of legacy pollution. The Three Rivers Heritage Trail now encompasses 25 miles of urban riverfront trails along both banks of the mighty Allegheny, Monongahela and Ohio rivers. Through broad and diverse collaborations, Friends of the Riverfront continues the work of providing environmental restoration, economic vitality and public health benefits to the Pittsburgh region through the Three Rivers Heritage Trail.

The Three Rivers Heritage Trail connects to the GAP at the Hot Metal Bridge and continues northwest through Riverfront Park along the Monongahela River. The trail then travels through Station Square, a shopping and entertainment complex occupying buildings once used by the Pittsburgh and Lake Erie Railroad. From where the GAP ends at Point State Park, the Three Rivers Heritage Trail continues across the Fort Pitt Bridge to the North Shore Trail and continues down the Chateau Trail.

TRAIL GAP 1 – PITTSBURGH TO CORAOPOLIS

Friends of the Riverfront, the Pennsylvania Environmental Council and Allegheny County, along with its partner organizations, have explored various options to connect the Three Rivers Heritage Trail to the Montour Trail between Pittsburgh and Coraopolis. Options to complete the trail connection along the southern shore of the Ohio River are in the planning stages. Currently, signs mark the route along Neville Road as an on-road portion of the Three Rivers Heritage Trail. In the fall of 2020, Trail Gap 1 was shortened by a 0.8-mile extension of the Montour Trail into Coraopolis.

MONTOUR TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	46.8
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Pa. (in Miles)	18.3
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt, crushed stone
Trail Manager	Montour Trail Council, Peters Township Parks & Recreation
Website	montourtrail.org
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/montour-trail

The Montour Trail follows a portion of the old Montour Railroad, which was built between 1877 and 1914 to link the Pittsburgh and Lake Erie Railroad with the region's many coal mines. Forming a semicircle around Pittsburgh, the Montour Railroad also connected to other railroads, including the Pennsylvania Railroad, Pittsburgh and West Virginia Railway, Baltimore and Ohio Railroad and Union Railroad. Both the trail and railroad are named for the creek that runs alongside them. Highlights of the trail include the 500-foot Enlow Tunnel in Findlay Township and the 900-foot-plus McDonald Trestle. In the fall of 2020, the Montour Trail was extended by 0.8 mile into Coraopolis.

The Montour Trail connects to Pennsylvania's Panhandle Trail at the borough of McDonald. The 46.8-mile Montour Trail will host the Great American Rail-Trail for 18.3 miles.

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT PENNSYLVANIA



Montour Trail | Photo by Kevin Belle, courtesy Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

PANHANDLE TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	29.2
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Pa. (in Miles)	15.9
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt, crushed stone
Trail Manager	Collier Friends of the Panhandle Trail, Montour Trail Council, Washington County Parks & Recreation Department
Website	panhandletrail.org
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/panhandle-trail

A Conrail line known as the Panhandle Railroad once connected Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, to Cincinnati, Ohio; Chicago, Illinois; and St. Louis, Missouri. The portion of the rail corridor between Carnegie, Pennsylvania, and Weirton, West Virginia, is now a 29.2-mile multiuse trail known as the Panhandle Trail. The Panhandle Trail will host the Great American Rail-Trail for 20.5 miles, including 15.9 miles in Pennsylvania, starting in McDonald where the trail meets the Montour Trail. The Panhandle Trail features many small bridge crossings as it cuts through the rolling and occasionally rocky hillside.

The remaining 4.6 miles of the Panhandle Trail along the Great American Rail-Trail will be discussed in the West Virginia chapter.

WEST VIRGINIA

ROUTE

The Great American Rail-Trail travels through the Northern Panhandle of West Virginia through the town of Weirton along the Ohio River. West Virginia contains the least number of miles along the Great American Rail-Trail of any state across the route. The West Virginia section is located along the Cleveland to Pittsburgh corridor of the proposed 1,500-mile Industrial Heartland Trails Coalition (IHTC) network.



Panhandle Trail in West Virginia | Photo by TrailLink user adoamm

TABLE 8 GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL MILEAGE IN WEST VIRGINIA

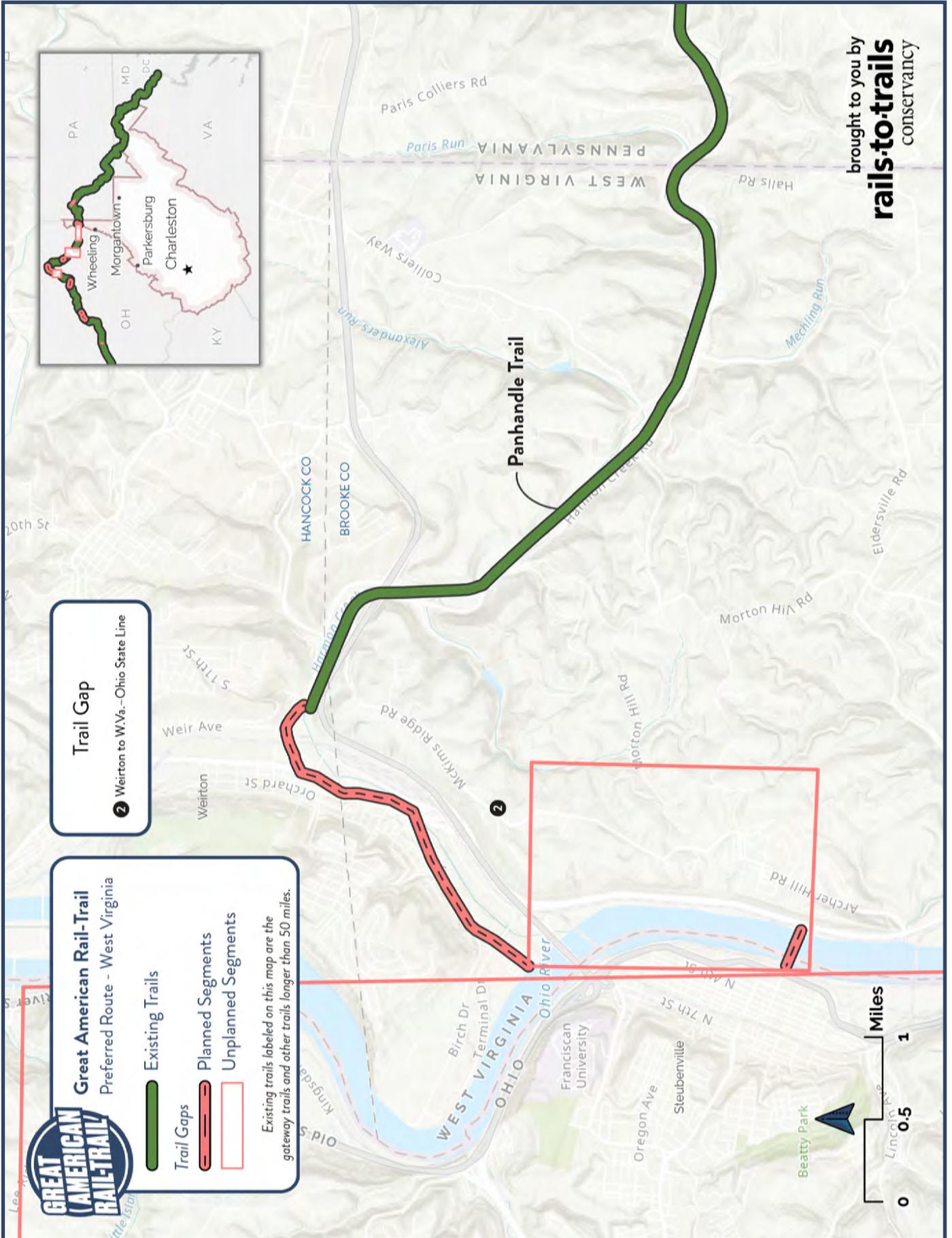
Total Great American Rail-Trail Existing Trail Miles in W.Va. (% of Total State Mileage)	4.6 (52.9%)
Total Great American Rail-Trail Trail Gap Miles in W.Va. (% of Total State Mileage)	4.1 (47.1%)
Total Trail Gaps in W.Va.	1
Total Great American Rail-Trail Miles in W.Va.	8.7

TABLE 9 GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE THROUGH WEST VIRGINIA

Existing Trail or Trail Gap Name	Length in W.Va. Along Great American Rail-Trail (in Miles)
Panhandle Trail	4.6
TRAIL GAP 2 – Weirton to W.Va.–Ohio State Line	4.1
Total Miles	8.7
Existing Trail Miles	4.6
Trail Gap Miles	4.1

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT 2023

MAP 4: WEST VIRGINIA



GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT WEST VIRGINIA

PANHANDLE TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	29.2
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in W.Va. (in Miles)	4.6
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt, crushed stone
Trail Manager	Collier Friends of the Panhandle Trail, Montour Trail Council, Washington County Parks & Recreation Department
Website	panhandletrail.org
TrailLink Map	trailink.com/trail/panhandle-trail

The Panhandle Trail enters West Virginia at the town of Colliers and continues 4.6 miles to its terminus in Weirton off of McKims Ridge Road, where there is currently a well-used trailhead. Local plans exist to extend the Panhandle Trail farther west into Weirton, as discussed in Trail Gap 2, below. In 2022, \$110,000 was allocated from a Transportation Alternatives (TA) grant and local match to pave 1 mile of the portion of the Panhandle Trail in West Virginia.

TRAIL GAP 2 – WEIRTON TO WEST VIRGINIA–OHIO STATE LINE

RTC is partnering with the Northern West Virginia Brownfields Assistance Center (NBAC) and the city of Weirton to identify a route for the Great American Rail-Trail that connects the end of the Panhandle Trail in Weirton, West Virginia, to the Market Street Bridge to cross the state line. NBAC, along with local planners and advocates, has found multiple routing options to establish a 4.1-mile connection through Weirton and south toward the Market Street Bridge: one via trail and one via on-street bicycle facilities. NBAC and the city of Weirton submitted a TA program grant to fund on-street bicycle facilities in Weirton that could help close this gap.

From the existing Panhandle Trail at McKims Ridge Road, the proposed route extends west to intersect a former Norfolk Southern rail yard and cross Harmon Creek via an existing railroad bridge. Frontier Group of Companies LLC in Buffalo, New York, recently purchased some of the impacted property and has plans to redevelop it. NBAC has been sharing connectivity options with Frontier and has been attempting to coordinate the proposed route with the company's ongoing planning efforts.

From this location, two options are proposed that could form a loop in Weirton.

- **Option A:** The On-Road Corridor would travel along Walnut Street and turn left to merge with Main Street in Weirton by way of a two-way bike path occupying the westernmost lane of traffic through the city. Traffic would be reconfigured, eliminating the middle turning lane along the impacted roadway. The proposed corridor would continue along Freedom Way.
- **Option B:** The Off-Road Corridor would utilize an abandoned railroad bridge and parallel Harmon Creek to the east for 0.75 mile. After diverting from Harmon Creek, the route would cross an existing parking lot to parallel Military Drive past the Brooke-Hancock County Veterans Memorial Park Revolutionary War Memorial to meet the proposed On-Road Corridor. Survey work is necessary to determine who owns the property along Harmon Creek, although it is posited that adjacent local businesses own the land.

From the intersection of Freedom Way and state Route 2/Main Street, the proposed route would cross state Route 2/Main Street with a crosswalk and head southwest along Freedom Way.

The Great American Rail-Trail could then head south to parallel the Ohio River along a proposed extension of the Brooke Pioneer Trail, a spur that will connect to the corridor from the south.

Just south of Weirton, the Great American Rail-Trail could travel across the Ohio River to Steubenville, Ohio, via the Market Street Bridge, an open-decked bridge currently open to vehicular traffic. The Market Street Bridge is aging into obsolescence, and a new highway bridge across the Ohio River planned for construction near Wellsburg, West Virginia, may open an opportunity. There is not a current plan to decommission the Market Street Bridge, although that could change based on regular inspections of the span.

If the Market Street Bridge is decommissioned, it is possible that the bridge would require only minor upgrades to handle bicycle and pedestrian traffic, pending a full engineering study of the bridge's structural soundness. Because the potential trail along the Ohio River would be well below the surface of the Market Street Bridge, a structure would need to be built to bring trail users down from the bridge to the riverbank while also clearing the active Norfolk Southern rail line that runs along the Ohio River.

OHIO



The Great American Rail-Trail passes through Xenia, Ohio, along the Ohio to Erie Trail. | Photo by Eric Oberg, courtesy Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

ROUTE

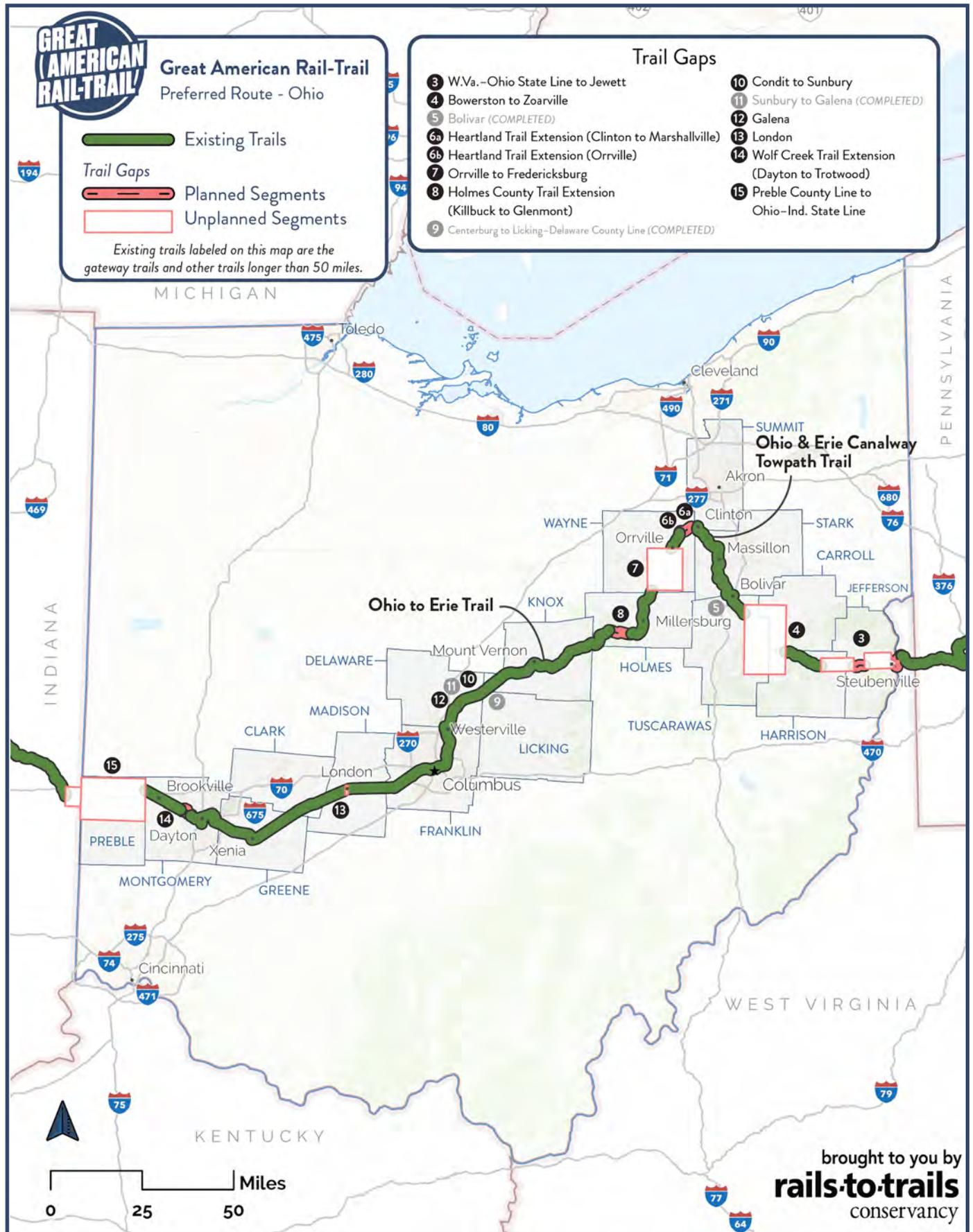
Several iconic trails make possible the route across Ohio, which is already more than two-thirds complete. The Ohio & Erie Canalway Towpath Trail connects New Philadelphia north to Cleveland, providing a rich history and unique experience along the way. Instead of following the Ohio & Erie Canalway Towpath Trail to Cleveland, however, the Great American Rail-Trail will branch off at Clinton, Ohio, to head about 150 miles southwest on the developing Ohio to Erie Trail, which travels to Cincinnati through Columbus.

TABLE 10 GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL MILEAGE IN OHIO

Total Great American Rail-Trail Existing Trail Miles in Ohio (% of Total State Mileage)	235.3 (70.2%)
Total Great American Rail-Trail Trail Gap Miles in Ohio (% of Total State Mileage)	100.0 (29.8%)
Total Trail Gaps in Ohio	10
Total Great American Rail-Trail Miles in Ohio	335.3

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT 2023

MAP 5: OHIO



GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT
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TABLE 11 GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE THROUGH OHIO

Existing Trail or Trail Gap Name	Length in Ohio Along Great American Rail-Trail (in Miles)	Existing Trail or Trail Gap Name	Length in Ohio Along Great American Rail-Trail (in Miles)
TRAIL GAP 3 – W.Va.–Ohio State Line to Jewett	25.2	TRAIL GAP 12 – Galena	0.5
Conotton Creek Trail	11.5	Hoover Scenic Trail (Part of the Ohio to Erie Trail)	0.6
TRAIL GAP 4 – Bowerston to Zoarville	17.9	Genoa Trail (Part of the Ohio to Erie Trail)	4.0
Zoar Valley Trail (Part of the Ohio & Erie Canalway Towpath Trail)	5.9	Westerville B&W (Part of the Ohio to Erie Trail)	2.5
TRAIL GAP 5 – Bolivar COMPLETED	-	Alum Creek Greenway Trail (Part of the Ohio to Erie Trail)	12.0
Ohio & Erie Canalway Towpath Trail	29.2	Downtown Connector Trail (Part of the Ohio to Erie Trail)	5.0
TRAIL GAP 6a – Heartland Trail Extension (Clinton to Marshallville)	6.0	Scioto Greenway Trail (Part of the Ohio to Erie Trail)	3.9
Heartland Trail (Marshallville to Orrville)	2.3	Camp Chase Trail (Part of the Ohio to Erie Trail)	15.9
TRAIL GAP 6b – Heartland Trail Extension (Orrville)	1.3	Roberts Pass Trail (Part of the Ohio to Erie Trail)	6.5
Heartland Trail – Orrville	1.6	TRAIL GAP 13 – London	0.8
TRAIL GAP 7 – Orrville to Fredericksburg	14.1	Prairie Grass Trail (Part of the Ohio to Erie Trail)	29.2
Holmes County Trail (Fredericksburg to Killbuck; Part of the Ohio to Erie Trail)	15.8	Creekside Trail	15.1
TRAIL GAP 8 – Holmes County Trail Extension (Killbuck to Glenmont)	6.6	Mad River Trail	3.0
Holmes County Trail (Glenmont to Brinkhaven; Part of the Ohio to Erie Trail)	7.3	Great Miami River Trail	4.0
Mohican Valley Trail (Part of the Ohio to Erie Trail)	4.5	Wolf Creek Trail (Dayton)	2.9
Kokosing Gap Trail (Part of the Ohio to Erie Trail)	13.5	TRAIL GAP 14 – Wolf Creek Trail Extension (Dayton to Trotwood)	5.0
Downtown Connector Trail (Mount Vernon; Part of the Ohio to Erie Trail)	1.0	Wolf Creek Trail (Trotwood to Preble County Line)	10.9
Heart of Ohio Trail (Part of the Ohio to Erie Trail)	18.5	TRAIL GAP 15 – Preble County Line to Ohio–Ind. State Line	21.8
TRAIL GAP 9 – Centerburg to Licking–Delaware County Line COMPLETED	-		
Meredith State Road Trail (Part of the Ohio to Erie Trail)	1.5	Total Miles	335.3
TRAIL GAP 10 – Condit to Sunbury	0.8	<i>Existing Trail Miles</i>	235.3
Sandel Legacy Trail (Part of the Ohio to Erie Trail)	5.7	<i>Trail Gap Miles</i>	100.0
TRAIL GAP 11 – Sunbury to Galena COMPLETED	-		
Thomas W. Hopper Legacy Trail (Part of the Ohio to Erie Trail)	1.5		

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT OHIO



Rendering of the Market Street Bridge if converted to trail use | Created by Divya Manek

TRAIL GAP 3 – WEST VIRGINIA–OHIO STATE LINE TO JEWETT

As discussed earlier in Trail Gap 2, a trail could cross over the Ohio River into Steubenville, Ohio, on the Market Street Bridge. Once in Steubenville, a trail could head north and skirt the Ohio River or travel through town on a proposed protected bike lane through downtown Steubenville.

Near Broadacre, the Jefferson County Soil and Water Conservation District has plans to develop a trail through the planned Hellbender Preserve. This planned 3-mile trail would bring attention to the hellbender salamander, an endangered species native to Ohio and the eastern United States. The greatest population of hellbenders in the country is found in Jefferson County. The planned Hellbender Preserve Trail would follow an abandoned rail line through lands to be included in the preserve and would include several beautiful bridges and tunnels with rich histories.

Options to complete the remaining sections of trail within this gap continue to be explored.

CONOTTON CREEK TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	11.5
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Ohio (in Miles)	11.5
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	Friends of the Conotton Creek Trail, Harrison County
Website	harrisoncountyohio.org/trails
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/conotton-creek-trail

The Conotton Creek Trail features 11.5 miles of rail-trail traveling from Jewett to Bowerston, Ohio. Once the corridor of the Wheeling & Lake Erie Railway, the trail now travels across Ohio's countryside and features five covered bridge crossings over the Conotton Creek. The trail was repaved in 2021, which will make this popular trail more accessible for the many seniors who are part of the surrounding community.

TRAIL GAP 4 – BOWERSTON TO ZOARVILLE

From the western end of the Conotton Creek Trail in Bowerston, Ohio, the Tuscarawas County Trail and Green Space Master Plan illustrates a plan to complete this 17.9-mile gap as part of a countywide network of trails, but does not discuss exact routing or project timeline plans. The Muskingum Watershed Conservancy District owns significant land between Harrison, Carroll and Tuscarawas counties and is a willing and

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT

OHIO

eager partner on trail development in the area. Tuscarawas County also has plans to extend the existing Ohio & Erie Canalway Towpath Trail south toward Dover for about 4 miles. The county has received a Transportation Alternatives (TA) program grant from the Ohio Department of Transportation and is currently raising funds for the local matching funds.

The county also has plans for 4–5 miles of bike lanes south from New Philadelphia toward Dennison. A strategic combination of these initiatives could help fill Trail Gap 4. New Philadelphia is partnering with the Ohio & Erie Canalway Coalition to complete a connectivity study to determine the best route for New Philadelphia’s portion of the Ohio & Erie Canalway Towpath Trail.

ZOAR VALLEY TRAIL (PART OF THE OHIO & ERIE CANALWAY TOWPATH TRAIL)

Total Length (in Miles)	19.6
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Ohio (in Miles)	5.9
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt, ballast, dirt, grass
Trail Manager	Camp Tuscazoar Foundation Inc., Ohio & Erie Canalway Coalition
Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ohioanderiecanalway.com tuscazoar.org/zoar-valley-trail
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/zoar-valley-trail

The Zoar Valley Trail runs alongside the Tuscarawas River for nearly 20 miles from New Philadelphia north to Bolivar, Ohio. The Zoar Valley Trail will host the Great American Rail-Trail along its northernmost 5.9 miles, beginning south of Historic Zoar Village. The village features architecture dating back to 1817, when Historic Zoar Village was founded by a group of German Separatists seeking religious freedom. The Zoar Valley Trail travels past Historic Zoar Village and is a part of the Ohio & Erie Canalway Towpath Trail, which extends beyond Bolivar.

The Camp Tuscazoar Foundation operates the Zoar Valley Trail, including providing camping facilities, water and restrooms for trail users.

TRAIL GAP 5—BOLIVAR COMPLETED

Trail Gap 5 (Bolivar) is now a completed trail segment as part of the Ohio & Erie Canalway Towpath Trail.

OHIO & ERIE CANALWAY TOWPATH TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	82.9
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Ohio (in Miles)	29.2
Trail Type	Canal
Surface Type	Asphalt, boardwalk, crushed stone
Trail Manager	Canalway Partners, City of Akron, Cleveland Metroparks, Cuyahoga Valley National Park, Ohio & Erie Canalway Coalition, Stark County Park District, Summit Metro Parks, Tuscarawas County Park Department
Website	ohioanderiecanalway.com
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/ohio--erie-canal-towpath-trail

The nearly 83-mile Ohio & Erie Canalway Towpath Trail follows a historical canal where mules pulled boats from New Philadelphia to Lake Erie in Cleveland from 1827 to 1913. When the full towpath trail is completed, it will be 101 miles long and incorporate several trails, including the Zoar Valley Trail. The Ohio & Erie Canalway Towpath Trail will host the Great American Rail-Trail for 29.2 miles between Bolivar and Clinton.

The Ohio & Erie Canalway Towpath Trail is part of the Ohio to Erie Trail and overlaps with the Ohio to Erie Trail from Massillon north to Clinton. The mileage from Bolivar to Clinton will be credited to the Ohio & Erie Canalway Towpath Trail, rather than the Ohio to Erie Trail, so that total mileage of the Great American Rail-Trail is not duplicated.

The Ohio & Erie Canalway Towpath Trail is managed by various jurisdictions, including the county park districts in Cuyahoga, Summit, Stark and Tuscarawas counties, as well as the National Park Service via Cuyahoga Valley National Park. The Ohio & Erie Canalway Coalition is the active nonprofit organization that leads many initiatives in support of the towpath trail. The towpath trail along the Great American Rail-Trail is within the jurisdictions of Summit, Stark and Tuscarawas counties and features a crushed limestone surface that is mostly Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible.

A 2-mile segment of the towpath trail through Bolivar was completed in 2021, connecting the trail from the south side of Bolivar to the Bolivar Aqueduct McDonnell Towpath Trailhead.

TRAIL GAP 6a – HEARTLAND TRAIL EXTENSION (CLINTON TO MARSHALLVILLE)

Rails to Trails of Wayne County owns the right-of-way of an abandoned Cleveland, Akron and Columbus (CA&C) rail line from Clinton to Orrville and is working on converting it into a trail called the Heartland Trail. The group completed a feasibility study of Trail Gap 6a in 2020 and is currently raising project construction funds. State funding totaling \$55,000 has been secured for 650 feet of trail in Marshallville.

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HEARTLAND TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	3.9
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Ohio (in Miles)	3.9
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	Rails to Trails of Wayne County
Website	waynecountytrails.org
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/ohio--erie-canal-towpath-trail

Two portions of the Heartland Trail have been completed. In September 2019, Phase 1—a 2.3-mile segment of trail—was opened between Marshallville and Forrer Road in Orrville. Rails to Trails of Wayne County and RTC celebrated the new paved trail with a ribbon-cutting ceremony in Marshallville.

Another 1.6-mile trail segment is open in Orrville. The trail segment makes use of city sidewalks and multiuse trail to travel through the center of Orrville, connecting parks, local businesses and homes. The completed segment begins at North Main Street, just south of Hostetler Road. The trail travels south along Main Street and heads west behind a residential property. After crossing Mineral Springs Street, the trail continues south, traveling through parkland and passing the Orrville Dog Park. The trail transitions to sidewalk as it heads south along North Ella Street and ends at West Market Street.

TRAIL GAP 6b – HEARTLAND TRAIL EXTENSION (ORRVILLE)

In the spring of 2021, Rails to Trails of Wayne County and the city of Orrville received a \$947,972 grant through the Transportation Alternatives Program via the Ohio Department of Transportation. The grant will complete the 1.3-mile gap in the Heartland Trail between Forrer Road and Allen Avenue. Construction is anticipated in 2024.

TRAIL GAP 7 – ORRVILLE TO FREDERICKSBURG

The southern terminus of the existing portion of the Heartland Trail is located at West Market and North Ella streets in Orrville. An abandoned rail line runs from just south of Orrville for more than 13 miles to Fredericksburg, but unfortunately, much of the right-of-way from Orrville south to Fredericksburg has been sold to private landowners. Rails to Trails of Wayne County has a long-term vision to connect a future trail between the communities of Orrville and Fredericksburg, and the organization is exploring all options, including attempting to reacquire the former rail corridor land.

Rails to Trails of Wayne County is partnering with Environmental Design Group and the local county engineer to apply for a Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant in 2023 for the design and construction of about one half of Trail Gap 7, between Apple Creek and Fredericksburg.

OHIO TO ERIE TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	270
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Ohio (in Miles)	148.9
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt, concrete, crushed stone
Trail Manager	Multiple; see separate trail sections below (coordination provided by Ohio to Erie Trail Fund)
Website	ohioerietrail.org
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/ohio-to-erie-trail

Starting at Fredericksburg, the Ohio to Erie Trail hosts the Great American Rail-Trail for about 150 miles across the state, winding southwest through Ohio's scenic countryside and bustling midwestern towns. The Ohio to Erie Trail was first envisioned by Ed Honton, who founded the trail and served as first president of the nonprofit Ohio to Erie Trail Fund. The trail was further developed by the National Park Service and various trail groups. The Ohio to Erie Trail is planned to span the state, reaching a total of 326 miles. As of 2019, about 275 planned miles were paved trails, with some 50 miles on streets or rural roads.

The Ohio to Erie Trail is formed by a collection of regional trails traveling across Ohio from Cleveland to Cincinnati. Included in the Great American Rail-Trail route are 17 trails that fall within the Ohio to Erie Trail footprint but are uniquely named and often operated independently. Each of the 17 trails will be discussed below, with their respective mileages included. The 17 trails along the Ohio to Erie Trail and Great American Rail-Trail route include:

- Holmes County Trail
- Mohican Valley Trail
- Kokosing Gap Trail
- Downtown Connector Trail (Mount Vernon)
- Heart of Ohio Trail
- Meredith State Road Trail
- Sandel Legacy Trail
- Thomas W. Hopper Legacy Trail
- Hoover Scenic Trail

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- Genoa Trail
- Westerville B&W
- Alum Creek Greenway Trail
- Downtown Connector Trail
- Scioto Greenway Trail
- Camp Chase Trail
- Roberts Pass Trail
- Prairie Grass Trail

The Ohio to Erie Trail is maintained through the combined efforts of trail partners including: the City of Mount Vernon, the Clark County Park District, Columbus and Franklin County MetroParks, Delaware County Friends of the Trail, Friends of Madison County Parks & Trails, Friends of the Camp Chase Trail, Genoa Township, Greene County Parks & Trails, Heart of Ohio Trail Inc., the Holmes County Park District, the Holmes County Rails to Trails Coalition Inc., the Knox County Park District, the Kokosing Gap Trail Board, the Madison County Park Board, the Ohio & Erie Canalway Coalition, the Ohio to Erie Trail Fund, Preservation Parks of Delaware County, Rails to Trails of Wayne County, Summit Metro Parks, the Village of Galena and Westerville Parks & Recreation.

HOLMES COUNTY TRAIL (PART OF THE OHIO TO ERIE TRAIL)

Total Length (in Miles)	23.1
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Ohio (in Miles)	23.1
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	Holmes County Park District, Holmes County Rails to Trails Coalition Inc.
Website	holmescountychamber.com/recreation/holmes-county-rails-trails-coalition
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/holmes-county-trail

The Holmes County Trail, part of the Ohio to Erie Trail, is currently open in two disconnected segments, connecting Fredericksburg to Killbuck and Glenmont to Brinkhaven. Located in the heart of Amish Country, the Holmes County Trail was the first recreational trail in the country designed to accommodate Amish buggies. Holmes County Rails to Trails Coalition Inc. and the Holmes County Park District maintain and develop the trail.

The Holmes County Trail is currently divided into two segments of existing trail with a gap between them:

Segment 1 – 15.8 miles of trail between Fredericksburg and Killbuck.

Segment 2 – 7.3 miles of trail between Glenmont and Brinkhaven (also known as Gann).

The gap from Killbuck to Glenmont is discussed in Trail Gap 8.

TRAIL GAP 8 – HOLMES COUNTY TRAIL EXTENSION (KILLBUCK TO GLENMONT)

There is a 6.6-mile trail gap in the Holmes County Trail between Killbuck and Glenmont. Trail users currently utilize state Route 520—a rural, two-lane road with no shoulder—as an interim on-road connector to travel from Killbuck to Glenmont. Holmes County Rails to Trails Coalition Inc., with the Holmes County Park District, will complete Trail Gap 8 in two parts. First, roughly 4 miles from the existing trail in Glenmont to state Route 520 will be completed in 2023. Funding is already in place and engineering is complete to make this first section possible. The Holmes County Park District submitted an application to the Appalachian Community Grant program through the state of Ohio for the remaining section between state Route 520 and Killbuck, which is anticipated to be completed in the summer of 2024 (pending funding).

MOHICAN VALLEY TRAIL (PART OF THE OHIO TO ERIE TRAIL)

Total Length (in Miles)	4.5
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Ohio (in Miles)	4.5
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	Knox County Park District
Website	knoxcountyparks.org/trails/bike-trails/mohican-valley-bike-trail
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/mohican-valley-trail

From the western terminus of the Holmes County Trail in Brinkhaven (also known as Gann), the Mohican Valley Trail travels 4.5 miles west to Danville. Part of the Ohio to Erie Trail, the Mohican Valley Trail follows an abandoned right-of-way of the old Penn Central Transportation Company on the eastern edge of Knox County. The Mohican Valley Trail features the Bridge of Dreams, a 370-foot covered bridge over the Mohican State Scenic River.

The trail is administered by the Knox County Park District. There is a trailhead located off East Street in the Village of Danville. Trail users can continue through the quiet streets of Danville to reach the Kokosing Gap Trail. Knox County Park District intends to resurface the Mohican Valley Trail soon.

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT OHIO

KOKOSING GAP TRAIL (PART OF THE OHIO TO ERIE TRAIL)

Total Length (in Miles)	13.5
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Ohio (in Miles)	13.5
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	Knox County Park District, Kokosing Gap Trail Board
Website	kokosinggaptrail.org
TrailLink Map	trailink.com/trail/kokosing-gap-trail

The Kokosing Gap Trail travels 13.5 miles from Danville to Mount Vernon. The trail is rich in railroad history, which is displayed throughout the route. Once the corridor of the Pennsylvania Railroad, the rail-trail features two railroad bridges, each more than 250 feet long, over the Kokosing State Scenic River, as well as restored train cars in Gambier. The trail is part of the Ohio to Erie Trail and is overseen by a 15-member board. From the city of Mount Vernon, trail users may either connect to the 1-mile Downtown Connector Trail or remain on the Kokosing Gap Trail to end in the city's Phillips Park.

DOWNTOWN CONNECTOR TRAIL (MOUNT VERNON; PART OF THE OHIO TO ERIE TRAIL)

Total Length (in Miles)	1.0
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Ohio (in Miles)	1.0
Trail Type	Greenway
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	City of Mount Vernon, Knox County Park District
Website	knoxcountyparks.org/trails
TrailLink Map	trailink.com/trail/downtown-connector-trail

The 1-mile Downtown Connector Trail opened in May 2016 and connects the Kokosing Gap Trail to the Heart of Ohio Trail through Mount Vernon. The trail is part of the Ohio to Erie Trail and begins at the western terminus of the Kokosing Gap Trail on Mt. Vernon Avenue. The trail travels west along the Kokosing River to the restored CA&C Railroad Depot, where it connects to the Heart of Ohio Trail.

HEART OF OHIO TRAIL (PART OF THE OHIO TO ERIE TRAIL)

Total Length (in Miles)	18.5
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Ohio (in Miles)	18.5
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt, ballast
Trail Manager	Heart of Ohio Trail Inc., Knox County Park District
Website	heartofohiotrail.com
TrailLink Map	trailink.com/trail/heart-of-ohio-trail

The Heart of Ohio Trail, part of the Ohio to Erie Trail, travels 18.5 miles from Mount Vernon to Centerburg. Along the trail in Mount Vernon, Ariel-Foundation Park proudly displays Ohio's industrial past in the form of a 250-acre adaptive reuse project. Once the site of a glass-making factory, this space now features sculptures, lakes, an observation tower and walking trails. Ariel-Foundation Park links to both the Heart of Ohio Trail and the Kokosing Gap Trail. The western terminus of the Heart of Ohio Trail was extended 1.3 miles in 2022 to connect with the Meredith State Road Trail at the Knox-Licking county line. The Knox County Park District and the Heart of Ohio Trail Inc. have championed the Heart of Ohio Trail and are in the process of creating a welcome center with a new restroom along the trail as well.

TRAIL GAP 9—CENTERBURG TO LICKING-DELAWARE COUNTY LINE COMPLETED

Trail Gap 9 (Centerburg to Licking- Delaware County Line) is now a completed trail segment as part of the Heart of Ohio Trail.

MEREDITH STATE ROAD TRAIL (PART OF THE OHIO TO ERIE TRAIL)

Total Length (in Miles)	1.5
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Ohio (in Miles)	1.5
Trail Type	Greenway
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	Delaware County Friends of the Trail, Preservation Parks of Delaware County
Website	preservationparks.com/ohio-to-erie-trail/meredith-state-road-trail
TrailLink Map	trailink.com/trail/meredith-state-road-trail-

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT OHIO

The 1.5-mile Meredith State Road Trail travels from the Licking–Delaware county line to the unincorporated community of Condit. Part of the Ohio to Erie Trail, the paved Meredith State Road Trail is supported by Preservation Parks of Delaware County and Delaware County Friends of the Trail.

TRAIL GAP 10 – CONDIT TO SUNBURY

Trail Gap 10 is expected to be completed in two segments:

Segment 1 – Preservation Parks of Delaware County received funding in 2022 from the Clean Ohio Trails Fund to complete a 1,500-foot gap in the trail between Hartford Road and Walnut Street. Construction includes rehabilitation work on a 220-foot-long former railroad bridge crossing Big Walnut Creek. Construction is expected to be completed on Segment 1 in 2023.

Segment 2 – Preliminary engineering was completed in 2022 for the next segment between East Cherry and South Columbus streets. The section is expected to be ready for construction once funding is secured.

SANDEL LEGACY TRAIL (PART OF THE OHIO TO ERIE TRAIL)

Total Length (in Miles)	5.7
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Ohio (in Miles)	5.7
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	Delaware County Friends of the Trail, Preservation Parks of Delaware County
Website	preservationparks.com/ohio-to-erie-trail/sandel-legacy-trail
TrailLink Map	trailink.com/trail/sandel-legacy-trail-

The Sandel Legacy Trail travels 5.7 miles through the village of Sunbury. Once an abandoned railroad bed, the trail was donated by Walter and Kathy Sandel with funding for trail conversion provided by a NatureWorks grant. The trail was formerly known as the Big Walnut Community Trail and continues to serve as a community hub, with a picnic area and former depot that houses the Delaware County Model Railroaders Group. The trail is supported by Preservation Parks of Delaware County and Delaware County Friends of the Trail. Eventually, the Meredith State Road Trail and Sandel Legacy Trail will merge under the name Sandel Legacy Trail. In 2018, Delaware County received a grant to purchase additional trail corridor, and in 2020, the county constructed an additional 2.5 miles of trail along this corridor.

TRAIL GAP 11 – SUNBURY TO GALENA COMPLETED

Trail Gap 11 (Sunbury to Galena) is now a completed trail segment as part of the Thomas W. Hopper Legacy Trail.

THOMAS W. HOPPER LEGACY TRAIL (PART OF THE OHIO TO ERIE TRAIL)

Total Length (in Miles)	1.5
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Ohio (in Miles)	1.5
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	Village of Galena
Website	dcft.typepad.com/galenabricktrail
TrailLink Map	trailink.com/trail/thomas-w-hopper-legacy-trail

The 1.5-mile Thomas W. Hopper Legacy Trail, formerly known as the Galena Brick Trail, is the section of the Ohio to Erie Trail that goes through the village of Galena. The latest section of the trail, which opened in late 2019, begins at County Road 104/Dustin Road and follows a former railbed northward to Sunbury. Largely wooded, it includes a bridge over Little Walnut Creek and travels through Miller Park, which contains a small playground. A trailhead parking lot is located where the trail crosses North Walnut Street in Galena. The trail is supported by the village of Galena.

TRAIL GAP 12 – GALENA

The former rail corridor that now houses the Thomas W. Hopper Legacy Trail continues south from Galena; however, it was developed as part of the Blackhawk Golf Course. There is now a 0.5-mile gap between the Thomas W. Hopper Legacy Trail and the Hoover Scenic Trail along the Hoover Reservoir. An on-road route is signed along County Road 104/Dustin Road and County Road 24/West Columbus Street to support riders currently looking to fill this gap.

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT OHIO

HOOVER SCENIC TRAIL (PART OF THE OHIO TO ERIE TRAIL)

Total Length (in Miles)	0.6
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Ohio (in Miles)	0.6
Trail Type	Greenway
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	Delaware County Friends of the Trail, Preservation Parks of Delaware County
Website	preservationparks.com/ohio-to-erie-trail/hover-scenic-trail
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/hover-scenic-trail

The Hoover Scenic Trail, part of the Ohio to Erie Trail, winds 0.6 mile through the Hoover Nature Preserve area. More than 220 bird species have been observed along the trail, including bald eagles and ospreys. The trail begins south of the village of Galena and runs along the shore of the Hoover Reservoir within the Hoover Nature Preserve. The trail heads west to cross South Old 3C Road via a bicycle and pedestrian bridge. Trail users continue west for a short way on Plumb Road to connect to the Genoa Trail. The trail is supported by Preservation Parks of Delaware County and Delaware County Friends of the Trail.

GENOA TRAIL (PART OF THE OHIO TO ERIE TRAIL)

Total Length (in Miles)	4.0
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Ohio (in Miles)	4.0
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	Delaware County Friends of the Trail, Genoa Township, Preservation Parks of Delaware County
Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> genoatwp.com/departments/parks/trails.php dcft.typepad.com/genoatrail
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/genoa-trail

The 4-mile Genoa Trail parallels state Route 3 from south of Galena to Westerville, Ohio, but is separated from the highway by trees and vegetation. Once an abandoned railroad, the corridor now features a multiuse asphalt trail and amenities for trail users, including benches and a bicycle repair station. The Genoa Trail is part of the Ohio to Erie Trail and is supported by Genoa Township, Delaware County Friends of the Trail and Preservation Parks of Delaware County.

WESTERVILLE B&W (PART OF THE OHIO TO ERIE TRAIL)

Total Length (in Miles)	23.0
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Ohio (in Miles)	2.5
Trail Type	Greenway, rail-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt, concrete
Trail Manager	Delaware County Friends of the Trail, Westerville Parks & Recreation
Website	westerville.org/services/parks-recreation/parks-and-trails/recreation-trail-system
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/westerville-bw

The Westerville B&W (Bike & Walk Route), part of the Ohio to Erie Trail, is an extensive system of paved multiuse trails forming many loops throughout the city of Westerville, a suburb of Columbus. The Westerville B&W will host the Great American Rail-Trail for 2.5 miles, connecting to the Alum Creek Greenway Trail. The spine of the Westerville B&W was built on a former rail corridor and connects 23 miles of trail throughout the city. The trail system is managed by Westerville Parks & Recreation and Delaware County Friends of the Trail.

ALUM CREEK GREENWAY TRAIL (PART OF THE OHIO TO ERIE TRAIL)

Total Length (in Miles)	25.2
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Ohio (in Miles)	12.0
Trail Type	Greenway
Surface Type	Asphalt, concrete
Trail Manager	Columbus & Franklin County Metro Parks, Columbus Recreation & Parks Department
Website	columbus.gov/recreationandparks/trails/alum-creek-trail
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/alum-creek-greenway-trail

Part of the Ohio to Erie Trail, the Alum Creek Greenway Trail winds alongside the picturesque Alum Creek for 25.2 miles. The Alum Creek Greenway Trail will host the Great American Rail-Trail for approximately 12 miles to travel between Westerville and downtown Columbus. The Alum Creek Greenway Trail celebrates active transportation by honoring important figures with plaques and bridges along the trail. From the Alum Creek Greenway Trail, users may connect to the I-670 Downtown Connector Trail at Airport Drive in Columbus.

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT

OHIO

DOWNTOWN CONNECTOR TRAIL (PART OF THE OHIO TO ERIE TRAIL)

Total Length (in Miles)	5.0
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Ohio (in Miles)	5.0
Trail Type	Greenway
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	Columbus & Franklin County Metro Parks, Columbus Recreation & Parks Department
Website	columbus.gov/recreationandparks/trails/downtown-connector-trail
TrailLink Map	trailink.com/trail/downtown-connector-trail-(columbus)

The Downtown Connector Trail parallels I-670 for 3.5 miles from Ohio Dominican University to Clinton Middle School and Columbus State Community College. Part of the Ohio to Erie Trail, the fully paved Downtown Connector Trail serves as an important link between neighborhoods on the city's east side and downtown Columbus. The asphalt trail was planned and implemented through the collaborative efforts of the city of Westerville, the city of Columbus, and Columbus & Franklin County Metro Parks. A 1.5-mile segment of the Downtown Connector Trail is largely on road, utilizing lower-volume roads and bike lanes with clear signage, and is described as "easily navigable."

SCIOTO GREENWAY TRAIL (PART OF THE OHIO TO ERIE TRAIL)

Total Length (in Miles)	12.2
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Ohio (in Miles)	3.9
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt, concrete
Trail Manager	Columbus & Franklin County Metro Parks, Columbus Recreation & Parks Department
Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> sciotomile.com/locations/scioto-greenways-recreational-trails columbus.gov/recreationandparks/trails/scioto-trail
TrailLink Map	trailink.com/trail/scioto-greenway-trail

The Scioto Greenway Trail is a 12.2-mile trail that traverses the banks of the Scioto River, connecting several parks and offering scenic views of downtown Columbus along the way. The first greenway built in Columbus, the Scioto Greenway Trail serves as the spine of the Scioto Mile, a string of prominent parks and landmarks in downtown Columbus. RTC contributed \$7,500 to this trail connection in 2013 with a grant from the Coca-Cola Foundation's Metropolitan Grants Program. The Scioto Greenway Trail will host the Great American Rail-Trail for 3.9 miles, traveling through the west side of Columbus.

CAMP CHASE TRAIL (PART OF THE OHIO TO ERIE TRAIL)

Total Length (in Miles)	15.9
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Ohio (in Miles)	15.9
Trail Type	Rail-with-rail
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	Columbus & Franklin County Metro Parks, Columbus Recreation & Parks Department, Friends of the Camp Chase Trail
Website	facebook.com/campchasefriends
TrailLink Map	trailink.com/trail/camp-chase-trail

The Camp Chase Trail travels 15.9 miles from Columbus to West Jefferson, Ohio. The trail, named after the railroad with which it shares a corridor, serves as a shining example of a well-constructed rail-with-trail. The trail was built by Columbus & Franklin County Metro Parks and the Columbus Recreation & Parks Department. The Friends of the Camp Chase Trail group supports the trail through monthly trail cleanups and events. The trail ends at a trailhead with restrooms and parking at Wilson Road Southeast in West Jefferson, and connects directly to Roberts Pass Trail. The Camp Chase Trail will soon be widened to better accommodate cyclists.

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT

OHIO

ROBERTS PASS TRAIL (PART OF THE OHIO TO ERIE TRAIL)

Total Length (in Miles)	6.5
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Ohio (in Miles)	6.5
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	Friends of Madison County Parks & Trails, Madison County Park Board
Website	fmcpt.com/roberts-pass-trail
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/roberts-pass-trail

Roberts Pass Trail runs 6.5 miles from Wilson Road in rural Fairfield Township to London, Ohio. The paved trail, which is part of the Ohio to Erie Trail, passes through farmland for its entirety and is shaded by tree canopy throughout. Local volunteers secured the right-of-way and a work lane for construction of the trail. Roberts Pass Trail is named after Wayne Roberts and Gene Pass, the leaders of Friends of Madison County Parks & Trails. A memorial plaque near Maple Street in London records the history of the Roberts Pass Trail. The trail travels through farmland and ends at Maple Street.

TRAIL GAP 13 – LONDON

The 0.8-mile gap in London begins at South Walnut Street near the western terminus of Roberts Pass Trail and continues to Midway Street, the eastern terminus of the Prairie Grass Trail. There is currently an interim on-road connector through London's segment of the Ohio to Erie Trail. An off-road trail through London is currently being explored in more detail.

PRAIRIE GRASS TRAIL (PART OF THE OHIO TO ERIE TRAIL)

Total Length (in Miles)	29.2
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Ohio (in Miles)	29.2
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	Clark County Park District, Friends of Madison County Parks & Trails, Greene County Parks & Trails, Madison County Park Board
Website	fmcpt.com/prairie-grass-trail
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/prairie-grass-trail

The Prairie Grass Trail travels 29.2 miles from London to Xenia, Ohio. The Prairie Grass Trail is part of the Ohio to Erie Trail and is one of four rail-trails that radiate from Xenia Station. Once a Baltimore and Ohio Railroad freight yard, Xenia Station now includes a local history museum that features information about the three railroads that once ran through the town: the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Wellston Subdivision and two lines of the Pennsylvania Railroad. The Prairie Grass Trail continues southwest from London to Xenia and ends at Xenia Station, a spot that also marks the western end of the Great American Rail-Trail's journey along the Ohio to Erie Trail. The Great American Rail-Trail continues west on the Creekside Trail from Xenia Station.

CREEKSIDE TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	15.1
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Ohio (in Miles)	15.1
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt, concrete
Trail Manager	Five Rivers MetroParks, Greene County Parks & Trails
Website	metroparks.org/places-to-go/paved-trails/#creekside-trail
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/creekside-trail

The Creekside Trail travels 15.1 miles northwest to Dayton through the town of Beavercreek, Ohio. The Creekside Trail is a rail-trail and is part of Miami Valley Trails—a network of more than 340 miles of trails that travel throughout Ohio's scenic Miami Valley. The Creekside Trail is also one of several trails that radiate from Xenia Station, allowing for connections to the Xenia–Jamestown Connector, the Little Miami Scenic Trail and the Prairie Grass Trail (the latter two are also part of the Ohio to Erie Trail, which continues south to Cincinnati). Greene County Parks & Trails manages the Creekside Trail east of the Greene County line, while Five Rivers MetroParks manages the trail west of the Greene County line to Eastwood MetroPark in Dayton, where the Creekside Trail's northwest terminus is located.

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT

OHIO

MAD RIVER TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	7.1
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Ohio (in Miles)	3.0
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	Five Rivers MetroParks, Miami Conservancy District
Website	metroparks.org/places-to-go/paved-trails/#mad-river-trail
TrailLink Map	trailink.com/trail/mad-river-trail

The scenic 7.1-mile Mad River Trail follows the Mad River into downtown Dayton. The Mad River Trail will host the Great American Rail-Trail for a 3-mile section that begins in Dayton's Eastwood MetroPark and travels to RiverScape MetroPark. The paved trail is relatively flat and is accessible for cyclists, skaters and pedestrians of all ages. The Mad River Trail is administered by the Miami Conservancy District and Five Rivers MetroParks.

GREAT MIAMI RIVER TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	86.2
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Ohio (in Miles)	4.0
Trail Type	Greenway
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	Five Rivers MetroParks, Miami Conservancy District
Website	metroparks.org/places-to-go/paved-trails/#great-miami-river-trail
TrailLink Map	trailink.com/trail/great-miami-river-trail

The Great Miami River Trail runs alongside the Great Miami River for 86.2 miles from Piqua down to Fairfield. The Great Miami River Trail is the backbone of Ohio's paved Miami Valley Trails network, spanning 340 miles throughout Ohio's Miami Valley. It will host the Great American Rail-Trail for approximately 4 miles through downtown Dayton.

There is a 7.6-mile loop around downtown Dayton on both sides of the Great Miami River. From the connection to the Mad River Trail, the Great Miami River Trail breaks off in two directions, giving trail users the following options:

Option 1 – Travel north along Deeds Point MetroPark and Kettering Field to cross the Great Miami River at Island MetroPark.

Option 2 – Travel south, heading into the heart of the city, to cross the river at West Stewart Street.

Both options connect to the Wolf Creek Trail in Dayton, where Wolf Creek branches off the Great Miami River just south of W. S. McIntosh Memorial Park.

WOLF CREEK TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	16.2
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Ohio (in Miles)	13.8
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	City of Dayton, Five Rivers MetroParks
Website	metroparks.org/places-to-go/paved-trails/#wolf-creek-trail
TrailLink Map	trailink.com/trail/wolf-creek-trail-(oh)

The Wolf Creek Trail is currently open in two disconnected segments and travels northwest for 13.8 miles from Dayton to the Montgomery–Preble county line. Part of the Ohio Miami Valley's 340 miles of off-road trails, Wolf Creek Trail is a well-maintained asphalt route that winds alongside Wolf Creek. With its longer, westernmost segment managed by Five Rivers MetroParks, Wolf Creek is one of the five waterways that gives MetroParks its name. The city of Dayton manages the trail east of Trotwood.

The Wolf Creek Trail is currently divided into two segments of existing trail with one gap (Trail Gap 14) between them:

Segment 1 – 2.9 miles of trail heading west from Dayton to the unincorporated community of Stillwater Junction.

Segment 2 – 10.9 miles of trail between Trotwood and Preble County Line Road in Brookville.

At the conjunction of the Mad River Trail and the easternmost endpoint of the Wolf Creek Trail, the Great American Rail-Trail route will head west on the 2.9-mile Segment 1 to Trail Gap 14, described below. From Trotwood, the Great American Rail-Trail route will continue northwest on the 10.9-mile Segment 2 to Preble County Line Road in Brookville, which marks the beginning of Trail Gap 15.

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT OHIO



Ohio & Erie Canalway Towpath Trail in Ohio | Photo by Richard T. (Tom) Bower

TRAIL GAP 14 – WOLF CREEK TRAIL EXTENSION (DAYTON TO TROTWOOD)

Five Rivers MetroParks is actively working to complete the 5-mile gap in the Wolf Creek Trail. The preferred route of the Great American Rail-Trail connects Wesleyan Nature Center to Vickwood Lane in Trotwood, the easternmost endpoint of Segment 2, via Hickorydale Park. The route has been determined and funding for construction is anticipated to be secured in the next few years.

TRAIL GAP 15 – PREBLE COUNTY LINE TO OHIO-INDIANA STATE LINE

The Wolf Creek Trail currently ends at the Preble County line. About eight to 10 years ago, the Preble County Commissioners bought the former rail corridor on which the existing Wolf Creek Trail now sits. When private landowners challenged the County Commission on the titles for a portion of the route, the county chose not to fight the challenge. The Preble County Commissioners currently own about 80% of the corridor and are reluctant to move toward trail development as a result.

The Preble County Commissioners expressed interest in looking at a route that uses the Ohio Department of Transportation Right of Way along U.S. 40. Additionally, the Preble County Park District plans to pass a resolution supporting the vision of the Great American Rail-Trail. The planned resolution would both state the Preble County Park District's dedication to finding a suitable way to connect the Great American Rail-Trail through Preble County and ask the Preble County Commissioners to do the same. Another part of the resolution would mention the need for a feasibility study to explore the best way to accomplish linking the Great American Rail-Trail 21.8 miles through Preble County to connect to a future trail development across the border in Indiana.

INDIANA



Indiana's Cardinal Greenway | Photo by Tony Valainis, courtesy Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

ROUTE

RTC met with Indiana state officials early in the Great American Rail-Trail process, recognizing that the route through Indiana would have a significant impact on the potential routes through its neighboring states. Two routes were presented: a shorter one across the north of the state and a longer diagonal one from Richmond, Indiana, toward the Chicago metropolitan area. Officials from the Indiana Department of Transportation were so excited about the potential of the Great American Rail-Trail that they asked RTC to consider including as many miles as possible in Indiana by using the longer diagonal route. In September 2018, Governor Holcomb announced the Next Level Connections program, a \$1 billion investment in infrastructure projects including trails. So far, the program has provided funding for several projects along the Great American Rail-Trail. October 2021–October 2022 was designated as the Year of the Trails in Indiana by the state's bipartisan legislative trails caucus with the intention of showcasing the critical value that the state's trails deliver and the need to guarantee funding to connect and maintain the state's trail system.

TABLE 12 GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL MILEAGE IN INDIANA

Total Great American Rail-Trail Existing Trail Miles in Ind. (% of Total State Mileage)	119.0 (55.4%)
Total Great American Rail-Trail Trail Gap Miles in Ind. (% of Total State Mileage)	95.7 (44.6%)
Total Trail Gaps in Ind.	9
Total Great American Rail-Trail Miles in Ind.	214.7

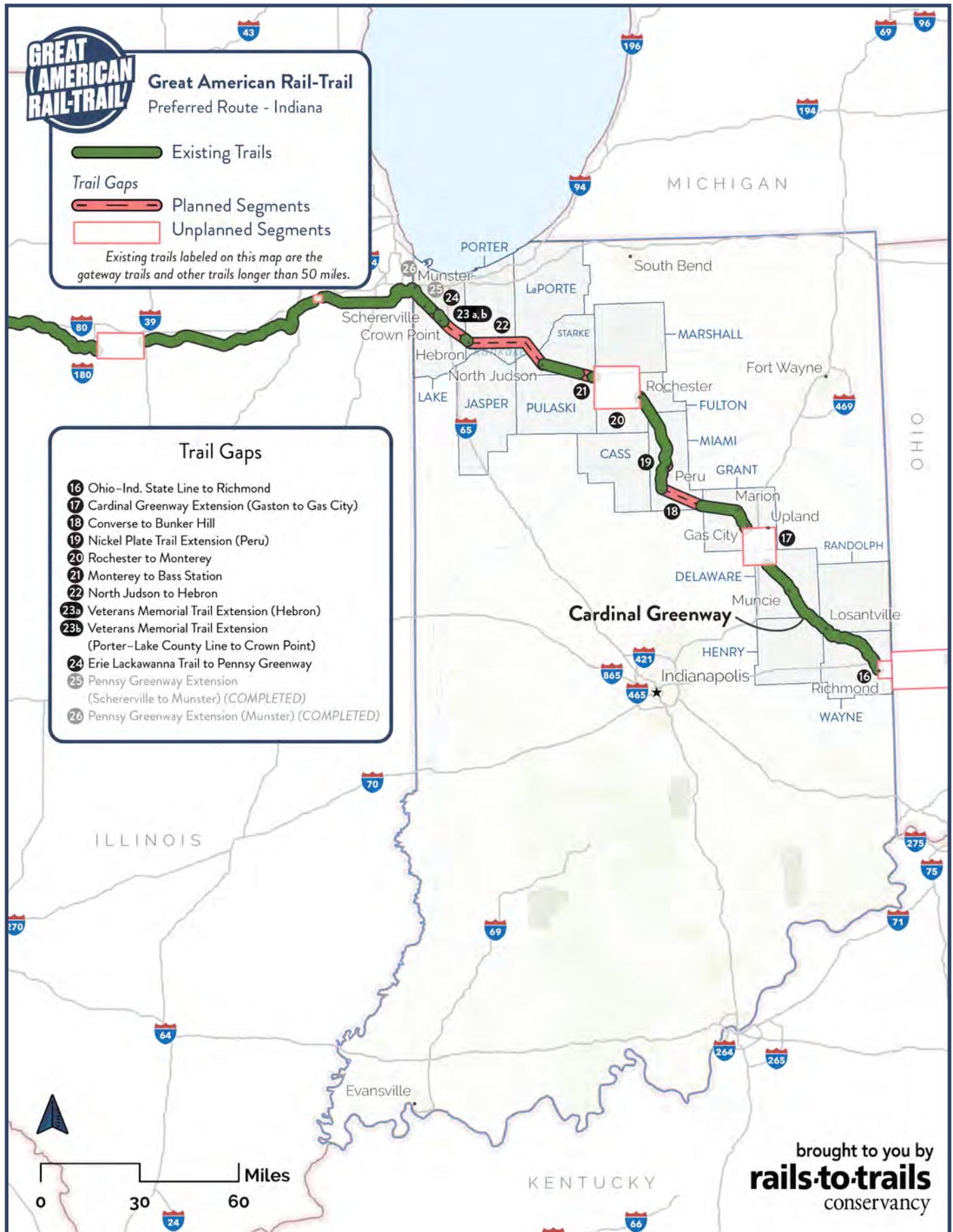
GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT
INDIANA

TABLE 13 GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE THROUGH INDIANA

Existing Trail or Trail Gap Name	Length in Ind. Along Great American Rail-Trail (in Miles)
TRAIL GAP 16 – Ohio–Ind. State Line to Richmond	5.0
Cardinal Greenway (Richmond to Gaston)	50.5
TRAIL GAP 17 – Cardinal Greenway Extension (Gaston to Gas City)	15.1
Cardinal Greenway (Gas City to Sweetser)	10.4
Sweetser Switch Trail	4.0
Converse Junction Trail	2.6
TRAIL GAP 18 – Converse to Bunker Hill	13.1
Nickel Plate Trail (Bunker Hill to Peru)	6.6
TRAIL GAP 19 – Nickel Plate Trail Extension (Peru)	2.6
Nickel Plate Trail (Peru to Rochester)	21.3
TRAIL GAP 20 – Rochester to Monterey	16.5
Monterey Erie Trail	0.6
TRAIL GAP 21 – Monterey to Bass Station	4.2
Erie Trail	11.1
TRAIL GAP 22 – North Judson to Hebron	25.2
TRAIL GAP 23a – Veterans Memorial Trail Extension (Hebron)	1.5
Veterans Memorial Trail (Hebron)	1.0
TRAIL GAP 23b – Veterans Memorial Trail Extension (Porter–Lake County Line to Crown Point)	8.5
Veterans Memorial Trail (Crown Point)	0.6
TRAIL GAP 23b – Veterans Memorial Trail Extension (Porter–Lake County Line to Crown Point)	0.7
Great American Rail-Trail (Crown Point)	0.4
Erie Lackawanna Trail	1.2
TRAIL GAP 24 – Erie Lackawanna Trail to Pennsy Greenway	3.3
Pennsy Greenway (Schererville to Ind.–Ill. State Line)	8.7
TRAIL GAP 25 – Pennsy Greenway Extension (Schererville to Munster) COMPLETED	-
TRAIL GAP 26 – Pennsy Greenway Extension (Munster) COMPLETED	-
Total Miles	214.7
Existing Trail Miles	119.0
Trail Gap Miles	95.7

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT 2023

MAP 6: INDIANA



GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT INDIANA

TRAIL GAP 16 – OHIO-INDIANA STATE LINE TO RICHMOND

Picking up from Trail Gap 15 at the Ohio-Indiana border, Trail Gap 16 encompasses the 5 miles from the state line to Richmond in Wayne County, Indiana. The city of Richmond’s 2015 Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan illustrates a proposed greenway connecting Richmond to the Ohio border. The proposed greenway parallels the East Fork Whitewater River and connects to downtown Richmond through an unnamed existing trail.

An important east-west connection to the adjacent county land and eventually to the state of Ohio is a proposed greenway along the East Fork of the White River. Although only a small portion of the greenway lies within the city limits, constructing this portion of the greenway could provide the catalyst needed to spur construction of the greenway to the state line. Building the greenway in this eastern direction will also provide connections to both Glen Miller Park and Hayes Arboretum on a more scenic route than what you would find along U.S. 40.

CARDINAL GREENWAY

Total Length (in Miles)	62.0
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Ind. (in Miles)	60.9
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	Cardinal Greenways
Website	cardinalgreenways.org
TrailLink Map	trailink.com/trail/cardinal-greenway

The Cardinal Greenway, the longest rail-trail in Indiana, stretches almost 62 miles along a former CSX Transportation railroad corridor. The Cardinal Greenway was the 2018 inductee into RTC’s Rail-Trail Hall of Fame. The trail is named after the Cardinal, a passenger train that once ran the length of the greenway. The Cardinal Greenway will host the Great American Rail-Trail from its southernmost endpoint in Richmond to Marion, just east of the greenway’s northernmost endpoint in Sweetser. The Cardinal Greenway has been championed by Cardinal Greenways, a nonprofit that aims to extend the Cardinal Greenway throughout eastern Indiana.

The Cardinal Greenway is currently divided into two segments of existing trail with one gap between them:

Segment 1 – 50.5 miles of trail between Richmond and Gaston.

Segment 2 – 10.4 miles of trail between Gas City and Sweetser.

The gap between the two segments of the Cardinal Greenway is discussed in Trail Gap 17, below.

A restoration plan for the Cardinal Greenway was developed in 2019 to keep the trail in excellent shape through 2040. The full cost of trail maintenance in this plan was estimated at \$20 million.

TRAIL GAP 17 – CARDINAL GREENWAY EXTENSION (GASTON TO GAS CITY)

An approximately 15.1-mile gap in the Cardinal Greenway currently exists between Gaston and Gas City due to private landowners acquiring the former rail corridor. The trail gap begins in Gaston and follows various county roads to reach Gas City. Cardinal Greenways expects to submit a grant application during the third round of Indiana’s Next Level Trails program for funding to acquire and construct 4 miles of trail within Trail Gap 17.

There is an active CSX Transportation corridor heading west from Upland to Jonesboro that could be helpful in bridging some of Trail Gap 17. Exploring trails along local county roads could also help fill the gap. Further exploration is needed to determine the best way to fill Trail Gap 17.

SWEETSER SWITCH TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	4.0
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Ind. (in Miles)	4.0
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	Cardinal Greenways, Town of Sweetser
Website	sweetserin.us/community-park
TrailLink Map	trailink.com/trail/sweetser-switch-trail

The 4-mile Sweetser Switch Trail is an important regional connector that follows the original corridor of the Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Chicago and St. Louis Railroad. The paved rail-trail connects to the Cardinal Greenway at County Road 400 West/North 400 West in Sweetser and joins the 2.6-mile Converse Junction Trail in Converse, making the Sweetser Switch Trail a key piece of north-central Indiana’s trail system.

The residents of Sweetser have championed this trail throughout the years. When residents explored the possibility of turning the right-of-way into a trail, they first had to create a park board because the small town did not have a parks and recreation department. Residents chipped in with donations and volunteer labor to complete the path’s first mile.

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CONVERSE JUNCTION TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	2.6
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Ind. (in Miles)	2.6
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	Town of Converse
Website	facebook.com/converse-junction-trail-1442126726034826
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/converse-junction-trail

The Converse Junction Trail provides around 2.6 miles of smooth asphalt along a former Penn Central Transportation Company line, linking the small Indiana communities of Mier and Converse. The Mier trailhead is located on North 800 West 27, from which point the Sweetser Switch Trail extends eastward. The Converse Junction Trail travels northwest across Pipe and Taylor creeks to reach downtown Converse. The trail ends at County Road 1000 West/North 1000 West 27, which also serves as the western border of Marion County.

TRAIL GAP 18 – CONVERSE TO BUNKER HILL

Nickel Plate Trail Inc. is working to fill the 13.1-mile trail gap between the western terminus of the Converse Junction Trail in Converse and the town of Bunker Hill, near the southern end of the Nickel Plate Trail.

Three-fourths of the trail gap land has been acquired and three grants have been secured to complete Trail Gap 18, including a 2022 Next Level Trails grant for \$3.6 million, which fills the remaining funding needed for this gap. In 2023, 4.5 miles of this gap between McGrawsville and Bunker Hill will be completed and opened to the public.

NICKEL PLATE TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	36.9
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Ind. (in Miles)	27.9
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	Nickel Plate Trail Inc.
Website	nickelplatetrail.org
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/nickel-plate-trail

The Nickel Plate Trail is currently divided into two segments of existing trail with one gap between them:

Segment 1 – About 15.6 miles of trail from Kokomo to Peru.

Segment 2 – About 21.3 miles of trail from Peru to Rochester.

The Nickel Plate Trail will host the Great American Rail-Trail, using 6.6 miles of Segment 1 (from Bunker Hill to Peru) and all of Segment 2 to travel between Bunker Hill and Rochester. The gap in the Nickel Plate Trail is discussed in Trail Gap 19, below.

TRAIL GAP 19 – NICKEL PLATE TRAIL EXTENSION (PERU)

The 2.6-mile trail gap in Peru utilizes an interim on-road connector. The interim connector heads east into downtown Peru before connecting back to Segment 2 of the Nickel Plate Trail. Nickel Plate Trail Inc. is leading efforts to complete this gap, including work to purchase the land between West 7th Street and East 100 North/East Lovers Lane Road, and is looking for funding to do so.

TRAIL GAP 20 – ROCHESTER TO MONTEREY

Nickel Plate Trail Inc. is actively working to connect the Nickel Plate Trail to downtown Rochester by extending the trail from its current terminus just south of Rochester to Rochester's city center.

The remaining 16.5-mile gap from downtown Rochester west to Monterey has not been discussed in depth. There is an abandoned rail corridor that begins north of Rochester and travels south of Leiters Ford that could form a potential route. More research needs to be done to develop a viable gap-filling strategy for Trail Gap 20.

MONTEREY ERIE TRAIL

The 0.6-mile Monterey Erie Trail occupies the same railbanked corridor as the Erie Trail (described below) to its west, and the two rail-trails are planned to be linked in the future. The towns of Monterey and North Judson once saw frequent freight service between the two communities, first by the Erie Lackawanna Railway and, later, by the Erie Western Railway, Tippecanoe Railroad and JK Lines. The 16-mile corridor was put up for abandonment in 2003, and the Hoosier Valley Railroad Museum stepped in to preserve the corridor for public use.

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TRAIL GAP 21 – MONTEREY TO BASS STATION

There is an approximately 4.2-mile gap between the western terminus of the Monterey Erie Trail in Monterey and the eastern terminus of the Erie Trail in the town of Ora. The Prairie Trails Club Inc., a volunteer group that oversees the Erie Trail, mentioned filling the gap in its 2016 Future Vision Phase Plan.

ERIE TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	11.1
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Ind. (in Miles)	11.1
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	Hoosier Valley Railroad Museum, The Prairie Trails Club Inc.
Website	hoosiervalley.org/visit/trail
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/north-judson-erie-trail

The 11-mile Erie Trail occupies the railbanked right-of-way of the former JK Line Railroad. In May 2019, the Prairie Trails Club Inc. was awarded an Indiana Department of Natural Resources Next Level Trails program grant from the first round of applications to construct 2.1 miles of trail beginning at the eastern terminus of the Erie Trail at U.S. 35 in Bass Station and stretching toward Ora. The group completed this extension in 2021.

TRAIL GAP 22 – NORTH JUDSON TO HEBRON

There are two known options to connect the 25.2 miles from the western endpoint of the Erie Trail in North Judson northwest to the town of Hebron.

Option 1 – The first option is to develop a trail along the Kankakee River. While this potential route is not mentioned in any formal plans, discussions with the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission indicate that a trail connection along the banks of the Kankakee River is viable in the long term and would offer trail users a scenic ride through northwest Indiana.

Option 2 – The second option is to develop a trail along an abandoned rail corridor connecting northwest from North Judson to La Crosse, Indiana, then west to Hebron. This option is discussed in several local and regional plans, including LaPorte County’s 2008 Countywide Land Development Plan. As part of an effort to extend the Erie Trail, the North Judson Redevelopment Commission selected a buyer for

its short-line railroad that will provide an easement for a trail along the Starke County portion of the right-of-way as well as support the continuation of the Hoosier Valley Railroad Museum.

More research needs to be completed to identify the best option for connecting North Judson and Hebron via trail.

TRAIL GAP 23a – VETERANS MEMORIAL TRAIL EXTENSION (HEBRON)

The Veterans Memorial Trail is currently under development in northwest Indiana. The trail will begin in Hebron just west of Cobb Creek and will travel 1.5 miles through Hebron until reaching its first open section.

VETERANS MEMORIAL TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	1.6
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Ind. (in Miles)	1.6
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	City of Crown Point, Friends of the Veterans Memorial Parkway, Lake County Parks, Town of Hebron

The Veterans Memorial Trail will connect Hebron to the Erie Lackawanna Trail in Crown Point. The trail is being developed in phases, with acquisition and construction underway. The two open sections of trail encompass:

Segment 1: 1.0 mile in Hebron that was completed in 2020, using a grant from Indiana’s Next Level Trails program.

Segment 2: 0.6 mile in Crown Point.

Trail Gap 23b, described below, currently separates Segments 1 and 2 with an 8.5-mile gap, and Segment 2 and the Great American Rail-Trail (Crown Point) with a 0.7-mile gap.

The Veterans Memorial Trail will connect a series of memorials dedicated to those who have served our country in times of war and peace. Currently one memorial—the Lake County Korean Veterans Memorial—has been completed, with two more under development. These include the Lake County World War I & II Veterans and Holocaust Memorial in Crown Point and the Northwest Indiana Middle East Veterans Memorial in Hebron. The connection to the Erie Lackawanna Trail will go through the heart of Crown Point and be adjacent to property slated for a future city hall.

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT INDIANA

TRAIL GAP 23b – VETERANS MEMORIAL TRAIL EXTENSION (PORTER–LAKE COUNTY LINE TO CROWN POINT)

Plans to fill Trail Gap 23b, the largest gap in the Veterans Memorial Trail—at 9.2 miles—are progressing. Traveling west from Hebron to Crown Point, the development of the Veterans Memorial Trail is anticipated to be as follows:

Porter–Lake County line to Iowa Street: The section of future trail from the Porter–Lake county line to Iowa Street is in the acquisition and funding stage. It is anticipated that the trail will be surfaced with asphalt and will include an adjacent equestrian trail.

Iowa Street to East 113th Avenue: Lake County Parks is actively working to complete right-of-way acquisition in this section. Construction is planned to begin in 2023 or 2024.

North Street to Summit Street trailhead: Lake County Parks received the final remaining funding for this section of trail as part of round 2 of the Next Level Trails program. Right-of-way acquisition is being finalized and construction is slated to begin in 2024.

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL (CROWN POINT)

Total Length (in Miles)	0.4
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Ind. (in Miles)	0.4
Trail Type	Greenway
Surface Type	Asphalt, concrete
Trail Manager	City of Crown Point

There is a brief section of trail through Crown Point that connects the Veterans Memorial Trail and the Erie Lackawanna Trail alongside existing city roads. The locals have declared it a piece of the Great American Rail-Trail and refer to it by this name.

ERIE LACKAWANNA TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	17.7
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Ind. (in Miles)	1.2
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	City of Hammond, Lake County Parks, Town of Schererville
Website	schererville.org/town-government/parks-and-recreation/erie-lackawanna-trail
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/erie-lackawanna-trail

The Erie Lackawanna Trail travels 17.7 miles between Crown Point and Hammond—two former rail junctions along a route that carried goods and people in and out of Chicago. The paved trail is bordered by green space and crosses wetlands and parks along the way. The Erie Lackawanna Trail will host the Great American Rail-Trail for just over 1 mile in Crown Point, starting from its southern terminus at West Summit and North Court streets and ending at Veterans Lane.

TRAIL GAP 24 – ERIE LACKAWANNA TRAIL TO PENNSY GREENWAY

Trail Gap 24 is moving forward with the help of two grants through Indiana’s Next Level Trails program that will fully close this gap. In May 2019, the program awarded \$2.9 million to complete 2.3 miles of trail between Clark Road and Rohrman Park, including a new trailhead along Clark Road. This extension of the Pennsy Greenway will be completed in 2023. In March 2021, Gov. Holcomb announced funding that will complete the remaining approximately 1 mile of the Pennsy Greenway along Trail Gap 24. That project is slated for construction beginning in 2023.

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT INDIANA



Wabash Bridge on Indiana's Nickel Plate Trail | Photo by TrailLink user ob

PENNSY GREENWAY

Total Length (in Miles)	12.5
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Ind. (in Miles)	8.7
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	Forest Preserve District of Cook County, Lake County Parks, Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission, Schererville Parks & Recreation
Website	indygreenways.org/pennsy-trail
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/pennsy-greenway

The Pennsy Greenway is currently open between Schererville, Indiana, and Calumet City, Illinois. The 12.5-mile paved trail runs along the former Penn Central Transportation Company rail line and is planned to travel a total of 15 miles once complete. The Pennsy Greenway will host the Great American Rail-Trail from Schererville, Indiana, to Lansing, Illinois, totaling 9.2 miles (8.7 of which are in Indiana, and 0.5 of which is in Illinois). An additional 3.4 miles of the Pennsy Greenway between Schererville and Munster were completed in 2020, closing a key gap in the Pennsy Greenway and the Great American Rail-Trail.

~~TRAIL GAP 25 — PENNSY GREENWAY EXTENSION (SCHERERVILLE TO MUNSTER)~~ **COMPLETED**

Trail Gap 25 (Pennsy Greenway Extension – Schererville to Munster) is now a completed trail segment as part of the Pennsy Greenway.

~~TRAIL GAP 26 — PENNSY GREENWAY EXTENSION (MUNSTER)~~ **COMPLETED**

Trail Gap 26 (Pennsy Greenway Extension – Munster) is now a completed trail segment as part of the Pennsy Greenway.

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT
INDIANA



Prepping for a ribbon-cutting ceremony along a newly completed section of the Veterans Memorial Trail in June 2020 | Photo courtesy Chicago Tribune



Indiana's Penny Greenway, headed northwest toward U.S. 41 | Photo by TrailLink user tommyspan

ILLINOIS

ROUTE

The Great American Rail-Trail route across Illinois incorporates the majority of the northern leg of the Great Illinois Trail between Lansing, Illinois, and the Quad Cities along the Mississippi River. The iconic Illinois & Michigan Canal State Trail and Hennepin Canal Parkway make up almost 75% of the existing miles that the Great American Rail-Trail route will use to cross Illinois. Some strategic investments can help complete the roughly 25 miles of trail remaining to be built to fully connect the Great American Rail-Trail across Illinois.

TABLE 14 GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL MILEAGE IN ILLINOIS

Total Great American Rail-Trail Existing Trail Miles in Ill. (% of Total State Mileage)	168.3 (87.0%)
Total Great American Rail-Trail Trail Gap Miles in Ill. (% of Total State Mileage)	25.2 (13.0%)
Total Trail Gaps in Ill.	4
Total Great American Rail-Trail Miles in Ill.	193.5



Riders stop for a refreshment along the Old Plank Road Trail in Frankfurt, Illinois | Photo by TrailLink user antonlove1

TABLE 15 GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE THROUGH ILLINOIS

Existing Trail or Trail Gap Name	Length in Ill. Along Great American Rail-Trail (in Miles)
Penny Greenway (Ind.-Ill. State Line to Lansing)	0.5
TRAIL GAP 27 – Lansing Greenway	2.4
Thorn Creek Trail	10.3
Old Plank Road Trail	21.6
TRAIL GAP 28 – Joliet	3.5
Illinois & Michigan Canal State Trail	60.4
TRAIL GAP 29 – LaSalle to Bureau Junction	14.6
Hennepin Canal Parkway	63.2
TRAIL GAP 30 – Colona to Silvis	4.7
Grand Illinois Trail (East Moline)	2.9
Beacon Harbor Parkway Trail	1.1
Great River Trail	7.7
Crossing the Mississippi River	0.6
Total Miles	193.5
Existing Trail Miles	168.3
Trail Gap Miles	25.2

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT ILLINOIS

PENNSY GREENWAY (INDIANA-ILLINOIS STATE LINE TO LANSING)

Total Length (in Miles)	12.5
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Ill. (in Miles)	0.5
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	Forest Preserves of Cook County, Lake County Parks, Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission, Schererville Parks & Recreation
Website	indygreenways.org/pennsy-trail
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/pennsy-greenway

The Pennsy Greenway is currently open between Schererville, Indiana, and Calumet City, Illinois. The existing sections of trail in Indiana are discussed in more detail in the Indiana chapter of this report. The Great American Rail-Trail will enter Illinois along the Pennsy Greenway at Lansing, Illinois, and travel northwest to Lansing's Chicago Avenue, where the route will then head south along Trail Gap 27, described below.

TRAIL GAP 27 – LANSING GREENWAY

There is a 2.4-mile gap in the Lansing trail network between the Pennsy Greenway and the Thorn Creek Trail. The Village of Lansing recently confirmed a trail routing to complete this gap, which will be called the Lansing Greenway. In 2020, Lansing received a grant from the Invest in Cook program for \$155,000 to complete the preliminary engineering to close this gap. The village is currently working to implement the grant and will turn its attention to trail construction once the preliminary engineering is completed.

There is currently also an effort underway to consider a more direct trail connection from the Pennsy Greenway in Schererville to the eastern end of the Old Plank Road Trail in Chicago Heights. If this project moves forward, RTC will discuss with local partners if and how the Great American Rail-Trail should be rerouted across the Indiana-Illinois border.

THORN CREEK TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	17.2
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Ill. (in Miles)	10.3
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	Forest Preserves of Cook County
Website	fpdcc.com/places/trails/thorn-creek-trail-system
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/thorn-creek-trail

The Thorn Creek Trail offers a paved 17-mile route traveling through woodlands and several communities on the southern outskirts of Chicago. The Forest Preserves of Cook County championed and currently maintains the Thorn Creek Trail. The Thorn Creek Trail will host the Great American Rail-Trail for 10.3 miles, connecting Thornton south to Chicago Heights. The Thorn Creek Trail is part of the Grand Illinois Trail system.

OLD PLANK ROAD TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	21.6
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Ill. (in Miles)	21.6
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	Forest Preserve District of Will County, Old Plank Road Trail Management Commission, Rich Township, Village of Frankfort, Village of Matteson, Village of Park Forest
Website	oprt.org
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/old-plank-road-trail

The Old Plank Road Trail travels 21.6 miles west from Chicago Heights to Joliet across a densely populated suburban landscape. The trail follows what was once a trail created and used by indigenous peoples around Lake Michigan that was later used by fur trappers and early settlers. Business interests later acquired the trail for the old Michigan Central Railroad line. The Old Plank Road Trail is part of the Grand Illinois Trail system.

In 2022, the Forest Preserve District of Will County repaved a 7-mile section of the Old Plank Road Trail, from Harlem Avenue in Frankfort to South Schoolhouse Road in New Lenox.

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT ILLINOIS

TRAIL GAP 28 – JOLIET

There is a 3.5-mile gap through Joliet between the Old Plank Road Trail and the Illinois & Michigan Canal State Trail. The city of Joliet and the Forest Preserve District of Will County have identified three potential routes to complete this gap through the city. All three options require further study, including solutions for crossing the Des Plaines River.

ILLINOIS & MICHIGAN CANAL STATE TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	79.5
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Ill. (in Miles)	60.4
Trail Type	Canal
Surface Type	Asphalt, crushed stone, grass, gravel
Trail Manager	Forest Preserve District of Will County, Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · www2.illinois.gov/dnr/Parks/Pages/HennepinCanal.aspx · iandmcanal.org
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/illinois--michigan-canal-state-trail

The 79.5-mile Illinois & Michigan Canal State Trail follows the Illinois and Michigan Canal alongside the Illinois River. It traverses the I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor, designated in 1984 as the first National Heritage Area in the United States. Along the trail are multiple state parks, historical sites and opportunities to observe wildlife. The Illinois & Michigan Canal State Trail will host the Great American Rail-Trail for 60.4 miles to connect the village of Rockdale, southwest of Joliet, to LaSalle at the Illinois River.

TRAIL GAP 29 – LASALLE TO BUREAU JUNCTION

A 14.6-mile gap exists between the western terminus of the Illinois & Michigan Canal State Trail in LaSalle and the eastern terminus of the Hennepin Canal Parkway in Bureau Junction. A study was conducted in 2013 to review alternatives for filling this gap, which included a circuitous trail route and a signed, on-street route. It was determined that neither option would move forward. RTC is currently assisting in an effort by local partners to study the opportunity to build a rail-with-trail along the active rail corridor that travels through this gap. The Illinois Department of Natural Resources has indicated a willingness to participate in the process as well.

HENNEPIN CANAL PARKWAY

Total Length (in Miles)	104.5
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Ill. (in Miles)	63.2
Trail Type	Canal
Surface Type	Asphalt, crushed stone
Trail Manager	Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Website	www2.illinois.gov/dnr/Parks/Pages/HennepinCanal.aspx
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/hennepin-canal-parkway

The 104.5-mile Hennepin Canal Parkway, administered by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources as a state park, follows an old towpath along the Hennepin Canal, first opened in 1907. The canal was originally built to link the Illinois and Mississippi rivers. Most of the various locks and aqueducts necessary to span the 105-mile distance are still in place, and the entire canal is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Hennepin Canal Parkway will host the Great American Rail-Trail for 63.2 miles, connecting Bureau Junction to Colona, the western terminus of the Hennepin Canal Parkway.

TRAIL GAP 30 – COLONA TO SILVIS

In 2022, the city of East Moline completed a 2.9-mile portion of Trail Gap 30 between the town of Silvis and the Mississippi River, described below as the Grand Illinois Trail (East Moline). This was part of a years-long plan to fill the gap in the trail network between the Hennepin Canal Parkway and the Mississippi River, also known as the Critical Gap Connector in the Grand Illinois Trail. The towns of Carbon Cliff and Silvis are coordinating to determine the best route to complete the remaining 4.7 miles of this gap, and progress should be forthcoming.

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT ILLINOIS

GRAND ILLINOIS TRAIL (EAST MOLINE)

Total Length (in Miles)	2.9
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Ill. (in Miles)	2.9
Trail Type	Greenway
Surface Type	Asphalt, concrete
Trail Manager	City of East Moline
Website	www2.illinois.gov/dnr/recreation/greenway-sandtrails/Pages/GrandIllinoisTrail.aspx
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/grand-illinois-trail-(east-moline-to-silvis)

The city of East Moline opened a roughly 3-mile section of the Grand Illinois Trail in the fall of 2022. It is a part of the regional trail system and connects the town of Silvis to the Mississippi River.

BEACON HARBOR PARKWAY TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	1.1
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Ill. (in Miles)	1.1
Trail Type	Asphalt
Surface Type	Concrete
Trail Manager	City of East Moline
Website	qctrails.org/trails/trail/7th-street-the-quarter-trail
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/beacon-harbor-parkway-trail

The Great American Rail-Trail will utilize 1.1 miles of an existing trail that heads west along 13th Avenue in East Moline. The trail leads to the East Moline City Office on Beacon Harbor Parkway. Near the Beacon Harbor welcome center, which faces the Mississippi River, the city recently invested in benches and upgrades to the trail. A large development is planned for this area, including a hotel that could increase the desire for trails and act as a logical trailhead for visitors. The trail connects to the Great River Trail at Beacon Harbor.

GREAT RIVER TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	65.5
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Ill. (in Miles)	7.7
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	City of East Moline, City of Moline, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Rock Island County Forest Preserve District, Village of Hampton, Village of Port Byron, Village of Rapids City
Website	greatrivertrail.org
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/great-river-trail

The Great River Trail is a 65.5-mile trail that travels along the banks of the Mississippi River between Savanna and Rock Island, Illinois. The Great River Trail will host the Great American Rail-Trail for 7.7 miles, heading southwest from East Moline to Rock Island. East Moline is currently exploring funding opportunities to resurface the section of the Great River Trail through the city, where it was last resurfaced 20–25 years ago.

CROSSING THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER

Toward the end of 2021, the Iowa-Illinois Memorial Bridge (I-74 Bridge) was completed, providing a new multimodal crossing of the Mississippi River between East Moline, Illinois, and Bettendorf, Iowa. Prior to this bridge completion, the Great American Rail-Trail was routed across the Government/Arsenal Bridge farther west between Rock Island, Illinois, and Davenport, Iowa. Both bridges are about the same length and accommodate trail users. Therefore, instead of choosing which bridge should be the official crossing of the Great American Rail-Trail, both bridges are shown on the route map, and trail users can choose for themselves.

IOWA



High Trestle Trail in Iowa | Photo by Milo Bateman, courtesy Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

ROUTE

The Great American Rail-Trail travels through Iowa from Davenport to Council Bluffs at the western end of the state. Iowa has a rich network of trails, and support for the Great American Rail-Trail was mentioned in the Iowa Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan adopted in December 2018.² The Iowa Department of Transportation’s Bicycle and Pedestrian Long-Range Plan also acknowledges the hard work of the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation in “securing and initiating recreational trails across Iowa.” Many of Iowa’s most significant trails would not be thriving today if not for the guidance and coordination the foundation provides to the state.

TABLE 16 GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL MILEAGE IN IOWA

Total Great American Rail-Trail Existing Trail Miles in Iowa (% of Total State Mileage)	255.3 (54.6%)
Total Great American Rail-Trail Trail Gap Miles in Iowa (% of Total State Mileage)	212.7 (45.4%)
Total Trail Gaps in Iowa	19
Total Great American Rail-Trail Miles in Iowa	468.0

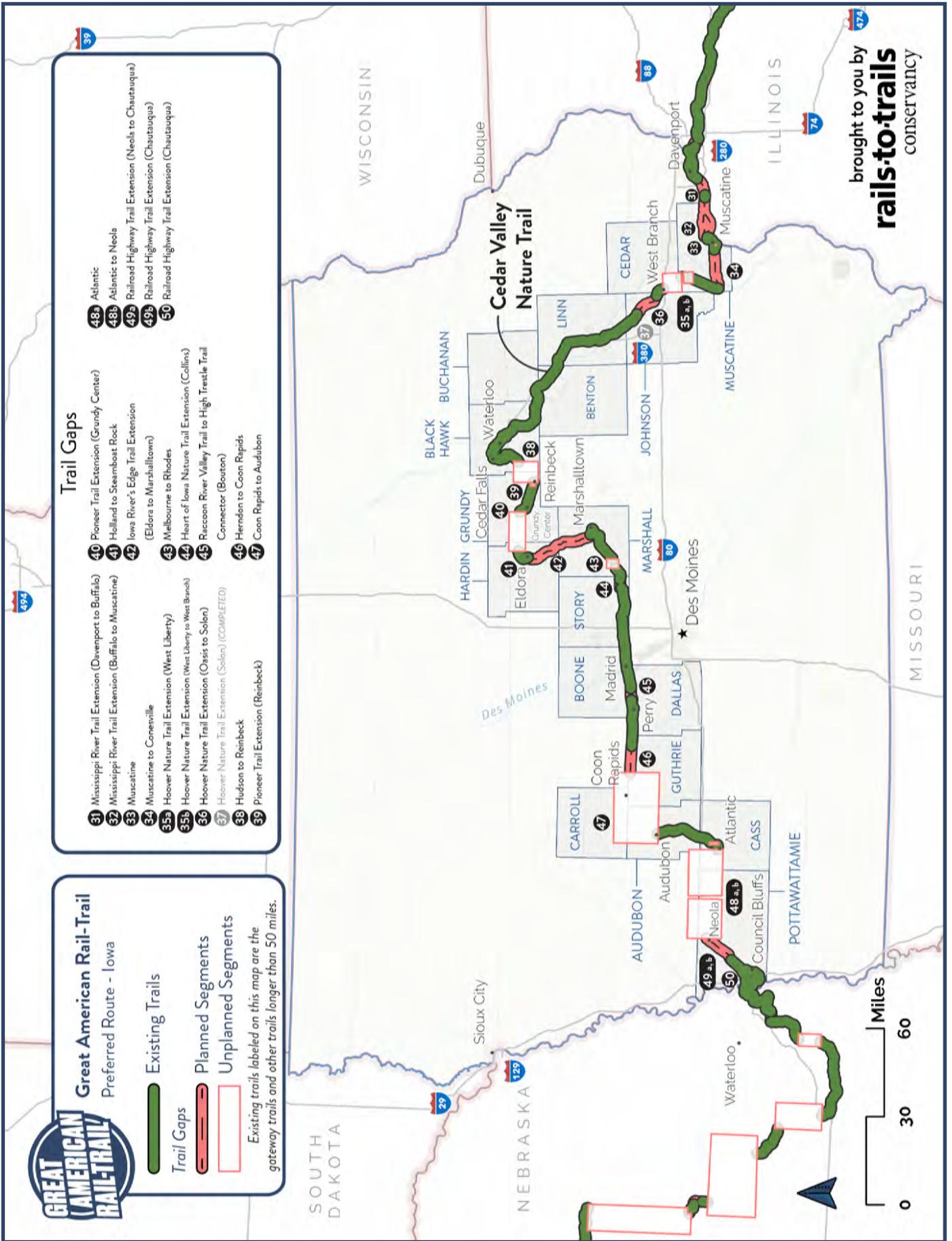
² The Great American Rail-Trail is briefly discussed on Page 123 of the Iowa Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. The report addresses several other national trails that pass through Iowa, including the Mississippi River Trail (MRT) and the Lewis and Clark Trail (LCT). The section on the Great American Rail-Trail ends with this statement of support: “As proposed, the Iowa DOT supports this alignment as it would link with the other two national trails that pass through Iowa, the MRT and the LCT.”

TABLE 17 GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE THROUGH IOWA

Existing Trail or Trail Gap Name	Length in Iowa Along Great American Rail-Trail (in Miles)	Existing Trail or Trail Gap Name	Length in Iowa Along Great American Rail-Trail (in Miles)
Crossing the Mississippi River	0.2	Iowa River's Edge Trail (Marshalltown)	2.1
Mississippi River Trail (Riverfront Trail)	4.2	Linn Creek Recreational Trail	2.7
TRAIL GAP 31 – Mississippi River Trail Extension (Davenport to Buffalo)	6.6	Iowa 330/US 30 Trail	11.1
Mississippi River Trail	0.8	TRAIL GAP 43 – Melbourne to Rhodes	3.9
TRAIL GAP 32 – Mississippi River Trail Extension (Buffalo to Muscatine)	15.0	Heart of Iowa Nature Trail (Rhodes to Collins)	4.4
Running River Trail System (Riverside Park)	5.5	TRAIL GAP 44 – Heart of Iowa Nature Trail Extension (Collins)	2.9
TRAIL GAP 33 – Muscatine	0.3	Heart of Iowa Nature Trail (Collins to Slater)	21.7
Running River Trail System (Kent Stein to Deep Lakes Park Trail)	0.8	High Trestle Trail (Slater to Bouton)	14.5
Running River Trail System	1.1	TRAIL GAP 45 – Raccoon River Valley Trail to High Trestle Trail Connector (Bouton)	4.7
TRAIL GAP 34 – Muscatine to Conesville	10.2	High Trestle Trail (Bouton to Perry)	2.3
Hoover Nature Trail (Conesville to West Liberty)	8.9	Hiawatha Trail	1.7
TRAIL GAP 35a – Hoover Nature Trail Extension (West Liberty)	3.4	Raccoon River Valley Trail	12.7
Hoover Nature Trail (West Liberty)	1.0	TRAIL GAP 46 – Herndon to Coon Rapids	17.1
TRAIL GAP 35b – Hoover Nature Trail Extension (West Liberty to West Branch)	10.3	TRAIL GAP 47 – Coon Rapids to Audubon	23.9
Hoover Nature Trail (West Branch to Oasis)	3.4	T-Bone Trail	19.8
TRAIL GAP 36 – Hoover Nature Trail Extension (Oasis to Solon)	9.7	TRAIL GAP 48a – Atlantic	3.1
TRAIL GAP 37 – Hoover Nature Trail Extension (Solon) COMPLETED		Northern Atlantic Trails System	2.2
Hoover Nature Trail (Solon to Johnson–Linn County Line)	6.1	TRAIL GAP 48b – Atlantic to Neola	34.1
Cedar Valley Nature Trail	68.6	TRAIL GAP 49a – Railroad Highway Trail Extension (Neola to Chautauqua)	11.4
Evansdale Nature Trail	1.0	Railroad Highway Trail (Chautauqua)	0.4
Gilbert Drive Trail	0.1	TRAIL GAP 49b – Railroad Highway Trail Extension (Chautauqua)	1.1
River Forest Road Trail/Cedar River Levee Trail	1.5	Railroad Highway Trail (Chautauqua)	2.0
Cedar Valley Lakes Trail	9.7	TRAIL GAP 50 – Railroad Highway Trail Extension (Chautauqua)	1.8
South Riverside Trail	0.7	Valley View Trail	5.2
Cedar Prairie Trail	8.2	Lake Manawa Trail	5.8
Sergeant Road Trail	4.0	Veterans Memorial Trail	0.5
TRAIL GAP 38 – Hudson to Reinbeck	8.8	Western Historic Trails Center Link	1.9
Pioneer Trail (Reinbeck)	0.3	Iowa Riverfront Trail	3.0
TRAIL GAP 39 – Pioneer Trail Extension (Reinbeck)	1.5	Bob Kerrey Pedestrian Bridge	0.3
Pioneer Trail (Reinbeck to Grundy Center)	6.1		
TRAIL GAP 40 – Pioneer Trail Extension (Grundy Center)	0.8		
Pioneer Trail (Grundy Center to Holland)	3.8		
TRAIL GAP 41 – Holland to Steamboat Rock	17.7		
Iowa River's Edge Trail (Steamboat Rock)	5.0		
TRAIL GAP 42 – Iowa River's Edge Trail Extension (Eldora to Marshalltown)	24.4		
		Total Miles	468.0
		Existing Trail Miles	255.3
		Trail Gap Miles	212.7

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT 2023

MAP 8: IOWA



GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT

IOWA

CROSSING THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER

Toward the end of 2021, the Iowa-Illinois Memorial Bridge (I-74 Bridge) was completed, providing a new multimodal crossing of the Mississippi River between East Moline, Illinois, and Bettendorf, Iowa. Prior to this bridge completion, the Great American Rail-Trail was routed across the Government/Arsenal Bridge farther west between Rock Island, Illinois, and Davenport, Iowa. Both bridges are about the same length and accommodate trail users. Therefore, instead of choosing which bridge should be the official crossing of the Great American Rail-Trail, both bridges are shown on the route map, and trail users can choose for themselves.

MISSISSIPPI RIVER TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	12.7
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Iowa (in Miles)	5.0
Trail Type	Greenway
Surface Type	Asphalt, concrete
Trail Manager	Davenport Parks & Recreation, Scott County Conservation Board
Website	nps.gov/miss/learn/news/mississippi-river-trail.htm
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/riverfront-trail-(ia)

The long-planned Mississippi River Trail (MRT) travels through Bettendorf and Davenport, Iowa. The planned MRT will host the Great American Rail-Trail using two segments:

Segment 1 – a 4.2-mile section of Iowa’s Riverfront Trail heading southwest along the Mississippi River from the Government/Arsenal Bridge.

Segment 2 – a 0.8-mile section of the trail along state Route 22 in Buffalo.

Heading west from the Government Bridge, Segment 1 passes Davenport’s Centennial Park—which opened on the reclaimed site of a landfill, rail yard and fairground in 2004—and Modern Woodmen Park, home to the Class A Quad Cities River Bandits baseball team.

Segment 1 currently ends with a loop around Credit Island Park, which was the site of a battle during the War of 1812 led by future president Zachary Taylor. Credit Island Park also marks the Riverfront Trail’s western terminus. Segment 1 is currently separated from Segment 2 by Trail Gap 31, described below.

Segment 2 travels adjacent to the Buffalo Shores State Recreation Area between Elm Street and 40th Avenue in the city of Buffalo, Iowa. Trail users can cross state Route 22 to access the recreation area, which provides overnight camping at the 65-site campground, as well as publicly accessible restrooms and water.

TRAIL GAP 31 – MISSISSIPPI RIVER TRAIL EXTENSION (DAVENPORT TO BUFFALO)

There is a 6.6-mile gap in the MRT between the western end of Iowa’s Riverfront Trail and the state Route 22 shared-use path in Buffalo (Segment 2, described above). Quad Cities Trails, a regional authority on mapping trails in the Quad Cities area, identifies a 3.1-mile route from the end of the Riverfront Trail along South Concord Street to state Route 22 as an open portion of trail. The route follows South Concord Street, a low-volume, low-speed section of road. Separated trail is ideal but not necessary in this section.

From this point, there are 3.5 miles to connect between the end of South Concord Street and the next section of MRT open trail along state Route 22 in Buffalo. State Route 22 is a four-lane major arterial road with a narrow, intermittent shoulder that is partially paved, and the highway narrows to two lanes once it enters the city of Buffalo. An active Canadian Pacific Railway corridor runs along the river south of state Route 22, and there are roughly 10 to 35 feet of separation between the road and the train tracks. An existing shared-use path connects at Elm Street in Buffalo. Iowa’s Mississippi River Trail Plan identifies this section as a candidate for on-street bike lanes, which could be accommodated by widening the paved section of roadway, removing a lane or narrowing lanes. Local representatives should continue to review options to complete a separated trail between Davenport and Buffalo.

TRAIL GAP 32 – MISSISSIPPI RIVER TRAIL EXTENSION (BUFFALO TO MUSCATINE)

There is a 15-mile gap in the MRT between the end of the state Route 22 shared-use path and the Running River Trail System in Muscatine, Iowa. As part of a project to connect the MRT between the cities of Buffalo and Muscatine, the Bi-State Regional Commission—an organization covering five counties in western Illinois and eastern Iowa—helped complete designs for a separated trail to complete this gap, dedicating funding to this project from various grant sources. Due to timing and local match funding, the 0.8 mile of shared-use path through Buffalo (described earlier as Segment 2 of the MRT) was the only section that was completed. The Bi-State Regional Commission still holds the designs for the potential trail connection west to Muscatine, which could get revived if there is sufficient funding.

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT

IOWA

Iowa's Mississippi River Trail Plan identifies the 6-mile section of state Route 22 between 40th Avenue in Buffalo and Wildcat Den Road in Muscatine as a candidate for on-street bike lanes. As the plan states, from this point, the MRT "can take advantage of Wildcat Den State Park by turning north onto state Route 77 E1/Wildcat Den [Road] in Muscatine County." After Wildcat Den State Park, the Great American Rail-Trail route can follow a low-volume and low-speed section of road that is already well-used by cyclists. However, a separate multiuse trail will be difficult to establish in this section.

A Muscatine Countywide Trails Plan identifies another corridor to complete a connection between Buffalo and Muscatine. In addition to the Wildcat Den Road route, the plan also identifies the section of state Route 22 that is bypassed by the route described above. According to the plan, "since this portion of Highway 22 is also Iowa's Great River Road, a designated National Scenic Byway..., aligning the [Mississippi River Trail] in close proximity to Iowa's Great River Road allows scenic byway discretionary program funds to be sought for implementing components of the MRT." A separated multiuse trail has more potential along state Route 22 given the existing highway and railroad rights-of-way.

RUNNING RIVER TRAIL SYSTEM

Total Length (in Miles)	10.0
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Iowa (in Miles)	7.4
Trail Type	Greenway, rail-trail, rail-with-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt, concrete, crushed stone
Trail Manager	City of Muscatine
Website	visitmuscatine.com/257/running-river-trail-system
TrailLink Map	trailink.com/trail/running-river-trail-system-(riverside-park)

The Running River Trail System is a network of trails around Muscatine. The Running River Trail System will host the Great American Rail-Trail utilizing three segments:

Segment 1 (Riverside Park) – 5.5 miles from Solomon Avenue and Keener Road to Musser Park.

Segment 2 (Kent Stein to Deep Lakes Park Trail) – 0.8 mile from the northern terminus of the Kent Stein to Deep Lakes Park Trail to South Houser Street.

Segment 3 – 1.1 miles from the western terminus of the Kent Stein to Deep Lakes Park Trail to the area near the Lutheran Homes on 231st Street.

Segment 1 begins in the east at Solomon Avenue and Keener Road and travels through Muscatine. The trail passes Muscatine Community College and connects through Weed Park as it heads south toward the Mississippi River. The trail then becomes a rail-with-trail for

approximately 2.3 miles along the Canadian Pacific Railway line that follows the shores of the Mississippi River. The trail continues to follow the rail-with-trail corridor along the Mississippi through Riverside Park in downtown Muscatine. Restrooms and drinking fountains are provided along the trail in Riverside Park. Segment 1 ends at Musser Park.

Trail Gap 33, described below, separates Segments 1 and 2.

Segment 2 starts at the northern terminus of the Kent Stein to Deep Lakes Park Trail, a part of the Running River Trail System that opened in 2017. The 4.9-mile trail originates at a trailhead on Roby Avenue before traveling west through Kent Stein Park and south to Deep Lakes Park. Kent Stein Park is home to a large complex of baseball and softball fields and provides public restrooms and water fountains.

The Great American Rail-Trail route will use 0.8 mile of the Kent Stein to Deep Lakes Park Trail. Starting at the Roby Avenue trailhead, the Great American Rail-Trail will pass through Kent Stein Park.

Segment 3 begins at South Houser Street, where the Great American Rail-Trail will diverge from the Kent Stein to Deep Lakes Park Trail and head north on an existing path along Houser Street. The path along Houser Street is currently a narrow sidewalk, but it is not busy and is passable by people on bicycles moving carefully. At Hershey Avenue/231st Street, the Great American Rail-Trail will continue west through Trail Gap 34 to connect to the Hoover Nature Trail.

TRAIL GAP 33 – MUSCATINE

There is approximately 0.3 mile between Musser Park—the western terminus of the Running River Trail System's Riverside Park section—and Kent Stein Park—the northern endpoint of the Running River Trail System's Kent Stein to Deep Lakes Park Trail section. Trail users wanting to connect to the Kent Stein to Deep Lakes Park Trail can travel on-road from Musser Park following Oregon Street.

An off-street trail is unlikely to be developed between these two trails due to physical constraints. The streets are relatively safe and provide a short on-street trip between the two trails. If the interim on-road connector itself is determined to be unsafe, an off-street corridor should be explored more carefully.

TRAIL GAP 34 – MUSCATINE TO CONESVILLE

There is a 10.2-mile gap between South Houser Street and the Hoover Nature Trail in Conesville, Iowa. The Muscatine Countywide Trails Plan identified Hershey Avenue/231st Street/County Highway 28 as the best route between Muscatine and the Hoover Nature Trail. Starting at South Houser Street, there is a brief 0.75-mile section of trail along 231st Street between Houser Street and Lutheran Drive near Muscatine. The shoulder on 231st Street is minimal and in poor condition, but current traffic volumes are relatively low. The county trail plan notes that, "at a minimum, widened, paved shoulders should be added to this roadway." A separated corridor trail may be warranted or necessary in the future depending upon use and demand.

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT

IOWA

There is also an existing bridge crossing the Cedar River along 231st Street. It is currently closed to all users, but reopening it for walking and bicycling could be explored to make a safer crossing at the river. After the Cedar River, the Great American Rail-Trail could continue along 231st Street, where it would intersect with the Hoover Nature Trail just north of Conesville.

Muscatine has a trail committee staffed by city and county staff and local volunteers. This group has significant local knowledge that could be used to confirm whether 231st Street is a viable off-street trail option to connect the Great American Rail-Trail through western Muscatine County.

HOOVER NATURE TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	19.4
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Iowa (in Miles)	19.4
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Concrete, crushed stone, grass
Trail Manager	Cedar County Conservation Board, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, Johnson County Conservation Board, Linn County Conservation Board, West Branch Parks & Recreation, West Liberty Parks & Recreation
Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · linncountytrails.org/maps/find-a-trail/hoover-trail · nps.gov/places/hoover-nature-trail.htm
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/hoover-nature-trail

The Hoover Nature Trail currently exists in four non-contiguous segments between Conesville and Ely, Iowa, where it connects to the Cedar Valley Nature Trail. When the Hoover Nature Trail is connected between Conesville and Ely, it will extend approximately 42 miles. The trail corridor lies on a former Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad corridor, and eventually could connect Cedar Rapids to Burlington, Iowa. The Hoover Nature Trail is named for former President Herbert Hoover, who was born in West Branch—one of the many towns through which the abandoned corridor passes.

The Hoover Nature Trail will host the Great American Rail-Trail in four segments through Muscatine, Cedar and Johnson counties. Each county will eventually own and operate the section of the Hoover Nature Trail within its jurisdiction. The Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation is providing long-term assistance in the ongoing maintenance and continued development of this trail.

The four existing segments of the Hoover Nature Trail along the Great American Rail-Trail are laid out as follows (totaling 19.4 miles of open trail):

Segment 1 – About 8.9 miles of trail between Conesville and West Liberty. This segment requires significant maintenance to bring it up to the standard of the other segments of the Hoover Nature Trail.

Segment 2 – About 1 mile of trail in West Liberty.

Segment 3 – About 3.4 miles of trail between West Branch and Oasis.

Segment 4 – About 6 miles of trail between Solon and the Johnson–Linn county line (connecting to the Cedar Valley Nature Trail).

The gaps currently separating these segments are described below.

TRAIL GAP 35a – HOOVER NATURE TRAIL EXTENSION (WEST LIBERTY)

The 3.4-mile gap in the Hoover Nature Trail in and around West Liberty travels through predominantly agricultural landscapes. The former rail corridor is visible in some places and has been plowed over in several spots. A combination of rail-trail and trail built along roadways could help fill this gap. Muscatine County should work to identify a corridor to complete this trail gap.

TRAIL GAP 35b – HOOVER NATURE TRAIL EXTENSION (WEST LIBERTY TO WEST BRANCH)

The largely agricultural landscape of the 10.3-mile gap in the Hoover Nature Trail between West Liberty and West Branch looks similar to that of Trail Gap 35a. Here, too, the former rail corridor is still visible in several spots. A combination of rail-trail and interim on-road connector trail built along roadways could help fill this trail gap, and Muscatine and Cedar counties should work together to identify a corridor to complete it.

TRAIL GAP 36 – HOOVER NATURE TRAIL EXTENSION (OASIS TO SOLON)

The Johnson County Conservation Board intends to complete the approximately 9.7-mile gap in the Hoover Nature Trail between Oasis and Solon. The board is working to acquire an abandoned rail corridor to complete this gap, though the exact routing may change if the rail corridor is not available and an alternate route has to be acquired. There have been land donations in this segment, and a land agent working for Johnson County is working with landowners to acquire additional parcels.

TRAIL GAP 37—HOOVER NATURE TRAIL EXTENSION (OLON) COMPLETED

Trail Gap 37 is now a completed trail segment as part of the Hoover Nature Trail.

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT IOWA

CEDAR VALLEY NATURE TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	68.6
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Iowa (in Miles)	68.6
Trail Type	Rail-trail, rail-with-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt, crushed stone
Trail Manager	Black Hawk County Conservation Board, Cedar Rapids Parks & Recreation, City of Ely, City of Hiawatha, Hickory Hills Park, Linn County Conservation Board
Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · cedarvalleynaturetrail.com · linncountytrails.org/trails/find-a-trail/cedar-valley-nature-trail
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/cedar-valley-nature-trail

The 68.6-mile Cedar Valley Nature Trail comprises three former trails—the Cedar Valley Nature Trail, Cedar River Trail and parts of the Hoover Nature Trail—which merged under one name in 2017. The trail was named in 1980 after the creation of the original 52-mile section running from Hiawatha to Evansdale. This section is owned and managed by Linn County and Black Hawk County’s respective conservation boards. The 12.6-mile Cedar River Trail addition is owned and managed by the city of Hiawatha and the city of Cedar Rapids. The final 4-mile section is owned and managed by the Linn County Conservation Board and the city of Ely.

In 2017, the Cedar Valley Nature Trail was extended south from Ely to the Johnson–Linn county line, where it connects with the northern terminus of the Hoover Nature Trail. Among the first rail-trail conversions in the state, the original northern portion of the Cedar Valley Nature Trail traces the original corridor of the Waterloo, Cedar Falls and Northern Railway. As the trail travels through Cedar Rapids, it parallels an active Union Pacific Railroad corridor for several blocks until it reaches Cedar Lake.

In July 2022, Gov. Kim Reynolds and the Iowa Economic Development Authority announced the awarding of a \$3.5 million grant from the Destination Iowa program to pave the final unpaved portion of the Cedar Valley Nature Trail, 16 miles between Hiawatha and Evansdale.

EVANSDALE NATURE TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	1.0
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Iowa (in Miles)	1.0
Trail Type	Greenway
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	City of Evansdale
Website	evansdale.govoffice.com/?SEC=8EF62527-035A-4C03-B1B3-D588CCFD5E5E
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/evansdale-nature-trail

The Cedar Valley Nature Trail ends at River Road in Evansdale, where trail users can follow the Evansdale Nature Trail west at Arbutus Avenue. The Evansdale Nature Trail offers a scenic ride along Meyers Lake and through Angels Park, which features picnic shelters, water and modern restrooms.

GILBERT DRIVE TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	1.0
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Iowa (in Miles)	0.1
Trail Type	Greenway
Surface Type	Concrete
Trail Manager	City of Evansdale
Website	evansdale.govoffice.com/?SEC=8EF62527-035A-4C03-B1B3-D588CCFD5E5E
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/gilbert-drive-trail

The Great American Rail-Trail will follow a side path along Gilbert Drive for a brief section between the Evansdale Nature Trail and the River Forest Road Trail/Cedar River Levee Trail.

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT

IOWA

RIVER FOREST ROAD TRAIL/CEDAR RIVER LEVEE TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	1.5
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Iowa (in Miles)	1.5
Trail Type	Greenway
Surface Type	Asphalt, crushed stone, dirt
Trail Manager	City of Evansdale
Website	evansdale.gov/office.com/?SEC=8EF62527-035A-4C03-B1B3-D588CCFD5E5E
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/river-forest-road-trail

A trail connects to the Gilbert Drive Trail at the intersection of River Forest Road and Deerwood Park Road, taking users north along the Cedar River and River Forest Road to the southern terminus of the Cedar Valley Lakes Trail. The trail was constructed in 2016 atop a flood control levee, which was also part of a safety enhancement project to reduce the four-lane River Forest Road to two lanes. The trail crosses the low-volume Deerwood Park Road with a visible crosswalk and continues north to meet the Cedar River.

CEDAR VALLEY LAKES TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	11.3
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Iowa (in Miles)	9.7
Trail Type	Rail-trail, rail-with-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt, concrete
Trail Manager	Black Hawk County Conservation Board, Cedar Falls Public Works, Cedar Valley Trails Partnership, George Wyth Memorial State Park, Waterloo Leisure Services
Website	cedarvalleytrails.org/trails/cedar-valley-lakes-trail
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/cedar-valley-lakes-trail

The Cedar Valley Lakes Trail originates in Evansdale, where it was constructed atop the town's Cedar River levee. After the trail enters the city of Waterloo, it briefly parallels an active section of Canadian National Railway corridor before traveling through downtown Waterloo.

The Cedar Valley Lakes Trail travels through George Wyth Memorial State Park, a 1,200-acre park on the north side of the Cedar River containing various lakes and an extensive trail system. Due to its location along the river, the state park is prone to flooding and has suffered two historic floods in the last decade. In 2021, RTC provided a \$10,000 grant to help support the long-term maintenance and resilience of this segment of trail. The Cedar Valley Lakes Trail connects to the South Riverside Trail at the southwestern edge of George Wyth Memorial State Park, just before the crossing of the Cedar River.

SOUTH RIVERSIDE TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	3.5
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Iowa (in Miles)	0.7
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	Cedar Falls Public Works, George Wyth Memorial State Park, Waterloo Leisure Services
Website	cedarvalleytrails.org/trails/south-riverside-trail
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/south-riverside-trail

The South Riverside Trail is one in a series of trail systems throughout the city of Cedar Falls, Iowa. The South Riverside Trail connects to the Cedar Valley Lakes Trail at the western end of George Wyth Memorial State Park and crosses the Cedar River on a dedicated bicycle and pedestrian bridge. The trail continues back to the east along the south side of the Cedar River, then stretches another 2.4 miles west across state Route 58 to the Cedar Falls Recreation Area. The 3.5-mile South Riverside Trail will host the Great American Rail-Trail for 0.7 mile to act as a connection between the Cedar Valley Lakes Trail and the Cedar Prairie Trail.

CEDAR PRAIRIE TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	8.2
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Iowa (in Miles)	8.2
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	Cedar Falls Public Works, Waterloo Leisure Services
Website	cedarvalleytrails.org/cedar-valley-trails/trail-loops/cedar-prairie-loop
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/cedar-prairie-trail

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT

IOWA

The Cedar Prairie Trail extends 8.2 miles between the South Riverside Trail and the Sergeant Road Trail, following the course of state Route 27. The path travels over gently rolling hills and follows the grade of the Chicago Great Western Railway's Cedar Falls branch. The Cedar Prairie Trail passes suburban neighborhoods and light industrial areas before entering the Katoski Greenbelt, a tree-lined path beside Black Hawk Creek. The trail connects to the Sergeant Road Trail near the intersection of Sergeant and West Shaulis roads in Waterloo.

SERGEANT ROAD TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	9.9
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Iowa (in Miles)	4.0
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	Black Hawk County Conservation Board, Waterloo Leisure Services
Website	cedarvalleytrails.org/trails/sergeant-road-trail
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/sergeant-road-trail

The Sergeant Road Trail travels 9.9 miles along Sergeant Road between downtown Waterloo and the city of Hudson along Black Hawk Creek. The trail is built on a railroad corridor originally constructed by the Wisconsin, Iowa & Nebraska Railway (also known as “The Old Diagonal”) in the late 19th century. There is a short on-road section in Hudson from Dale Drive to 5th Street. The Sergeant Road Trail currently ends about 0.3 mile southwest of South Hudson Road.

TRAIL GAP 38 – HUDSON TO REINBECK

A rail corridor once connected Hudson southwest to the city of Marshalltown, Iowa, spanning about 35 miles and providing an ideal corridor for a trail to connect the Sergeant Road Trail to the Linn Creek Recreational Trail in Marshalltown. However, this corridor has long since been abandoned, and adjacent landowners now own the property of the former rail line. According to the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, initial conversations about providing easements along the former rail corridor for future trail use have not been met with a positive reaction. As such, an alternative 8.8-mile route has been identified that connects the Sergeant Road Trail to the Linn Creek Recreational Trail in Marshalltown via the Pioneer Trail and future trail building in Grundy and Hardin counties.

A Black Hawk County Metropolitan Area Transportation Policy Board 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan notes that a future regional connection should be made from Hudson to points south and west of the town, though specifics on exactly where and how are not elaborated upon.

There are several low-volume rural roads that connect the towns of Hudson and Reinbeck. Many of these roads are two-lane rural roads with minimal shoulders. Further work should be conducted to identify a potential off-street trail option or locations where a shoulder could be widened for bicycle and pedestrian use.

PIONEER TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	10.2
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Iowa (in Miles)	10.2
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Crushed stone
Trail Manager	Grundy County Conservation Board
Website	grundycounty.org/departments/conservation/trails/pioneer-trail
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/pioneer-trail

The 10.2-mile Pioneer Trail—which gets its name from the early settlers in Grundy County—is built on a former rail line that once connected the towns of Reinbeck and Holland and the communities in between. The Pioneer Trail will host the Great American Rail-Trail for 10.2 miles in three existing segments that are laid out as follows:

Segment 1 (Reinbeck) – 0.3 mile between the trailhead at the Grundy County Greenbelt to V Avenue in Reinbeck.

Segment 2 (Reinbeck to Grundy Center) – 6.1 miles between U Avenue in Reinbeck and the Wolfe Family Preserve on Diagonal Road in Grundy Center.

Segment 3 (Grundy Center to Holland) – 3.8 miles between 235th Street in Grundy Center and Main Street in Holland.

The flat trail parallels Black Hawk Creek for most of its route and features several commemorative plaques with tributes to trail supporters. There are two short gaps in the Pioneer Trail (discussed in Trail Gaps 39–40, below). The Grundy County 2021 Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) Plan mentions completing both.

TRAIL GAP 39 – PIONEER TRAIL EXTENSION (REINBECK)

A 1.5-mile gap exists in the Pioneer Trail just west of Reinbeck. The status of the ownership of the former rail line is unknown. While further ownership research is conducted, an interim on-road connector trail can be routed along Diagonal Road. The Grundy County 2021 REAP Plan notes in Appendix 11 that completing this connection is a project the county should focus on. If Diagonal Road remains the most viable option in the short term, signage should be added to note that it is part of the trail and to warn drivers to be cautious of cyclists and pedestrians.

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT IOWA

TRAIL GAP 40 – PIONEER TRAIL EXTENSION (GRUNDY CENTER)

A short, 0.8-mile gap exists in the Pioneer Trail just east of the city of Grundy Center. The gap travels through the Wolfe Family Preserve and causes the trail to make a detour along Diagonal Road to 235th Street, where the trail is reconnected. Options to close this gap include completing the trail along the former rail line or widening the shoulder on Diagonal Road to provide an on-road connector with further separation for trail users. The Grundy County 2021 REAP Plan notes in Appendix 11 that completing this connection is a project the county should focus on. If Diagonal Road remains the most viable option in the short term, signage should be added to note that it is part of the trail and to warn drivers to be cautious of cyclists and pedestrians.

TRAIL GAP 41 – HOLLAND TO STEAMBOAT ROCK

A 17.7-mile gap exists between the end of the Pioneer Trail in Holland and the beginning of the Iowa River’s Edge Trail in the city of Steamboat Rock, Iowa. Appendix 12 of the Grundy County 2021 REAP Plan shows a concept plan for bicycle wayfinding on county roads. At the end of the Pioneer Trail in Holland, the county proposes to sign a route to the city of Wellsburg. The county plan identifies several locations along this route for decision signs (showing directions and mileage to nearby towns), turn signs and confirmation signs.

Hardin County does not identify any on- or off-street trail connections from the Grundy–Hardin county line to Steamboat Rock. Various low-volume county roads could help make this connection via a side path, widened shoulders or, at minimum, signage.

IOWA RIVER’S EDGE TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	7.1
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Iowa (in Miles)	7.1
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Concrete
Trail Manager	Hardin County Board of Supervisors Trail Commission, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, TRAILS Inc. (Marshall County)
Website	riversedgetrail.com
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/rivers-edge-trail-(ia)

The first sections of the Iowa River’s Edge Trail are complete and are laid out as follows:

Segment 1 – A 5-mile section of the trail is now complete between Steamboat Rock and Eldora, 4.4 miles of which were completed in the fall of 2022.

Segment 2 – In Marshalltown, the trail is open for 2.1 miles extending from the Keyser Street Trailhead at Wilson Circle to the Summit Street Viaduct. Trail Gap 42, below, discusses plans to connect the Iowa River’s Edge Trail for 24.4 miles between Eldora and Marshalltown.

TRAIL GAP 42 – IOWA RIVER’S EDGE TRAIL EXTENSION (ELDORA TO MARSHALLTOWN)

The Iowa River Railroad formerly connected towns along the Iowa River in Hardin and Marshall counties. The railroad filed for abandonment in 2012, and a process to convert it into a trail between Steamboat Rock and Marshalltown began soon thereafter. The Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation is spearheading the project with local organizations in Hardin County, Marshall County and the city of Marshalltown. The Iowa River’s Edge Trail will also connect the small towns of Eldora, Gifford, Union, Liscomb and Albion, bringing the potential of economic opportunities from trail tourism.

The former rail corridor has been secured, and the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation and local partners are continuing fundraising to complete this section of trail in the near future.

In 2019, \$375,000 in Iowa Recreational Trails Program funding was awarded to the Iowa River’s Edge Trail project to complete an additional 4.4 miles of paved trail from south of County Road D35 in Steamboat Rock to Edgington Avenue in Eldora, which was completed in 2022. On the other end, the project was awarded \$300,000 in federal Recreational Trails Program funding in late 2020 to complete an additional 1.8 miles from Radio Tower Road in Marshalltown toward the Iowa River, which is slated for construction in 2023.

An engineering inspection of the wooden bridges in Marshall County shows that they will need to be replaced, while it is more likely that the bridges in Hardin County can be rehabilitated rather than fully replaced, providing an overall project cost savings.

In May 2019, Hardin County received a grant from the Wellmark Foundation for \$100,000 to rehabilitate and convert seven former railroad bridges for trail use between Steamboat Rock and Gifford.

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT

IOWA

LINN CREEK RECREATIONAL TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	10.1
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Iowa (in Miles)	2.7
Trail Type	Rail-trail, rail-with-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	Marshall County Conservation Board, Marshalltown Parks and Recreation
Website	marshalltown-ia.gov/291/trails
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/linn-creek-recreational-trail

The Linn Creek Recreational Trail is approximately 10 miles in total and runs through the center of Marshalltown, Iowa. The Linn Creek Recreational Trail will host the Great American Rail-Trail for 2.7 miles, connecting to the Iowa River's Edge Trail near Legion Memorial Park and heading west to connect to the Iowa 330/US 30 Trail. Most of this 2.7-mile section is a rail-with-trail, running within highway right-of-way alongside an active Union Pacific Railroad corridor, often separated by vegetation.

IOWA 330/US 30 TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	11.1
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Iowa (in Miles)	11.1
Trail Type	Greenway
Surface Type	Concrete
Trail Manager	Marshall County Conservation Board
Website	marshallcountya.gov/501/conservation
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/iowa-330us-30-trail

The Iowa 330/US 30 Trail stretches from the outskirts of Marshalltown to just west of the town of Melbourne, close to the geographic center of Iowa. The 11.1-mile trail parallels either state Route 330 or U.S. 30 for the majority of its length, providing a non-motorized option along a major thoroughfare. The trail connects to the Linn Creek Recreational Trail at the Grimes Farm & Conservation Center in Marshalltown. The trail currently ends at Gerhart Avenue, just north of U.S. 30.

TRAIL GAP 43 – MELBOURNE TO RHODES

Marshall County intends to extend the length of the Heart of Iowa Nature Trail an additional 3.9 miles from its current endpoint in Rhodes to the beginning of the Iowa 330/US 30 Trail in Melbourne. This extension will allow for an uninterrupted trip on a variety of off-road trails from Marshalltown to Woodward in Dallas County and to points south of there, including Ankeny and Des Moines. The project is identified in the Central Iowa Regional Transportation Planning Alliance's Horizon Year 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan. Only a portion of the old railroad right-of-way is in public ownership. The majority of the former rail corridor, still visible from aerial photography as it travels through the agricultural area between Melbourne and Rhodes, has the potential to be a future rail-trail, though it is not a local priority at this time.

HEART OF IOWA NATURE TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	26.1
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Iowa (in Miles)	26.1
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Concrete, crushed stone, dirt, grass
Trail Manager	Marshall County Conservation Board, Story County Conservation Board
Website	storycountyiowa.gov/documentcenter/view/2320/heart-of-iowa-nature-trail
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/heart-of-iowa-nature-trail

The Heart of Iowa Nature Trail, currently in two segments, traverses farmland along the former route of the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad, also known as the Milwaukee Road. The two segments include:

Segment 1 (Rhodes to Collins) – The trail begins on East Jefferson Street in Rhodes and continues west 4.4 miles through agricultural areas to a short gap in the trail between 730th Avenue and U.S. 65/1st Avenue in Collins (as described in Trail Gap 44, below).

Segment 2 (Collins to Slater) – The trail picks back up at U.S. 65/1st Avenue in Collins and, for the next 21.7 miles, connects the depot towns of Maxwell, Cambridge, Huxley and Slater. At Slater, the trail connects seamlessly to the High Trestle Trail.

The Marshall and Story county conservation boards are embarking on a seven-phase mission to resurface the Heart of Iowa Nature Trail. Phase 1 was completed in the fall of 2019 and resulted in approximately 2.7 miles of paved trail from Huxley toward Slater. Phase 2 was completed in the fall of 2020 and resulted in another 3.3 miles of newly paved trail from Huxley eastward to the South Skunk River. An additional \$859,000 was awarded in three separate grants in 2021 and 2022 to support the continued resurfacing of the Heart of Iowa Nature Trail.

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT

IOWA

TRAIL GAP 44 – HEART OF IOWA NATURE TRAIL EXTENSION (COLLINS)

There is a 2.9-mile gap in the Heart of Iowa Nature Trail in Story County between 730th Avenue and U.S. 65/1st Avenue in Collins. Story County has indicated a desire to complete this portion, but has not identified a timeline or exact alignment. In the meantime, trail users can use an interim on-road connector through Collins.

HIGH TRESTLE TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	27.7
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Iowa (in Miles)	16.8
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt, concrete
Trail Manager	Ankeny Parks & Recreation, Boone County Conservation Board, City of Madrid, City of Slater, City of Woodward, Dallas County Conservation Board, Polk County Conservation Board
Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · inhf.org/what-we-do/protection/high-trestle-trail · polkcountyiowa.gov/conservation/things-to-do/biking/#High%20Trestle%20Trail · dallascountyiowa.gov/services/conservation-and-recreation/conservation/let-s-connect-trail-project
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/high-trestle-trail

The High Trestle Trail is a 28-mile trail that extends from the cities of Ankeny to Perry using a former Union Pacific Railroad corridor. The corridor was discontinued in 2003 and sold to the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation in 2005 with a generous donation of land value.³

The High Trestle Trail hosts the Great American Rail-Trail for 16.8 miles between Slater—where the trail connects to the Heart of Iowa Nature Trail—and the city of Perry, where the trail connects to the Raccoon River Valley Trail.

The two completed segments of the High Trestle Trail that play host to the Great American Rail-Trail include:

- Slater to Bouton: 14.5 miles
- Bouton to Perry: 2.3 miles

In 2020, the Dallas County Conservation Board completed two sections of the High Trestle Trail in Woodward: a 1.1-mile stretch between S and R avenues, as well as 1 mile of trail between R and Quinlan avenues. The board also completed 0.5 mile to complete the gap in Woodward and 0.2 mile from M Avenue and 130th Street in Spring Valley Township to Perry in 2022.

The remaining section to be completed near Bouton is discussed in Trail Gap 45. The High Trestle Trail is famous for its 130-foot-tall High Trestle Bridge, which boasts an art installation wrapped in 43 twisting, diamond-shaped steel ribs lined with LED lights. The Boone County Conservation Board owns and operates the bridge.

TRAIL GAP 45 – RACCOON RIVER VALLEY TRAIL TO HIGH TRESTLE TRAIL CONNECTOR (BOUTON)

Currently, there is a 4.7-mile gap in the High Trestle Trail through the town of Bouton. Once filled in, this trail will complete the connection between the High Trestle Trail and the Raccoon River Valley Trail. In 2022, the Dallas County Conservation Board received two large grants to complete the remainder of this gap, including a \$400,000 award from the state via the Recreational Trails Program and a \$1 million Destination Iowa grant. Trail Gap 45 is expected to be completed in 2024.

HIAWATHA TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	2.5
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Iowa (in Miles)	1.7
Trail Type	Greenway
Surface Type	Concrete
Trail Manager	City of Perry
Website	perryia.org/trails.html
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/hiawatha-trail-(ia)

The Hiawatha Trail travels across Perry’s northeastern neighborhoods and provides a connection between the High Trestle Trail and the Raccoon River Valley Trail.

³ The Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation was instrumental in making the High Trestle Trail possible, gathering the funding and leading a coalition of cities and counties during the planning and construction process. Each jurisdiction now handles its own maintenance, while the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation continues to lead a steering committee on the bridge and assists with fundraising to ensure that the trail remains in good shape.

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT

IOWA

RACCOON RIVER VALLEY TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	89.0
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Iowa (in Miles)	12.7
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt, concrete
Trail Manager	Dallas County Conservation Board, Greene County Conservation Board, Guthrie County Conservation Board
Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · raccoonrivervalleytrail.org · dallascountyiowa.gov/services/conservation-and-recreation/conservation/trails-land-and-water/raccoon-river-valley-trail
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/raccoon-river-valley-trail

The Raccoon River Valley Trail runs 89 miles in total between Dallas, Greene and Guthrie counties, and its northern leg will host the Great American Rail-Trail for 12.7 miles. The trail provides a loop between just outside of the Des Moines area to the town of Jefferson in Greene County, connecting through several rural communities. The Raccoon River Valley Trail runs along a former Milwaukee Road corridor that was first built in the 1870s to carry rail traffic between Des Moines and the Great Lakes region.

The Dallas County Conservation Board notes that the northern section of the Raccoon River Valley Trail was repaved with concrete in 2012 and remains in good shape today, while the southern section that will not host the Great American Rail-Trail route needs resurfacing attention.

TRAIL GAP 46 – HERNDON TO COON RAPIDS

The city of Coon Rapids has a plan to extend the Raccoon River Valley Trail approximately 17 miles west.⁴ Coon Rapids holds a grant from the Iowa Department of Transportation to complete the 9 miles between the unincorporated community of Herndon—one of the trail junctions along the Raccoon River Valley Trail—and the end of an abandoned rail corridor just east of the city of Bayard.

There are three ongoing negotiations with private landowners who own portions of this corridor. The remainder of the corridor is in public ownership and ready for trail development. The remaining 8 miles between Bayard and Coon Rapids could run adjacent to an active BNSF Railway line to create a rail-with-trail. If this option is not feasible, a different corridor will need to be identified. The American Discovery Trail is currently signed as an on-street route along 330th Street between Herndon and Coon Rapids, and can act as an interim on-road connector while this portion of the gap is being completed.

⁴ A local proposal exists to connect Herndon to Council Bluffs following an active rail line. This effort is spearheaded by the National Park Service’s Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) Program. RTCA staff have explored this connection, including having discussions with the rail operator in the area and stakeholders from Shelby and Harrison counties. This project has potential to be a long-term solution to fill the trail gaps between Herndon and Council Bluffs; however, it requires additional research and conversations before it becomes feasible. If this project makes additional progress toward feasibility, the Great American Rail-Trail could be rerouted to take advantage of this more direct trail opportunity.

TRAIL GAP 47 – COON RAPIDS TO AUDUBON

From Coon Rapids, the route will head south 23.9 miles to the T-Bone Trail in Audubon. The Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation shows an interim on-road connector that could be made from Coon Rapids to Audubon. These roads are paved, low-volume roads with small spikes in traffic during the harvesting season in the fall, but there is no shoulder for traffic-separated travel. A safer, long-term off-road connection will need to be identified to connect the cities of Coon Rapids and Audubon.

T-BONE TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	19.8
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Iowa (in Miles)	19.8
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt, concrete
Trail Manager	Audubon County Conservation Board, Cass County Conservation Board
Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · auduboncounty.com/webres/file/tbone-trail-brochure.pdf · mycountyparks.com/county/audubon/park/t-bone-recreational-trail-audubon-trailhead.aspx
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/t-bone-trail

The 19.8-mile T-Bone Trail was named for an event called Operation T-Bone Days originating in the town of Audubon, and it is a joint project of the Audubon and Cass county conservation boards. The trail was constructed on the former railbed of a spur of the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad that extended from Atlantic to Audubon to carry cattle to the stockyards of Chicago. The northern terminus of the T-Bone Trail is in Albert the Bull Park in Audubon, featuring a 30-foot-tall cow sculpture. The trail is proposed to extend to just west of Atlantic, near the Pellet Wildlife Refuge, following the former rail line.

TRAIL GAP 48a – ATLANTIC

Cass County Conservation Board is reviewing opportunities to extend the southern terminus of the T-Bone Trail at Dunbar Road 3.1 miles south into the city of Atlantic. Nishna Valley Trails is working with engineers to review two route alternatives to connect the T-Bone Trail into Atlantic and has secured dedicated funding to complete this trail connection from a private donor.

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT

IOWA

NORTHERN ATLANTIC TRAILS SYSTEM

Total Length (in Miles)	6.0
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Iowa (in Miles)	2.2
Trail Type	Greenway
Surface Type	Concrete
Trail Manager	City of Atlantic
Website	atlanticiowa.com/atlantic/city-departments/parks-recreation/parks/schildberg-recreation-area
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/northern-atlantic-trails-system

The Northern Atlantic Trails System connects two major recreation sites in Atlantic. On its western end is the Schildberg Recreation Area, where 1.3 miles of pathway wrap around three lakes. Heading east across Troublesome Creek, the trail system connects to the Atlantic Municipal Utilities (AMU) Well Field, where a combination of gravel and paved trails crisscross the open space.

TRAIL GAP 48b – ATLANTIC TO NEOLA

A clear path does not currently exist to connect Atlantic 34.1 miles to the planned Railroad Highway Trail in Neola. The Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation has identified a series of on-street routes along low-volume county roads that could connect the two towns through Cass and Pottawattamie counties. Cass County completed a new trail plan in 2021. The plan shows two route proposals to connect a trail west from Atlantic—one that travels northwest through the cities of Marne and Avoca along state Route 83 and one that travels west through the city of Hancock along County Road G30/Mahogany Road.

TRAIL GAP 49a – RAILROAD HIGHWAY TRAIL EXTENSION (NEOLA TO CHAUTAUQUA)

Trail construction is planned for an approximately 11.4-mile section of trail between Neola and Chautauqua, which will be an extension of the existing 2.4 miles of the Railroad Highway Trail in Chautauqua. The trail will be constructed between the active BNSF Railway tracks and Railroad Highway, just west of I-80. Future trail construction will be paved in concrete, similar to the existing sections of the Railroad Highway Trail. Four planned trail extension segments, collectively totaling 11.4 miles, include:

Segment 1 – The first 4.7 miles between Neola and Underwood require an additional \$1.6 million for construction, and the project does not have a construction timeline identified.

Segment 2 – The next 1.2 miles through Underwood require an additional \$400,000 for construction, and the project does not have a construction timeline identified.

Segment 3 – The next 4.1 miles from Underwood to Weston are scheduled for construction in the near future. The \$1.7 million needed for this section has already been secured.

Segment 4 – The remaining 1.4 miles between Weston and the open portions of the Railroad Highway Trail (beginning at Idlewood Road) are also scheduled for construction in the near future. The \$1 million needed for this section has already been secured.

RAILROAD HIGHWAY TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	2.4
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Iowa (in Miles)	2.4
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Concrete
Trail Manager	Pottawattamie County Conservation Board
Website	wattawayia.com/trails/railroad_highway
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/railroad-highway-trail-

The Railroad Highway Trail will eventually be a 16.7-mile trail extending from Neola south to Council Bluffs. Two existing portions of the Railroad Highway Trail parallel Railroad Highway heading north of Chautauqua for 0.4 mile and 2 miles, respectively. An additional 14.3 miles—in the form of several extensions, discussed in Trail Gaps 49a, 49b and 50—are planned for construction in the near future.

TRAIL GAP 49b – RAILROAD HIGHWAY TRAIL EXTENSION (CHAUTAUQUA)

An additional 1.1 miles of trail are expected to be developed along Railroad Highway between the two open sections of trail in and around Chautauqua, roughly between the two roadway crossings of Mosquito Creek.

TRAIL GAP 50 – RAILROAD HIGHWAY TRAIL EXTENSION (CHAUTAUQUA)

The Railroad Highway Trail is set to be extended south from the existing trail in Chautauqua to the northern end of the Valley View Trail. The city of Council Bluffs has already identified the \$500,000 necessary for construction, and Pottawattamie County has identified its \$300,000 contribution to the project. This remaining section, which adds an additional 1.8 miles of trail, crosses the busy U.S. 6 at-grade with crosswalks and pedestrian signals for assistance.

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT

IOWA

VALLEY VIEW TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	7.2
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Iowa (in Miles)	5.2
Trail Type	Greenway
Surface Type	Concrete
Trail Manager	Council Bluffs Parks & Recreation
Website	councilbluffs-ia.gov/2166/trails
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/valley-view-trail

The Great American Rail-Trail enters the Council Bluffs area beginning with the Valley View Trail. The trail spans the eastern side of Council Bluffs, passing Iowa Western Community College. In the south, the trail links with the Lake Manawa Trail at Iowa West Foundation Trailhead Park. The same trailhead also features the northern endpoint for the Wabash Trace Nature Trail, which runs 63 miles south from Council Bluffs to the Iowa-Missouri border and was the 2011 inductee into RTC's Rail-Trail Hall of Fame. Along the Valley View Trail, trail users can read historical markers for the Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trail, which traces the route of the Mormon migration from the Midwest in the mid-1800s.

LAKE MANAWA TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	7.5
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Iowa (in Miles)	5.8
Trail Type	Greenway
Surface Type	Asphalt, concrete
Trail Manager	Council Bluffs Parks & Recreation
Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> iowadnr.gov/places-to-go/state-parks/iowa-state-parks/lake-manawa-state-park councilbluffs-ia.gov/2166/trails
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/lake-manawa-trail

The Lake Manawa Trail begins at Iowa West Foundation Trailhead Park and continues west along East South Omaha Bridge Road. The trail heads south along Mosquito Creek, crossing under several active railroad corridors. At the Eagle Trail neighborhood, trail users have two options to complete the loop around Lake Manawa and through Lake Manawa State Park:

Option 1 – To the west and north, trail users can follow East Manawa Drive to its intersection with U.S. 275/Veterans Memorial Highway.

Option 2 – To the west and south, trail users can continue to follow the trail along Mosquito Creek to where it heads west to follow South Shore Drive. This route is slightly longer, but offers more plentiful views of Lake Manawa.

Both options connect to the Veterans Memorial Trail and the Indian Creek Trail where U.S. 275/Veterans Memorial Highway crosses Indian Creek. The Indian Creek Trail continues north from this juncture into the Sunset Park neighborhood of Council Bluffs. The Great American Rail-Trail will continue west along the Veterans Memorial Trail.

VETERANS MEMORIAL TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	5.0
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Iowa (in Miles)	0.5
Trail Type	Greenway
Surface Type	Concrete
Trail Manager	Council Bluffs Parks & Recreation
Website	councilbluffs-ia.gov/2166/trails
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/veterans-memorial-trail-(ia)

The Veterans Memorial Trail will host the Great American Rail-Trail for 0.5 mile to connect the Lake Manawa Trail to the Western Historic Trails Center Link. The Veterans Memorial Trail runs adjacent to U.S. 275—also known as Veterans Memorial Highway—for its 5-mile route.

The Veterans Memorial Trail extends into Omaha, Nebraska, across the Missouri River using the South Omaha Veterans Memorial Bridge. Because the Veterans Memorial Trail shares the bridge with vehicular traffic, however, the Great American Rail-Trail will continue another 5.2 miles in Iowa, using the Western Historic Trails Center Link and Iowa Riverfront Trail (both described below) to access the iconic Bob Kerrey Pedestrian Bridge, which only allows non-motorized traffic, to cross into Nebraska.

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT IOWA

WESTERN HISTORIC TRAILS CENTER LINK

Total Length (in Miles)	1.9
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Iowa (in Miles)	1.9
Trail Type	Greenway
Surface Type	Concrete
Trail Manager	Council Bluffs Parks & Recreation
Website	iowaculture.gov/history/sites/western-historic-trails-center
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/western-historic-trails-center-link

The Western Historic Trails Center Link connects to the Veterans Memorial Trail at South 24th Street in Council Bluffs, from where it travels north and heads west to the Western Historic Trails Center. The Western Historic Trails Center was built by the National Park Service and is owned and operated by the State Historical Society of Iowa. The Trails Center provides information about the various routes north and west for early American pioneers, including the Lewis and Clark Trail, Oregon Trail, California Trail and Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trail.

IOWA RIVERFRONT TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	6.5
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Iowa (in Miles)	3.0
Trail Type	Greenway
Surface Type	Asphalt, concrete
Trail Manager	Council Bluffs Parks & Recreation
Website	councilbluffs-ia.gov/2166/trails
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/iowa-riverfront-trail

The Iowa Riverfront Trail starts at the Western Historic Trails Center and travels north approximately 7 miles along the Missouri River to the northern end of Council Bluffs. The Iowa Riverfront Trail will host the Great American Rail-Trail for 3 miles, crossing under I-80 and using a short on-road bike path along a low-volume section of River Road. The trail passes through Tom Hanafan River's Edge Park. Here, it connects to the Bob Kerrey Pedestrian Bridge, which takes non-motorized users across the Missouri River into Omaha, Nebraska.

BOB KERREY PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE

Total Length (in Miles)	0.5
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Iowa (in Miles)	0.3
Trail Type	Greenway
Surface Type	Concrete
Trail Manager	Council Bluffs Parks & Recreation, Omaha Parks & Recreation, Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District
Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · councilbluffs-ia.gov/2178/bob-kerrey-pedestrian-bridge · visitomaha.com/bob
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/bob-kerrey-pedestrian-bridge

The Bob Kerrey Pedestrian Bridge—named after former Nebraska Governor and U.S. Senator Bob Kerrey, who helped secure funding to build the bridge—spans the Missouri River and connects the communities of Council Bluffs, Iowa, and Omaha, Nebraska. The main span of the bridge was opened in 2008. It extends more than 1,000 feet and runs 50 feet above the Missouri River. The Bob Kerrey Pedestrian Bridge also has the distinction of being the longest bridge to span two states that is dedicated solely to non-motorized transportation. On the Iowa side of the Missouri River, the bridge originates in Tom Hanafan River's Edge Park and connects to the Iowa Riverfront Trail, which follows the Missouri River for 6.5 miles.

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT
IOWA



Riders along Iowa's Railroad Highway Trail | Photo courtesy National Park Service



The Solon to Ely section of the Hoover Nature Trail under construction | Photo courtesy Johnson County Conservation Board

NEBRASKA



Bob Kerrey Pedestrian Bridge connecting Iowa and Nebraska | Photo by Matthew Nissen

ROUTE

The Great American Rail-Trail crosses from Iowa into Nebraska on the iconic Bob Kerrey Pedestrian Bridge. The route weaves through the urban areas of Omaha and Lincoln, connecting these population centers to the more rural western part of the state. The open sections of the Cowboy Recreation and Nature Trail take trail users almost 40% of the way across Nebraska's existing trail miles, with more miles set for construction in the near future.

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT NEBRASKA

TABLE 18 GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL MILEAGE IN NEBRASKA

Total Great American Rail-Trail Existing Trail Miles in Neb. (% of Total State Mileage)	307.3 (52.0%)
Total Great American Rail-Trail Trail Gap Miles in Neb. (% of Total State Mileage)	283.2 (48.0%)
Total Trail Gaps in Neb.	10
Total Great American Rail-Trail Miles in Neb.	590.5

TABLE 19 GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE THROUGH NEBRASKA

Existing Trail or Trail Gap Name	Length in Neb. Along Great American Rail-Trail (in Miles)	Existing Trail or Trail Gap Name	Length in Neb. Along Great American Rail-Trail (in Miles)
Bob Kerrey Pedestrian Bridge	0.2	Oak Lake Connector Trail	0.8
TRAIL GAP 51 – “Baby Bob” Bridge Extension (Omaha)	0.1	North 1st Street Trail	1.5
TRAIL GAP 52 – Burt Street Trail Extension (Omaha)	0.9	Superior Street Trail	0.2
Burt Street Trail	0.7	Highlands Trail	1.3
Turner Boulevard Trail	2.1	TRAIL GAP 56 – Lincoln to Valparaiso	17.4
TRAIL GAP 53 – Turner Boulevard Trail Extension (Omaha) COMPLETED	-	Oak Creek Trail	13.0
Field Club Trail	1.4	TRAIL GAP 57a – Brainard to Columbus	25.7
South Omaha Trail	3.7	Third Avenue Viaduct Trail	0.8
Keystone Trail	5.6	TRAIL GAP 57b – Columbus	3.9
West Papio Trail	5.7	Robert White Trail	1.5
Walnut Creek Lake Trail	2.6	Bob Lake Trail	1.2
TRAIL GAP 54 – Papillion to Springfield	3.5	TRAIL GAP 57c – Columbus to Norfolk	44.4
MoPac Trail (Springfield)	13.2	Cowboy Recreation and Nature Trail (Norfolk to Valentine)	202.1
Platte River Connection	1.5	TRAIL GAP 58 – Cowboy Recreation and Nature Trail Extension (Valentine to Gordon)	90.0
TRAIL GAP 55 – MoPac Connector (South Bend to Wabash)	9.4	Cowboy Recreation and Nature Trail (Gordon to Rushville)	16.6
MoPac East Trail	20.7	TRAIL GAP 59a – Cowboy Recreation and Nature Trail Extension (Rushville to Chadron)	25.2
MoPac Trail West	6.1	TRAIL GAP 59b – Cowboy Trail Connection (Chadron)	6.4
Antelope Valley Trail	1.0	TRAIL GAP 60 – Chadron to Crawford	23.8
Salt Creek Levee Trail	1.0	White River Trail	2.8
		TRAIL GAP 61 – White River Trail Extension (Crawford to Neb.-Wyo. State Line)	32.5
		Total Miles	590.5
		<i>Existing Trail Miles</i>	<i>307.3</i>
		<i>Trail Gap Miles</i>	<i>283.2</i>

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT NEBRASKA

BOB KERREY PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE

Total Length (in Miles)	0.5
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Neb. (in Miles)	0.2
Trail Type	Greenway
Surface Type	Concrete
Trail Manager	Council Bluffs Parks & Recreation, Omaha Parks & Recreation, Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District
Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · councilbluffs-ia.gov/2178/bob-kerrey-pedestrian-bridge · visitomaha.com/bob
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/bob-kerrey-pedestrian-bridge

The Bob Kerrey Pedestrian Bridge, discussed in more detail in the Iowa chapter of this report, has become a major community landmark, with a planned extension into Omaha in the works. The bridge is lit at night to provide a safe and attractive connection throughout the day and night. Visitors taking the bridge into Omaha can travel about a half-mile south along the Omaha Riverfront Trail to the Omaha Visitors Center to learn more about Omaha and what it has to offer. People continuing along the Great American Rail-Trail will head west into Omaha along the planned “Baby Bob” bridge extension, described below.

TRAIL GAP 51 – “BABY BOB” BRIDGE EXTENSION (OMAHA)

The Bob Kerrey Pedestrian Bridge currently ends on the Omaha, Nebraska, side of the Missouri River at Lewis & Clark Landing, connecting trail users to the Omaha Riverfront Trail running along the Missouri River. The current configuration of roads and railroads just to the west of this landing makes it difficult for trail users to access the bridge from downtown Omaha.

The city of Omaha plans to extend the Bob Kerrey Pedestrian Bridge 0.1 mile over Riverfront Drive and the railroad tracks to a planned trail extension along Mike Fahey Street. The North Downtown Riverfront Pedestrian Connector Bridge (or “Baby Bob”) is listed in Omaha’s 2021–2026 Capital Improvement Program. The bridge extension is in the final design stages. Construction is slated to begin in 2022 with a completion date anticipated in 2023.

TRAIL GAP 52 – BURT STREET TRAIL EXTENSION (OMAHA)

The city of Omaha plans to extend the existing Burt Street Trail 0.9 mile from its current western terminus at North 20th Street eastward to connect to the “Baby Bob” bridge extension. The trail will follow Burt Street to CHI Health Center Omaha, where the “Baby Bob” bridge extension is to connect at the end of Mike Fahey Street. Bike Walk Nebraska is working locally to explore an on-street protected bike lane along Burt Street that could also help make this connection.

BURT STREET TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	0.7
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Neb. (in Miles)	0.7
Trail Type	Greenway
Surface Type	Concrete
Trail Manager	Omaha Parks & Recreation
Website	parks.cityofomaha.org/parks/trails
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/burt-street-trail-

The existing Burt Street Trail runs 0.7 mile between North 20th and North 30th streets in Omaha. The trail is a shared-use path that parallels Burt Street on the south side of the road. It is largely wide enough to accommodate both bicycle and pedestrian traffic, though there are small sections that narrow to a normal sidewalk width. This pathway provides a connection on the north side of the Creighton University campus.

TURNER BOULEVARD TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	2.2
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Neb. (in Miles)	2.1
Trail Type	Greenway
Surface Type	Asphalt, concrete
Trail Manager	Omaha Parks & Recreation
Website	parks.cityofomaha.org/parks/trails
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/turner-boulevard-trail

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT NEBRASKA



MoPac Trail East in Nebraska | Photo by TrailLink user dimitri.hunter

The Turner Boulevard Trail connects to the Burt Street Trail at North 30th Street in Omaha. The Turner Boulevard Trail currently travels 2.2 miles. The Turner Boulevard Trail will host the Great American Rail-Trail for 2.1 miles, spanning the intersection of North 30th and Burt streets to Pacific Street at the Field Club of Omaha. The trail is a shared-use path that runs along the west side of North 30th Street and Turner Boulevard, winding past several parks and neighborhoods and ending at the Field Club of Omaha.

~~TRAIL GAP 53~~—TURNER BOULEVARD TRAIL-EXTENSION (OMAHA) COMPLETED

A 0.3-mile extension of the Turner Boulevard Trail was completed in 2021 along Pacific Street to connect to the Field Club Trail.

FIELD CLUB TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	1.8
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Neb. (in Miles)	1.4
Trail Type	Greenway, rail-trail
Surface Type	Concrete
Trail Manager	Omaha Parks & Recreation
Website	parks.cityofomaha.org/parks/trails
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/field-club-trail

The Field Club Trail travels 1.8 miles from the intersection of South 39th and Leavenworth streets south to the northern terminus of the South Omaha Trail at Vinton Street. Of this trail, 1.4 miles beginning at the end of the Turner Boulevard Trail Extension will provide a connection through Omaha and the Hanscom Park neighborhood for the Great American Rail-Trail. The Field Club Trail occupies an old railroad bed that runs for 2 miles and lies 30 feet below grade.

SOUTH OMAHA TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	3.7
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Neb. (in Miles)	3.7
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Concrete
Trail Manager	Omaha Parks & Recreation
Website	pacionrd.org/recreation-wildlife/parks-and-trails/metro-omaha-trails
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/south-omaha-trail

The South Omaha Trail connects the Field Club Trail to the Keystone Trail at its crossing of Little Papillion Creek. The South Omaha Trail is built on a former Chicago and North Western Transportation Company corridor with an old trestle crossing South 60th Street. The city of Omaha installed a pedestrian hybrid beacon signal at the busy at-grade crossing of South 50th Street to allow for safer crossing.

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT NEBRASKA

KEYSTONE TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	15.0
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Neb. (in Miles)	5.6
Trail Type	Greenway, rail-trail
Surface Type	Concrete
Trail Manager	Bellevue Parks Department, Omaha Parks & Recreation, Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District
Website	papionrd.org/recreation-wildlife/parks-and-trails/metro-omaha-trails
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/keystone-trail

The South Omaha Trail connects to the Keystone Trail at its crossing of Little Papillion Creek, though the Keystone Trail continues several miles north through much of western Omaha. The Keystone Trail partially follows the banks of Papillion Creek atop the flood control levees, while the remaining 2.3 miles are along an old rail corridor. The Great American Rail-Trail will turn west once the Keystone Trail intersects the West Papio Trail near South 36th Street at its crossing of Big Papillion Creek in Bellevue, though the Keystone Trail itself continues south to the Bellevue Loop Trail.

WEST PAPIO TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	22.9
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Neb. (in Miles)	5.7
Trail Type	Greenway, rail-trail
Surface Type	Concrete
Trail Manager	Omaha Parks & Recreation, Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District
Website	papionrd.org/recreation-wildlife/parks-and-trails/metro-omaha-trails
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/west-papio-trail

The West Papio Trail connects at its eastern end to the Keystone Trail and continues west toward the city of Elkhorn through the city of Papillion, following West Papillion Creek. At the western edge of Papillion, the Great American Rail-Trail will head south along South 96th Street toward the Walnut Creek Lake and Recreation Area to eventually connect to the MoPac Trail. The Great American Rail-Trail will make a brief on-street jog westward along Santa Fe Circle to access a trail underpass to safely cross underneath the busy state Route 370. The West Papio Trail will host the Great American Rail-Trail for 5.7 miles between the Keystone Trail and Papillion.

WALNUT CREEK LAKE TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	3.3
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Neb. (in Miles)	2.6
Trail Type	Greenway
Surface Type	Boardwalk, concrete
Trail Manager	City of Papillion, Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District
Website	papillion.org/facilities/facility/details/walnut-creekrecreationarea-14
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/walnut-creek-lake-trail

The West Papio Trail connects to a trail system at Walnut Creek Lake, a 105-acre reservoir and mixed-use recreation area in Papillion. The lake and recreation area are under the management of the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District. The paved loop around Walnut Creek Lake is 3.3 miles and is complete with amenities including a campground, restrooms, water fountains and an equestrian trail.

TRAIL GAP 54 – PAPILLION TO SPRINGFIELD

The Omaha metropolitan area has long been interested in completing a trail connection between the Walnut Creek Lake Trail and the MoPac Trail. A distinct trail corridor has not yet been identified. In the meantime, people who would like to travel between the trails can use Schram Road. This approximately 3.5-mile connection passes through farmland along an unpaved, low-volume county road. Gravel roads such as this can provide a low-stress bicycling experience and require the same equipment that would be needed on an unpaved rail-trail, such as many of those included in the Great American Rail-Trail route. When a trail connection to fill this gap is identified, the route of the Great American Rail-Trail will be adjusted to use that corridor. In the meantime, Schram Road can provide an appropriate interim on-road connector.

MoPAC TRAIL (SPRINGFIELD)

Total Length (in Miles)	13.2
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Neb. (in Miles)	13.2
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Crushed stone
Trail Manager	Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District
Website	papionrd.org/recreation-wildlife/parks-and-trails/metro-omaha-trails
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/mopac-trail-(springfield)

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT NEBRASKA

The MoPac Trail exists in three segments, starting just north of Springfield to the north and ending in Lincoln to the south and west. Nearly the entire route rests on an abandoned Missouri Pacific Railroad corridor (the MoPac).

Segment 1 – MoPac Trail (Springfield): Beginning at Schram Road in Omaha, the MoPac Trail heads south along state Route 50 through the town of Springfield, where a former gap in the route between Platteview Road and Main Street was recently completed slightly away from the former MoPac rail line, allowing for uninterrupted off-road travel through Springfield. The MoPac Trail continues along the old rail corridor south of the Platte River, just north of the city of Louisville, where the trail heads west to parallel state Route 31. Once the trail reaches the Platte River at South Bend, there is a trailhead with parking as the trail continues to cross the Platte River over the Lied Platte River Bridge.

Segment 2 – MoPac East Trail (discussed below).

Segment 3 – MoPac Trail West (discussed below).

PLATTE RIVER CONNECTION

Total Length (in Miles)	1.5
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Neb. (in Miles)	1.5
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Crushed stone, concrete
Trail Manager	Lower Platte South Natural Resources District, Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District
Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · papionrd.org/recreation-wildlife/parks-and-trails/platteriverbridgetrail · lpsnrd.org/lied-bridge-platte-river-connection
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/platte-river-connection

A connection across the Platte River at the village of South Bend, Nebraska, was completed in 2002, using an abandoned Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad bridge. The bridge across the river is now known as the Lied Platte River Bridge, named after the Lied Foundation, a major contributor to the project. The bridge was heavily damaged by flooding in March 2019. Lower Platte South Natural Resources District and the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District collaborated to repair and reopen the bridge to the public in July 2021.

TRAIL GAP 55 – MoPAC CONNECTOR (SOUTH BEND TO WABASH)

The Lower Platte South Natural Resources District identifies an interim on-road connector between the Platte River Connection and the MoPac East Trail. Bike Walk Nebraska, the Nebraska Trails Foundation and the

Great Plains Trail Network—collectively, the “MoPac Alliance”—recently announced a partnership to close this 9.4-mile gap and make a multiuse trail between Omaha and Lincoln closer to reality. The MoPac Alliance received a huge boost to its momentum in 2022 with the inclusion of \$8.3 million in funding in the 2022 Nebraska Legislature budget. Advocates are currently working with Cass County and the Lower Platte South Natural Resources District to identify the preferred alignment and move the project toward design and construction.

MoPAC EAST TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	20.7
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Neb. (in Miles)	20.7
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Crushed stone
Trail Manager	Lower Platte South Natural Resources District
Website	lpsnrd.org/mopac-east-trail
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/mopac-trail-east

The second segment of the MoPac Trail, following the old corridor of the Missouri Pacific Railroad’s Omaha Belt Line, travels 20.7 miles between Wabash and Lincoln. This eastern segment of the MoPac Trail is very rural and travels on a crushed stone path through prairie, woodland and farmland. A separate equestrian trail, the Charles L. Warner Equestrian Trail, is provided along the majority of the trail. Here, the MoPac East Trail connects to the MoPac Trail West to make the rest of the voyage into Lincoln.

MoPAC TRAIL WEST

Total Length (in Miles)	6.1
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Neb. (in Miles)	6.1
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Concrete, crushed stone
Trail Manager	Lincoln Parks & Recreation
Website	lincoln.ne.gov/city/departments/parks-and-recreation/parks-facilities/trails
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/mopac-trail-west

The third segment of the MoPac Trail starts at South 84th Street, east of Lincoln, and travels 6.1 miles into downtown Lincoln. The MoPac Trail West travels through many neighborhoods in Lincoln and helps connect

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT NEBRASKA

the two campuses of the University of Nebraska—Lincoln. The Great American Rail-Trail will head north at North Antelope Valley Parkway—the westernmost terminus of the MoPac Trail—onto the Antelope Valley Trail.

ANTELOPE VALLEY TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	2.1
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Neb. (in Miles)	1.0
Trail Type	Greenway
Surface Type	Concrete, crushed stone
Trail Manager	Lincoln Parks & Recreation
Website	lincoln.ne.gov/city/departments/parks-and-recreation/parks-facilities/trails
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/antelope-valley-trail

The Antelope Valley Trail runs roughly south to north through downtown Lincoln, with Lincoln High School to the south and Salt Creek to the north. The trail passes Trago Park, Union Park Plaza and the Bob Devaney Center. The Antelope Valley Trail will host the Great American Rail-Trail for 1 mile, connecting the MoPac Trail West to the Salt Creek Levee Trail.

SALT CREEK LEVEE TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	4.0
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Neb. (in Miles)	1.0
Trail Type	Greenway
Surface Type	Crushed stone
Trail Manager	Lincoln Parks & Recreation
Website	lincoln.ne.gov/city/departments/parks-and-recreation/parks-facilities/trails
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/salt-creek-levee-trail

The Salt Creek Levee Trail connects a trail along the levee of Salt Creek from its confluence with Oak Creek down to the Jamaica North Trail. The Great American Rail-Trail will utilize the northern mile of the Salt Creek Levee Trail connecting the Antelope Valley Trail to the Oak Lake Connector Trail at a bridge crossing Salt Creek.

OAK LAKE CONNECTOR TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	1.4
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Neb. (in Miles)	0.8
Trail Type	Greenway
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	Lincoln Parks & Recreation
Website	lincoln.ne.gov/city/departments/parks-and-recreation/parks-facilities/trails
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/oak-lake-connector-trail

The Oak Lake Connector Trail travels around Oak Lake Park along Charleston and North 1st streets in Lincoln, connecting to a shared-use path along North 1st Street at U.S. 6/Cornhusker Highway. Oak Lake Park provides two parking lots and a restroom facility, as well as walking trails along Oak Lake.

NORTH 1ST STREET TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	1.5
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Neb. (in Miles)	1.5
Trail Type	Greenway
Surface Type	Concrete
Trail Manager	Lincoln Parks & Recreation
Website	lincoln.ne.gov/city/departments/parks-and-recreation/parks-facilities/trails
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/north-1st-street-trail

A shared-use path runs along the length of North 1st Street from U.S. 6/Cornhusker Highway northwest to Superior Street. The trail is made of concrete and is approximately 10 feet wide, running along the northbound lane of North 1st Street.

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SUPERIOR STREET TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	4.4
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Neb. (in Miles)	0.2
Trail Type	Greenway
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	Lincoln Parks & Recreation
Website	lincoln.ne.gov/city/departments/parks-and-recreation/parks-facilities/trails
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/superior-street-trail

A 0.2-mile section of the Superior Street Trail will host the Great American Rail-Trail between North 1st Street and a connection to the Highlands Trail at Technology Drive in Lincoln. The Superior Street Trail is primarily a commuter route following its namesake thoroughfare from U.S. 6/Cornhusker Highway to the Highlands neighborhood at the western edge of the city.

HIGHLANDS TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	2.6
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Neb. (in Miles)	1.3
Trail Type	Greenway
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	Lincoln Parks & Recreation
Website	lincoln.ne.gov/city/departments/parks-and-recreation/parks-facilities/trails
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/highlands-trail-(ne)

The Highlands Trail offers a pleasant, 2.6-mile loop through Lincoln's Highlands neighborhood, providing the western link of the series of trails that travels through Lincoln. Those following the Great American Rail-Trail can follow the trail 1.3 miles along West Highland Boulevard and connect north along NW 12th Street to the Highlands Trail's terminus near NW 10th Street.

TRAIL GAP 56 – LINCOLN TO VALPARAISO

There are no known corridors that could help complete the 17.4-mile gap between the Highlands Trail in Lincoln and the Oak Creek Trail in Valparaiso. There is an active Union Pacific Railroad corridor connecting Lincoln north to Valparaiso with a low traffic density, according to data from the Federal Railroad Administration in 2014.

While a feasible, off-road multiuse trail option between these two trails continues to be explored, a temporary on-road interim connection can be made using various low-volume county roads in Lancaster and Saunders counties. A new group with representatives from local and statewide organizations has recently formed and is considering opportunities to complete this gap.

OAK CREEK TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	13.0
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Neb. (in Miles)	13.0
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Crushed stone
Trail Manager	Lower Platte South Natural Resources District
Website	lpsnrd.org/oak-creek-trail
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/oak-creek-trail

The Oak Creek Trail occupies a former Union Pacific Railroad corridor between the Nebraska villages of Valparaiso and Brainard. The trail travels 13 miles through Saunders and Butler counties. Across the county line is the tiny community of Loma, where restrooms are located just off the trail near the St. Luke Czech Catholic Shrine in the center of town. An equestrian trail runs adjacent to the Oak Creek Trail for its entire route, and horse trailer parking can be found at the trailheads in Valparaiso and Loma.

TRAIL GAP 57a – BRAINARD TO COLUMBUS

A 25-mile gap exists between Brainard and Columbus. The rail line on which the Oak Creek Trail was constructed between Valparaiso and Brainard extends northwest for an additional 10.5 miles to David City. The rail line is not officially abandoned and is currently under Nebraska Central Railroad Company ownership, though Federal Railroad Administration data from 2014 shows no rail traffic along this corridor. If this section is ever officially abandoned, Butler County and the local natural resource districts should seek to extend the Oak Creek Trail northwest to David City. As the rail line to David City crosses through the jurisdiction of three natural resource districts (Lower Platte South, Upper Big Blue and Lower Platte North, respectively), a partnership on trail development and management could be pursued.

From David City, an active BNSF Railway line continues north through Columbus, Nebraska, and has a traffic density of two out of five, according to 2014 Federal Railroad Administration data. The Lower Platte North Natural Resources District recently approved a letter of support for considering a rail-with-trail opportunity on this section of active rail line between David City and Columbus.

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THIRD AVENUE VIADUCT TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	0.8
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Neb. (in Miles)	0.8
Trail Type	Greenway
Surface Type	Concrete
Trail Manager	City of Columbus
Website	columbusnetrails.com
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/third-avenue-viaduct-trail-

The 3rd Avenue viaduct was an infrastructure project decades in the making. Prior to its completion, travelers heading north or south along 3rd Avenue between 8th Street and U.S. 30 were forced to cross a tangle of Union Pacific Railroad tracks at street level. The finished viaduct, which opened in August 2018, includes a concrete path between 8th and 19th streets (just south of U.S. 30), ensuring safe passage over the tracks for drivers, bicyclists and pedestrians. The trail is part of a trail network in Columbus known as CART (Columbus Area Recreational Trails).

TRAIL GAP 57b – COLUMBUS

The city of Columbus and CART are working together to complete a network of trails through Columbus, including an approximately 3.9-mile connection between the Third Avenue Viaduct Trail and the Robert White Trail. The new connection would follow 3rd Avenue north and the existing canal northwest before intersecting with the Robert White Trail at the Lake Babcock Reservoir.

ROBERT WHITE TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	1.5
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Neb. (in Miles)	1.5
Trail Type	Greenway
Surface Type	Crushed stone
Trail Manager	City of Columbus
Website	columbusnetrails.com
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/robert-white-trail

In Columbus, the Robert White Trail runs 1.5 miles between 18th Avenue/ Monastery Road and the start of the Bob Lake Trail at the intersection of 65th and 68th streets. The trail follows the southern shore of Lake Babcock for its duration.

BOB LAKE TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	1.2
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Neb. (in Miles)	1.2
Trail Type	Greenway
Surface Type	Crushed stone
Trail Manager	City of Columbus
Website	columbusnetrails.com
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/bob-lake-trail

The Bob Lake Trail runs 1.2 miles between the northern terminus of the Robert White Trail at 65th and 68th streets, south of 83rd Street. The trail follows the southwestern shore of Lake Babcock for part of its route.

TRAIL GAP 57c – COLUMBUS TO NORFOLK

The city of Columbus plans to construct a trail extending from the Bob Lake Trail westward along the canal to at least 63rd Avenue. From 63rd Avenue, the trail would continue north toward Norfolk. 2014 data from the Federal Railroad Administration lists a local Nebraska Central Railroad Company rail line to Norfolk as active, but shows no rail traffic along the corridor. If this section is ever officially abandoned, local natural resource districts should seek to transform it into a trail as well. Alternative options, including low-volume county roads, should be explored in the meantime to make this 44.4-mile connection in the interim.

COWBOY RECREATION AND NATURE TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	218.7
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Neb. (in Miles)	218.7
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Concrete, crushed stone
Trail Manager	Nebraska Game and Parks Commission
Website	· outdoornebraska.gov/cowboytrail · bikecowboytrail.com
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/cowboy-recreation-and-nature-trail

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The Cowboy Recreation and Nature Trail (“Cowboy Trail”) is one of the country’s longest rail-trails. The Cowboy Trail was designated as a National Recreational Trail as part of the National Park Service’s National Trails System in 2001. When it is fully complete, the trail will extend more than 300 miles between the cities of Norfolk and Chadron. Two segments of the Cowboy Trail are currently complete:

Segment 1 – 202.1 miles between Norfolk and Valentine.

Segment 2 – 16.6 miles between Gordon and Rushville.

The Cowboy Trail was created when a major corridor of the Chicago and North Western Transportation Company (originally part of the Fremont, Elkhorn and Missouri Valley Railroad) was abandoned in 1992. RTC purchased the railroad right-of-way and donated it to the state of Nebraska. The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission now owns the entire corridor between Norfolk and mile marker 400, about 5 miles east of downtown Chadron.

Maintenance of the Cowboy Trail has historically been underfunded at the state level. This situation leaves parts of the Cowboy Trail in rough but passable shape, particularly as the trail passes through the more remote sections of completed trail on the western end.⁵ The trail has not been entirely resurfaced since it was first completed in the late 1990s, and short sections could be rough from washboarding. LB981 was introduced to the Nebraska Legislature in January 2022. It would provide a dedicated maintenance fund of \$15 million for the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission to support ongoing maintenance of the Cowboy Trail and other trails within the commission’s purview outside of specific state parks. LB981 was unsuccessful in the Nebraska Legislature, and efforts are underway to secure the necessary maintenance funding in other ways.

Flooding in the spring of 2019 severely damaged portions of the Cowboy Trail, with repair costs estimated to top \$7.7 million. The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission has applied for funding from the Federal Emergency Management Agency as well as elected state officials to complete the necessary repairs.

TRAIL GAP 58 – COWBOY RECREATION AND NATURE TRAIL EXTENSION (VALENTINE TO GORDON)

The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission owns a former rail corridor between the existing trailheads in Valentine and Gordon that was never officially surfaced as part of the Cowboy Trail. The commission has been hesitant to complete construction on this 90-mile section of trail until dedicated and stable funding is made available by the Nebraska Legislature for ongoing operations and maintenance of the entire Cowboy Trail.

Between Valentine and Merriman (approximately 61 miles), the bridges are decked and the remaining activities to open the trail include mowing, grading and surfacing with crushed stone. Ballast and railroad ties are still present on the remaining 30 miles between Merriman and Gordon, and the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission is preparing to remove the ballast when resources allow. The bridges along the section between Merriman and Gordon still need to be decked as well. Completing the entire Cowboy Trail will go a long way toward making the Great American Rail-Trail a reality and providing economic development assistance to the small towns that settled along the former rail corridor.

TRAIL GAP 59a – COWBOY RECREATION AND NATURE TRAIL EXTENSION (RUSHVILLE TO CHADRON)

Cowboy Trail West Inc. is working to complete the western 25.2 miles of the Cowboy Trail from Rushville to mile marker 400, east of Chadron. Cowboy Trail West completed and maintains the existing western section of the Cowboy Trail between Gordon and Rushville in Sheridan County. In September 2018, the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission offered Cowboy Trail West \$350,000 in Recreational Trails Program funds for trail development. In partnership with the commission, Cowboy Trail West will use the funds to upgrade the surfacing of the existing trail section and extend it westward toward Hay Springs.

In the spring of 2023, the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission reviewed bids to complete a substantial portion of the work on this gap, which is slated to begin soon.

TRAIL GAP 59b – COWBOY TRAIL CONNECTION (CHADRON)

The Northwest Nebraska Trails Association (NNTA) is working closely with the city of Chadron and Nebraska Northwestern Railroad to complete roughly 6.4 miles of trail to connect the end of the Cowboy Trail at mile marker 400 into downtown Chadron. Nebraska Northwestern Railroad has issued an easement for a rail-with-trail along the active rail line to complete this gap, and NNTA and the city of Chadron have entered into a memorandum of understanding agreement for the eventual completion and management of the trail. Engineering documents were completed in 2021, and NNTA and the city of Chadron are currently raising funds for trail construction. The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission has awarded NNTA \$528,540 in Recreational Trails Program grants for development of this trail gap.

⁵ Cowboy Trail West Inc. provides the labor to maintain the section between Gordon and Rushville, using materials provided by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission. RTC provided a Doppelt Family Trail Development Fund grant in 2017 to Cowboy Trail West Inc. for trail surfacing in this western section of the trail.

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Cowboy Trail in Nebraska | Photo by Alex Duryea, courtesy Nebraska Tourism Commission

TRAIL GAP 60 – CHADRON TO CRAWFORD

An active Canadian Pacific Railway corridor runs between the cities of Chadron and Crawford. The line has a low traffic density, according to data from the Federal Railroad Administration in 2014. There is no abandoned rail option to complete an off-road trail between Chadron and the existing White River Trail in Crawford. While a feasible off-road multiuse trail option connecting this 23.8-mile gap continues to be explored, a temporary interim on-road connector can be made using various low-volume county roads in Dawes County.

WHITE RIVER TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	2.8
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Neb. (in Miles)	2.8
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Ballast
Trail Manager	City of Crawford, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission
Website	outdoornebraska.gov/fortrobinson
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/white-river-trail

The White River Trail runs along a former Chicago and North Western Transportation Company corridor for 2.8 miles, starting in Crawford and ending at Fort Robinson State Park. Fort Robinson encompasses the fort and military camp that was home to the Red Cloud Agency in the 1870s. The agency served as an issuing point for supplies to the Oglala Lakota tribe of the Great Sioux Nation, as well as the Northern Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes, authorized in exchange for land ceded to the United States in 1868.

Fort Robinson is also the site of Crazy Horse’s surrender and death in 1877, and visitors can find a historical plaque that marks the location. The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission handles the ongoing operations and maintenance of the White River Trail, while the city of Crawford maintains the portion of the trail outside of Fort Robinson State Park.

TRAIL GAP 61 – WHITE RIVER TRAIL EXTENSION (CRAWFORD TO NEBRASKA- WYOMING STATE LINE)

The former Chicago and North Western Transportation Company corridor that traveled along the White River in Nebraska and Niobrara River in Wyoming was severely damaged in a flood in 1991. Twenty miles of track and 45 bridges were destroyed along the corridor, and rail service never recovered after the storm. Local rail advocates were insistent upon the railbed being turned into a trail once it was no longer viable for rail traffic.

The existing 3 miles of the White River Trail are the result of those efforts. The remainder of the rail corridor between Fort Robinson State Park and Van Tassell, Wyoming, is under the ownership of the Friends of the White River Trail, which includes 34 miles in Nebraska. The friends group intends to hold on to the ownership of the rail corridor until resources become available to complete construction of the trail and keep it maintained. Chief Dull Knife College is currently working with the Northern Cheyenne tribe to develop a 3-mile trail from the Cheyenne Breakout barracks at Fort Robinson to the monument created to commemorate the Cheyenne Breakout of January 1879. It will be called the Healing Trail and will incorporate about 2 to 2.5 miles of the railbed west of Fort Robinson. In 2021, the Northern Cheyenne Breakout Committee received a \$149,500 grant from the National Park Service’s American Battlefield Protection Program to support the development of the Northern Cheyenne Healing Trail.

Any future trail connecting the 32.5-mile gap from Crawford to the Nebraska–Wyoming border needs to connect to a trail on the Wyoming side. Potential trail connections in Wyoming are discussed in Trail Gap 62a in the Wyoming chapter of this report.

WYOMING



Casper Rail Trail in Wyoming | Photo courtesy Platte River Trails Trust

ROUTE

Wyoming has the potential to be an incredible section of the Great American Rail-Trail. Its landscapes are unique in the United States, and Wyoming is already known for its outdoor recreation assets. Because of Wyoming's topography, any route through the state will require sizable grade increases at several locations. Local options including shuttle services could be explored to accommodate trail users who are unable to traverse these grade increases. Currently, there are not significant miles of multiuse trail that could be used to route a trail across Wyoming. However, with the statewide commitment to the project and the exceptional landscapes across the state, the Great American Rail-Trail is a viable project to help Wyoming with its outdoor recreation and tourism economy.

TABLE 20 GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL MILEAGE IN WYOMING

Total Great American Rail-Trail Existing Trail Miles in Wyo. (% of Total State Mileage)	17.2 (3.4%)
Total Great American Rail-Trail Trail Gap Miles in Wyo. (% of Total State Mileage)	492.2 (96.6%)
Total Trail Gaps in Wyo.	6
Total Great American Rail-Trail Miles in Wyo.	509.4

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT WYOMING

TABLE 21 GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE THROUGH WYOMING

Existing Trail or Trail Gap Name	Length in Wyo. Along Great American Rail-Trail (in Miles)
TRAIL GAP 62a – White River Trail Extension (Neb.–Wyo. State Line to Van Tassell)	2.0
TRAIL GAP 62b – Van Tassell to Douglas	70.7
Douglas Trail System	3.3
TRAIL GAP 62c – Douglas to Glenrock	25.9
Al’s Way	2.1
TRAIL GAP 63 – Glenrock to Evansville	18.5
Casper Rail Trail	6.4
Platte River Trail	1.8
TRAIL GAP 64 – Casper to Shoshoni	95.7
TRAIL GAP 65a – Shoshoni to Thermopolis	50.1
East Bighorn River Trail	0.7
TRAIL GAP 65b – Thermopolis to Greybull	50.2
Greybull Riverwalk	1.9
TRAIL GAP 66 – Greybull to Cody	51.7
Beck Lake Park Bike Trail	1.0
TRAIL GAP 67 – Cody to Wyo.–Mont. State Line	127.4
Total Miles	509.4
<i>Existing Trail Miles</i>	<i>17.2</i>
<i>Trail Gap Miles</i>	<i>492.2</i>

Note: RTC pulled together several potential route options through Wyoming and Montana and held a meeting of state and local officials in the two states in January 2019. The goal of the meeting was to come to a consensus on the best route option, or Preferred Wyoming Route, to connect Wyoming to Montana, weighing all of the opportunities and challenges presented by every option.

The result of the meeting was the Preferred Wyoming Route selected below from Casper, Wyoming, to Livingston, Montana. This was chosen as the Preferred Wyoming Route to accommodate physical constraints and highlight the potential economic development opportunities of a cross-country trail through the rural north-central portions of Wyoming, where the state has prioritized economic development efforts. This route presents several challenges, as described in Trail Gaps 65–69 (below and in the Montana chapter).

At the 2019 meeting, attendees discussed an alternate route heading southwest from Shoshoni, Wyoming, following the Wyoming Heritage Trail to Lander and heading northwest toward Jackson along U.S. 26, which is also the route of Adventure Cycling Association’s TransAmerica Trail. The alternate route connects to the Greater Yellowstone Trail at Grand Teton National Park and continues approximately 180 miles around Yellowstone National Park on existing and planned rail-trails to West Yellowstone, Montana. The alternate route then travels through Yellowstone National Park and connects to the route as described in this report.

This alternate route is 448 miles total, 140 miles of which are currently existing trail. The alternate route remains available should the Preferred Wyoming Route be determined unfeasible. The consensus was that RTC and its partners should continue to conduct research on the Preferred Wyoming Route’s feasibility; however, if it is determined that this route is not feasible, then the official route of the Great American Rail-Trail will move to accommodate the alternate route option.

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT WYOMING

WYOMING BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN SYSTEM TASK FORCE

In 2016, the Wyoming Bicycle and Pedestrian System Task Force was created and charged with developing a report to better understand the opportunities, benefits and challenges of bicycle and pedestrian pathways and natural surface trails. The highlight of the report for RTC was the strong language encouraging the state and communities to support the development of the Great American Rail-Trail:

“Lead the state effort to develop the Great American Rail Trail through Wyoming; partner with Wyoming communities and the Rails to Trails Conservancy on concept and feasibility plans for the Wyoming section of the trail. Seek and support ways to fund this project using existing or future (proposed) state funds. Encourage the governor and the state legislature to become vocal champions of the project.”

Other useful recommendations in the report included:

- Create and fund a \$10 million annual statewide bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure and information initiative.
- Encourage the governor to contact and persuade the Wyoming delegation and federal land agencies regarding the serious federal land trail maintenance backlog and need for continued federal investment in public trails and pathways in Wyoming.
- Create a WYDOT Office of Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation.
- Promote and market long-distance bicycling opportunities in Wyoming, and provide information on key bicycle touring amenities for visitors.
- Complete a systemwide non-motorized trail plan for Wyoming State Parks, Historic Sites, & Trails, prioritizing the trail-building projects to be completed.

TRAIL GAP 62a – WHITE RIVER TRAIL EXTENSION (NEBRASKA–WYOMING STATE LINE TO VAN TASSELL)

In addition to 34 miles of the future White River Trail in Nebraska, the Friends of the White River Trail also maintains ownership over 2 miles of abandoned rail corridor from the Nebraska–Wyoming state line west to the small town of Van Tassell. The group intends to hold onto ownership of the rail corridor until resources become available to complete construction of the trail and keep it maintained.

TRAIL GAP 62b – VAN TASSELL TO DOUGLAS

From Van Tassell, a trail would extend west approximately 70 miles to the city of Douglas. U.S. 18/20 connects Lusk and Douglas, and while there are no confirmed abandoned rail corridors between Lusk and just east of Orin, Wyoming, there are several active rail lines adjacent to the highway that could potentially be available for rail-with-trail construction. There is a very active Union Pacific Railroad corridor that extends approximately 45 miles between Lusk and Shawnee, a less active 6.2-mile section of Union Pacific Railroad corridor between Shawnee and Orin, and approximately 15 miles of two parallel active

tracks between Orin and Douglas—one owned by Union Pacific Railroad and one owned by BNSF Railway. Also, there are documents that describe an abandoned rail line between Shawnee and Orin. Further research should be conducted in Converse County, Wyoming, on the status of this potential corridor for future trail development.

Between Orin and Douglas, the active Union Pacific Railroad line becomes abandoned for approximately 7 miles into Douglas, following Irvine Road. This abandoned line travels a total of approximately 76 miles to a point northeast of the Casper/Natrona County International Airport, roughly paralleling U.S. 20/26/Yellowstone Highway, where it converges with the active BNSF Railway line. A trail heading west could converge with the existing Douglas Trail System. Douglas plans to extend the existing trail system about 0.2 mile from its current southern terminus at Robin Lane to I-25 along the remainder of the abandoned railway portion that the city owns.

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT WYOMING

DOUGLAS TRAIL SYSTEM

Total Length (in Miles)	3.3
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Wyo. (in Miles)	3.3
Trail Type	Greenway
Surface Type	Concrete
Trail Manager	City of Douglas
Website	cityofdouglas.org/192/city-parks-trails
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/douglas-bike-path

The Douglas Trail System traces the North Platte River north and south. In 2019, Douglas extended the trail system from Richards Street south to Robin Lane along an abandoned rail corridor using grant funding from the Wyoming Department of Transportation.

TRAIL GAP 62c – DOUGLAS TO GLENROCK

The abandoned line continues 25.9 miles into Glenrock, where Al's Way was constructed along the corridor in the 1990s. In the summer of 2020, the town of Glenrock completed Al's Way east to the town limits at Meadowlark Street. Work remains to determine ownership of the former Chicago and North Western Transportation Company's railroad corridor connecting Douglas to Glenrock and its potential for a rail-to-trail conversion. A group of local partners has recently submitted a request to the National Park Service Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program to support planning work to identify a corridor and the necessary stakeholders to complete the trail gap between Douglas and Casper, which is a catalyst project of the Great American Rail-Trail.

AL'S WAY

Total Length (in Miles)	2.1
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Wyo. (in Miles)	2.1
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt, crushed stone
Trail Manager	Town of Glenrock
Website	glenrock.org/?SEC=CA1DCD8A-8CDA-489B-B420-F2D593DAD24E
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/als-way

The 2.1-mile Al's Way was named after Glenrock High School track coach Al Finch, who has since retired but is well-known in the community. The rail corridor was purchased in 1990, and a trail was initially constructed in 1994. In 2020, Al's Way was extended to the eastern and western limits of Glenrock with the assistance of grant funding from the Wyoming Department of Transportation and the Wyoming Business Council.

TRAIL GAP 63 – GLENROCK TO EVANSVILLE

The abandoned rail corridor continues nearly 20 miles west from Glenrock to Evansville, a small town just east of Casper, where the trail intersects the existing Casper Rail Trail. In the summer of 2021, the Casper Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) worked with Platte River Trails to complete a study of the developing rail-trail extension from Edness Kimball Wilkins State Park (in Evansville) west to state Route 256/Hat 6 Road (also in Evansville). The extension would add roughly 2.4 miles of trail eastward from Casper. Following construction of this trail segment, discussions can begin on the best ways to connect the trail eastward to Glenrock.

CASPER RAIL TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	6.4
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Wyo. (in Miles)	6.4
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Concrete
Trail Manager	Casper Parks Department
Website	platterivertrails.com
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/casper-rail-trail

The Casper Rail Trail extends 6.4 miles through the center of Casper, from state Route 256/Hat 6 Road and U.S. 20/26 west to South Spruce Street. The first section of the Casper Rail Trail was constructed in 1998, with additional mileage having been added since then. The city of Casper was granted a Certificate of Interim Trail Use by the Surface Transportation Board to permit trail development. Platte River Trails was the entity created to develop the trail since 2002.

Operations and maintenance of the trail are the responsibilities of the city of Casper. Platte River Trails reports that the existing trail is in good condition and that no upgrades are needed in the immediate future.

A new state office building will be constructed near the western end of the Casper Rail Trail at South Spruce Street. The city of Casper intends to leverage the momentum behind this new development to complete bicycle and pedestrian upgrades to Midwest Avenue, connecting to the trails along the North Platte River.

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT WYOMING

PLATTE RIVER TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	10.0
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Wyo. (in Miles)	1.8
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt, concrete
Trail Manager	Platte River Trails
Website	platterivertrails.com
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/platte-river-trail-(wy)

Platte River Trails owns and maintains this 10-mile concrete trail that follows the North Platte River through Casper. The Platte River Trail will host the Great American Rail-Trail for approximately 2 miles, crossing the North Platte River and heading further west into Natrona County. This portion of the trail crosses the Platte River at the Tate Pump House, a restored historical building that now houses the offices of Platte River Trails. Portions of the Platte River Trail are approaching 30 years old. Platte River Trails and the city of Casper have plans to rehabilitate the oldest sections of the trail by spending \$500,000 on trail resurfacing and rehabilitation.

TRAIL GAP 64 – CASPER TO SHOSHONI

There is an approximately 96-mile gap between the end of the Platte River Trail and Shoshoni, Wyoming. U.S. 20/26/Yellowstone Highway, a two-lane high-speed road with relatively low volume, connects Casper west to Shoshoni through the small community of Powder River. U.S. 20/26/Yellowstone Highway has wide shoulders that could accommodate bicycle travel while a fully separated trail is explored in more detail.

The Casper Area MPO is considering a study of an extension of U.S. 20/26/Yellowstone Highway that could include a trail connection heading west out of Casper. An abandoned rail corridor connects the end of the Platte River Trail approximately 14 miles northwest past the Casper/Natrona County International Airport. An active BNSF Railway corridor connects from there into Shoshoni with a medium traffic density. The rail corridor travels through a very remote area of Natrona and Fremont counties that is not ideal for a trail route. A fully separated trail should be explored in more detail to connect Casper and Shoshoni.

RTC reviewed a variety of routes to connect the largest expanse of trail gap between Casper, Wyoming, and Livingston, Montana. RTC staff consulted state and local officials and nonprofit organizations on the best route options through this area, and staff made several visits to scout out locations. Rail-trail conversions have been less frequent in these parts of Wyoming and Montana due to an overall lack of railroads, the relatively rough topography and sparse populations. The few existing railroads are successful due to resource extraction in the area, making them less suitable for a rail-with-trail. Therefore, there is no easy rail-trail route option in the area.

TRAIL GAP 65a – SHOSHONI TO THERMOPOLIS

From Shoshoni, the trail will continue just over 50 miles north to Thermopolis, Wyoming, to connect to the existing East Bighorn River Trail. The 50-mile gap follows U.S. 20, as well as an active BNSF Railway line with a medium traffic density.

This gap holds the challenge of traveling through the beautiful Wind River Canyon. Heading north out of Shoshoni, Wind River Canyon begins just north of Boysen State Park and travels 14 miles. The canyon is heavily constricted by the Wind River, the topography of the canyon, the existing highway and an active BNSF Railway line. Both the highway and rail line are funneled through tunnels cut into the adjacent rock with minimal room for further expansion to accommodate a trail. Innovative solutions could include signalization to alert drivers of cyclists traveling through the tunnels, as well as a shuttle service connecting Shoshoni to Thermopolis, which lies just north of Wind River Canyon.

An option exists to bypass Wind River Canyon by traveling over Birdseye Pass along existing dirt roads, connecting into Buffalo Creek Road in Thermopolis. This option trades the constraints of the canyon for a steeper hill traveling over Birdseye Pass. More field research should be done to determine if this option for bypassing Wind River Canyon is feasible.

Trail Gap 65a travels through the western portion of the Wind River Reservation. RTC and local partners should collaborate with the Eastern Shoshone and Northern Arapaho tribes to explore the potential economic development opportunities of a cross-country trail in this area.

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT WYOMING

EAST BIGHORN RIVER TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	0.7
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Wyo. (in Miles)	0.7
Trail Type	Greenway
Surface Type	Concrete
Trail Manager	City of Thermopolis

A trail follows the Bighorn River through Thermopolis and provides access to Hot Springs State Park, a major attraction in the Bighorn Basin.

TRAIL GAP 65b – THERMOPOLIS TO GREYBULL

A trail is needed to connect the roughly 50 miles between Thermopolis and Greybull. The trail could follow the active BNSF Railway line, U.S. 20 or another linear feature to be determined. The Bureau of Land Management owns a significant portion of land in the Bighorn Basin that should be explored for additional trail development opportunities. Likewise, a group of public and private citizens, in conjunction with the Wyoming Office of Outdoor Recreation, launched the Bighorn Basin Outdoor Recreation Collaborative (BBORC) to promote, enhance and develop sustainable outdoor recreation that encourages responsible use, personal well-being and economic benefit in the Bighorn Basin. BBORC has expressed interest in the Great American Rail-Trail and will be instrumental in helping identify and complete the route through the basin.

Trail Gap 65b also travels through a string of small towns. If a trail route is identified apart from U.S. 20 or the rail line, spurs should be created to take trail users into these towns for food, water and lodging support.

GREYBULL RIVERWALK

Total Length (in Miles)	1.9
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Wyo. (in Miles)	1.9
Trail Type	Greenway
Surface Type	Concrete
Trail Manager	Town of Greybull
TrailLink Map	trailink.com/trail/greybull-riverwalk-

The Greybull Riverwalk travels south to north through the town of Greybull, Wyoming, for 1.9 miles. The trail travels on the east side of Greybull along the Bighorn River. The trail is accessible every five blocks or so throughout town, with a safe crossing provided underneath U.S. 14/Greybull Avenue. The Greybull Riverwalk ends to the north on U.S. 20/U.S. 14/state Route 789/U.S. 16, just north of 13th Avenue.

TRAIL GAP 66 – GREYBULL TO CODY

From the northern end of the Greybull Riverwalk, the Great American Rail-Trail will continue approximately 52 miles west to the city of Cody, Wyoming. The trail could follow U.S. 14, a two- or three-lane highway with an intermittent shoulder that could be used as an interim on-road connector. Additional right-of-way could be available on either side of the highway to construct a separate trail facility to accommodate trail users between Greybull and Cody.

Another option is to continue north from Greybull to the town of Frannie, following the same highway and rail options as Trail Gaps 65a and 65b. From Frannie, the route could then head southwest into Cody, following U.S. 14 ALT or an active BNSF Railway corridor with light traffic that parallels the highway. This route option adds significant miles to the trail, but could be a more attractive option should the rail line between Cody and Frannie ever become abandoned and available for a rail-trail conversion. There is also enthusiasm in the city of Powell for a trail that could connect into Cody. Similar to BBORC in the Bighorn Basin, the Park County Outdoor Recreation Collaborative (PCORC) was created in 2022 and has expressed interest in helping to identify and complete the route in Park County, Wyoming.

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT WYOMING



Platte River Trail in Wyoming | Photo by Mike McLemore

BECK LAKE PARK BIKE TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	2.0
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Wyo. (in Miles)	1.0
Trail Type	Greenway
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	City of Cody
Website	codywy.gov/facilities/facility/details/beck-lake-park-10
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/beck-lake-park-bike-trail

Just minutes from downtown Cody, the Beck Lake Park Bike Trail wraps around the perimeter of Beck Lake Park's two reservoir lakes and also parallels a portion of the Cody Canal.

TRAIL GAP 67 – CODY TO WYOMING–MONTANA STATE LINE

In Cody, the trail will travel through town to continue west along U.S. 14 for approximately 127 miles toward Yellowstone National Park and the Wyoming–Montana state line. There are various existing trails and bike lanes in Cody that could help make this transition through town, and additional options should be explored. U.S. 14 outside of Cody is a two-lane highway with a decent shoulder that can accommodate interim bicycle travel while an off-street trail option is being reviewed further.

Yellowstone National Park presents a unique situation along the Great American Rail-Trail. It is an iconic national park that trail users would be excited to visit along a journey across the country. However, the road system through the park is not accommodating for trail users due to its lack of shoulders, high traffic volumes in the summer and distracted drivers.⁶ RTC intends to work with its local and federal partners and the administration of Yellowstone National Park to discuss potential options for multiuse trail development through the park.

Yellowstone National Park also has a network of existing trails, service roads and sections of historical carriage roads that could potentially be restored and connected to provide a feasible through-route for the Great American Rail-Trail. Further evaluation and research are needed.

The nearby Grand Teton National Park provides a wonderful example of building a successful multiuse trail to accommodate non-motorized visitors. Yellowstone presents unique topographical constraints that may prohibit the construction of a multiuse trail adjacent to the entire road system through the park, but given the well-documented effects of increased automobile travel through the park, a trail could help ameliorate some of those concerns.

Another option to consider in the interim period while an off-street trail through Yellowstone National Park is being explored is a shuttle service. Such a service could shuttle trail users (and their bicycles if applicable) between Cody, Wyoming, and Gardiner, Montana, through Yellowstone. Tour services already exist in those communities, and future services could be tailored explicitly to travelers along the Great American Rail-Trail.

⁶ The 2018 Wyoming Bicycle and Pedestrian Task Force Report recommends that the National Park Service 1) update its standards to ensure 5-foot shoulders on park roads and 2) “evaluate potential bicycle use of additional off-highway pathways and trails” in Yellowstone National Park.

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)	106.6 (25.0%)
Total Great American Rail-Trail Trail Gap Miles in Mont. (% of Total State Mileage)	319.3 (75.0%)
Total Trail Gaps in Mont.	12
Total Great American Rail-Trail Miles in Mont.	425.9

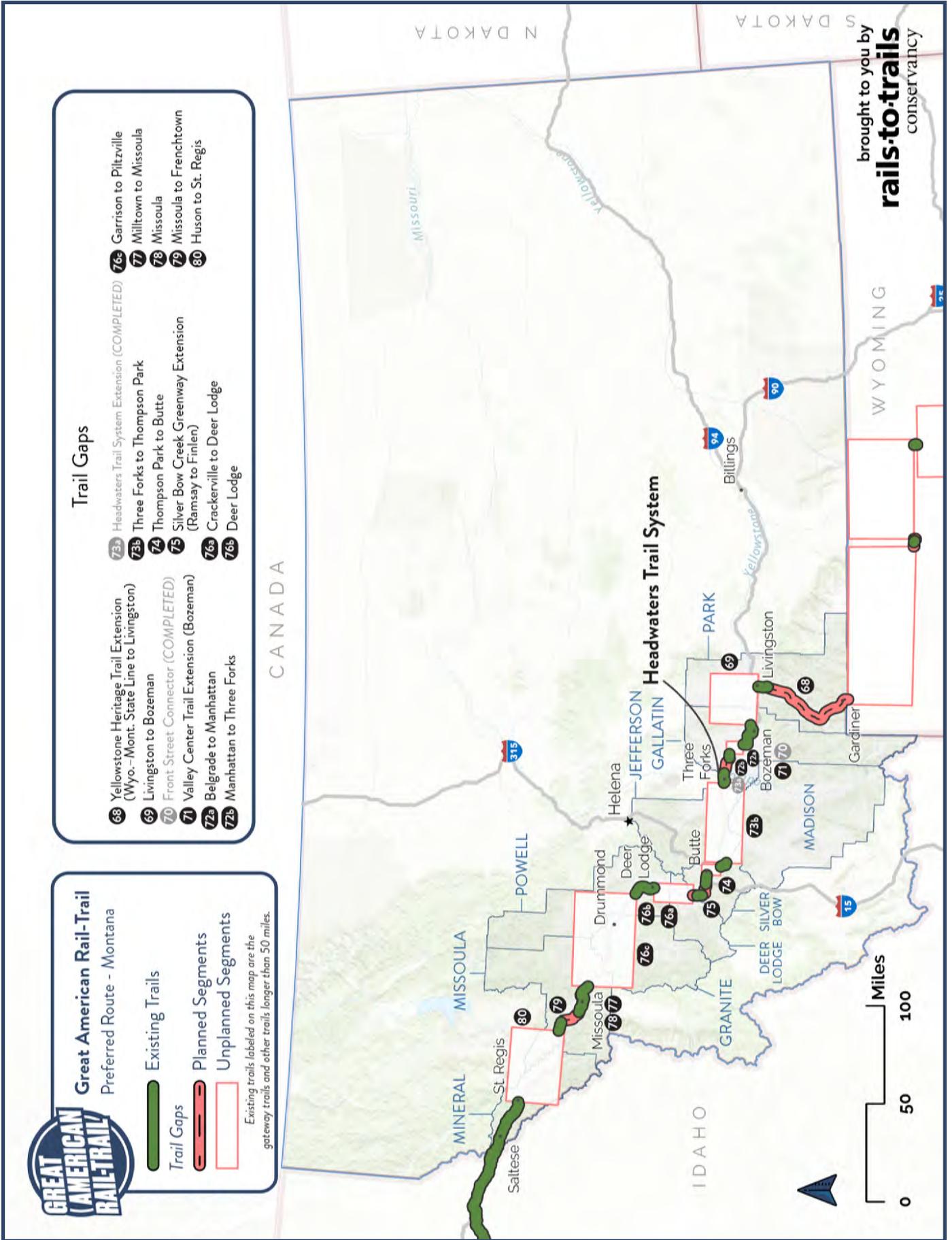
GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT
MONTANA

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 – Yellowstone Heritage 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 Finlen)	7.6
TRAIL GAP 69 – Livingston to Bozeman	26.1	Silver Bow Creek Greenway (Finlen to Crackerville)	2.6
Bozeman to Bridger Mountains Trail/Path to the “M” and Drinking Horse	2.3	TRAIL GAP 76a – Crackerville to Deer Lodge	21.1
Story Mill Spur	1.0	Arrow Stone Park Trail	0.9
Front Street Connector (formerly Trail Gap 70)	0.3	TRAIL GAP 76b – Deer Lodge	0.7
Oak Street Trail	1.5	Old Yellowstone Trail	11.0
North 19th Avenue Trail	1.3	TRAIL GAP 76c – Garrison to Piltzville	60.2
Valley Center Trail (North 19th Avenue to Catamount Street)	0.3	Piltzville Trail	3.3
TRAIL GAP 71 – Valley Center Trail Extension (Bozeman)	1.4	Bonner Streetcar Trail	1.8
Valley Center Trail (East Valley Center Spur to State Route 85/Jackrabbit Lane)	4.5	TRAIL GAP 77 – Milltown to Missoula	2.0
Jackrabbit Lane Shared-Use Path	2.0	Canyon River Trail	0.8
TRAIL GAP 72a – Belgrade to Manhattan	9.2	Milwaukee Trail	5.9
Manhattan to the Gallatin River Trail	1.8	TRAIL GAP 78 – Missoula	1.8
TRAIL GAP 72b – Manhattan to Three Forks	15.5	Mullan Road Trail	2.2
Headwaters Trail System	5.7	TRAIL GAP 79 – Missoula to Frenchtown	11.5
TRAIL GAP 73a – Headwaters Trail System Extension COMPLETED	–	A.J. Hoyt Memorial Trail	4.7
TRAIL GAP 73b – Three Forks to Thompson Park	46.0	TRAIL GAP 80 – Huson to St. Regis	52.8
Milwaukee Road Rail-Trail (Thompson Park)	4.1	Route of the Olympian	22.7
		NorPac Trail	14.4
		Total Miles	425.9
		Existing Trail Miles	106.6
		Trail Gap Miles	319.3

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT 2023

MAP 11: MONTANA



GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL
Preferred Route - Montana

Trail Gaps

- Existing Trails
- Planned Segments
- Unplanned Segments

Existing trails labeled on this map are the gateway trails and other trails longer than 50 miles.

Trail Gaps

- 68 Yellowstone Heritage Trail Extension (Wyo.-Mont. State Line to Livingston)
- 69 Livingston to Bozeman
- 70 Front Street Connector (COMPLETED)
- 71 Valley Center Trail Extension (Bozeman)
- 72a Belgrade to Manhattan
- 72b Manhattan to Three Forks
- 73a Headwaters Trail System Extension (COMPLETED)
- 73b Three Forks to Thompson Park
- 74 Thompson Park to Butte
- 75 Silver Bow Creek Greenway Extension (Ramsay to Finlen)
- 76a Crackerville to Deer Lodge
- 76b Deer Lodge
- 76c Garrison to Piltzville
- 77 Miltown to Missoula
- 78 Missoula
- 79 Missoula to Frenchtown
- 80 Huson to St. Regis

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT MONTANA



Paradise Valley in Montana | Photo by John Heine

TRAIL GAP 68 – YELLOWSTONE HERITAGE 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 are partnering to complete a similar study for the remaining length of the corridor from Point of Rocks north to the current terminus of the Highway 89 South Pedestrian Trail, just south of Livingston. The preliminary feasibility study should be completed in the summer of 2023, and depending on the findings, design and construction could follow after funding is acquired.

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	livingstonmontana.org/community/page/livingston-area-trails
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 about 4 miles into Livingston to connect to the Livingston Depot Center Trail. The 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 were 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 east 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	highways.dot.gov/federal-lands/projects/mt/bozeman-bridger-mountains-trail
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.

FRONT STREET CONNECTOR (FORMERLY TRAIL GAP 70)

Total Length (in Miles)	0.3
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Mont. (in Miles)	0.3
Trail Type	Rail-with-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	City of Bozeman
Website	gvlt.org/trails
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/front-street-connector-(bozeman)

In late 2021, the Gallatin Valley Land Trust and the city of Bozeman completed a 0.3-mile connection along Front Street between L Street and state Route 86/North Rouse Avenue. The Front Street Connector briefly runs between an active railroad line and a lumber yard and forms an important connection between the Story Mill Spur and the Oak Street Trail.

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 state Route 86/North Rouse Avenue to North 19th Avenue. The trail begins on the south side of Oak Street at state Route 86/North Rouse Avenue 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 Baxter Lane and Rawhide Ridge Road. The trail switches from the east to the west side of North 19th Avenue at Cattail Street.

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-

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT MONTANA

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 that are separated by Trail Gap 71, described below:

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 state Route 85/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.

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 state Route 85/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 state Route 85/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 72a – BELGRADE TO MANHATTAN

From Belgrade, loose plans exist to follow Dry Creek Road/West Dry Creek Road about 9 miles through town to connect to the Manhattan to the Gallatin River Trail. Further exploration is needed to confirm if that is a viable trail route to fill Trail Gap 72a.

MANHATTAN TO THE GALLATIN RIVER TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	1.8
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Mont. (in Miles)	1.8
Trail Type	Greenway
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	Town of Manhattan
Website	townofmanhattan.com
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/manhattan-to-the-gallatin-river-trail-

A straight shot along West Dry Creek Road, the Manhattan to the Gallatin River Trail provides separated access from the center of Manhattan east to the recreation opportunities along the Gallatin River.

TRAIL GAP 72b – MANHATTAN TO THREE FORKS

A group in Manhattan has identified a 15.5-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.



Headwaters Trail System in Montana | Photo by Scott Stark

HEADWATERS TRAIL SYSTEM

Total Length (in Miles)	11.8
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Mont. (in Miles)	5.7
Trail Type	Greenway, rail-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	City of Three Forks
Website	threeforksmontana.com/business/headwaters-trail-system-2
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/headwaters-trail-system

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT MONTANA

The Headwaters Trail System is a paved network of trails, portions of which run along the former corridor of the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad (also known as the Milwaukee Road) 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.

The portion of the Headwaters Trail System that will host the Great American Rail-Trail runs between Madison Road and Drouillard Fishing Access on state Route 2 (which also serves as the westernmost endpoint of the nearly 12-mile Headwaters Trail System).

~~TRAIL GAP 73a~~ — HEADWATERS TRAIL SYSTEM EXTENSION COMPLETED

The city of Three Forks completed a small gap in the Headwaters Trail System in 2021.

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	traillink.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 rail corridor. 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 other trails 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.

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.

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT MONTANA

In 2022, a coalition comprising local government entities and nonprofit stakeholders formed to improve mobility, access and safety in western Montana communities by planning and advocating for the completion of the Great American route spanning from the Western Continental Divide to the Montana–Idaho border. The Western Montana Cross-County Trail Collaborative features representatives from five counties, including Butte–Silver Bow, Granite, Powell, Missoula and Mineral. The collaborative partnered on an application for the 2023 Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) program with a focus on preparing planning and engineering documents to develop approximately 105 miles of multiuse trail in western Montana. This would complete the remaining missing links in the Great American between Butte and the Montana–Idaho border. If funded, this planning project would be transformative for western Montana and would accelerate the development of Trail Gaps 75–80.

SILVER BOW CREEK GREENWAY

Total Length (in Miles)	8.3
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Mont. (in Miles)	8.3
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	Silver Bow Creek Greenway Service District
Website	co.silverbow.mt.us/433/silver-bow-creek-greenway-trails
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/silver-bow-creek-greenway

The Silver Bow Creek Greenway runs 8.3 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 – 2.6 miles from Durant Canyon Road near Finlen 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 Damage 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. In 2022, an additional mile of trail was added to the Silver Bow Creek Greenway between Fairmont Road and the community of Hackney.

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

The City and County of Butte–Silver Bow plans to complete this 7.6-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 Milwaukee Road corridor along a bench in the canyon for the remaining miles to Segment 2 of the existing Silver Bow Creek Greenway 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.

The remainder of Trail Gap 75 is on track for construction in 2024 and 2025.

TRAIL GAP 76a – CRACKERVILLE TO DEER LODGE

In 2023, 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 roughly 19.1 miles toward the Arrow Stone Park Trail in Deer Lodge using various alignments along the I-90 corridor.

ARROW STONE PARK TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	0.9
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Mont. (in Miles)	0.9
Trail Type	Greenway
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	Powell County
Website	powellcountymt.gov/boards/arrowstone-park-board
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/arrow-stone-park-trail

Arrow Stone Park Trail travels north/south through Deer Lodge, following Cottonwood Creek and paralleling Main Street for about 1 mile.

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT MONTANA

TRAIL GAP 76b – DEER LODGE

There is a small, missing trail connection between the Arrow Stone Park Trail and the southern end of the Old Yellowstone Trail in Deer Lodge. Trail users can currently travel on the street grid of Deer Lodge to make this connection.

OLD YELLOWSTONE TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	11.0
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Mont. (in Miles)	11.0
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Crushed stone, dirt
Trail Manager	Powell County
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/old-yellowstone-trail

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. In 2022, Phase 2 of the Old Yellowstone Trail was completed with an addition of 3.5 miles of trail connecting to a trailhead on Washington Street in Deer Lodge.

TRAIL GAP 76c – 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. In 2022, Missoula County applied for a U.S. Department of Transportation Reconnecting Communities program grant to support the final design and construction of a portion of this gap.

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.

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT MONTANA

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

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 1,800–3,000 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	gis.missoulacounty.us/caps/parksandtrails
TrailLink Map	traillink.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.

In 2022, Missoula County allocated \$250,000 in funding from its 2014 Parks and Trails Bond to support 30% design plans on two sections of trail that would develop 4.5 miles of trail, including 2.3 miles directly on the Great American Rail-Trail route along Mullan Road between Cote and Deschamps lanes, and an overpass over I-90 that would connect into the A.J. Hoyt Memorial Trail in Frenchtown.

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT MONTANA

A.J. HOYT MEMORIAL TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	5.3
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	gis.missoulacounty.us/caps/parksandtrails
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/aj-hoyt-memorial-trail-

A side path runs along Frenchtown Frontage Road for about 5 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 in Mineral County recently formed the nonprofit group Mineral County MT Rails to Trails to help support the completion of the Great American Rail-Trail through Mineral County. Representatives are in discussions with the nearby Lolo National Forest and other organizations to support completing the 52.8-mile gap between Huson and St. Regis (an unincorporated community in Mineral County).

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.

⁷ 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.



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

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.⁷

One of the first goals of Mineral County MT Rails to Trails is to rehabilitate the Saltese Trestle in the town of Saltese, Montana. In 2021, an anonymous donor gave \$25,000 to support engineering work on rehabilitation of the trestle, which the group hopes to leverage into construction funding for bridge rehabilitation.

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.

IDAHO



The Chatcolet Bridge carries the Trail of the Coeur d'Alenes across Lake Coeur d'Alene. | Photo by Lisa James

ROUTE

The Great American Rail-Trail travels through the northern Panhandle of Idaho along primarily developed rail-trails. The NorPac Trail and Trail of the Coeur d'Alenes are in RTC's Rail-Trail Hall of Fame for their exceptional views of the rugged Idaho landscape.

TABLE 24 GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL MILEAGE IN IDAHO

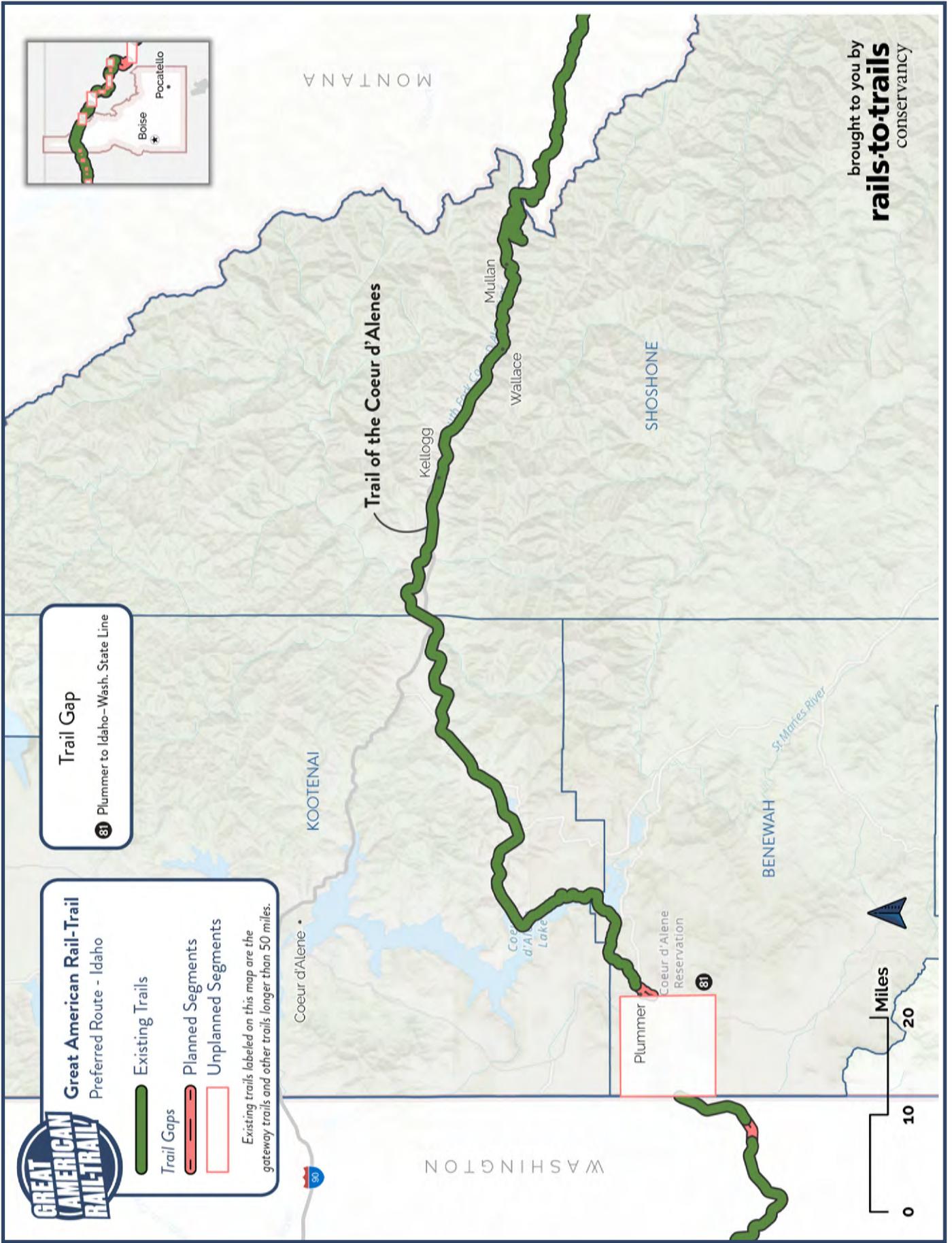
Total Great American Rail-Trail Existing Trail Miles in Idaho (% of Total State Mileage)	79.1 (88.3%)
Total Great American Rail-Trail Trail Gap Miles in Idaho (% of Total State Mileage)	10.5 (11.7%)
Total Trail Gaps in Idaho	1
Total Great American Rail-Trail Miles in Idaho	89.6

TABLE 25 GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE THROUGH IDAHO

Existing Trail or Trail Gap Name	Length in Idaho Along Great American Rail-Trail (in Miles)
NorPac Trail	7.8
Trail of the Coeur d'Alenes	71.3
TRAIL GAP 81 – Plummer to Idaho–Wash. State Line	10.5
Total Miles	89.6
Existing Trail Miles	79.1
Trail Gap Miles	10.5

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT 2023

MAP 12: IDAHO



GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT IDAHO

NORPAC TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	22.2
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Idaho (in Miles)	7.8
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 Idaho portion of the NorPac Trail runs 7.8 miles through the state, heading west from the Montana–Idaho state line. The separated trail ends at Beacon Light Road, about 4 miles from the eastern endpoint of the Trail of the Coeur d’Alenes in Mullan. Trail users can follow the low-volume Larson Road/Friday Avenue west into Mullan, where a separated trail picks up along Earle Street and connects to the Trail of the Coeur d’Alenes trailhead at 2nd and River streets.

TRAIL OF THE COEUR D’ALENES

Total Length (in Miles)	71.3
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Idaho (in Miles)	71.3
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	Coeur d’Alene Tribe, Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation, Old Mission State Park
Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> friendsofcdatrails.org/trail-of-the-coeur-dalenes parksandrecreation.idaho.gov/parks/trail-coeur-d-alenes
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/trail-of-the-coeur-dalenes

The Trail of the Coeur d’Alenes, inducted into RTC’s Rail-Trail Hall of Fame in 2010 (with the Route of the Hiawatha, also in Idaho), covers 71.3 miles of paved rail-trail through Idaho’s scenic mountains and valleys. The area has a rich mining, railroading and Native American history, and the Coeur d’Alene tribe was instrumental in the development of the trail. The trail originates in Mullan at 2nd and River streets and terminates in the west at the city of Plummer in a public park with interpretive signage on tribal history.



Trailhead for the Trail of the Coeur d’Alenes in Idaho | Photo by Kevin Belle, courtesy Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

TRAIL GAP 81 – PLUMMER TO IDAHO–WASHINGTON STATE LINE

Local officials in the city of Plummer have identified a potential corridor through Plummer to continue the trail westward into Benewah County, Idaho. The trail will then need to continue through Benewah County to connect into the Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail at the Idaho–Washington border in Spokane County, Washington. The Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad (the Milwaukee Road) corridor travels between Plummer and Spokane County, and local farmers and property owners have had preliminary discussions on how to make this connection possible. The state of Idaho and local officials should continue to work with landowners through the Lovell Valley to find an opportunity to complete the 10.5-mile connection between the Trail of the Coeur d’Alenes and the Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail.

WASHINGTON



An aerial view of the completed Beverly Bridge over the Columbia River | Photo by Mike Sorensen

ROUTE

The Washington section of the Great American Rail-Trail begins with the Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail, formerly known as the John Wayne Pioneer Trail, which travels more than 220 miles from the Idaho–Washington state line west to the community of Cedar Falls, Washington. The Great American Rail-Trail will connect into King County’s extensive trail network. The trail will continue across Puget Sound via ferry to connect to the Sound to Olympics Trail and Olympic Discovery Trail on the Olympic Peninsula.

TABLE 26 GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL MILEAGE IN WASHINGTON

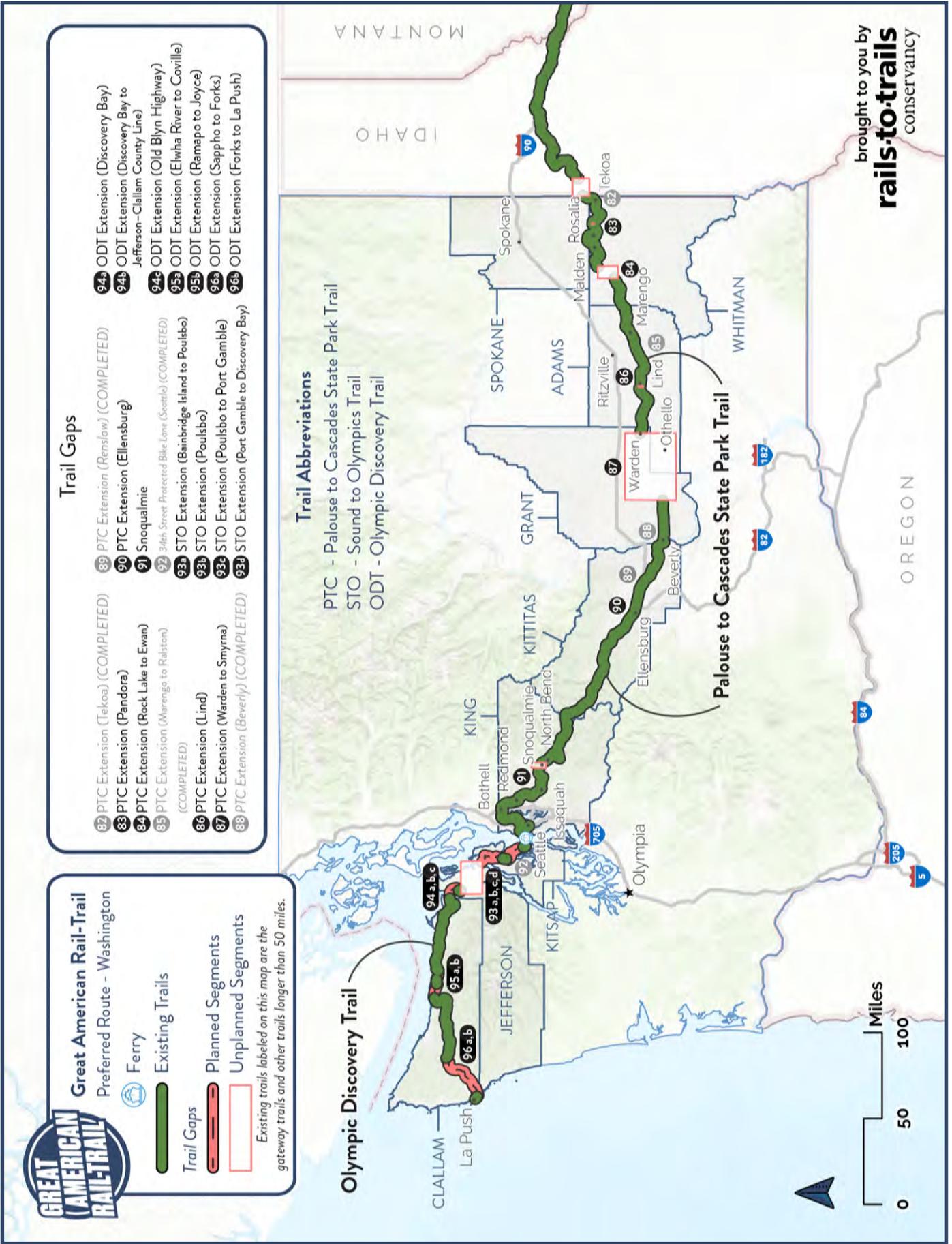
Total Great American Rail-Trail Existing Trail Miles in Wash. (% of Total State Mileage)	394.6 (73.3%)
Total Great American Rail-Trail Trail Gap Miles in Wash. (% of Total State Mileage)	143.9 (26.7%)
Total Trail Gaps in Wash.	10
Total Great American Rail-Trail Miles in Wash.	538.5

TABLE 27 GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE THROUGH WASHINGTON

Existing Trail or Trail Gap Name	Length in Wash. Along Great American Rail-Trail (in Miles)	Existing Trail or Trail Gap Name	Length in Wash. Along Great American Rail-Trail (in Miles)
Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail (Idaho–Wash. State Line to Pandora)	17.8	Fremont Bridge	0.2
TRAIL GAP 82 – Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail Extension (Tekoa) COMPLETED	-	Ship Canal Trail	1.9
TRAIL GAP 83 – Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail Extension (Pandora)	0.4	Interbay Protected Bike Lane	1.2
Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail (Pandora to Rock Lake)	28.1	Elliott Bay Trail	2.5
TRAIL GAP 84 – Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail Extension (Rock Lake to Ewan)	11.7	Seattle Waterfront Pathway	1.3
Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail (Ewan to Lind)	49.5	Ferry Across Puget Sound	-
TRAIL GAP 85 – Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail Extension (Marengo to Ralston) COMPLETED	-	Sound to Olympics Trail (Bainbridge Island)	1.0
TRAIL GAP 86 – Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail Extension (Lind)	0.4	TRAIL GAP 93a – Sound to Olympics Trail Extension (Bainbridge Island to Poulsbo)	10.1
Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail (Lind to Warden)	20.5	Sound to Olympics Trail (Poulsbo 1)	0.3
TRAIL GAP 87 – Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail Extension (Warden to Smyrna)	37.8	TRAIL GAP 93b – Sound to Olympics Trail Extension (Poulsbo)	0.8
Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail (Smyrna to Ellensburg)	50.2	Sound to Olympics Trail (Poulsbo 2)	0.4
TRAIL GAP 88 – Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail Extension (Beverly) COMPLETED	-	TRAIL GAP 93c – Sound to Olympics Trail Extension (Poulsbo to Port Gamble)	12.2
TRAIL GAP 89 – Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail Extension (Renslow) COMPLETED	-	TRAIL GAP 93d – Sound to Olympics Trail Extension (Port Gamble to Discovery Bay)	20.0
TRAIL GAP 90 – Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail Extension (Ellensburg)	1.1	TRAIL GAP 94a – Olympic Discovery Trail Extension (Discovery Bay)	0.4
Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail (Ellensburg to Cedar Falls)	81.5	Olympic Discovery Trail (Discovery Bay)	0.7
Snoqualmie Valley Trail	14.0	TRAIL GAP 94b – Olympic Discovery Trail Extension (Discovery Bay to Jefferson–Clallam County Line)	7.3
TRAIL GAP 91 – Snoqualmie	7.4	Olympic Discovery Trail (Jefferson–Clallam County Line to Old Blyn Highway)	1.8
Preston-Snoqualmie Trail	6.8	TRAIL GAP 94c – Olympic Discovery Trail Extension (Old Blyn Highway)	0.8
Issaquah-Preston Trail	5.1	Olympic Discovery Trail (Blyn Road to Elwha River)	35.0
East Lake Sammamish Trail	9.8	TRAIL GAP 95a – Olympic Discovery Trail Extension (Elwha River to Coville)	4.0
Marymoor Connector Trail	1.5	Olympic Discovery Trail (Coville to Ramapo)	1.8
Sammamish River Trail	10.1	TRAIL GAP 95b – Olympic Discovery Trail Extension (Ramapo to Joyce)	6.5
Burke-Gilman Trail	15.1	Olympic Discovery Trail (Joyce to Sappho)	34.7
34th Street Protected Bike Lane (formerly Trail Gap 92)	0.3	TRAIL GAP 96a – Olympic Discovery Trail Extension (Sappho to Forks)	11.0
		TRAIL GAP 96b – Olympic Discovery Trail Extension (Forks to La Push)	12.0
		Olympic Discovery Trail (La Push)	1.5
		Total Miles	538.5
		<i>Existing Trail Miles</i>	<i>394.6</i>
		<i>Trail Gap Miles</i>	<i>143.9</i>

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT 2023

MAP 13: WASHINGTON



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GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT WASHINGTON

PALOUSE TO CASCADES STATE PARK TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	247.6
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Wash. (in Miles)	247.6
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Ballast, crushed stone, sand
Trail Manager	Washington State Department of Natural Resources, Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission (Washington State Parks)
Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · parks.state.wa.us/521/palouse-to-cascades · palousetocascadestrail.org
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/palouse-to-cascades-state-park-trail

The Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail (formerly known as the John Wayne Pioneer Trail) travels across Washington from the Idaho–Washington state line to Cedar Falls, Washington, and is one of the longest rail-trail conversions in the United States. The trail follows the corridor of the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad (the Milwaukee Road), which was completed in 1909. By 1980, the railroad had ceased operations on the right-of-way. The state of Washington acquired most of the corridor and has developed it into the nearly 250-mile trail that exists today. The Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail is currently divided into six segments of existing trail with five gaps between them:

Segment 1 – 17.8 miles between the Idaho–Washington state line and Pandora

Segment 2 – 28.1 miles between Pandora and Rock Lake

Segment 3 – 49.5 miles between Ewan and Lind

Segment 4 – 20.5 miles between Lind and Warden

Segment 5 – 50.2 miles between Smyrna and Ellensburg

Segment 6 – 81.5 miles between Ellensburg and Cedar Falls

Washington State Parks and the Washington State Department of Natural Resources are tasked with the difficult job of operating and maintaining this long-distance trail. The length and primitive conditions of most of the trail make ongoing maintenance a challenge, and available statewide funds have not been sufficient to date on an annual basis. Washington State Parks does its best to keep the trail maintained and continues to seek funding to maintain the trail, upgrade its condition and close the remaining gaps in the trail. Washington State Parks intends to continue seeking additional funding for similar work, as well as several of the projects described below in the five remaining trail gaps.

There are several small gaps in Washington State Parks ownership along the Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail that are not identified in the trail gaps noted below. Trail users should be aware and follow all signage and use appropriate detours where provided.

~~TRAIL GAP 82 – PALOUSE TO CASCADES STATE PARK TRAIL EXTENSION (TEKOA) COMPLETED~~

Trail Gap 82 is now a completed trail segment as part of the Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail with the opening of the Tekoa Trestle to trail users in 2022.

TRAIL GAP 83 – PALOUSE TO CASCADES STATE PARK TRAIL EXTENSION (PANDORA)

The Milwaukee Road formerly crossed Wilhelm Road around the community of Pandora at a bridge that has since been removed. Trail users currently need to take a brief 0.4-mile on-road detour from Wilhelm Road to Pandora Road, where the trail reconnects and continues westward. The state should consider rebuilding this bridge in the future, though this should remain a low priority compared to other more significant gaps in the trail system. In the meantime, signage should be added at the detour to confirm that the trail continues along Pandora Road and reconnects on the western side.

TRAIL GAP 84 – PALOUSE TO CASCADES STATE PARK TRAIL EXTENSION (ROCK LAKE TO EWAN)

The former Milwaukee Road corridor traveled southwest between the Washington communities of Pine City and Ewan via the shores of Rock Lake. The state owns the northern section of the former rail line, but when the rail line was abandoned, private property owners purchased some mileage of the former rail line that abutted Rock Lake along a section that provides the only direct beach access to the lake. Initial discussions on continuing the trail along Rock Lake were not successful, and currently, the Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail has an 11-mile gap between Rock Lake and Ewan. The state of Washington should continue negotiating with private landowners to find ways to reconnect the trail along Rock Lake to provide a safe, off-street trail opportunity.

~~TRAIL GAP 85 – PALOUSE TO CASCADES STATE PARK TRAIL EXTENSION (MARENGO TO RALSTON) COMPLETED~~

Trail Gap 85 is now a completed trail segment as part of the Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail with the March 2023 opening of a trail bypass around the former Cow Creek Trestle.

TRAIL GAP 86 – PALOUSE TO CASCADES STATE PARK TRAIL EXTENSION (LIND)

A missing bridge over a creek and an active BNSF Railway rail line just west of the town of Lind created a brief gap along the Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail. There is an on-road detour that travels through the center of Lind, allowing trail users to experience the town and visit its stores and restaurants. Rebuilding this bridge is not high on the list of priorities for Washington State Parks given the reasonably direct detour through Lind, though this missing bridge should be

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT WASHINGTON

revisited once the higher priority items are completed and trail usage picks up in this part of Washington.

TRAIL GAP 87 – PALOUSE TO CASCADES STATE PARK TRAIL EXTENSION (WARDEN TO SMYRNA)

The largest gap in the Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail—37.8 miles—lies between the city of Warden and the unincorporated community of Smyrna. This section skirts the Columbia National Wildlife Refuge and travels through the city of Othello. The section of rail line between Warden and Othello remains active, providing train car storage for the Columbia Basin Railroad. The remainder of the section is part of the abandoned Milwaukee Road corridor and could be completed to help reduce the gap. Creative solutions that include the rail line and highway rights-of-way between Warden and Othello should be considered to help fully close this large gap in the trail.

TRAIL GAP 88 – PALOUSE TO CASCADES STATE PARK TRAIL EXTENSION (BEVERLY) COMPLETED

Trail Gap 88 is now a completed trail segment as part of the Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail, with the opening of the Beverly Bridge to trail users in the spring of 2022.

TRAIL GAP 89 – PALOUSE TO CASCADES STATE PARK TRAIL EXTENSION (RENSLOW) COMPLETED

Trail Gap 89 is now a completed trail segment as part of the Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail with the opening of the Renslow Trestle to trail users in the spring of 2021.

TRAIL GAP 90 – PALOUSE TO CASCADES STATE PARK TRAIL EXTENSION (ELLENSBURG)

As the Milwaukee Road continued westward, it passed through the city of Ellensburg, which is now home to the final trail gap in the Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail. The trail is missing a 1.1-mile segment that travels through the campus of Central Washington University (CWU). According to the 2008 City of Ellensburg Nonmotorized Transportation Plan, the “railroad right-of-way historically passed through the middle of the CWU campus but was interrupted by new construction and the removal of a trestle.”

The opportunity to complete the trail on the former rail corridor is no longer available, but Ellensburg and CWU have a plan to reconnect the trail using two alternatives. The Nonmotorized Transportation Plan highlights the Ellensburg Greenbelt Trail (also known as the John Wayne Pioneer Trail reconnection route), a 6-mile trail that will bypass CWU and central Ellensburg. The plan states that “surfacing includes both paved and unpaved surfaces to accommodate a diversity of users.”

CWU also intends to complete a connection by widening existing sidewalks along the Ellensburg Water Company’s waterway that travels through the center of its campus. Trail users who want a direct route through Ellensburg will be encouraged to use this option, and RTC’s official mapping of the Great American Rail-Trail will show this as the main corridor to accommodate the criteria of having a reasonably direct route.

SNOQUALMIE VALLEY TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	31.3
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Wash. (in Miles)	14.0
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Ballast, gravel
Trail Manager	King County Parks & Recreation
Website	kingcounty.gov/services/parks-recreation/parks/trails/regional-trails/popular-trails/svt.aspx
TrailLink Map	trailink.com/trail/snoqualmie-valley-trail

The 31.3-mile, packed gravel Snoqualmie Valley Trail follows an extension of the Milwaukee Road that linked the city of Everett in the north to the main line heading from east to west over the Cascades, where the Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail lies today. The western extent of the Palouse to Cascades State Park Trail connects to the Snoqualmie Valley Trail in Cedar Falls at the Rattlesnake Lake Recreation Area, where there is a well-used trailhead that accommodates trail users and visitors at Rattlesnake Lake. The Snoqualmie Valley Trail will host the Great American Rail-Trail for approximately 14 miles between Cedar Falls and Snoqualmie, from which point the trail will head northwest toward Seattle. Heading north from Rattlesnake Lake through the city of North Bend, the trail has views of Mount Si to the east.

TRAIL GAP 91 – SNOQUALMIE

Two options take trail users in and around the city of Snoqualmie, one on each side of the Snoqualmie River. The Snoqualmie Valley Trail continues north on the east side of the Snoqualmie River. However, the Great American Rail-Trail will need to head west from Snoqualmie toward the Preston-Snoqualmie Trail. There is not a perfect connection into the Preston-Snoqualmie Trail heading westward from Snoqualmie due to the mighty Snoqualmie Falls and the presence of the origin lands of the Snoqualmie Tribe.

The city of Snoqualmie is working on the Snoqualmie Riverwalk on the banks of the river, which would connect people into town on the west side of the river, while the Snoqualmie Ridge trail along the Snoqualmie Parkway could take users westward. However, a 7.4-mile connection is needed to meet with the Preston-Snoqualmie Trail. Local officials have pursued a connection through Snoqualmie for many years. Hopefully, the momentum behind the Great American Rail-Trail can help King County and the city of Snoqualmie find a creative solution.

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PRESTON-SNOQUALMIE TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	6.8
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Wash. (in Miles)	6.8
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	King County Parks & Recreation, Snoqualmie Parks & Recreation
Website	kingcountyparks.org/2017/02/17/trail-spot-light-preston-snoqualmie
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/preston-snoqualmie-trail

The Preston-Snoqualmie Trail follows a former Seattle, Lake Shore and Eastern Railway line through the Snoqualmie Valley from Snoqualmie west to Preston. The trail is 6.8 miles long and is paved for its entirety. Its eastern end is near Snoqualmie Falls, but the trail does not extend to or across the falls. The first spot to access the Preston-Snoqualmie Trail from the east is at the Lake Alice trailhead, along Lake Alice Road. The trail snakes through the forest until it reaches the Raging River Valley, where the trail follows a slight detour down into the valley along Preston-Fall City Road and climbs back up again, due to the loss of a historical trestle bridge that once spanned this valley.

ISSAQUAH-PRESTON TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	5.1
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Wash. (in Miles)	5.1
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt, gravel
Trail Manager	City of Issaquah Parks and Recreation, King County Parks & Recreation, Washington State DOT Bike Ped Program
Website	kingcounty.gov/services/parks-recreation/parks/trails/regional-trails.aspx
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/issaquah-preston-trail

The Issaquah-Preston Trail roughly follows the original route of the Seattle, Lake Shore and Eastern Railway that was purchased by Northern Pacific Railway in the late 1800s and became inactive in the early 1980s. The trail connects to the Preston-Snoqualmie Trail at the intersection of 300th Avenue Southeast and Southeast High Point Way, just north of Preston. The Issaquah-Preston Trail begins as a two-way trail on the south side of Southeast High Point Way for 0.7 mile and has an unpaved, hard-packed crushed stone surface for approximately 3.5 miles (the final mile is paved, toward the East Lake Sammamish Trail). The Issaquah-Preston Trail reaches its connection with the East Lake Sammamish Trail near 4th Avenue Northwest in the city of Issaquah.

EAST LAKE SAMMAMISH TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	11.0
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Wash. (in Miles)	9.8
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt, crushed stone
Trail Manager	King County Parks & Recreation
Website	kingcounty.gov/services/parks-recreation/parks/trails/regional-trails/popular-trails/east-lake-samm.aspx
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/east-lake-sammamish-trail

The East Lake Sammamish Trail follows the corridor of a former BNSF Railway line that ceased operations in 1996. The trail was originally opened as a soft-surface interim trail and has been paved and redeveloped in segments over the years. Near its southern end, the East Lake Sammamish Trail connects to the Issaquah-Preston Trail near 4th Avenue Northwest in Issaquah. From there, the trail continues north, passing Lake Sammamish State Park and continuing along the shore of Lake Sammamish 3.2 miles before reaching the last remaining 3.6-mile unpaved gravel segment, which began construction in 2021.

The trail follows Lake Sammamish another 3 miles until it reaches Marymoor Park in the city of Redmond. Funding for the development of a trailhead with parking and restrooms in the Inglewood Hill area was approved in 2014, and construction is anticipated to be completed soon.

MARYMOOR CONNECTOR TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	1.5
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Wash. (in Miles)	1.5
Trail Type	Greenway
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	King County Parks & Recreation
Website	kingcounty.gov/services/parks-recreation/parks/trails/regional-trails/popular-trails/marymoor-connector.aspx
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/marymoor-connector-trail

The 1.5-mile Marymoor Connector Trail provides an important link between the East Lake Sammamish Trail on the east side of Marymoor Park and the Sammamish River Trail on its west side. The trail route connects through Marymoor Park, providing a paved, completely off-street connection between these two trails. Marymoor Park provides ample parking and facilities including restrooms and water fountains.

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SAMMAMISH RIVER TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	10.1
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Wash. (in Miles)	10.1
Trail Type	Greenway
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	King County Parks & Recreation
Website	kingcounty.gov/services/parks-recreation/parks/trails/regional-trails/popular-trails/samm-river.aspx
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/sammamish-river-trail

The Sammamish River Trail is the center link of the Seattle area's locks-to-lakes corridor, which connects lakes Sammamish and Washington to the Ballard Locks via the East Lake Sammamish, Marymoor Connector, Sammamish River and Burke-Gilman trails. The majority of the Sammamish River Trail runs along a levee that was created in the 1960s when crews drained the swamps and completed the second rechanneling of the once-meandering Sammamish River. The Sammamish River Trail provides 10.1 miles of paved trail, beginning at its connection with the Marymoor Connector Trail in Marymoor Park. The trail continues north following the Sammamish River through the cities of Redmond, Woodinville and Bothell, where it connects to the Burke-Gilman Trail.

BURKE-GILMAN TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	18.8
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Wash. (in Miles)	15.1
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	King County Parks & Recreation, Seattle Parks and Recreation, University of Washington
Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> kingcounty.gov/services/parks-recreation/parks/trails/regional-trails/popular-trails/burke-gilman.aspx seattle.gov/parks/find/parks/burke-gilman-trail
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/burke-gilman-trail

The Great American Rail-Trail picks up the Burke-Gilman Trail in Bothell. The Burke-Gilman Trail was one of the first rail-trails in the country and is a popular commuting and recreation route through Seattle. The trail was selected for RTC's Rail-Trail Hall of Fame in 2008. The trail was once part of a line of the Seattle, Lake Shore and Eastern Railway, and gets its name from the two founders of the rail line, Thomas

Burke and Daniel Gilman. Heavy traffic by the logging industry sustained the line through 1963, and the corridor became inactive in 1971.

The Burke-Gilman Trail begins in Bothell and travels west, meeting the north shore of Lake Washington in the city of Kenmore and continuing along Lake Washington through the city of Lake Forest Park and into Seattle, passing through the University of Washington campus.

34TH STREET PROTECTED BIKE LANE (FORMERLY TRAIL GAP 92)

Total Length (in Miles)	0.3
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Wash. (in Miles)	0.3
Trail Type	Greenway
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	Seattle Department of Transportation
Website	seattle.gov/transportation/projects-and-programs/programs/bike-program/protected-bike-lanes/n-34th-st-mobility-improvements

The Seattle Department of Transportation upgraded the existing bike lanes along North 34th Street to protected paint-and-post bike lanes in the summer of 2021. These improvements provide a safer passage between the Burke-Gilman Trail and the Fremont Bridge.

FREMONT BRIDGE

Total Length (in Miles)	0.2
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Wash. (in Miles)	0.2
Trail Type	Greenway
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	City of Seattle
Website	seattle.gov/transportation/projects-and-programs/programs/bridges-stairs-and-other-structures/bridges

The Fremont Bridge was opened in 1917 over the Lake Washington Ship Canal. Non-motorized users can travel on separated sidewalks on either side of the bridge, which is also a drawbridge that frequently opens to accommodate vessels underneath.

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT WASHINGTON

SHIP CANAL TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	1.9
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Wash. (in Miles)	1.9
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	City of Seattle
Website	seattle.gov/parks/find/hiking-and-trails
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/ship-canal-trail

Across the waterway from the Burke-Gilman Trail, the Ship Canal Trail runs along the southern edge of the Lake Washington Ship Canal near Seattle Pacific University.

INTERBAY PROTECTED BIKE LANE

Total Length (in Miles)	1.2
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Wash. (in Miles)	1.2
Trail Type	Greenway
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	City of Seattle
Website	seattle.gov/transportation/projects-and-programs/programs/bike-program/trails-upgrade-plan/interbay-trail-connections-project

The Interbay Protected Bike Lane project redesigned West Emerson Place, Gilman Avenue West and 20th Avenue West to include protected bike lanes and more intuitive and comfortable intersections. The project added bike lanes on the north and east sides of the streets, creating a protected connection between the Ship Canal Trail and the Elliott Bay Trail. This project was given high priority in the most recent update to Seattle's Bicycle Master Plan because it completes a large segment of the active transportation network the city is building to serve people of all ages and abilities.

ELLIOTT BAY TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	3.4
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Wash. (in Miles)	2.5
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	City of Seattle
Website	seattle.gov/parks/find/hiking-and-trails
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/elliott-bay-trail-(terminal-91-bike-path)

The Elliott Bay Trail, also known as the Terminal 91 Bike Path, connects the Interbay Protected Bike Lane to the Seattle Waterfront Pathway. The western portion of trail skirts a rail yard and crosses under the Magnolia Bridge in two places to reach Elliott Bay. Heading east, the trail follows Elliott Bay to its terminus at Alaskan Way.

SEATTLE WATERFRONT PATHWAY

Total Length (in Miles)	2.0
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Wash. (in Miles)	1.3
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	City of Seattle
Website	seattle.gov/parks/find/hiking-and-trails
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/seattle-waterfront-pathway

The highly urban Seattle Waterfront Pathway is a continuation of the Elliott Bay Trail that heads south on a route connecting Broad Street and South Royal Brougham Way. The trail parallels Alaskan Way along Elliott Bay. Those following the Great American Rail-Trail will continue to the Seattle to Bainbridge ferry at the Seattle Ferry Terminal.

FERRY ACROSS PUGET SOUND

The Seattle to Bainbridge ferry, provided by the Washington State Department of Transportation, departs roughly 20 times per day, connecting Seattle and Bainbridge Island across Puget Sound. While there is a fee for walk-on passengers and bicycle riders from Seattle to Bainbridge Island (with an additional \$1 bicycle surcharge), the route from Bainbridge Island to Seattle only charges for automobiles (walk-on passengers and bicycle riders can ride for free).

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT WASHINGTON

The Peninsula Trails Coalition, the Sound to Olympics Trail and the Bainbridge Island Parks & Trails Foundation have partnered on an application for the 2023 Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) program with a focus on preparing planning and engineering documents and constructing portions of the remaining gaps in the Great American between Puget Sound and the Pacific Ocean. If funded, this planning project will be transformative for western Washington and will accelerate the development of Trail Gaps 93–96.

SOUND TO OLYMPICS TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	1.7
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Wash. (in Miles)	1.7
Trail Type	Greenway
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	City of Bainbridge Island, Kitsap County
Website	northkitsaptrails.org/copy-of-regional-trails
TrailLink Map	trailink.com/trail/sound-to-olympics-trail-

When complete, the Sound to Olympics Trail will extend across Kitsap County to link two Washington State regional trail systems: the Mountains to Sound Greenway and the Olympic Discovery Trail. Today, three disconnected segments exist. One follows the first mile of state Route 305 in Bainbridge Island, stretching from the tip of the Winslow Ferry Terminal, which was completed in 2018, up to High School Road Northeast. Two smaller segments totaling 0.7 mile can be found in the city of Poulsbo. Trail gaps along these developed segments total 43.1 miles, and are described in Trail Gaps 93a–93d, below.

TRAIL GAP 93a – SOUND TO OLYMPICS TRAIL EXTENSION (BAINBRIDGE ISLAND TO POULSBO)

Plans are in place to extend the Sound to Olympics Trail 10.1 miles north from its current northern terminus at High School Road Northeast. Some funding has already been acquired for this portion of the project. The trail will follow state Route 305 to the extent possible along a parallel path. A separated crossing at the Agate Pass Bridge, which connects Bainbridge Island to the Kitsap Peninsula, should also be considered to accommodate the narrow passage.

New funding was dedicated in 2022 to complete the next section of trail in Bainbridge Island, including \$215,000 from the Bainbridge Island Capital Improvement Plan and \$50,000 from the Bainbridge Island Parks & Trails Foundation.

The route of the Sound to Olympics Trail will continue to follow state Route 305 to the first roundabout in Poulsbo at Johnson Road Northeast, where an underpass is proposed to help trail users safely navigate the interchange. Construction is slated for completion in 2023. At Johnson Road Northeast, the trail will head north along Noll Road Northeast, where an existing portion of the trail adjacent to Poulsbo Elementary and Poulsbo Middle School has already been completed.

TRAIL GAP 93b – SOUND TO OLYMPICS TRAIL EXTENSION (POULSBO)

A proposed extension of the Sound to Olympics Trail would connect the two existing sections in Poulsbo along Noll Road Northeast and Langaunet Lane Northeast to Northeast Lincoln Road for approximately 0.8 mile.

TRAIL GAP 93c – SOUND TO OLYMPICS TRAIL EXTENSION (POULSBO TO PORT GAMBLE)

A proposed extension of the Sound to Olympics Trail would continue 12.2 miles north to and through the town of Port Gamble. The trail would travel north along Stottlemeyer Road Northeast until Port Gamble Forest Heritage Park and a recently announced planned expansion (the Port Gamble Upland Block). Several routes through the Upland Block along existing roads and trails have been considered, and a preferred route connects to the historic Port Gamble site just east of the Hood Canal Floating Bridge.

Kitsap Public Facilities District allocated \$1.7 million in early 2020 for several park and trail development projects, including engineering for the northern sections of the Sound to Olympics Trail in Port Gamble and for the design, permitting and construction of a trailhead at a southern park entrance on Stottlemeyer Road Northeast. This portion of the project is planned to be completed in 2023 and can set the stage for future funding and work to be completed.

TRAIL GAP 93d – SOUND TO OLYMPICS TRAIL EXTENSION (PORT GAMBLE TO DISCOVERY BAY)

On the northwestern side of the Hood Canal Floating Bridge, an exact trail alignment is not yet determined through Jefferson County to connect the 20-mile gap to the Olympic Discovery Trail at Discovery Bay. Jefferson County has large swaths of timberland owned by one large company, which could be instrumental in providing a scenic route to make this trail connection. Several groups are collaborating on an economic development study of the area, and a trail concept is on the agenda for review.

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The Dungeness River Bridge along the Olympic Discovery Trail |
Photo by Kevin Belle, courtesy Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

OLYMPIC DISCOVERY TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	82.8
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Wash. (in Miles)	75.5
Trail Type	Greenway, rail-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt, crushed stone, dirt
Trail Manager	City of Port Angeles, City of Port Townsend, City of Sequim, Clallam County, Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe, Jefferson County, Olympic National Forest, Olympic National Park, Peninsula Trails Coalition, Washington DNR, Washington DOT, Washington State Parks
Website	olympicdiscoverytrail.org
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/olympic-discovery-trail

The developing Olympic Discovery Trail (ODT) is locally regarded to have four segments between Port Townsend and La Push on the Pacific Coast. The first of these ODT segments, between Port Townsend and Discovery Bay, is part of the Pacific Northwest National Scenic Trail. While not an official portion of the Great American Rail-Trail, it provides a valuable connection to the city of Port Townsend. For the purposes of this assessment, three ODT segments are incorporated to the Great American Rail-Trail, starting at Discovery Bay.

Gaps, or ODT extensions, included in these three segments are described in Trail Gaps 94–96, below. The combined mileage of these gaps—42.0 miles—is not included in the indicated 75.5 miles of existing ODT trail along the Great American Rail-Trail.

Segment 1 – ODT (Discovery Bay to Diamond Point Road Trailhead):

This rural segment, which is approximately 8.5 miles, begins at the yet-to-be-determined junction where the ODT, extending south from Port Townsend to arrive at Discovery Bay, will be joined by the Sound to Olympics Trail coming from the east. From the Discovery Bay junction westward to the trailhead at Diamond Point Road and U.S. 101/Olympic Highway (roughly the boundary between Jefferson and Clallam counties), the trail is currently routed along low-volume side roads (primarily remnants of a former state highway known locally as Old Gardiner Road) and the road shoulder of U.S. 101/Olympic Highway. There is only one 0.7-mile section of paved, separated trail paralleling the shoreline of Discovery Bay. In addition, at the western end of this segment, there is an approximately 600-foot off-road gap immediately east of the Diamond Point Road trailhead.

Segment 2 – ODT (Diamond Point Road Trailhead to Elwha River):

This segment of trail is about 37 miles in length between the trailhead at Diamond Point Road near the Jefferson–Clallam county line and the Elwha River Bridge trail crossing. The trail route in this segment is mostly complete and characterized by paved, separated trail and several short sections on low-volume roads.

Most of the route in this segment follows the corridor of the former Seattle, Port Angeles and Western Railway, which had the distinction of being the only railway in the nation whose schedule was determined by tides. The corridor includes nine bridges over rivers and creeks; four of these bridges are large, restored railroad trestles dating back to 1914–15. The bridge over the Elwha River is 589 feet long and 85 feet above the river level. Originally completed around 1913, it was reconstructed in 2009 and features a suspended trail deck beneath the road level of the bridge.

Segment 2 links the unincorporated communities of Blyn and Carlsborg; the cities of Sequim and Port Angeles; several local and state parks (Sequim Bay State Park, Carrie Blake Park, Railroad Bridge Park and Robin Hill Farm County Park); and the Jamestown S’Klallam Tribal campus in Blyn. Along this segment are several marine views of Sequim Bay and approximately 5 miles of trail along the Port Angeles Harbor waterfront. The Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe has been a key partner in the development of the ODT in eastern Clallam County and was the first tribe to be recognized as a Bicycle Friendly Community by the League of American Bicyclists.

Segment 3 – ODT (Elwha River to La Push): This segment of the planned ODT will be approximately 71.5 miles in length when complete and extend from the existing Elwha River Bridge to the western terminus of the ODT and Great American Rail-Trail in the Quileute Tribal community of La Push on the Pacific Ocean. Along the way, the trail will also pass through the communities of Joyce and Forks; connect to Olympic National Park areas around Lake Crescent and the Pacific Coast beaches; and travel through large tracts of private and public forestland.

Currently, 38 miles, or more than 50%, of the ODT in Segment 3 are completed or substantially complete (i.e., under construction or awaiting paving). The shared roadway section includes an

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT WASHINGTON

approximately 9.7-mile stretch following Cooper Ranch and Mary Clark roads east of Sappho. This stretch travels mostly through state and federal public forestland with very limited residential development.

Several sections of the separated trail in Segment 3 also serve as limited access routes to support timber operations. These sections have been improved and paved to a 10- to 12-foot width for trail purposes. Access is controlled by gates and bollards, making these sections generally free of motorized vehicles except during periods in which they are used to support timber harvest operations.

Portions of the trail follow the route of the old Spruce Railroad, which the U.S. Army built to harvest the strong wood of the Sitka spruce, unique to the coastal Pacific Northwest. The final phase of the 10-mile Spruce Railroad Trail (SRRT) section of the ODT around the north shore of Lake Crescent in Olympic National Park was completed in late 2020.

Jefferson and Clallam counties, with their numerous partners, are leading the effort to complete Segment 1 jointly, and Segments 2 and 3, respectively. The Peninsula Trails Coalition (PTC) is a key partner actively working with both counties to complete the ODT between Port Townsend and La Push. PTC is also a key partner in maintaining the trail in both counties. When complete, the ODT will span approximately 130 miles. The remaining gaps in the ODT along the Great American Rail-Trail are described below.

TRAIL GAP 94a – OLYMPIC DISCOVERY TRAIL EXTENSION (DISCOVERY BAY)

The ODT will connect 0.4 mile to the Sound to Olympics Trail roughly at the junction of state Route 20 and U.S. 101/Olympic Highway at Fairmount Road at the head of Discovery Bay. A short section of trail will follow U.S. 101/Olympic Highway to connect to the existing portion of the ODT at Discovery Bay.

TRAIL GAP 94b – OLYMPIC DISCOVERY TRAIL EXTENSION (DISCOVERY BAY TO JEFFERSON-CLALLAM COUNTY LINE)

There is technically some existing ODT trail across this segment marked along Old Gardiner Road and the shoulder of U.S. 101/Olympic Highway. The planned trail segment is about 7.3 miles, and within this current plan, Jefferson County's priority is to achieve an alternative to the 1.6-mile length currently on the shoulder of U.S. 101/Olympic Highway. Negotiations are underway with all key property interests. Once this piece is completed, the foreseeable alignment for the ODT will be shared use of the low-volume Old Gardiner Road in combination with the new off-highway section.

TRAIL GAP 94c – OLYMPIC DISCOVERY TRAIL EXTENSION (OLD BLYN HIGHWAY)

A brief 0.8-mile gap exists in the ODT along Old Blyn Highway between U.S. 101 and Blyn Road. Trail users can currently follow the road while the gap undergoes planning for completion.

TRAIL GAP 95a – OLYMPIC DISCOVERY TRAIL EXTENSION (ELWHA RIVER TO COVILLE)

Clallam County is working to connect the approximately 4-mile ODT gap between the Elwha River trail crossing and the community of Coville (not to be confused with the Washington city of Colville) to the west. The county continues to look for opportunities and funding to acquire additional lands to close this gap.

TRAIL GAP 95b – OLYMPIC DISCOVERY TRAIL EXTENSION (RAMAPO TO JOYCE)

Clallam County is working to connect the approximately 6.5-mile ODT gap between the communities of Ramapo and Joyce. The county continues to look for opportunities and funding to acquire additional lands to close this gap. Acquisition in this gap is challenging, given the topography constraints and the significant number of landowners along potential routes.

TRAIL GAP 96a – OLYMPIC DISCOVERY TRAIL EXTENSION (SAPPHO TO FORKS)

Clallam County has been working to identify a corridor to complete the trail between Sappho and Forks. Completing this trail connection has been a lower priority while trails connecting on each end are in the planning and construction stages. Completion of Trail Gap 96b, below, is becoming a catalyst to spark the development of this approximately 11- to 14-mile section of trail, with the route still to be determined.

TRAIL GAP 96b – OLYMPIC DISCOVERY TRAIL EXTENSION (FORKS TO LA PUSH)

Clallam County and the National Park Service jointly were selected for a \$6 million grant through the Federal Lands Access Program for the design and construction of this approximately 12-mile segment. The county is responsible for first securing trail right-of-way along most of this corridor. Much of the corridor is owned by a private timber company that has expressed interest as a willing seller.

In early 2021, Clallam County approved the necessary funds to acquire 9.7 miles of this gap, with the remainder of the link on existing public roadway or tribal land. The county intends to begin construction in 2024 with completion likely in 2025. The Quileute Tribe is located in and around La Push and has been an active partner in the process of completing the ODT.

HOW WE MEASURE ECONOMIC IMPACT

Headwaters Economics partnered with Rails-to-Trails Conservancy to conduct an independent economic impact analysis of the Great American Rail-Trail®. Economic impact analyses are based on the idea that something—whether a new trail, new business, or a new policy—can attract new money by enticing visitors who otherwise would not have come to the area. This new money, in turn, supports local businesses that employ residents, pay taxes, and support other businesses. These analyses require measuring the number of visitors drawn to the area and how much they spend.

The analysis was conducted in 2021-2022 using four data elements: 1) existing trail count data; 2) original statistical models to estimate trail users; 3) a literature review of spending estimates and trail use characteristics; and 4) economic impact estimates from the IMPLAN economic modeling program. The economic benefits presented in this report rely on three underlying assumptions. First, we assume that communities will capitalize on the trail with businesses like gear shops, restaurants, and lodging; signage directing users to these local businesses; and marketing the community as a welcoming stop for trail users. Second, we assume that the increase in outdoor recreation observed during the pandemic will persist. This assumption is supported by data from Rails-to-Trails Conservancy's [national network](#) of trail counters and the Outdoor Industry Association's [national survey](#) on participation in outdoor recreation. Finally, we assume that the route in this assessment will be built and maintained at a level of quality that is connected to other segments; has a safe separation from vehicles; and has a surface that is sufficiently maintained to allow most skills and abilities to walk, bike, and roll. This analysis does not assume that all segments would be paved.

The statistical modeling to estimate the number of trail users was conducted at the county level, using trail counter data from 57 locations across the U.S. to calibrate the model. In counties where trail counter data were available, we used the actual trail use. Where counter data were not available, we built on a statistical model developed by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy to predict use. The model uses communities of a similar size, climate, wealth, and population density. Due to the inherent variability and uncertainty underlying statistical modeling, we calculated the likely range of predicted use, and throughout the report provide the mid-point. The numbers provided in this analysis report the impact of a trail that is 100% complete. In states where the Great American Rail-Trail is not yet completed, the benefits today are proportional to the percentage of trail that is complete.

We relied on 30 existing studies of long-distance trails across the U.S. to estimate the share of users that are visitors versus locals, the share of visitors who are overnight versus day users, and spending profiles for overnight and day visitors. Where recent data were available for a specific trail segment we used segment-specific data. Otherwise, we applied averages from the literature.

The spending and visitation estimates were input into IMPLAN, a regional economic modeling software, to estimate the jobs, income, tax revenue, and contributions to GDP likely from the completion of the Great American Rail-Trail.

For complete methods and definitions, see <https://headwaterseconomics.org/outdoor-recreation/great-american-rail-trail>.



Olympic Discovery Trail. Photo courtesy TrailLink user stevelee73

ECONOMIC POTENTIAL

The completion of the Great American Rail-Trail® will help amplify the benefits—on a mass scale—that trails provide. In addition to offering places for physical activity and recreation, connecting diverse communities with safe walking and biking routes, and promoting a closer connection to nature, the Great American will help communities along the route realize new economic potential.

The cross-country route will serve as a catalyst for economic growth. Hundreds of communities along the route will experience new opportunities for business development and tourism thanks to the Great American Rail-Trail, all while

contributing to the growth of the country’s burgeoning outdoor economy—one of the fastest-growing sectors in the United States.

To fully realize the economic opportunity of the Great American Rail-Trail, communities will need to plan for and invest in the trail. Eighty-eight gaps remain to be completed and infrastructure like trailheads and signage are needed. States and communities can support tourism-ready businesses along the route. Such investments could generate more than \$229.4 million in visitor spending, \$104 million in labor income, and \$22.8 million in new tax revenue.

This independent economic analysis finds that the Great American Rail-Trail® could generate annually:

 **25.6M TRIPS**

 **\$229.4M**
IN VISITOR SPENDING

 **2,500**
NEW JOBS

 **\$22.8M**
IN NEW TAX REVENUE

 **\$104M**
IN LABOR INCOME

 **\$161M**
GDP CONTRIBUTION



GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT

APPENDIX: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

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Abandoned rail corridor – When a railroad company ceases operations on a line or terminates the line itself. Abandonment is official when the Surface Transportation Board (STB) has issued an order authorizing abandonment of the line and the railroad has notified the STB that it has consummated the abandonment authorization.

Active rail corridor – Any rail corridor that has not been formally abandoned through the process identified by the Surface Transportation Board.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) – The federal civil rights law that prohibits discrimination based on disability.

Arterial road – A major thoroughfare, particularly one used to provide a large traffic capacity for traveling longer distances.

Ballast – The trackbed upon which railroad ties are laid, often composed of crushed stone.

Bike lane – A portion of the roadway that has been designated by striping, signage and pavement markings for the preferential or exclusive use of bicyclists.

Bike route – On-street routes that are signed for bicycle travel but do not provide any physical or visual separation from automobile traffic.

Bollard – A short post used to divert traffic from an area or road.

Contiguous – Sharing a common border; touching.

Culvert – A tunnel carrying a stream or open drain under a road, railroad or trail.

Decking – The surface of a bridge.

Federal Railroad Administration – An agency within the U.S. Department of Transportation that handles matters related to the railroad industry.

Geographic Information System (GIS) – A system designed to capture, store, manipulate, analyze, manage and present spatial or geographic data.

Greenway – A strip of undeveloped land, set aside for recreational use or environmental protection.

Interim on-road connector – An on-road segment that is to be used temporarily while a trail is being planned or built.

Multiuse trails – Trails that are designed to accommodate more than one type of use (walking, bicycling, horseback riding, etc.).

Non-motorized trails – Trails that do not allow travel using vehicles with motors.

Off-road trails – Trails that are outside of a roadbed for motorized vehicles.

Protected bike lane (cycle track) – A bikeway that is at street level and uses a variety of methods for physical protection from passing traffic. Protected bike lanes (cycle tracks) can allow bicycle movement in one or both directions on one side of a road.

Railbanked/railbanking – Condition allowing a railroad to “bank” a corridor for future rail use. During the interim, alternative trail use is a viable option.

Railbed – The roadbed of a railroad track.

Rail corridor – The tracks and railroad right-of-way (generally 50 to 100 feet wide, though it varies widely by geography).

Rail-trail – The conversion of a disused railway track into a multiuse trail. The characteristics of abandoned railways—flat, long, frequently running through historical areas—are appealing for various developments.

Rail-with-trail – A trail located adjacent to an active rail line.

Rail yard – A complex series of railroad tracks for storing, sorting, loading and unloading railroad cars.

Recreational Trails Program – A competitive grant program managed by state trail administrators; therefore, only projects that meet certain criteria may be funded. Its funds are drawn from the larger Transportation Alternatives Program.

Right-of-way – The land on which a railroad line, road or utility is built.

Roadway – The strip of land over which a road passes.

Shared land marking (sharrow) – Road marking used to indicate a shared land environment for bicycles and automobiles.

Shared-use path – A form of infrastructure that supports multiple recreation and transportation opportunities (a common synonym for “trail”).

Shoulder (road) – A strip of land adjacent to the traffic lane of a road, often used as an emergency stopping lane.

Surface Transportation Board (STB) – The federal agency that oversees changes made by railroad companies. Formerly the Interstate Commerce Commission.

Towpath – A road or trail on the bank of a river, canal or other inland waterway.

Trailbed – The roadbed of a trail.

Trail gap – Section of trail that still needs to be built to connect the existing trails.

Transportation Alternatives Program – A program administered by the Federal Highway Administration to authorize funding for programs and projects defined as “transportation alternatives,” including on- and off-road pedestrian and bicycle facilities. The Transportation Alternatives Program is the largest federal source for trail funding.

Waterway – A river, canal or other route for travel by water.



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Rails-to-Trails Conservancy is the nation's largest trails organization—with a grassroots community more than 1 million strong—dedicated to connecting people and communities by creating a nationwide network of public trails, many from former rail lines. For more info, go to railstotrails.org.



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