

# 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

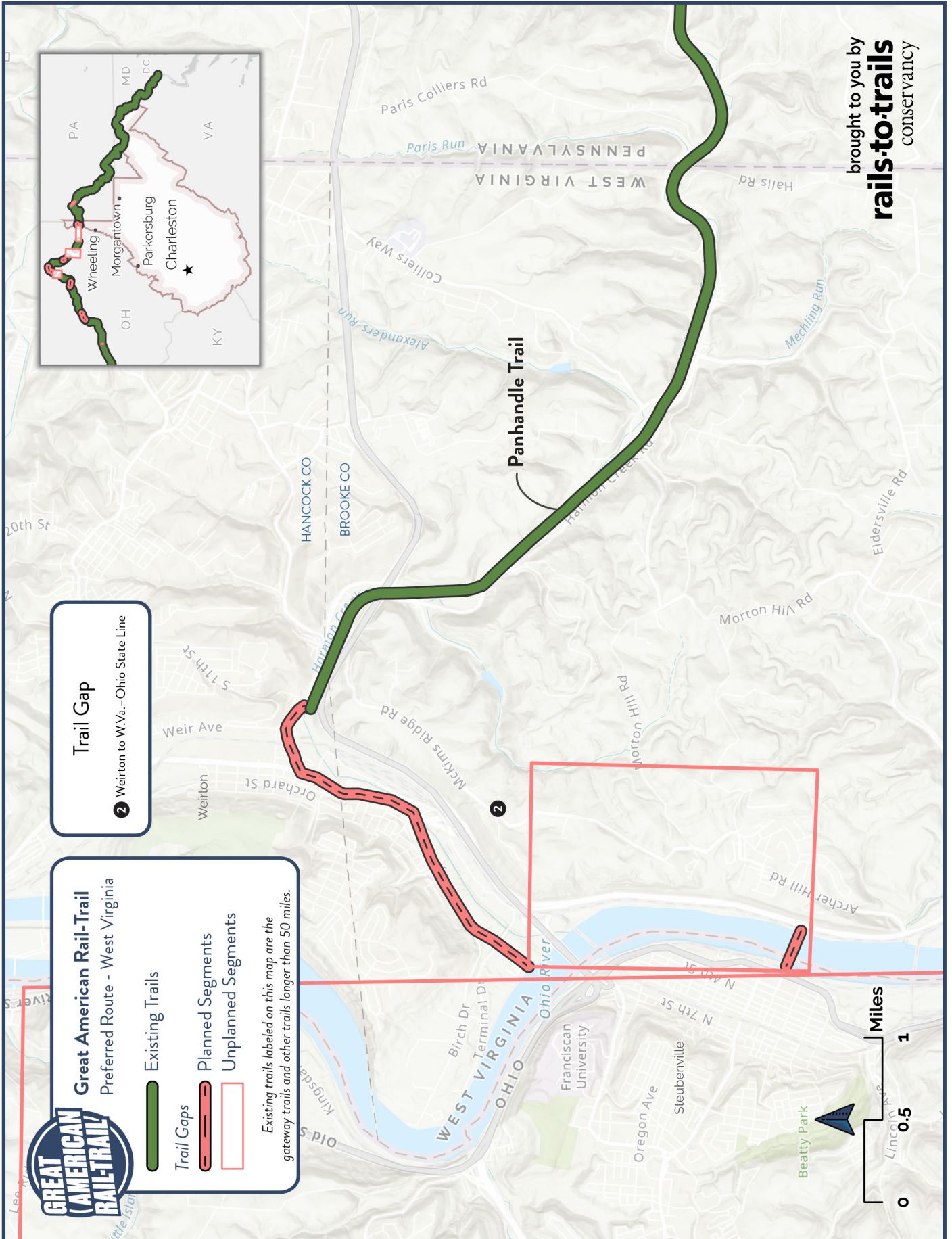
Total Great American Rail-Trail Existing Trail Miles in W.Va. (% of Total State Mileage)	4.6 (52.9%)
Total Great American Rail-Trail Trail Gap Miles in W.Va. (% of Total State Mileage)	4.1 (47.1%)
Total Trail Gaps in W.Va.	1
Total Great American Rail-Trail Miles in W.Va.	8.7

## 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.