

# 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.<sup>2</sup> 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)	251.4 (54.2%)
Total Great American Rail-Trail Gap Miles in Iowa (% of Total State Mileage)	212.2 (45.8%)
Total Trail Gaps in Iowa	19
Total Great American Rail-Trail Miles in Iowa	463.6

<sup>2</sup> 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	0.3	Iowa River's Edge Trail (Marshalltown)	2.9
Mississippi River Trail (Riverfront Trail)	7.3	Linn Creek Recreational Trail	3.2
TRAIL GAP 31 – Mississippi River Trail Extension (Davenport to Buffalo)	6.7	Iowa 330/US 30 Trail	11.1
Mississippi River Trail	1.0	TRAIL GAP 43 – Melbourne to Rhodes	3.5
TRAIL GAP 32 – Mississippi River Trail Extension (Buffalo to Muscatine)	15.6	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)	21.6
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	1.2	TRAIL GAP 45 – Raccoon River Valley Trail to High Trestle Trail Connector (Bouton)	4.8
TRAIL GAP 34 – Muscatine to Conesville	13.7	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	12.8
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)	7.6	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)	9.8	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 Avoca	19.2
Cedar Valley Nature Trail	68.7	Avoca Trails	0.4
Evansdale Nature Trail	1.0	TRAIL GAP 48c – Avoca to Neola	14.8
Gilbert Drive Trail	0.2	TRAIL GAP 49 – Railroad Highway Trail Extension (Neola to Chautauqua)	11.4
River Forest Road Trail/Cedar River Levee Trail	1.5	Railroad Highway Trail	3.5
Cedar Valley Lakes Trail	9.7	TRAIL GAP 50a – Railroad Highway Trail Extension (Chautauqua)	1.8
South Riverside Trail	0.7	Kanesville Trail	1.0
Cedar Prairie Trail	8.2	TRAIL GAP 50b – Kanesville Trail Extension 1	0.5
Sergeant Road Trail	4.0	Kanesville Trail	1.0
TRAIL GAP 38 – Hudson to Reinbeck	8.8	TRAIL GAP 50c – Kanesville Trail Extension 2	0.1
Pioneer Trail (Reinbeck)	0.3	Kanesville Trail	1.1
TRAIL GAP 39 – Pioneer Trail Extension (Reinbeck)	1.1	First Avenue Trail	3.2
Pioneer Trail (Reinbeck to Grundy Center)	5.9	Bob Kerrey Pedestrian Bridge	0.2
TRAIL GAP 40 – Pioneer Trail Extension (Grundy Center)	0.8		
Pioneer Trail (Grundy Center to Holland)	3.8	Total Miles	463.6
TRAIL GAP 41 – Holland to Steamboat Rock	17.7	Existing Trail Miles	251.4
Iowa River's Edge Trail (Steamboat Rock)	5.0	Trail Gap Miles	212.2
TRAIL GAP 42 – Iowa River's Edge Trail Extension (Eldora to Marshalltown)	23.6		



# GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT

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### 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)	8.3
Trail Type	Greenway
Surface Type	Asphalt, concrete
Trail Manager	Davenport Parks & Recreation, Scott County Conservation Board
Website	<a href="https://nps.gov/miss/learn/news/mississippi-river-trail.htm">nps.gov/miss/learn/news/mississippi-river-trail.htm</a>
TrailLink Map	<a href="https://traillink.com/trail/riverfront-trail-(ia)">traillink.com/trail/riverfront-trail-(ia)</a>

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 7.3-mile section of Iowa’s Riverfront Trail heading southwest along the Mississippi River from the Government/Arsenal Bridge.

**Segment 2** – a 1-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 6.7-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 15.6-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.



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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)	7.5
Trail Type	Greenway, rail-trail, rail-with-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt, concrete, crushed stone
Trail Manager	City of Muscatine
Website	<a href="http://visitmuscatine.com/257/running-river-trail-system">visitmuscatine.com/257/running-river-trail-system</a>
TrailLink Map	<a href="http://trailink.com/trail/running-river-trail-system-(riverside-park)">trailink.com/trail/running-river-trail-system-(riverside-park)</a>

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** – 1.2 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 13.7-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.

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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"> <li>· <a href="http://linncountytrails.org/maps/find-a-trail/hover-trail">linncountytrails.org/maps/find-a-trail/hover-trail</a></li> <li>· <a href="http://nps.gov/places/hover-nature-trail.htm">nps.gov/places/hover-nature-trail.htm</a></li> </ul>
TrailLink Map	<a href="http://trailink.com/trail/hover-nature-trail">trailink.com/trail/hover-nature-trail</a>

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 6.1 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 7.6-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 9.8-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 (SOLON) 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)	68.7
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Iowa (in Miles)	68.7
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"> <li>· <a href="http://cedarvalleynaturetrail.com">cedarvalleynaturetrail.com</a></li> <li>· <a href="http://linncountytrails.org/trails/find-a-trail/cedar-valley-nature-trail">linncountytrails.org/trails/find-a-trail/cedar-valley-nature-trail</a></li> </ul>
TrailLink Map	<a href="http://trailink.com/trail/cedar-valley-nature-trail">trailink.com/trail/cedar-valley-nature-trail</a>

The 68.7-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 12.7-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	<a href="http://evansdale.govoffice.com/?SEC=8EF62527-035A-4C03-B1B3-D588CCFD5E5E">evansdale.govoffice.com/?SEC=8EF62527-035A-4C03-B1B3-D588CCFD5E5E</a>
TrailLink Map	<a href="http://trailink.com/trail/evansdale-nature-trail">trailink.com/trail/evansdale-nature-trail</a>

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)	0.2
Trail Type	Greenway
Surface Type	Concrete
Trail Manager	City of Evansdale
Website	<a href="http://evansdale.govoffice.com/?SEC=8EF62527-035A-4C03-B1B3-D588CCFD5E5E">evansdale.govoffice.com/?SEC=8EF62527-035A-4C03-B1B3-D588CCFD5E5E</a>
TrailLink Map	<a href="http://trailink.com/trail/gilbert-drive-trail">trailink.com/trail/gilbert-drive-trail</a>

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.

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### 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	<a href="https://evansdale.gov/office.com/?SEC=8EF62527-035A-4C03-B1B3-D588CCFD5E5E">evansdale.gov/office.com/?SEC=8EF62527-035A-4C03-B1B3-D588CCFD5E5E</a>
TrailLink Map	<a href="https://traillink.com/trail/river-forest-road-trail">traillink.com/trail/river-forest-road-trail</a>

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	<a href="https://cedarvalleytrails.org/trails/cedar-valley-lakes-trail">cedarvalleytrails.org/trails/cedar-valley-lakes-trail</a>
TrailLink Map	<a href="https://traillink.com/trail/cedar-valley-lakes-trail">traillink.com/trail/cedar-valley-lakes-trail</a>

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	<a href="https://cedarvalleytrails.org/trails/south-riverside-trail">cedarvalleytrails.org/trails/south-riverside-trail</a>
TrailLink Map	<a href="https://traillink.com/trail/south-riverside-trail">traillink.com/trail/south-riverside-trail</a>

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	<a href="https://cedarvalleytrails.org/cedar-valley-trails/trail-loops/cedar-prairie-loop">cedarvalleytrails.org/cedar-valley-trails/trail-loops/cedar-prairie-loop</a>
TrailLink Map	<a href="https://traillink.com/trail/cedar-prairie-trail">traillink.com/trail/cedar-prairie-trail</a>



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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	<a href="http://cedarvalleytrails.org/trails/sergeant-road-trail">cedarvalleytrails.org/trails/sergeant-road-trail</a>
TrailLink Map	<a href="http://traillink.com/trail/sergeant-road-trail">traillink.com/trail/sergeant-road-trail</a>

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)	10.0
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Iowa (in Miles)	10.0
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Crushed stone
Trail Manager	Grundy County Conservation Board
Website	<a href="http://grundycounty.org/departments/conservation/trails/pioneer-trail">grundycounty.org/departments/conservation/trails/pioneer-trail</a>
TrailLink Map	<a href="http://traillink.com/trail/pioneer-trail">traillink.com/trail/pioneer-trail</a>

The 10-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 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)** – 5.9 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 1.1-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)	7.9
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Iowa (in Miles)	7.9
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	<a href="http://riversedgetrail.com">riversedgetrail.com</a>
TrailLink Map	<a href="http://traillink.com/trail/rivers-edge-trail-(ia)">traillink.com/trail/rivers-edge-trail-(ia)</a>

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 2.9 miles extending from the Keyser Street Trailhead at Wilson Circle to Radio Tower Road. Trail Gap 42, below, discusses plans to connect the Iowa River’s Edge Trail for 23.6 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 2024.

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.

The Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation applied for TA funding in late 2023 to construct the next 5 miles of the Iowa River’s Edge Trail between Eldora and Gifford, and they are awaiting the notice of funding award.

# 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)	3.2
Trail Type	Rail-trail, rail-with-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	Marshall County Conservation Board, Marshalltown Parks and Recreation
Website	<a href="http://marshalltown-ia.gov/291/trails">marshalltown-ia.gov/291/trails</a>
TrailLink Map	<a href="http://traillink.com/trail/linn-creek-recreational-trail">traillink.com/trail/linn-creek-recreational-trail</a>

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 3.2 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 3.2-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	<a href="http://marshallcountyiowa.gov/501/conservation">marshallcountyiowa.gov/501/conservation</a>
TrailLink Map	<a href="http://traillink.com/trail/iowa-330us-30-trail">traillink.com/trail/iowa-330us-30-trail</a>

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 3.5 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)	26.0
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Iowa (in Miles)	26.0
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Concrete, crushed stone, dirt, grass
Trail Manager	Marshall County Conservation Board, Story County Conservation Board
Website	<a href="http://storycountyiowa.gov/documentcenter/view/2320/heart-of-iowa-nature-trail">storycountyiowa.gov/documentcenter/view/2320/heart-of-iowa-nature-trail</a>
TrailLink Map	<a href="http://traillink.com/trail/heart-of-iowa-nature-trail">traillink.com/trail/heart-of-iowa-nature-trail</a>

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 21.6 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"> <li><a href="https://dallascountyia.gov/services/conservation-and-recreation/conservation/trails-land-and-water/let-s-connect-trail-project">dallascountyia.gov/services/conservation-and-recreation/conservation/trails-land-and-water/let-s-connect-trail-project</a></li> <li><a href="https://inhf.org/what-we-do/protection/high-trestle-trail">inhf.org/what-we-do/protection/high-trestle-trail</a></li> <li><a href="https://polkcountyia.gov/conservation/things-to-do/biking/#High%20Trestle%20Trail">polkcountyia.gov/conservation/things-to-do/biking/#High%20Trestle%20Trail</a></li> </ul>
TrailLink Map	<a href="https://traillink.com/trail/high-trestle-trail">traillink.com/trail/high-trestle-trail</a>

The High Trestle Trail is a nearly 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.<sup>3</sup>

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 4.8-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	<a href="https://perryia.org/trails.html">perryia.org/trails.html</a>
TrailLink Map	<a href="https://traillink.com/trail/hiawatha-trail-(ia)">traillink.com/trail/hiawatha-trail-(ia)</a>

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

<sup>3</sup> 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)	12.8
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"> <li>· <a href="http://dallascountyiowa.gov/services/conservation-and-recreation/conservation/trails-land-and-water/raccoon-river-valley-trail">dallascountyiowa.gov/services/conservation-and-recreation/conservation/trails-land-and-water/raccoon-river-valley-trail</a></li> <li>· <a href="http://raccoonrivervalleytrail.org">raccoonrivervalleytrail.org</a></li> </ul>
TrailLink Map	<a href="http://traillink.com/trail/raccoon-river-valley-trail">traillink.com/trail/raccoon-river-valley-trail</a>

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 12.8 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.<sup>4</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> 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"> <li>· <a href="http://auduboncounty.com/webres/file/tbone-trail-brochure.pdf">auduboncounty.com/webres/file/tbone-trail-brochure.pdf</a></li> <li>· <a href="http://mycountyparks.com/county/audubon/park/t-bone-recreational-trail-audubon-trailhead.aspx">mycountyparks.com/county/audubon/park/t-bone-recreational-trail-audubon-trailhead.aspx</a></li> </ul>
TrailLink Map	<a href="http://traillink.com/trail/t-bone-trail">traillink.com/trail/t-bone-trail</a>

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.

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### 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	<a href="http://atlanticiowa.com/atlantic/city-departments/parks-recreation/parks/schildberg-recreation-area">atlanticiowa.com/atlantic/city-departments/parks-recreation/parks/schildberg-recreation-area</a>
TrailLink Map	<a href="http://traillink.com/trail/northern-atlantic-trails-system">traillink.com/trail/northern-atlantic-trails-system</a>

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 AVOCA

A clear path does not currently exist to connect Atlantic 19.2 miles to Avoca. Cass County completed a trail plan in 2021 that shows two route proposals to connect a trail west from Atlantic, including an option that connects into Avoca.

### AVOCA TRAILS

Total Length (in Miles)	0.4
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Iowa (in Miles)	0.4
Trail Type	Greenway
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	City of Avoca
Website	<a href="http://cityofavoca.com/vnews/display.v/SEC/Live/Work/Play%7CTrail%20Map">cityofavoca.com/vnews/display.v/SEC/Live/Work/Play%7CTrail%20Map</a>

A short section of trail connects through Avoca along East High Street.

### TRAIL GAP 48c – AVOCA TO NEOLA

A clear path does not currently exist to connect Avoca approximately 15 miles to Neola.

### TRAIL GAP 49 – 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 3.5 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.

In February 2024, the Pottawattamie County Trails Association submitted a Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant application for construction funding to complete the remaining gaps in the Railroad Highway Trail.

### RAILROAD HIGHWAY TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	3.5
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Iowa (in Miles)	3.5
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Concrete
Trail Manager	Pottawattamie County Conservation Board
Website	<a href="http://wattawayia.com/trails/railroad_highway">wattawayia.com/trails/railroad_highway</a>
TrailLink Map	<a href="http://traillink.com/trail/railroad-highway-trail">traillink.com/trail/railroad-highway-trail</a>

The Railroad Highway Trail will eventually be a 16.7-mile trail extending from Neola south to Council Bluffs. The existing portion of the Railroad Highway Trail parallels Railroad Highway between Idlewood Road and the Smith Wildlife Refuge Area for 3.5 miles. An additional

# GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT

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13.2 miles—in the form of several extensions, discussed in Trail Gaps 49 and 50a—are planned for construction in the near future.

### TRAIL GAP 50a – RAILROAD HIGHWAY TRAIL EXTENSION (CHAUTAUQUA)

An additional 1.8 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.

### KANESVILLE TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	3.1
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Iowa (in Miles)	3.1
Trail Type	Greenway
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	City of Council Bluffs

The Kanesville Trail follows East Kanesville Boulevard as it enters Council Bluffs from the east. Several gaps in the Kanesville Trail are described below.

### TRAIL GAP 50b – KANESVILLE TRAIL EXTENSION 1

The City of Council Bluffs intends to complete the remaining gaps in the Kanesville Trail to create a seamless entry into Council Bluffs from the east.

### TRAIL GAP 50c – KANESVILLE TRAIL EXTENSION 2

The City of Council Bluffs intends to complete the remaining gaps in the Kanesville Trail to create a seamless entry into Council Bluffs from the east.

### FIRST AVENUE TRAIL

Total Length (in Miles)	3.2
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Iowa (in Miles)	3.2
Trail Type	Rail-trail
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	City of Council Bluffs
Website	<a href="http://councilbluffs-ia.gov/2347/FIRST-AVE">councilbluffs-ia.gov/2347/FIRST-AVE</a>
TrailLink Map	<a href="http://traillink.com/trail/first-ave-trail">traillink.com/trail/first-ave-trail</a>

The First Avenue Trail follows a former rail corridor through downtown Council Bluffs, running parallel to West Broadway. The trail is part of a larger revitalization project that includes trails, transit and redevelopment.

The wide, paved pathway has a 10- to 12-foot-wide asphalt middle section with 2-foot-wide concrete shoulders on either side. The First Avenue Trail is more like a linear park, and along the 3.2-mile trail, you can enjoy multiple public green spaces, shared seating and trail plazas located every few blocks.

### BOB KERREY PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE

Total Length (in Miles)	0.4
Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Iowa (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"> <li><a href="http://councilbluffs-ia.gov/2178/bob-kerrey-pedestrian-bridge">councilbluffs-ia.gov/2178/bob-kerrey-pedestrian-bridge</a></li> <li><a href="http://visitomaha.com/bob">visitomaha.com/bob</a></li> </ul>
TrailLink Map	<a href="http://traillink.com/trail/bob-kerrey-pedestrian-bridge">traillink.com/trail/bob-kerrey-pedestrian-bridge</a>

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*