

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 Washington, D.C., and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

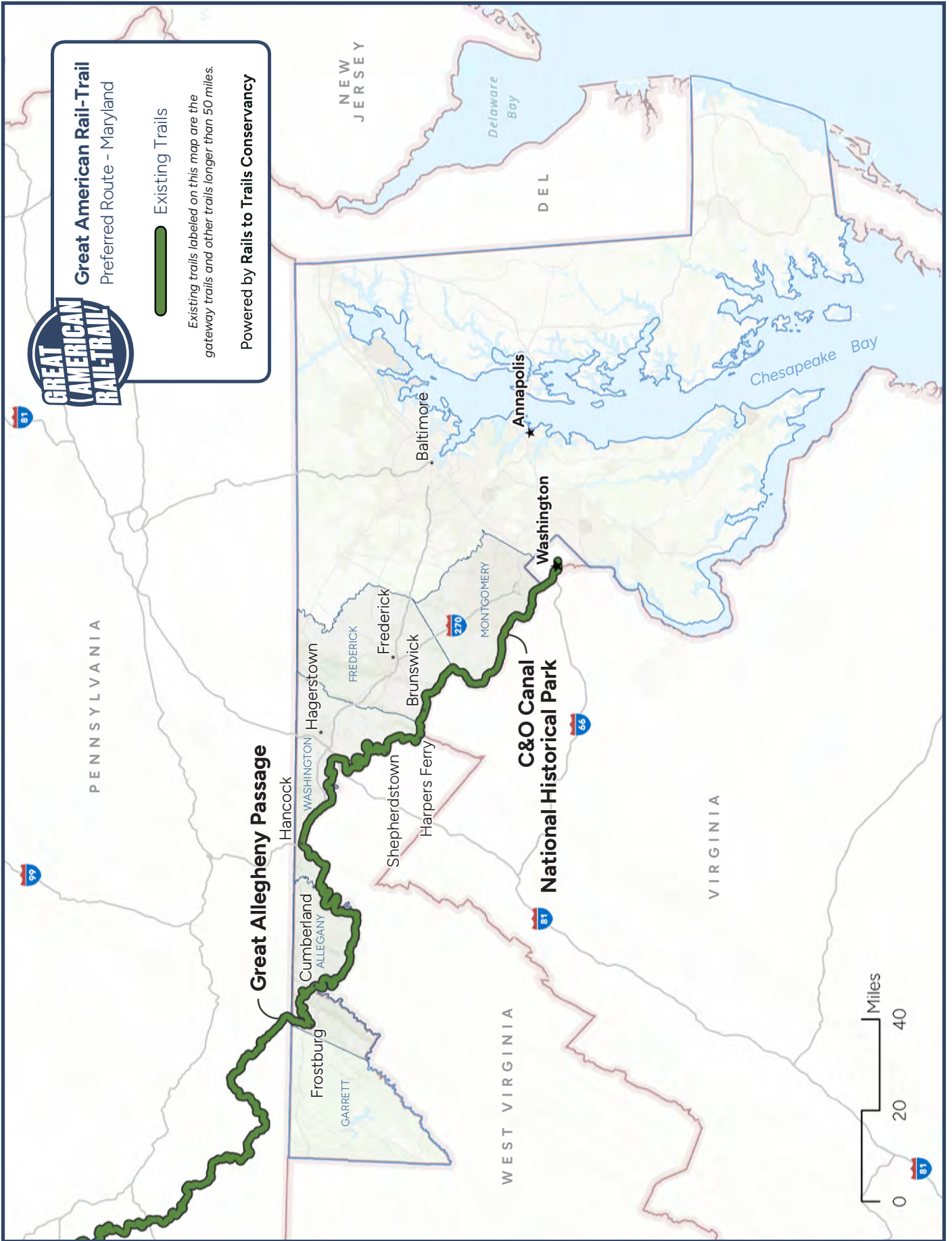
TABLE 4 GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL MILEAGE IN MARYLAND

Total Great American Rail-Trail Existing Trail Miles in Md. (% of Total State Mileage)	200.8 (100%)
Total Great American Rail-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.	200.8

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	180.3
Great Allegheny Passage	20.5
Total Miles	200.8
Existing Trail Miles	200.8
Trail Gap Miles	0.0

**GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT 2024
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)	180.3
Trail Type	Canal
Surface Type	Crushed stone, dirt, gravel
Trail Manager	National Park Service
Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · canaltrust.org · nps.gov/choh/index.htm
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 about 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 Great Allegheny Passage Conservancy (previously known as 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 previous years, the C&O Canal National Historical Park had been only able to resurface about 1 to 3 miles of the towpath annually. The Great Allegheny Passage Conservancy’s safety assessment recommended 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, and as such, the National Park Service applied for and received a Transportation Alternatives grant for \$1.2 million in 2023 to rehabilitate an additional 11 miles of the towpath in Allegany County.

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 were released in 2023. Attention now pivots 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)	145.2
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, Great Allegheny Passage Conservancy, 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 Great Allegheny Passage Conservancy. 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 124.7 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.