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Rails to Trails Conservancy Calls New Trail Connection Between Raccoon River Valley Trail and the High Trestle Trail a Boon for the Region and the Nation

New connection marks important progress for the cross-country Great American Rail-Trail, which promises new opportunities for tourism, recreation and active transportation in Iowa

DES MOINES, Iowa— Rails to Trails Conservancy, the nation's largest trails advocacy organization, joined leaders across Iowa who have championed the trail connection between the Raccoon River Valley Trail and the High Trestle Trail for decades in celebrating the project's completion.

The Raccoon River Valley Trail to High Trestle Connection creates one of longest paved trails in the U.S., unlocking a 120-mile trail loop. The connection also marks an important milestone in Iowa for the Great American Rail-Trail®, the nation's first cross-country multiuse trail, closing gap #45 and creating nearly 60 miles of uninterrupted trail along the route.

"Completing this connection between these two iconic trails creates an uninterrupted 57-mile trail segment between the small towns of Holland and Herndon along the Great American Rail-Trail, said Kevin Belle, RTC's project manager for the Great American Rail-Trail. "This connection taps into the incredible trail network that stretches into the greater Des Moines area and provides significant economic development opportunities for all the vibrant towns along the route."

An [economic analysis commissioned by RTC](#) finds that the Great American will bring \$14.3 million in visitor spending and \$1.2 million in tax revenue each year to Iowa. Cyclists and trails across Iowa generate [\\$364.8 million in direct and indirect economic impacts on the state](#).

"This has an incredible economic impact that is beyond just someone spending their money at a restaurant near the trail," said Luke Hoffman, Executive Director of Iowa Bicycle Coalition, in a statement. "This trail is more than just a trail, it's also a legacy for future generations because it's a community asset that has economic, tourism, and health and wellness benefits. Trails are one of those tools in the toolbox that we can't ignore. In the tourism commercials for the state of Iowa, they're showing images of the High Trestle Bridge. It's part of the symbolism of what makes our state great."

The [Raccoon River Valley Trail](#), a member of RTC's Hall of Fame, is the longest and oldest paved loop trail in the nation. The trail, along with the [High Trestle Trail](#), which spans 31.4 miles and is known for its famous 130-foot-tall High Trestle Bridge, are vital tourist engines for central Iowa, embraced by the region and state as an asset for health, wellness and connection.

The trails are part of the developing 3,700-mile [Great American Rail-Trail](#), Rails to Trails Conservancy's flagship project to connect a cross-country, multiuse trail, across 12 states

between Washington, D.C., and Washington State. For more details about the Great American, including photos and video for press use, visit greatamericanrailtrail.org and follow @greatamericanrailtrail and #GRTAmerican on social media.

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