

JULY 24, 2025

TrailNation Spotlight

Delta Heritage Trail State Park



Delta Heritage Trail State Park Arkansas | Photo courtesy Tourism Arkansas

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TrailNation Spotlight: Delta Heritage Trail

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Agenda

1. TrailNation Summit: Master Class Preview
Liz Thorstensen, VP of Trail Development, RTC
2. Spotlight on the Delta Heritage Trail State Park
Becky Flynn, Deputy Director of the Arkansas Office of Outdoor Recreation
with Cas Marburger, Director of Communications, RTC
3. Audience Q&A

TrailNation Summit

HOSTED BY RAILS TO TRAILS CONSERVANCY

October 27-29, 2025
Cleveland, Ohio



Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail | Photo by Jason Cohn

Register Today: railstotrails.org/trailnation



Participants at the TrailNation Summit (2018)

Master Classes

These immersive learning sessions will feature hands-on learning with leaders in the field, alongside case studies of sustainable solutions to funding, advocacy and trail development challenges. Rural, suburban and urban cohort groups will move through the sessions as a team, walking away with the specific localized skills and new perspectives to empower local action.

- ❑ Overcoming Obstacles to Trail Network Implementation
- ❑ Engaging End Users: Marketing, Messaging & Trail Activation
- ❑ Mapping Trail Networks for Implementation & Advocacy
- ❑ Trails as Economic Engines



POLL



ARKANSAS
— OFFICE OF —
OUTDOOR RECREATION

DELTA HERITAGE TRAIL

RECREATION, COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT





ARKANSAS OFFICE OF OUTDOOR RECREATION

Leveraging the State's natural assets to advance the outdoor recreation economy.

- \$4.5 Billion
- 2.5% of State GDP
- 41,000 jobs

Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism

Connection and Collaboration

- Connector of resources, creator of partnerships, and catalyst of growth in the Arkansas economy.

Promotion and Awareness

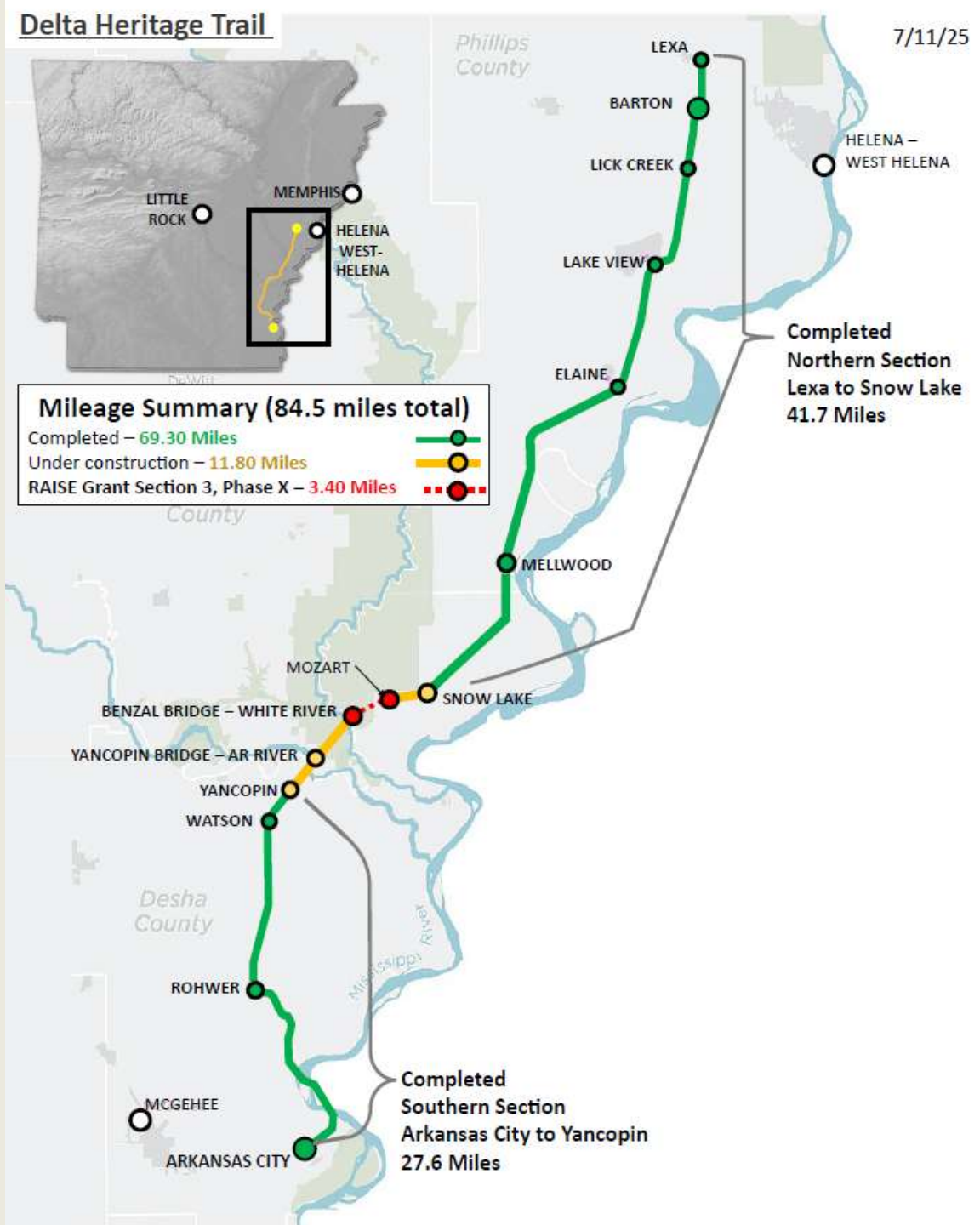
- Establish Arkansas as a top destination for outdoor recreation



DELTA HERITAGE TRAIL (DHT)

84.5-mile Rails-To-Trails corridor through the Arkansas Delta

- Gravel and paved levee
- Background
 - 1992: Union Pacific donates right-of-way to Arkansas State Parks
 - 1997: DHT Masterplan
 - 2002: First section open to the public
 - 2026: Anticipated trail completion
- Travel through diverse landscape
- Region is rich in heritage, culture, food, music





MEASURING THE \$13.8M+ DHT IMPACT

- Economic Impact Analysis – 2019
 - Trail Usage
 - Visitation
 - Non-Local Expenditures
- \$13.8 - \$26.2 million in Annual Direct Benefits
 - Transportation, environmental, health, and economic-related
- Investment in Trail construction and local economy

THE DHT IMPACT

An economic impact analysis conducted in 2019 evaluated the anticipated impact upon completion of the Delta Heritage Trail through Arkansas, Desha and Phillips counties in Arkansas. Assessing the potential benefits that might accrue, the report estimated that the trail could generate between \$13.8 million and \$26.2 million in annual benefits.

1 THE LOCALS

Approximately 3,000 residents live near the proposed alignment, including 600 students. According to the most recent five-year estimates from the American Community Survey, the surrounding population is approximately 56% white, 43% Black, and 1% Native American, Asian or some other race. Among the nearly 1,000 workers living near the trail alignment, 80% drive alone to work, 13% carpool, 2% walk and 0% bicycle.

2 THE DEMAND

To understand potential demand for the trail, count and/or survey data was reviewed at nine aspirational trails in seven U.S. states, representing rural or suburban areas with extended trail networks. On average, the aspirational trails experienced 3,400 annual users per mile. If Delta Heritage Trail experienced the same number of users along its 86-mile alignment, 800 people would be expected to use the trail each day.

3 THE LOCATION



4 THE BENEFITS

Potential benefits resulting from the completion and subsequent use of the Delta Heritage Trail by local residents and non-local visitors include transportation, environmental, health and economic-related impacts.



NATURAL STATE INITIATIVE OPPORTUNITY ZONE

Business & Community Development

ABOUT DELTA HERITAGE TRAIL (DHT)

When the Delta Heritage Trail State Park project is complete, it will be an astounding 84.5 miles long. To date, there are over 70 miles of trail completed. The completed corridors include Leona to Snow Lake and Yamacoon to Arkansas City, which encompasses 15 miles of shared-use roadway on the Mississippi River Mainline Levee. Upon completion, the trail will cross the White and Arkansas rivers.

There are currently trailheads at 10 locations: Barton, Elaine, Millwood, Snow Lake, Arkansas City, Watson and Rothermel offer parking and restrooms. Leona, Lick Creek and Lake View also offer parking.

The Delta Heritage Trail State Park's visitor center is located at the Barton trailhead, near the northern end. Along with a gift shop, there are 24-hour access restrooms (no showers), five primitive campsites with tent pads, picnic tables, standing grills and a community water spigot. Bike rentals and interpretive programming are offered. The Pedal & Paddle Tour is a roundtrip bike ride from Barton to Lake View, which includes kayaking on Old Town Lake.

At the Arkansas City trailhead on the trail's southern end, visitors will find the newly built John H. Johnson Commemorative Plaza, which memorializes the contributions of the publishing magnate who was born in Arkansas City, as well as a building designed in the style of historic rail depots, which houses administrative functions, bathroom facilities and an open pavilion. Picnic areas, a water fountain and a bicycle repair station are also available. Interpretive elements provide information on the DHT, the town's history and local recreational offerings.

**SCHEDULED TO BE
COMPLETED IN 2026,
DHT WILL HAVE:**

84.5
Miles of trail through the
Arkansas Delta

13
Trailheads with parking,
interpretive information,
and/or restrooms



BUSINESS RESOURCES

The Arkansas Economic Development Commission's Small Business & Entrepreneurship Development Division shares the step-by-step process to launching a business.

1 DEVELOP AN IDEA AND PERFORM MARKET RESEARCH

Every business starts with an idea or a problem that needs to be solved. Once you have that, perform market research to determine if there is a need for your business, product or service. The Arkansas Small Business and Technology Development Center (ASBTDC) can assist with market research. Useful resources can also be found at the Arkansas Secretary of State's website and through AEDC.

2 WRITE A BUSINESS PLAN

It is crucial to start your business with a plan. A business plan provides you with a strategy for launching your business and making it succeed. There are a variety of resources to help you develop a business plan, including Startup Junkie, The Venture Center and The Conductor.

3 CHOOSE A NAME AND A BUSINESS STRUCTURE

Deciding on a name is a fun, but important, step of starting your business. Make sure that your business name has not been used before by checking the Arkansas Secretary of State's Business Entity Search. Also, a business might own the national rights to a name that is registered as a trademark with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. This trademark might not be registered with the Arkansas Secretary of State's Office, but you could still be violating the law by using that company's nationally registered name in Arkansas. You can check the national availability of names on the United States Patent and Trademark Office website, but it is highly advised you seek the assistance of an intellectual property attorney with this process.

You must also decide on a structure for your business. The U.S. Small Business Administration website has a handy guide that explains different business structures. You should always seek the guidance of a qualified business attorney and accountant to determine the right entity choice for your business. Building your company's foundation properly and legally is vital and takes financial investment in the beginning, but many local professionals can assist you with this process.



SALES TAX CREDITS

- 15% in a low unemployment county
- \$150,000 minimum investment

- 25% in a high unemployment county
- \$50,000 minimum investment

INCOME TAX CREDITS

- 4% of the total payroll of new, full-time permanent employees
- May be earned for a period of 5 years and carried forward for up to 9 years.

- Minimum payroll thresholds based upon the most current Arkansas Incentive Tier Map*

NATURAL STATE INITIATIVE OPPORTUNITY ZONE

Business & Community Development

- State Collaboration
 - Arkansas Economic Development Commission Community Development Team
 - State and Regional Tourism Division
 - Arkansas Game and Fish Commission
- Promotion
 - Local Meetings
 - Radio Station, Print, Digital
- Local Community Groups and Business Leaders
 - Chambers of Commerce
 - Nonprofits – Delta Magic, THRIVE, StudioDRIFT
 - Colleges and Universities

TOTAL BENEFITS

\$13,842,000+

Residents living near the DHT could experience between \$13.8 million and \$26.2 million in Annual Direct Benefits, impacting local revenue. Additional tourism spend and tax revenue collected correlates to local funding for community amenities like schools, fire and police departments, water, sewer and health care.



PROMOTION & ACTIVATION

Market Analysis and Business Considerations

- Arkansas Small Business & Technology Development Center (ASBTDC)
 - Define and analyze key target audiences for trail-related marketing and visitation
 - Identify geographies with strong potential for visitor recruitment based on travel behavior, recreational interests, and spending patterns
 - Offer insight into the types of businesses that may align well with trail-related visitor needs and regional assets



PROMOTION & ACTIVATION

Content Development

- Photo and Video Shoot April 2025
 - Barton, Lexa, Mellwood
 - Visitor Center
 - Old Town Lake
- Travel Itineraries
 - Food, Beverage, Activities
- Wayfinding and Signage



PROMOTION & ACTIVATION

Events and Programming

- Arkansas Graveler 2026
 - Course Crew Preview Fall 2025
 - Gather Content – Photo/Video for Promotion
- October 2025 Event
 - South end of DHT
- VIP event for industry partners in surrounding target markets
 - Include food and beverage feature
- Fall and Spring events – food, music, bird watching





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Questions?



Thank you!

Register for the TrailNation Summit: railstotrails.org/trailnation/summit2025

