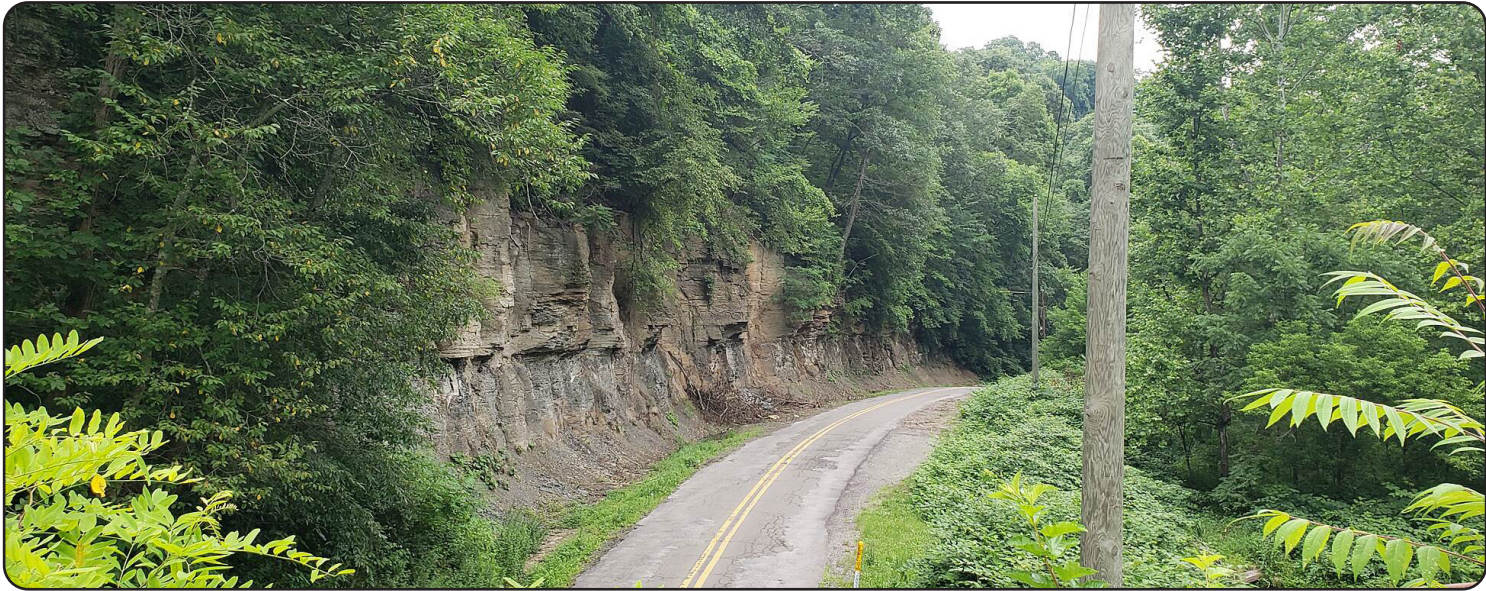


GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL®

ROUTE ASSESSMENT REPORT
MAY 2025

RAILS TO
Trails
conservancy

WEST VIRGINIA



Panhandle Trail | Photo by TrailLink user ejbeckl

The Great American Rail-Trail travels through the Northern Panhandle of West Virginia through the town of Weirton along the Ohio River. One gap remains in West Virginia, connecting Weirton to the Ohio state line. The West Virginia section is located along the Cleveland to Pittsburgh corridor of the proposed 1,500-mile Industrial Heartland Trails Coalition (IHTC) network.

TABLE 8: GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL MILEAGE IN WEST VIRGINIA

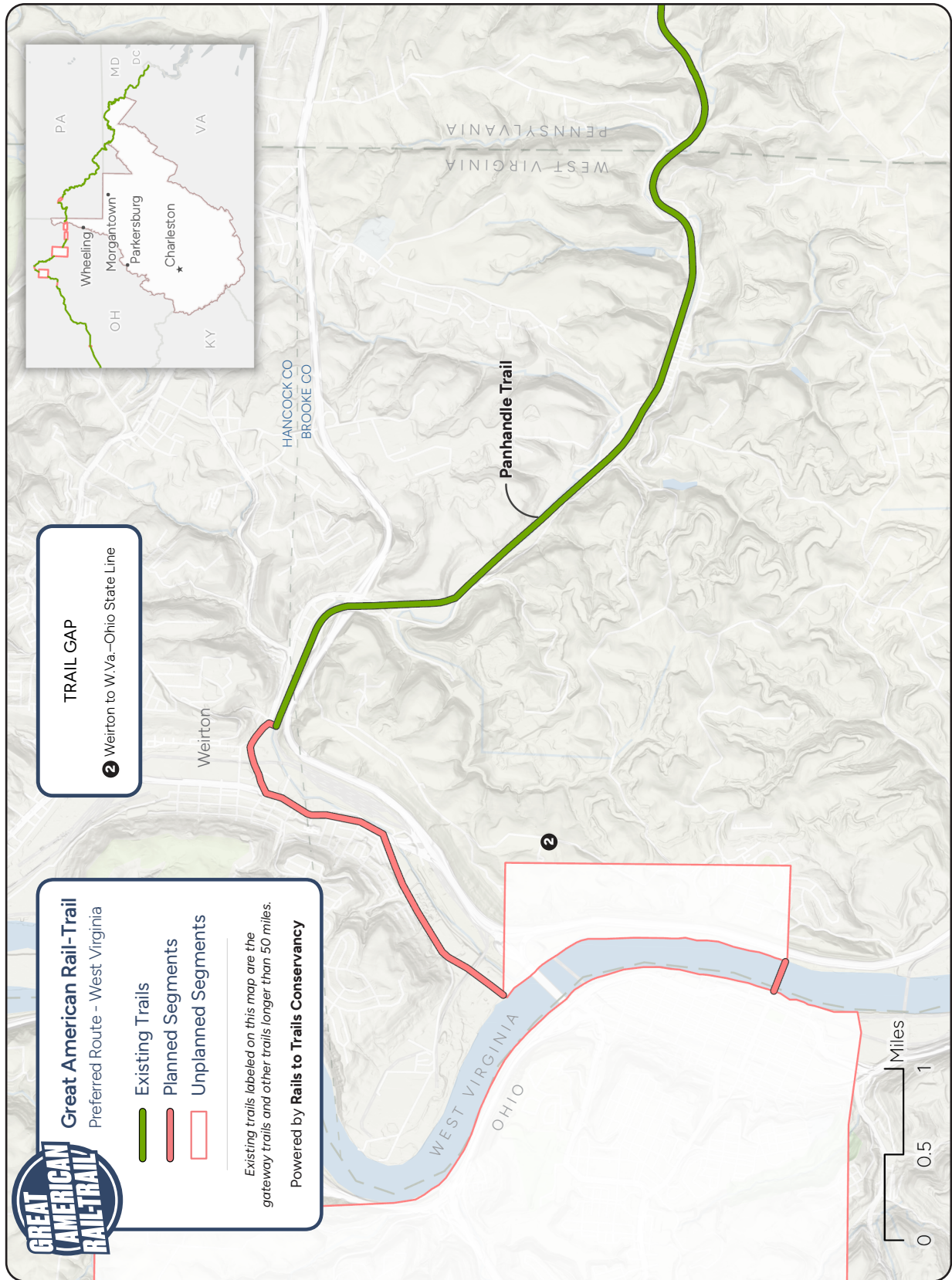
Total Great American Rail-Trail Existing Trail Miles in W.Va. (% of Total State Mileage)	4.6 (52.9%)
Total Great American Rail-Trail Gap Miles in W.Va. (% of Total State Mileage)	4.1 (47.1%)
Total Trail Gaps in W.Va.	1
Total Great American Rail-Trail Miles in W.Va.	8.7

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 2025

MAP 4: WEST VIRGINIA





Panhandle Trail | Photo by TrailLink user stache21

PANHANDLE TRAIL

Total Length / Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in W.Va. (in Miles)	28.3 / 4.6
Surface Type	Asphalt, crushed stone
Trail Managers	Collier Friends of the Panhandle Trail, Montour Trail Council, Washington County Parks & Recreation Department
Website	panhandletrail.org
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/panhandle-trail

Most of the Panhandle Trail is in Pennsylvania and is addressed in that chapter.

TRAIL GAP 2 – WEIRTON TO WEST VIRGINIA–OHIO STATE LINE

Planning Status	Partially planned
Funding Status	Partially funded
Construction Status/ Expected Completion Date	TBD

Multiple routing options have been explored 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. 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. 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 Main Street in Weirton by way of a two-way bike path. The proposed corridor would then 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.

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. The bridge, which is an aging, open-decked bridge, was abruptly closed to all traffic in late 2023 after it was deemed unsafe. Funding was awarded in 2024 via the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) Bridge Investment Program to rebuild the Market Street Bridge, including appropriate bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and will help facilitate the trail crossing of the Ohio River.

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.

APPENDIX: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Abandoned rail corridor – When a railroad company ceases operations on a line or terminates the line itself. Abandonment is official when the Surface Transportation Board (STB) has issued an order authorizing abandonment of the line and the railroad has notified the STB that it has consummated the abandonment authorization.

Active rail corridor – Any rail corridor that has not been formally abandoned through the process identified by the Surface Transportation Board.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) – The federal civil rights law that prohibits discrimination based on disability.

Arterial road – A major thoroughfare, particularly one used to provide a large traffic capacity for traveling longer distances.

Ballast – The trackbed upon which railroad ties are laid, often composed of crushed stone.

Bike lane – A portion of the roadway that has been designated by striping, signage and pavement markings for the preferential or exclusive use of bicyclists.

Bike route – On-street routes that are signed for bicycle travel but do not provide any physical or visual separation from automobile traffic.

Bollard – A short post used to divert traffic from an area or road.

Contiguous – Sharing a common border; touching.

Culvert – A tunnel carrying a stream or open drain under a road, railroad or trail.

Decking – The surface of a bridge.

Federal Railroad Administration – An agency within the U.S. Department of Transportation that handles matters related to the railroad industry.

Geographic Information System (GIS) – A system designed to capture, store, manipulate, analyze, manage and present spatial or geographic data.

Greenway – A strip of undeveloped land, set aside for recreational use or environmental protection.

Interim on-road connector – An on-road segment that is to be used temporarily while a trail is being planned or built.

Multiuse trails – Trails that are designed to accommodate more than one type of use (walking, bicycling, horseback riding, etc.).

Non-motorized trails – Trails that do not allow travel using vehicles with motors.

Off-road trails – Trails that are outside of a roadbed for motorized vehicles.

Protected bike lane (cycle track) – A bikeway that is at street level and uses a variety of methods for physical protection from passing traffic. Protected bike lanes (cycle tracks) can allow bicycle movement in one or both directions on one side of a road.

Railbanked/railbanking – Condition allowing a railroad to “bank” a corridor for future rail use. During the interim, alternative trail use is a viable option.

Railbed – The roadbed of a railroad track.

Rail corridor – The tracks and railroad right-of-way (generally 50 to 100 feet wide, though it varies widely by geography).

Rail-trail – The conversion of a disused railway track into a multiuse trail. The characteristics of abandoned railways—flat, long, frequently running through historical areas—are appealing for various developments.

Rail-with-trail – A trail located adjacent to an active rail line.

Rail yard – A complex series of railroad tracks for storing, sorting, loading and unloading railroad cars.

Recreational Trails Program – A competitive grant program managed by state trail administrators; therefore, only projects that meet certain criteria may be funded. Its funds are drawn from the larger Transportation Alternatives Program.

Right-of-way – The land on which a railroad line, road or utility is built.

Roadway – The strip of land over which a road passes.

Shared land marking (sharrow) – Road marking used to indicate a shared land environment for bicycles and automobiles.

Shared-use path – A form of infrastructure that supports multiple recreation and transportation opportunities (a common synonym for “trail”).

Shoulder (road) – A strip of land adjacent to the traffic lane of a road, often used as an emergency stopping lane.

Surface Transportation Board (STB) – The federal agency that oversees changes made by railroad companies. Formerly the Interstate Commerce Commission.

Towpath – A road or trail on the bank of a river, canal or other inland waterway.

Trailbed – The roadbed of a trail.

Trail gap – Section of trail that still needs to be built to connect the existing trails.

Transportation Alternatives Program – A program administered by the Federal Highway Administration to authorize funding for programs and projects defined as “transportation alternatives,” including on- and off-road pedestrian and bicycle facilities. The Transportation Alternatives Program is the largest federal source for trail funding.

Waterway – A river, canal or other route for travel by water.



At Rails to Trails Conservancy, we are building a nation connected by trails. We reimagine public spaces to create safe ways for everyone to walk, bike and be active outdoors.