

IOWA



High Trestle Trail | Photo by TrailLink user dj123

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. 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 are thriving today because of 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)	256.5 (55.8%)
Total Great American Rail-Trail Gap Miles in Iowa (% of Total State Mileage)	203.2 (44.2%)
Total Trail Gaps in Iowa	18
Total Great American Rail-Trail Miles in Iowa	459.7

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT 2026

MAP 8: IOWA

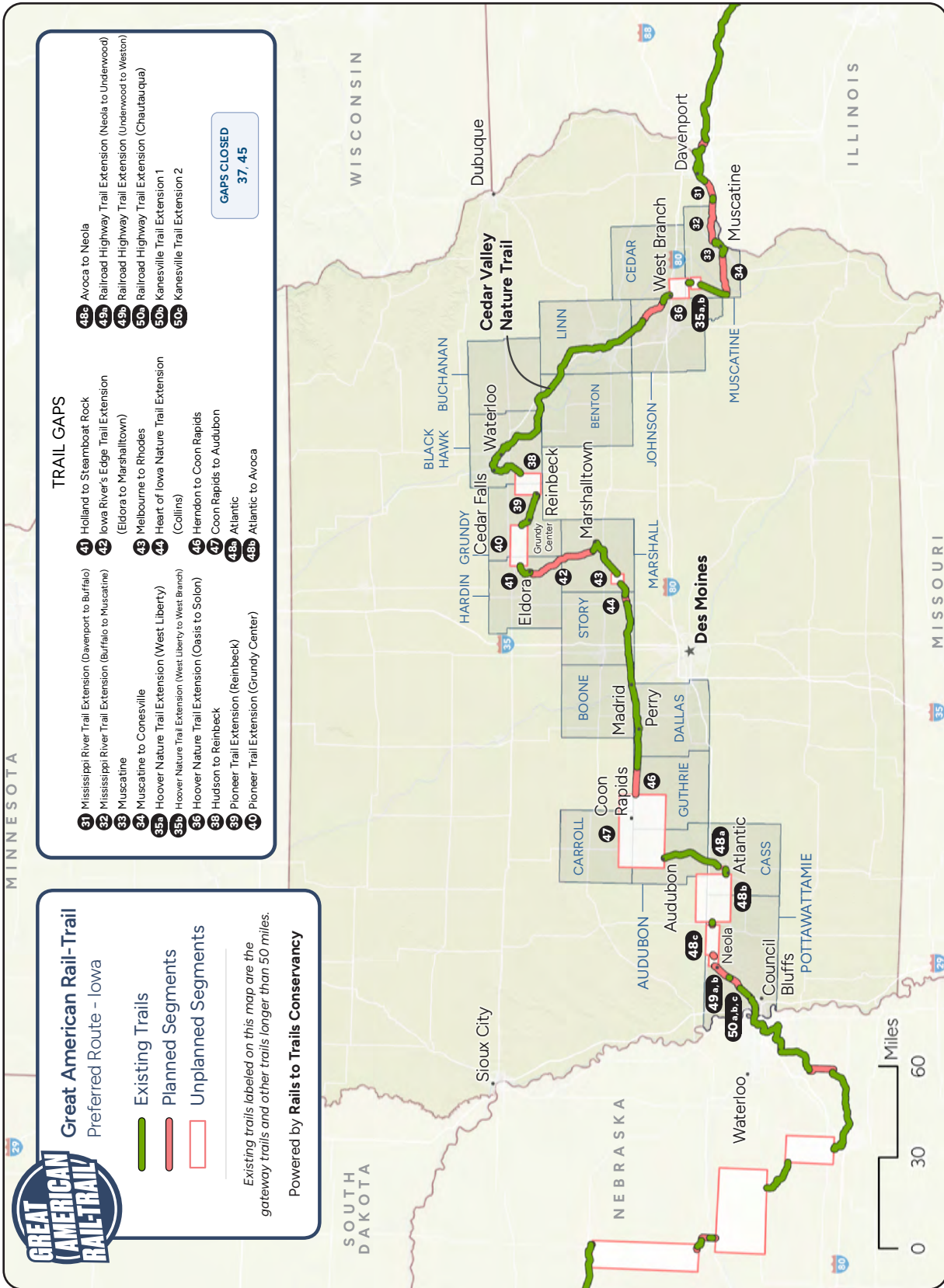


TABLE 17: GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE THROUGH IOWA

Existing Trail or Trail Gap Name	Length in Iowa Along Great American Rail-Trail (in Miles)
Crossing the Mississippi River	0.3
Mississippi River Trail (Riverfront Trail)	7.3
TRAIL GAP 31 – Mississippi River Trail Extension (Davenport to Buffalo)	6.7
Mississippi River Trail	1.0
TRAIL GAP 32 – Mississippi River Trail Extension (Buffalo to Muscatine)	15.6
Running River Trail System (Riverside Park)	5.5
TRAIL GAP 33 – Muscatine	0.3
Running River Trail System (Kent Stein to Deep Lakes Park Trail)	0.8
Running River Trail System	1.2
TRAIL GAP 34 – Muscatine to Conesville	13.7
Hoover Nature Trail (Conesville to West Liberty)	8.9
TRAIL GAP 35a – Hoover Nature Trail Extension (West Liberty)	3.4
Hoover Nature Trail (West Liberty)	1.0
TRAIL GAP 35b – Hoover Nature Trail Extension (West Liberty to West Branch)	7.6
Hoover Nature Trail (West Branch to Oasis)	3.4
TRAIL GAP 36 – Hoover Nature Trail Extension (Oasis to Solon)	9.8
TRAIL GAP 37 – Hoover Nature Trail Extension (Solon) COMPLETED	-
Hoover Nature Trail (Solon to Johnson–Linn County Line)	6.1
Cedar Valley Nature Trail	68.7
Evansdale Nature Trail	1.0
Gilbert Drive Trail	0.2
Cedar Valley Lakes Trail	11.2
South Riverside Trail	0.7
Cedar Prairie Trail	8.2
Sergeant Road Trail	4.0
TRAIL GAP 38 – Hudson to Reinbeck	13.2
Pioneer Trail (Reinbeck)	0.3
TRAIL GAP 39 – Pioneer Trail Extension (Reinbeck)	1.4
Pioneer Trail (Reinbeck to Grundy Center)	5.9
TRAIL GAP 40 – Pioneer Trail Extension (Grundy Center)	0.8
Pioneer Trail (Grundy Center to Holland)	3.8
TRAIL GAP 41 – Holland to Steamboat Rock	17.7
Iowa River's Edge Trail (Steamboat Rock)	5.0
TRAIL GAP 42 – Iowa River's Edge Trail Extension (Eldora to Marshalltown)	23.6

Existing Trail or Trail Gap Name	Length in Iowa Along Great American Rail-Trail (in Miles)
Iowa River's Edge Trail (Marshalltown)	2.9
Linn Creek Recreational Trail	3.2
Iowa 330/US 30 Trail	11.1
TRAIL GAP 43 – Melbourne to Rhodes	3.5
Heart of Iowa Nature Trail (Rhodes to Collins)	4.4
TRAIL GAP 44 – Heart of Iowa Nature Trail Extension (Collins)	3.1
Heart of Iowa Nature Trail (Collins to Slater)	21.6
High Trestle Trail	14.9
Raccoon River Valley Trail to High Trestle Trail Connector (formerly Trail Gap 45)	6.7
Hiawatha Trail	1.7
Raccoon River Valley Trail	12.8
TRAIL GAP 46 – Herndon to Coon Rapids	9.0
TRAIL GAP 47 – Coon Rapids to Audubon	24.0
T-Bone Trail	19.8
TRAIL GAP 48a – Atlantic	3.1
North Atlantic Trails System	2.2
TRAIL GAP 48b – Atlantic to Avoca	19.2
Avoca Trails	0.4
TRAIL GAP 48c – Avoca to Neola	14.1
TRAIL GAP 49a – Railroad Highway Trail Extension (Neola to Underwood)	6.1
Railroad Highway Trail	0.3
TRAIL GAP 49b – Railroad Highway Trail Extension (Underwood to Weston)	4.9
Railroad Highway Trail	3.5
TRAIL GAP 50a – Railroad Highway Trail Extension (Chautauqua)	1.8
Kanesville Trail	1.0
TRAIL GAP 50b – Kanesville Trail Extension 1	0.5
Kanesville Trail	1.0
TRAIL GAP 50c – Kanesville Trail Extension 2	0.1
Kanesville Trail	1.1
First Avenue Trail	3.2
Bob Kerrey Pedestrian Bridge	0.2
Total Miles	459.7
Existing Trail Miles	256.5
Trail Gap Miles	203.2

CROSSING THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Quad Cities provide two trail crossings of the Mississippi River from which trail users along the Great American Rail-Trail can choose. The Government/Arsenal Bridge is a multimodal bridge that contains a bicycle and pedestrian element and crosses between Rock Island, Illinois, and Davenport, Iowa. In 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. Both bridges are about the same length and accommodate trail users.

MISSISSIPPI RIVER TRAIL

Total Length / Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Iowa (in Miles)	12.7 / 8.3
Surface Type	Asphalt, concrete
Trail Managers	Davenport Parks & Recreation, Scott County Conservation Board
Website	nps.gov/miss/learn/news/mississippi-river-trail.htm
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/riverfront-trail-(ia)

The long-planned Mississippi River Trail (MRT) travels through Bettendorf and Davenport, Iowa. The Great American Rail-Trail uses two segments of the MRT:

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.

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. 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)

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

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. A separated trail route should still be considered for 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 highway with a narrow, intermittent shoulder that is partially paved, narrowing 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, with 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 MRT 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)

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

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.

Iowa's MRT 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.

The 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 / Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Iowa (in Miles)	10.0 / 7.5
Surface Type	Asphalt, concrete, crushed stone
Trail Manager	City of Muscatine
Website	visitmuscatine.com/257/running-river-trail-system
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/running-river-trail-system-(riverside-park)

The Running River Trail System is a network of trails around Muscatine, including three segments hosting the Great American Rail-Trail:

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 travels through Muscatine, becoming a rail-with-trail for approximately 2.3 miles along the Canadian Pacific Railway line that follows the shores of the Mississippi River to Riverside Park in downtown Muscatine. Trail Gap 33, described on page 67, 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. The Great American Rail-Trail route will use 0.8 mile of the Kent Stein to Deep Lakes Park Trail.

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

Planning Status	Unplanned
Funding Status	Unfunded
Construction Status/ Expected Completion Date	TBD

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**

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

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.

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 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 / Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Iowa (in Miles)	19.4 / 19.4
Surface Type	Concrete, crushed stone, grass
Trail Managers	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	• linncountytrails.org/hover • nps.gov/places/hover-nature-trail.htm
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/hover-nature-trail

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 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)

Planning Status	Unplanned
Funding Status	Unfunded
Construction Status/ Expected Completion Date	TBD

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. More work is needed to identify a corridor to complete this trail gap.

TRAIL GAP 35B – HOOVER NATURE TRAIL EXTENSION (WEST LIBERTY TO WEST BRANCH)

Planning Status	Unplanned
Funding Status	Unfunded
Construction Status/ Expected Completion Date	TBD

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)

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

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.

CEDAR VALLEY NATURE TRAIL

Total Length / Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Iowa (in Miles)	68.7 / 68.7
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Managers	Black Hawk County Conservation Board, Cedar Rapids Parks & Recreation, City of Ely, City of Hiawatha, Hickory Hills Park, Linn County Conservation Board
Website	• linncountyiowa.gov/967/Cedar-Valley-Nature-Trail • linncountytrails.org/cedar-valley-nature
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/cedar-valley-nature-trail

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.

Among the first rail-trail conversions in the state, the original northern portion of the Cedar Valley Nature Trail traces the former 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. The entire Cedar Valley Nature Trail is paved, thanks to a \$3.5 million grant from the Destination Iowa program to pave the final 16 miles between Hiawatha and Evansdale in 2024.

EVANSDALE NATURE TRAIL

Total Length / Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Iowa (in Miles)	1.0 / 1.0
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	City of Evansdale
Website	cedarvalleytrails.org/trails/evansdale-nature-trail
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/evansdale-nature-trail

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 / Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Iowa (in Miles)	1.0 / 0.2
Surface Type	Concrete
Trail Manager	City of Evansdale
Website	evansdale.gov/office.com/?SEC=8EF62527-035A-4C03-B1B3-D588CCFD5E5E
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/gilbert-drive-trail

The Great American Rail-Trail will follow a side path along Gilbert Drive for a brief section between the Evansdale Nature Trail and the Cedar Valley Lakes Trail.



Cedar Valley Nature Trail | Photo by John Riley

CEDAR VALLEY LAKES TRAIL

Total Length / Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Iowa (in Miles)	12.8 / 11.2
Surface Type	Asphalt, concrete
Trail Managers	Cedar Falls Public Works, Cedar Valley Trails Partnership, George Wyth Memorial State Park, Waterloo Leisure Services
Website	cedarvalleytrails.org/trails/cedar-valley-lakes-trail
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/cedar-valley-lakes-trail

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.

SOUTH RIVERSIDE TRAIL

Total Length / Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Iowa (in Miles)	3.5 / 0.7
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Managers	Cedar Falls Public Works, George Wyth Memorial State Park, Waterloo Leisure Services
Website	cedarvalleytrails.org/trails/south-riverside-trail
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/south-riverside-trail

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.

CEDAR PRAIRIE TRAIL

Total Length / Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Iowa (in Miles)	8.2 / 8.2
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Managers	Cedar Falls Public Works, Waterloo Leisure Services
Website	cedarvalleytrails.org/cedar-valley-trails/trail-loops/cedar-prairie-loop
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/cedar-prairie-trail

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.

SERGEANT ROAD TRAIL

Total Length / Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Iowa (in Miles)	9.9 / 4.0
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	Waterloo Leisure Services
Website	cedarvalleytrails.org/trails/sergeant-road-trail
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/sergeant-road-trail

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.

TRAIL GAP 38 – HUDSON TO REINBECK

Planning Status	Unplanned
Funding Status	Unfunded
Construction Status/ Expected Completion Date	TBD

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 successful. As such, an alternative 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 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 | Photo by Milo Bateman

PIONEER TRAIL

Total Length / Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Iowa (in Miles)	10.0 / 10.0
Surface Type	Crushed stone
Trail Manager	Grundy County Conservation Board
Website	grundycountyiowa.gov/departments/conservation/trails/pioneer-trail
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/pioneer-trail-(ia)

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 exists 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).

TRAIL GAP 39 – PIONEER TRAIL EXTENSION (REINBECK)

Planning Status	Fully planned
Funding Status	Fully funded
Construction Status/ Expected Completion Date	Completion expected in 2026

A 1.4-mile gap exists in the Pioneer Trail just west of Reinbeck. The Grundy County Conservation Board has recently received several significant state grants to complete Trail Gap 39. The conservation board is working through final trail designs and expects to see trail construction in 2026 to complete this gap.

TRAIL GAP 40 – PIONEER TRAIL EXTENSION (GRUNDY CENTER)

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

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 Resource Enhancement and Protection (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

Planning Status	Unplanned
Funding Status	Unfunded
Construction Status/ Expected Completion Date	TBD

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 / Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Iowa (in Miles)	7.9 / 7.9
Surface Type	Concrete
Trail Managers	Hardin County Board of Supervisors Trail Commission, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, TRAILS Inc. (Marshall County)
Website	riversedgetrail.com
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/rivers-edge-trail-ia

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)

Planning Status	Partially planned
Funding Status	Partially funded
Construction Status/ Expected Completion Date	Some sections under construction and expected in 2026; remaining sections TBD

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.

On the southern end, the project was awarded \$300,000 in federal Recreational Trails Program funding in 2020 to complete an additional 1.8 miles from Radio Tower Road in Marshalltown toward the Iowa River, which is slated for construction in 2026.

The trail also was awarded several million dollars from the Iowa Recreational Trails Program, the federal Transportation Alternatives program and Iowa's Community Attraction and Tourism program to construct the next 8.1 miles of trail between Union and Eldora. Construction is expected in 2027.

LINN CREEK RECREATIONAL TRAIL

Total Length / Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Iowa (in Miles)	10.1 / 3.2
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Managers	Marshall County Conservation Board, Marshalltown Parks and Recreation
Website	marshalltown-ia.gov/291/trails
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/linn-creek-recreational-trail

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 / Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Iowa (in Miles)	11.1 / 11.1
Surface Type	Concrete
Trail Manager	Marshall County Conservation Board
Website	marshallcountyiowa.gov/501/conservation
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/iowa-330us-30-trail

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

Planning Status	Unplanned
Funding Status	Unfunded
Construction Status/ Expected Completion Date	TBD

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 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.

HEART OF IOWA NATURE TRAIL

Total Length / Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Iowa (in Miles)	26.0 / 26.0
Surface Type	Concrete, crushed stone, dirt, grass
Trail Managers	Marshall County Conservation Board, Story County Conservation Board
Website	storycountyiowa.gov/1500/Heart-of-Iowa-Nature-Trail
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/heart-of-iowa-nature-trail

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:



High Trestle Trail | Photo by Joe LaCroix

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 in the process of resurfacing the entire Heart of Iowa Nature Trail, and are close to meeting their goal.

TRAIL GAP 44 – HEART OF IOWA NATURE TRAIL EXTENSION (COLLINS)

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

There is a 3.1-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 is actively working to acquire land to support the closure of this gap. In the meantime, trail users can use an interim on-road connector through Collins.

HIGH TRESTLE TRAIL

Total Length / Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Iowa (in Miles)	25.6 / 14.9
Surface Type	Asphalt, concrete
Trail Managers	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	• dallascountyiowa.gov/330/High-Trestle-Trail • inhf.org/what-we-do/protection/high-trestle-trail • polkcountyiowa.gov/conservation/parks-trails/high-trestle-trail/
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/high-trestle-trail

The High Trestle Trail is a nearly 26-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. 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.

RACCOON RIVER VALLEY TRAIL TO HIGH TRESTLE TRAIL CONNECTOR (FORMERLY TRAIL GAP 45)

Total Length / Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Iowa (in Miles)	6.7 / 6.7
Surface Type	Asphalt, concrete
Trail Manager	Dallas County Conservation Board
Website	dallascountyiowa.gov/330/High-Trestle-Trail
TrailLink Map	trailink.com/trail/high-trestle-trail-to-raccoon-river-valley-trail-connector

For many years, a gap existed between the High Trestle Trail and the Raccoon River Valley Trail through the town of Bouton. The Dallas County Conservation Board invested significant time and resources to close this gap, which was finally opened in 2024 with much excitement. There is now a seamless trail connection between these two iconic Iowa trails.

HIAWATHA TRAIL

Total Length / Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Iowa (in Miles)	2.5 / 1.7
Surface Type	Concrete
Trail Manager	City of Perry
Website	perryia.org/trails.html
TrailLink Map	trailink.com/trail/hiawatha-trail-(ia)

The Hiawatha Trail travels across Perry's northeastern neighborhoods and provides a connection between the High Trestle Trail on its eastern end and the Raccoon River Valley Trail on its western end.

RACCOON RIVER VALLEY TRAIL

Total Length / Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Iowa (in Miles)	89.0 / 12.8
Surface Type	Asphalt, concrete
Trail Managers	Dallas County Conservation Board, Greene County Conservation Board, Guthrie County Conservation Board
Website	dallascountyiowa.gov/335/Raccoon-River-Valley-Trail raccoonrivervalleytrail.org
TrailLink Map	trailink.com/trail/raccoon-river-valley-trail

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.

TRAIL GAP 46 – HERNDON TO COON RAPIDS

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

The city of Coon Rapids has a plan to extend the Raccoon River Valley Trail approximately 17 miles west. 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. There is currently an on-street signed route along 330th Street between Herndon and Coon Rapids, which can act as an interim on-road connector while this portion of the gap is being completed.

TRAIL GAP 47 – COON RAPIDS TO AUDUBON

Planning Status	Unplanned
Funding Status	Unfunded
Construction Status/ Expected Completion Date	TBD

From Coon Rapids, the route will head south 24 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 / Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Iowa (in Miles)	19.8 / 19.8
Surface Type	Asphalt, concrete
Trail Managers	Audubon County Conservation Board, Cass County Conservation Board
Website	• auduboncountyiowa.gov/webres/File/tbone-trail-brochure.pdf • mycountyparks.com/county/audubon/park/t-bone-recreational-trail-audubon-trailhead.aspx
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/t-bone-trail

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.

TRAIL GAP 48A – ATLANTIC

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

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.

NORTH ATLANTIC TRAILS SYSTEM

Total Length / Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Iowa (in Miles)	6.0 / 2.2
Surface Type	Concrete
Trail Manager	City of Atlantic
Website	cityofatlantic.com/parks-recreation/parks/schildberg-recreation-area
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/northern-atlantic-trails-system

The North 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 Well Field, where a combination of gravel and paved trails crisscross the open space.

TRAIL GAP 48B – ATLANTIC TO AVOCA

Planning Status	Unplanned
Funding Status	Unfunded
Construction Status/ Expected Completion Date	TBD

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. Further work is needed to identify the best trail connection.

AVOCA TRAILS

Total Length / Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Iowa (in Miles)	0.4 / 0.4
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	City of Avoca
Website	wattaway.com/trails/ avoca_city_trails

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

TRAIL GAP 48C – AVOCA TO NEOLA

Planning Status	Unplanned
Funding Status	Unfunded
Construction Status/ Expected Completion Date	TBD

A clear path does not currently exist to connect Avoca approximately 14 miles to Neola. Pottawattamie County's Comprehensive Plan 2030 identifies potential corridors to make this trail connection, which should continue to be reviewed. The City of Minden, situated between Avoca and Neola, is actively working on a section of trail through town as part of their recovery from a devastating tornado in 2024. This trail section could potentially be a hub for the Great American Rail-Trail.

**TRAIL GAP 49A – RAILROAD
HIGHWAY TRAIL EXTENSION
(NEOLA TO UNDERWOOD)**

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

The Pottawattamie County Conservation Board is partnering with several local organizations to complete the Railroad Highway Trail. Construction is underway toward the southern end, with the northern end (Trail Gap 49a) to follow.

**TRAIL GAP 49B – RAILROAD
HIGHWAY TRAIL EXTENSION
(UNDERWOOD TO WESTON)**

Planning Status	Partially planned
Funding Status	Partially funded
Construction Status/ Expected Completion Date	Construction expected in 2027

Significant funding was awarded in 2025 to complete Trail Gap 49b between Underwood and Weston. In early 2026, Pottawattamie County issued a request for proposals to complete final engineering designs and construction-ready plans for this nearly 5-mile section of trail, with construction slated to follow.

RAILROAD HIGHWAY TRAIL

Total Length / Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Iowa (in Miles)	3.8 / 3.8
Surface Type	Concrete
Trail Manager	Pottawattamie County Conservation Board
Website	wattaway.com/trails/railroad_highway_multiuse_trail
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/railroad-highway-trail-

The Railroad Highway Trail will eventually be a 16.7-mile trail extending from Neola south to Council Bluffs. The existing portions of the trail parallel Railroad Highway briefly through Underwood as well as between Idlewood Road and the Smith Wildlife Refuge Area. An additional 13 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)

Planning Status	Fully planned
Funding Status	Fully funded
Construction Status/ Expected Completion Date	Construction expected in 2026

An additional 1.8 miles of trail are expected to be developed along Railroad Highway between Kanesville Boulevard and the existing trail around the Smith Wildlife Refuge Area. Construction is slated for 2026.

KANESVILLE TRAIL

Total Length / Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Iowa (in Miles)	3.1 / 3.1
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	City of Council Bluffs
Website	councilbluffs-ia.gov/2166/Trails

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

Planning Status	Fully planned
Funding Status	Unfunded
Construction Status/ Expected Completion Date	TBD

The City of Council Bluffs intends to complete this half-mile gap in the Kanesville Trail to create a seamless entry into Council Bluffs from the east.

TRAIL GAP 50C – KANESVILLE TRAIL EXTENSION 2

Planning Status	Fully planned
Funding Status	Unfunded
Construction Status/ Expected Completion Date	TBD

The City of Council Bluffs intends to complete this 0.1-mile gap in the Kanesville Trail to create a seamless entry into Council Bluffs from the east.

FIRST AVENUE TRAIL

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

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 similar to a linear park. 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 / Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in Iowa (in Miles)	0.4 / 0.2
Surface Type	Concrete
Trail Managers	Council Bluffs Parks & Recreation, Omaha Parks & Recreation, Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District
Website	• councilbluffs-ia.gov/2178/bob-kerrey-pedestrian-bridge • visitomaha.com/bob
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/bob-kerrey-pedestrian-bridge

The Bob Kerrey Pedestrian 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.