

WASHINGTON, D.C.



RTC staff and members of the Warrior Expeditions team set out on a ride along the existing route of the Great American Rail-Trail in May 2024. | Photo by Mariah Miranda

A journey westward along the Great American Rail-Trail will begin at the steps of the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C. The trail will travel among some of the most iconic landmarks in the nation's capital along the National Mall, including the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial, where the trail heads north along the Rock Creek Park Trails. The route then picks up the Capital Crescent Trail in Georgetown, which flows into the towpath of the Chesapeake and Ohio (C&O) Canal National Historical Park stretching from Washington, D.C., to Cumberland, Maryland.

TABLE 2: GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL MILEAGE IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

Total Length / Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in D.C. (in Miles)	7.5 (100%)
Total Great American Rail-Trail Gap Miles in D.C. (% of Total State Mileage)	0 (0%)
Total Trail Gaps in D.C.	0
Total Great American Rail-Trail Miles in D.C.	7.5

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE ASSESSMENT 2026

MAP 1: WASHINGTON, D.C.

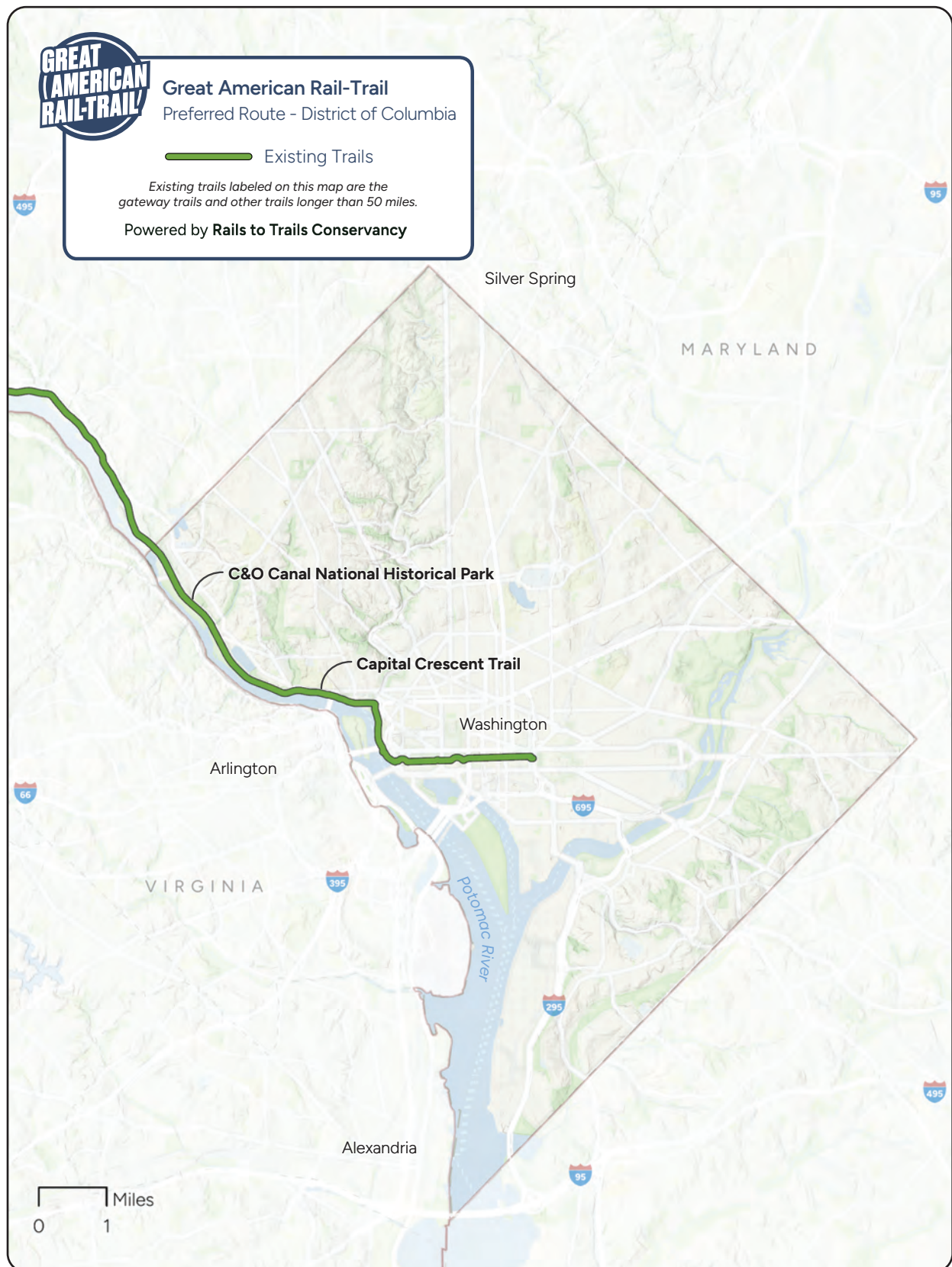


TABLE 3: GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL ROUTE THROUGH WASHINGTON, D.C.

Existing Trail Name	Length in D.C. Along Great American Rail-Trail (in Miles)
National Mall Trails	2.4
Rock Creek Park Trails	0.7
K Street/Water Street Cycle Track	0.6
Capital Crescent Trail	2.3
C&O Canal National Historical Park	1.5
Total Miles	7.5
Existing Trail Miles	7.5
Trail Gap Miles	0.0



NATIONAL MALL TRAILS

Total Length / Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in D.C. (in Miles)	5.0 / 2.4
Surface Type	Concrete, dirt
Trail Manager	National Park Service
Website	nps.gov/nama/index.htm

Beginning at the steps of the U.S. Capitol, the Great American Rail-Trail will travel west from this eastern extent along the National Mall. The National Mall has a series of trails owned and maintained by the National Park Service that are popular with tourists traveling around the monuments and museums. Bicycles are allowed on the trails, but because the trails are frequently crowded, cyclists should take caution and proceed through the National Mall Trails slowly. The trail crosses the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway (also known as Rock Creek Parkway) before heading north along the Potomac River. The trail hugs the river, then merges with the Rock Creek Park Trails.

Guinness World Record holder Ian Mackay holds an event on the National Mall before beginning a 475-mile wheelchair trek on the Great American Rail-Trail in 2022. | Photo by Anthony Le

ROCK CREEK PARK TRAILS

Total Length / Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in D.C. (in Miles)	8.5 / 0.7
Surface Type	Asphalt, dirt
Trail Manager	National Park Service
Website	nps.gov/rocr/planyourvisit/hiking.htm
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/rock-creek-park-trails

Rock Creek Park is the oldest and largest urban park in the national park system. The portion of the Rock Creek Park Trails system through Rock Creek Park in Washington, D.C., is owned and maintained by the National Park Service. The Rock Creek Park Trails connect to the National Mall Trails along the banks of the Potomac River near the Theodore Roosevelt Bridge. The Rock Creek Park Trails travel 8.5 miles in total in Washington, D.C. The Great American Rail-Trail utilizes the southernmost portion of these trails.

K STREET/WATER STREET CYCLE TRACK

Total Length / Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in D.C. (in Miles)	0.6 / 0.6
Surface Type	Asphalt
Trail Manager	District Department of Transportation (DDOT)

The Rock Creek Park Trails create a connection to a protected bike lane, or cycle track, along K Street/Water Street in the Georgetown neighborhood of Washington, D.C. (accessible via a ramp from K Street Northwest to Rock Creek Parkway). The two-way protected bike lane travels the length of K Street/Water Street, underneath the elevated Whitehurst Freeway, to the entrance of the Capital Crescent Trail.

CAPITAL CRESCENT TRAIL

Total Length / Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in D.C. (in Miles)	11.0 / 2.3
Surface Type	Asphalt, crushed stone
Trail Managers	DDOT, Montgomery County Department of Transportation, Montgomery Parks, National Park Service
Website	cctrail.org
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/capital-crescent-trail

At the end of K Street/Water Street, the Great American Rail-Trail reaches the first rail-trail along the route as it heads west from Washington, D.C., onto the Capital Crescent Trail. This 11-mile trail uses the right-of-way of the former Georgetown Branch of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, which was abandoned in the mid-1980s. The paved Capital Crescent Trail is sandwiched between the Potomac River and the C&O Canal. After about 2 miles, the Capital Crescent Trail arcs northward toward Bethesda, Maryland, and crosses over the C&O Canal Towpath at the Arizona Avenue Bridge. Trail users continuing on the Great American can find a connection to the historical C&O Canal Towpath at Fletcher's Cove Boathouse 0.5 mile before the Arizona Avenue Bridge.

C&O CANAL NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

Total Length / Total Length Along Great American Rail-Trail in D.C. (in Miles)	184.5 / 1.5
Surface Type	Crushed stone, dirt, gravel
Trail Manager	National Park Service
Website	canaltrust.org nps.gov/choh/index.htm
TrailLink Map	traillink.com/trail/chesapeake--ohio-canal-national-historical-park

The majority of the C&O Canal National Historical Park, also known as the C&O Canal Towpath, is in Maryland and is addressed in the next chapter.