

GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL™

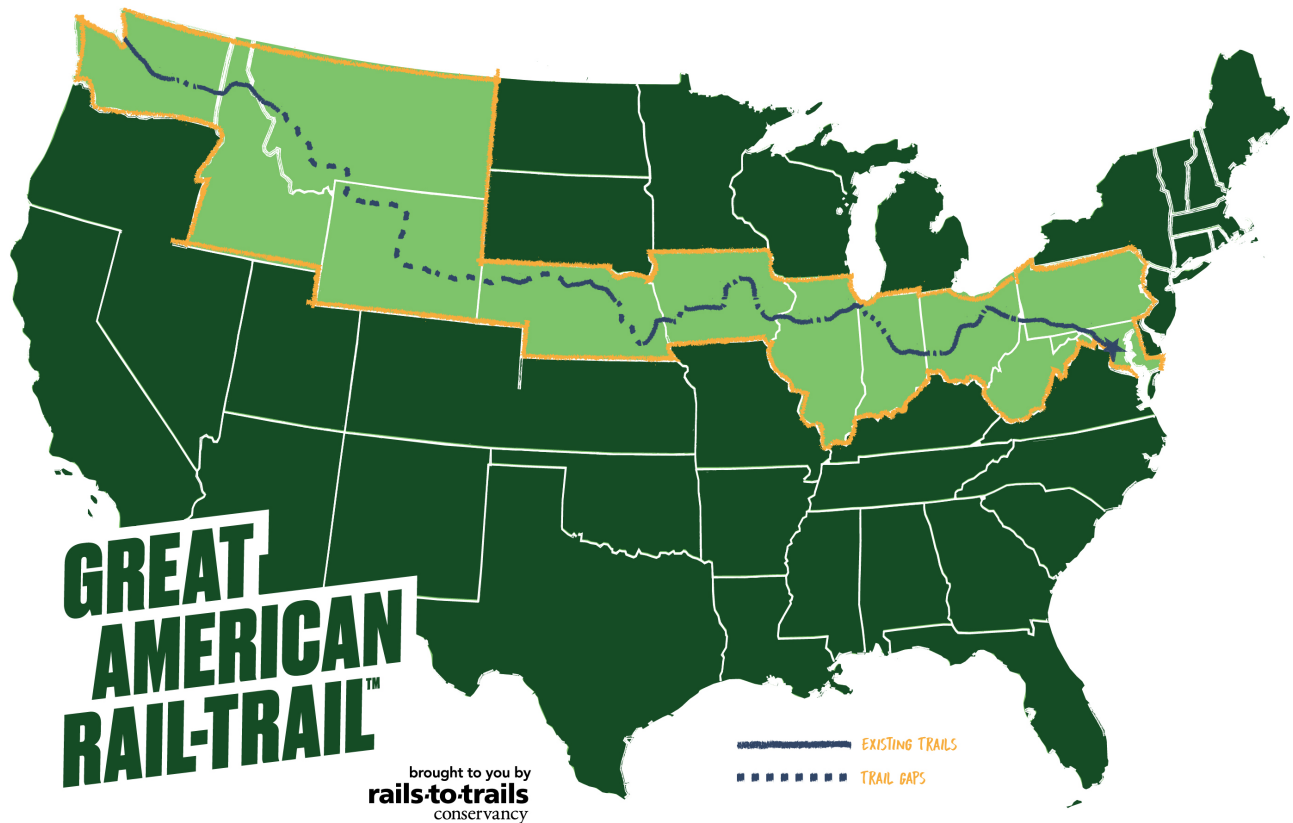
UNITED WE TRAIL™



#GRTAmerican

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Cedar Valley Nature Trail, Iowa | Photo by Liz Zabel, courtesy GO Cedar Rapids



IMAGINE A TRAIL THAT CONNECTS THE COUNTRY...

Picture yourself ... pedaling across the entire country on a safe, seamless and scenic pathway—or walking a local trail that connects along historic routes. Imagine the incomparable experience of exploring America’s heritage by trail—its potential, its beauty and bounty, its people and places. Consider the economic opportunities and the benefits for communities along the route of a multiuse trail that stretches more than 3,700 miles between Washington, D.C., and Washington State.



THAT'S WHAT'S POSSIBLE WITH THE GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL.

A signature project of Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC), the Great American Rail-Trail™—or the “Great American”—is the organization’s most ambitious trail project to date and will prove to be a national treasure as it unites millions of people over thousands of miles of trail. As the nation’s first cross-country multiuse trail, the Great American Rail-Trail will be entirely bikeable and walkable, connecting travelers of all ages and abilities with America’s diverse landscapes and communities. Nearly 50 million people living within 50 miles of its route will be

able to call this iconic American infrastructure their own, as the trail delivers new access to the outdoors and new opportunities for physical activity and recreation. Hundreds of communities along the route will experience new opportunities for business development and tourism thanks to the Great American Rail-Trail, all while contributing to the growth of the country’s burgeoning outdoor economy—one of the largest sectors in the United States.¹

THE TIME IS NOW.

The possibility of a rail-trail that spans the country has been known since the mid-1980s. As RTC stood at the forefront of the trails movement that was emerging across the country, it tracked rail-trails being developed east to west along the same course charted by the railroads a century ago. Now, RTC’s GIS analysis of open trails shows that more than half of the Great American Rail-Trail’s preferred route is complete—the milestone RTC has long identified as the threshold for committing to make this trail a reality. With that milestone in hand, RTC has committed to leverage its national expertise and resources in connecting the people and the infrastructure necessary to deliver the Great American Rail-Trail to the country.

 **The Great American Rail-Trail will be a national treasure. It presents a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to create—together—an enduring gift to the nation that will bring joy for generations to come.** 

—Ryan Chao, RTC President

CONNECTING THE GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL.

The Great American Rail-Trail is a bold vision—one that will take several decades to complete. The trail’s future is possible thanks to the hard work and ingenuity of the entire trails community—from RTC itself, to trail managers, nonprofit partners, state agencies and volunteers who have rolled up their sleeves to protect and preserve more than 36,000 miles of rail-trails, greenways and other multiuse paths across the country. Existing trails like these comprise more than 52% of the Great American’s preferred route across the country.

The work to close the 95+ trail gaps along the preferred route between Washington, D.C., and Washington State is being guided by RTC’s

route assessment—the product of a 12-month analysis of potential trail routing. The resulting route assessment is the guiding document informing the preferred route of the Great American Rail-Trail. The assessment was developed in partnership with states and local trail organizations using RTC’s comprehensive GIS database of more than 36,000 miles of existing multiuse trails nationwide, and findings from the review of more than 300 state and local trail plans to identify planned future trails. In addition, RTC conducted dozens of meetings and phone calls with 200+ local trail partners and 50+ state agencies representing the trails along the route. These discussions informed the preferred route, ensuring it aligned with local and state priorities.

THE "GREAT AMERICAN" CRITERIA.

Key to the process of defining the preferred route of the Great American Rail-Trail with states and trail partners was confirming a route across the country that would provide the highest quality experience for all types of trail users—from long-distance cyclists and runners, to casual daily explorers and everyone in between. Trail criteria were developed to ensure the Great American Rail-Trail would provide safe, non-motorized travel on a route that is entirely bikeable and walkable. These trail criteria specify that the Great American Rail-Trail be one contiguous route that is reasonably direct between Washington, D.C., and Washington State. It will be separated from vehicle traffic—a minimum of 80% initially and ultimately entirely separated when the trail is complete. It will comprise existing trails to the extent possible and will represent trail priorities of the states and local jurisdictions it crosses. And, it will serve as a catalyst for local economic development, including providing services for long-distance travelers.

SPURRING TRAIL COMPLETION.

In every state along the preferred route of the Great American, needs for completing the trail vary. To spur trail completion, RTC has identified initial catalyst initiatives—projects or challenges that would most benefit from RTC’s national breadth of resources. For example, along the preferred route of the Great American, RTC will provide trail planning assistance for completing trail gaps; generate public funding support for future trail development or improvements to open trails; advocate for local and state trail priorities, and provide communications support and strategy to advance trail priorities along the route; and conduct research critical to advancing trail priorities. Through these initiatives, RTC will directly support local and state partners, investing time, expertise and organizational resources in specific projects that are critical to the ultimate completion of the Great American Rail-Trail. (A listing of current catalyst initiatives is available at greatamericanrailtrail.org/catalysts.)



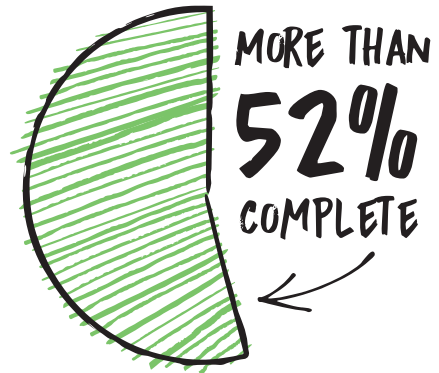
GATEWAY TRAILS

The Great American Rail-Trail includes 12 “gateway” trails—existing trails along the route that make possible this grand vision of a nation connected by trails. These gateway trails form the foundation for the “Great American” in each of the states it crosses. They have been built through the hard work and ingenuity of the trails community, who have rolled up their sleeves to protect and preserve these priceless corridors. Meet the gateway trails at greatamericanrailtrail.org.

THIS IS THE GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL

TOTAL MILES
1,900+

3,700+
EXISTING TRAIL
MILES



145+
EXISTING TRAILS
HOSTING ROUTE

95+
TRAIL GAPS

12 STATES TRAVERSED



~50,000,000 PEOPLE WITHIN
50 MILES OF THE TRAIL

JOIN THE MOVEMENT TO COMPLETE THE GREAT AMERICAN RAIL-TRAIL

The Great American Rail-Trail is America's trail. It will stand alongside our country's iconic landmarks as a national treasure. And, it will take all of us—through advocacy, volunteerism and donations—to bring the full potential of the Great American to life. Join RTC as we work with hundreds of partners across the country to connect these trails and complete this vision.

greatamericanrailtrail.org

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Rails-to-Trails Conservancy is the nation's largest trails organization—with a grassroots community more than 1 million strong—dedicated to connecting people and communities by creating a nationwide network of public trails, many from former rail lines. railstotrails.org



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