



St. Clair County Trails and Routes Master Plan Executive Summary

St. Clair County
Parks and Recreation
Commission

Prepared by:



THE GREENWAY COLLABORATIVE, INC.

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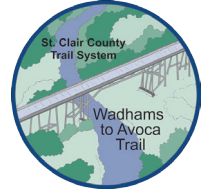
Existing Trails and Trail System Gaps

Executive Summary

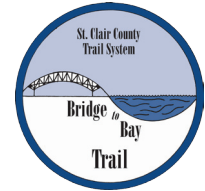


EXISTING TRAILS

The two primary trails in St. Clair County are the Bridge to Bay Trail and the Wadhams to Avoca Trail. Both Trails have outgrown their original named endpoints and have proven to be wildly popular with residents and visitors alike. The two trails are very different in their character and in the way they were implemented. The Wadhams to Avoca Trail, is a rail-trail, located on property owned by the County and the County constructed and manages the trail as a County Park.



The Bridge to Bay Trail on the other hand, is comprised of sidepath, paved roadway shoulders and rail-trail segments located on a combination of public road ROW's, public property and easements on privately held land. It was built and is maintained by the different communities that the trail travels through.



The third significant trail, the Macomb Orchard Trail, ends just west of the County line in Richmond. The Macomb Orchard Trail is part of the Airline Cross-state Trail. The Macomb Orchard Trail also links to many of the region's most significant off-road trails including the Clinton River Trail, The Paint Creek Trail and indirectly to The West Bloomfield Trail and the Polly Ann Trail.



These three regionally significant trails: the Macomb Orchard Trail, the Wadhams to Avoca Trail and the Bridge to Bay Trail form the foundation for the trails action plan. The proposed trails and routes link these three trails into a system to and make them more accessible to a wider spectrum of the county's population.

TRAIL SYSTEM GAPS

The St. Clair County Trails Action Plan is a conflation of what were previously two separate planning studies:

- **Wadhams to Avoca / Bridge to Bay Link Master Plan**
- **South County Connector Feasibility Study**

These two studies were initiated to address the two largest questions regarding trails in St. Clair County. First, how may the Wadhams to Avoca Trail be extended east through Port Huron to link up with the Bridge to Bay Trail? Second, what is the most appropriate route to link the Macomb Orchard Trail that ends in Richmond to the Bridge to Bay Trail along the St. Clair River?

As these two studies were nearing completion it became clear that they shared many elements and indeed that some of the proposed trails and routes linked the two initiatives. Thus, these two efforts, along with some related projects, were brought together into a single document to coordinate their implementation.



Trails and Routes Action Plan Overview

Executive Summary



TRAILS AND ROUTES ACTION PLAN OVERVIEW

The purpose of the St. Clair Trails Master Plan is to outline the next ten to fifteen years of major trail and bike route improvements. These improvements will be led by St. Clair County Parks and Recreation Commission in collaboration with local agencies. The report is not a comprehensive trails plan for the County. Numerous trails and greenways identified in other recent planning efforts will be undertaken by other agencies. This document focuses on the corridors of regional and county-wide significance.

The Action Plan classifies all of the existing and proposed corridors as either a trail or a route.

Off-Road Trails are non-motorized facilities that for the most part, are independent from roadways although some run alongside a roadway within the road right-of-way. There are numerous types of trails including Rail Trails - built on the grade of an abandoned railroad (like the Wadhams to Avoca Trail); Rail-with-Trails - constructed adjacent to an active railroad line; and Transmission Corridor Trails - built within a high-voltage power transmission corridor.



On-Road Bike Routes utilize existing roadways. Typically they have identification and guide signage that direct bicyclists along suitable routes between two destinations. An On-Road Bike Route may be comprised of Bike Lanes, Paved Shoulders or a Shared Roadway. A Bike Lane is a traffic lane in the roadway designated for the exclusive use of bicycles. In suburban and urban areas a Bike Lane would typically be paired with sidewalks. Paved Shoulders are more typical in rural areas. Also, in where low volume/low speed roadways a road may be signed as a Bike Route without any special facilities for bicyclists.



There was a strong desire to make the connections from the Wadhams to Avoca Trail and the Macomb Orchard Trail to the Bridge to Bay Trail, Off-Road Trails. This goal was met. But in recognition that Off-Road Trails can be costly facilities that require the purchase or long-term lease of right-of-way, On-Road Bike Routes were also suggested. Some of these may be implemented in the near-term to address the gaps in the trail system. Others are offered as alternatives to a portion of the preferred Off-Road Trail should acquiring right-of-way become difficult or too costly.

In any case, the On-Road Bike Routes complement the Off-Road Trails making for a more comprehensive non-motorized transportation system. They also offer users the option to create loop rides where they do not need to double back on the same route.

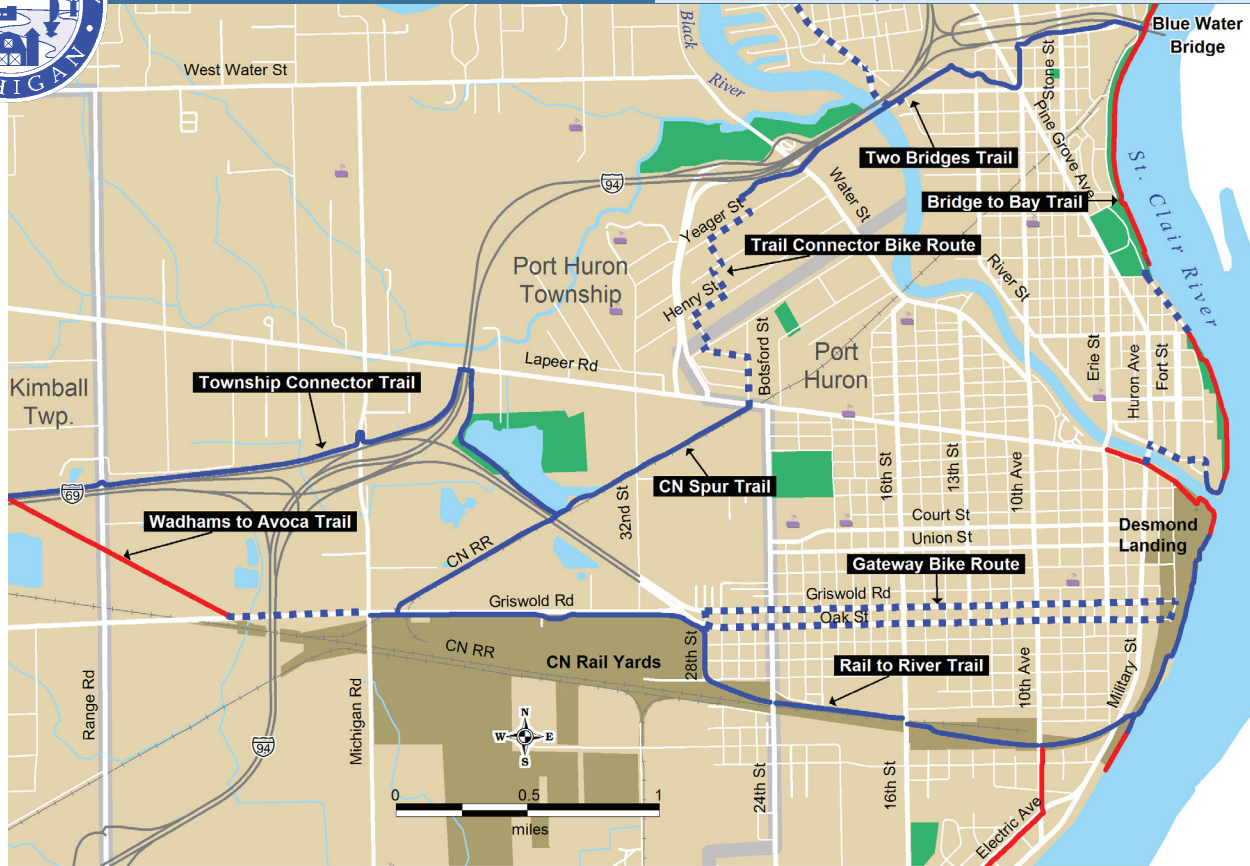
An exciting element of the Trails and Routes Action Plan is the approximately 64 mile primarily off-road loop through the middle of the county. This loop will connect and incorporate three of the four major facilities of the St. Clair County Park and Recreation Commission. Its length, varied natural and cultural elements, and loop form lends itself to major events such as metric century rides and could become a regional draw for bicyclists.

The following pages review the key links in more detail.



Wadhams to Avoca / Bridge to Bay Trail Connectors

Executive Summary



Legend:

- Existing Off-Road Trail
- - - Existing On-Road Bike Route
- Proposed Off-Road Trail
- - - Proposed On-Road Bike Route
- Public Park
- Selected Large Private Properties



Abandoned rail car maintenance buildings south of Griswold Road and west of 28th Street

PROPOSED OFF-ROAD TRAILS:

- **Rail to River Trail** - this is proposed to be the primary link between the Wadhams to Avoca Trail and Bridge to Bay Trail.
- **Two Bridges Trail** – this trail is dependent on the proposed Black River Bridge project and the proposed Toll Plaza project.
- **CN Spur Trail** – this secondary route would lead from the Rail to River trail toward the Two Bridges Trail.

PROPOSED ON-ROAD BIKE ROUTES:

- **Gateway Bike Route** – is a Complete Street make over for the business route leading into downtown Port Huron. This could also be a primary link should the eastern half of the Rails to River trail prove unfeasible.
- **Trail Connector Bike Route** – would link the CN Spur Trail to the Two Bridges Trail.

RAIL TO RIVER TRAIL

The Rail to River trail is planned to be the primary link between the Wadhams to Avoca Trail and the Bridge to Bay trail. The Trail is about 3.6 miles long and generally parallels Griswold Road for the first half and the CN rail line for the second half.

INTERPRETIVE THEME

The proposed Rail to River Trail route connects a number of transportation related features:

- A number of abandoned railroads;
- The extremely busy Canadian National railroad that is significant to north American trade;
- A large switching yard for the international train tunnel;
- An abandoned turn table artifact that has the potential to be restored;
- An extensive abandoned car works site;
- An Amtrak passenger train terminal;
- The first and second Port Huron / Sarnia international train tunnels;
- The abandoned train ferry docks; and
- Desmond Landings Vantage Point, home of boatnerd.com.

All of these past and current transportation facilities present an almost unparalleled opportunity to explore Port Huron's role in rail and water transportation.

A series of interpretive signs are proposed to help the trail user better understand the relationships between the current and past transportation features. Beyond signs, two overlooks are proposed, one at the tunnel yards and the other at the international tunnels. These locations present the opportunity to create a more engaging interpretive experience by providing audio of the calls between the train controllers and the train engineers.

A similar train observation platform with audio links has proven to be extremely popular along a busy train line in northern Florida. There is also an opportunity to coordinate the interpretive signs and overlooks along the trail with an exhibit at the Port Huron Museum.

Property promoted, the combination of viewing trains along the Rail to River Trail and freighters along the St. Clair River from Desmond Landing could provide to be a significant regional tourist draw.



Abandoned turn-table just south of Griswold between Michigan Road and 28th Street



Vantage Point at Desmond Landing



Rail to River Trail Overview

Executive Summary



Legend:

- Existing Off-Road Trail
- - - Existing On-Road Bike Route
- Proposed Off-Road Trail
- - - Proposed On-Road Bike Route
- Public Park
- Selected Large Private Properties
- Freeway
- + — Railroad
- • — Power Transmission Line - Owned
- - - • - - - Power Transmission Line - Easement
- P Staging Area
- A Interpretive Station
- ◇ At Grade Trail / Road Intersection
- △ Trail Bridge / Overpass
- ▽ Trail Underpass

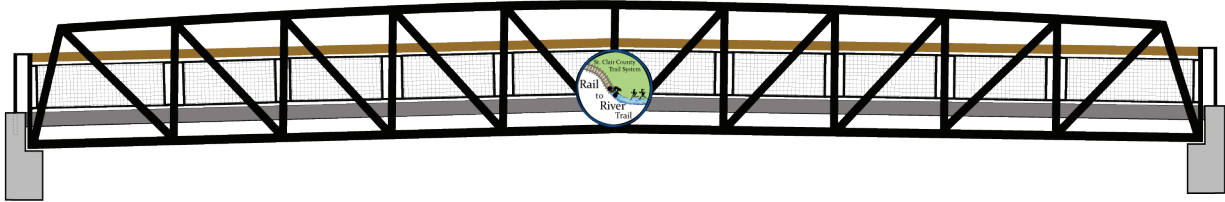
The Rail to River Trail is highlighted in green

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS:

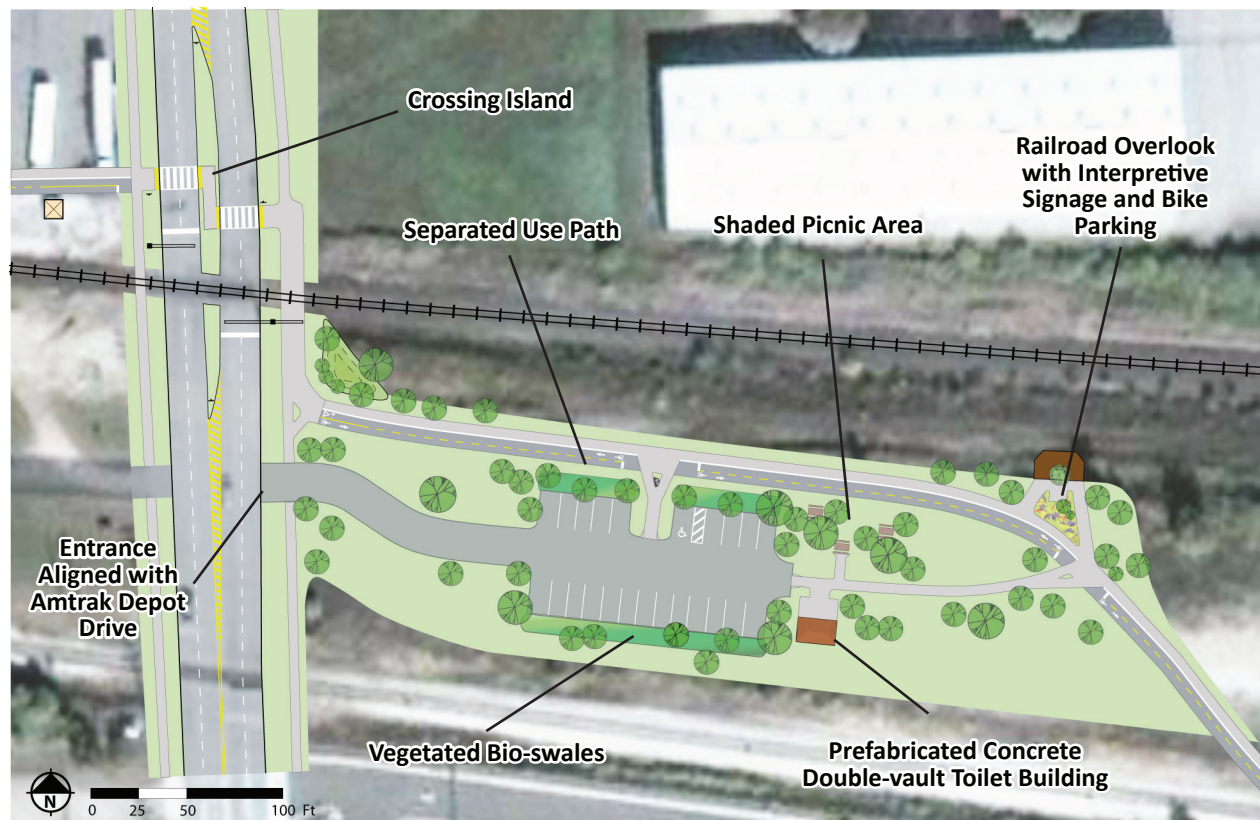
- Bike lanes and a wide sidewalk/path along the north side of Griswold Road from the end of the Wadhams to Avoca Trail to Michigan Road.
- A Trail on the south side of Griswold Road from Michigan Road to 28th Street. The Trail may be constructed in either the Griswold Road ROW or it could be integrated into the redevelopment of the abandoned GTW Car Yard (a railroad car maintenance facility).
- Construct a Trail along the north side of the active CN Rail from 28th Street to Military Street.
- Provide an overpass over 24th Street and Crossing Island for at-grade crosswalks at 16th Street and 10th Avenue.
- Provide a series of interpretive stations that explore railroad transportation history and current activities.
- Provide staging areas at the eastern terminus of the Wadhams to Avoca Trail, 24th Street and 16th Street.

RAIL TO RIVER TRAIL DESIGN ELEMENTS

BRIDGE OVER 24TH STREET



16TH STREET CROSSING AND STAGING AREA



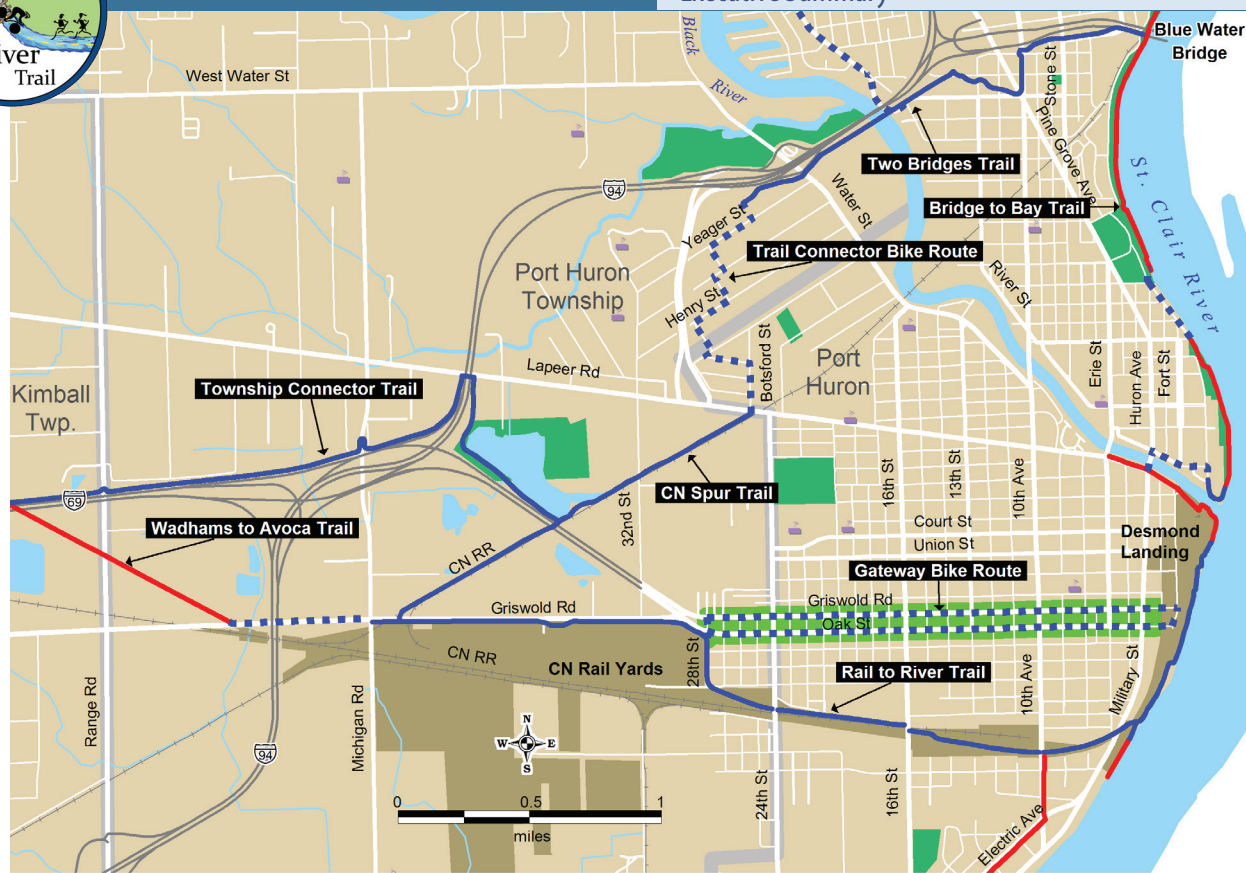
TRAIL HEAD AND INTERPRETIVE SIGNS





Gateway Bike Route Context

Executive Summary



Legend:

- Existing Off-Road Trail
- - - Existing On-Road Bike Route
- Proposed Off-Road Trail
- - - Proposed On-Road Bike Route
- Public Park
- Selected Large Private Properties

The Gateway Bike Route highlighted in green.



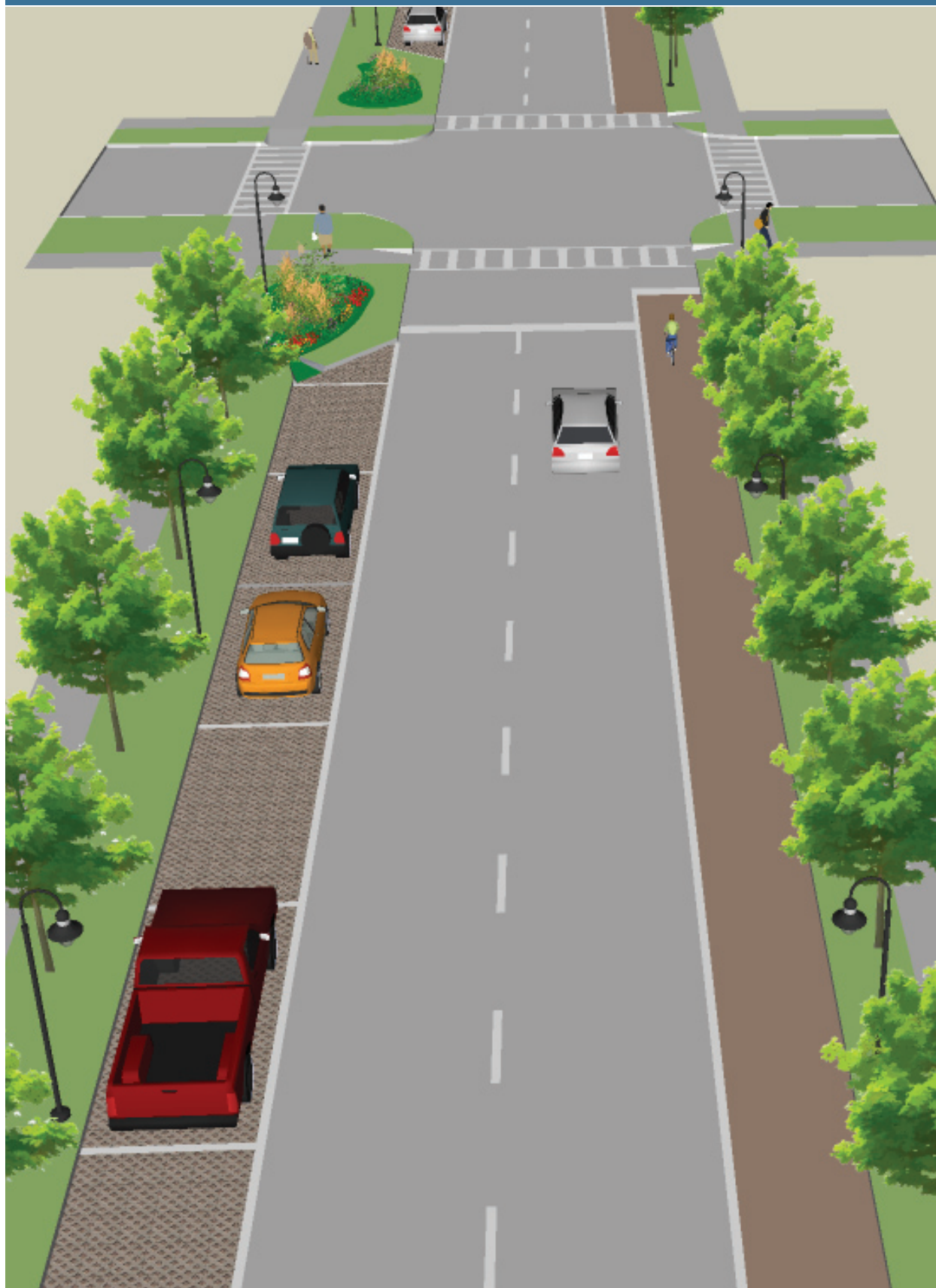
Bicyclists along Oak Street

The Gateway Bike Route functions on two levels; as an alternative eastern portion of the Rails to River Trail as well as a worthwhile project all by itself. It would greatly enhance the entrance to Port Huron while improving bicycle and pedestrian accommodations along and across the corridor.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Add bike lanes the length of Griswold Road and Oak Street by narrowing the existing travel lanes.
- Move parking to the left side of the street and pave with permeable pavers.
- Shorten crosswalk distances by using curb extensions and incorporate rain gardens into the curb extensions planting with native shrubs and flowers.
- Add pedestrian scale lighting.
- Add a wayfinding system
- Add street trees between the sidewalk and the roadway

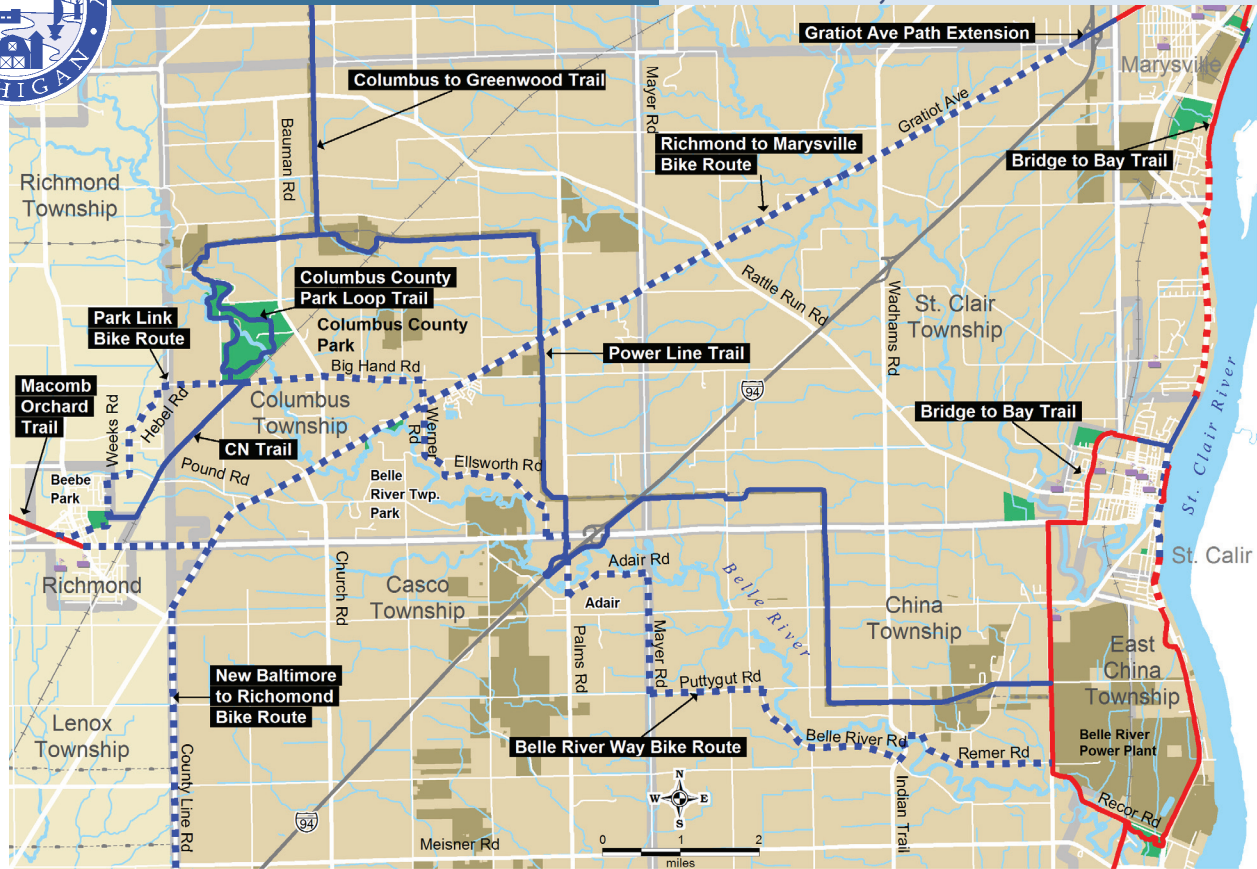
GATEWAY BIKE ROUTE DESIGN ELEMENTS





Macomb Orchard Trail / Bridge to Bay Trail Connectors

Executive Summary



Legend:

- Existing Off-Road Trail
- - - Existing On-Road Bike Route
- Proposed Off-Road Trail
- - - Proposed On-Road Bike Route
- Public Park
- Selected Large Private Properties
- Freeway
- Railroad
- Power Transmission Line - Owned
- Power Transmission Line - Easement
- P Staging Area
- A Interpretive Station
- At Grade Trail / Road Intersection
- Trail Bridge / Overpass
- Trail Underpass

PROPOSED OFF-ROAD TRAILS:

The following three trails make up the primary off-road link between the Macomb Orchard Trail and the Bridge to Bay Trail:

- **CN Trail** – a Rails-with-Trail that connects Richmond to Columbus County Park;
- **Columbus County Park Loop** – this loop trail also links the CN Trail and the Power Line Trail; and
- **Power Line Trail** – this trail within a Transmission Corridor links Columbus County Park and the Bridge to Bay Trail

PROPOSED ON-ROAD BIKE ROUTES:

- **Park Link Bike Route and the Belle River Way Bike Route** – provide an immediate low cost link between the Macomb Orchard Trail and the Bridge to Bay Trail; and
- **Richmond to Marysville Bike Route** – is a longer term link primarily along Gratiot Ave.

CN TRAIL AND POWER LINE TRAIL

The CN Trail in Combination with the Power Line Trail will serve as the long-term off-road trail linking the Macomb Orchard Trail and the Bridge to Bay Trail. These two trails will also provide a nonmotorized route to Columbus County Park.

The CN Trail links Richmond's Beebe Park to Columbus County Park. The route requires obtaining easements as it crosses privately held land. The trail may be within the CN ROW and/or the private property that adjoins the railroad. For the most part the property that lies to the west of the railroad is in agricultural use and the parcels are of substantial size. This should make obtaining easements easier.

The Power Line Trail is located primarily within a 320' wide high voltage transmission corridor owned by ITC Transmission. The trail will need to obtain an easement from ITC. This should be feasible as ITC has a policy for granting easements to trails and preliminary discussions with ITC have been positive. There are three places though where the trail is needs to obtain easements from other landholders due to a gap in ITC ownership of the corridor. The first location is just south of Big Hand Road and the gap is 2,800' with a single land owner. The other two gaps in ownership are on either side of Allington Road, just north of Fred W. Moore Highway. To the west of Allington Road the gap is 660' long, east of Allington Road the gap is 1,400' long. All three gaps are currently undeveloped and there exists a service drive.

The biggest hurdle for the PowerLine Trail is I-94. While a freeway overpass would be ideal, the cost would likely be prohibitive. The proposal shows the trail leaving the ITC corridor and going south along Palms Road to the I-94 ROW and then under I-94 at the Belle River bridge. The trail then follows the I-94 ROW north again to the ITC corridor. There is enough headroom to go under the I-94 bridge at the Belle River but the path would likely be flooded out in the spring requiring frequent maintenance to clear sediment.



The Clinton River Trail in Rochester Hills Michigan used a recycled asphalt surface that has been well received by trail users. This may be an ideal surface for the CN and Power Line Trails if the construction of the trail can be coordinated with a near-by road reconstruction project.



CN Trail and Power Line Trail Western Half Overview

Executive Summary



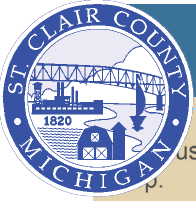
Legend:

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The CN Trail and Power Line Trail are highlighted in green.

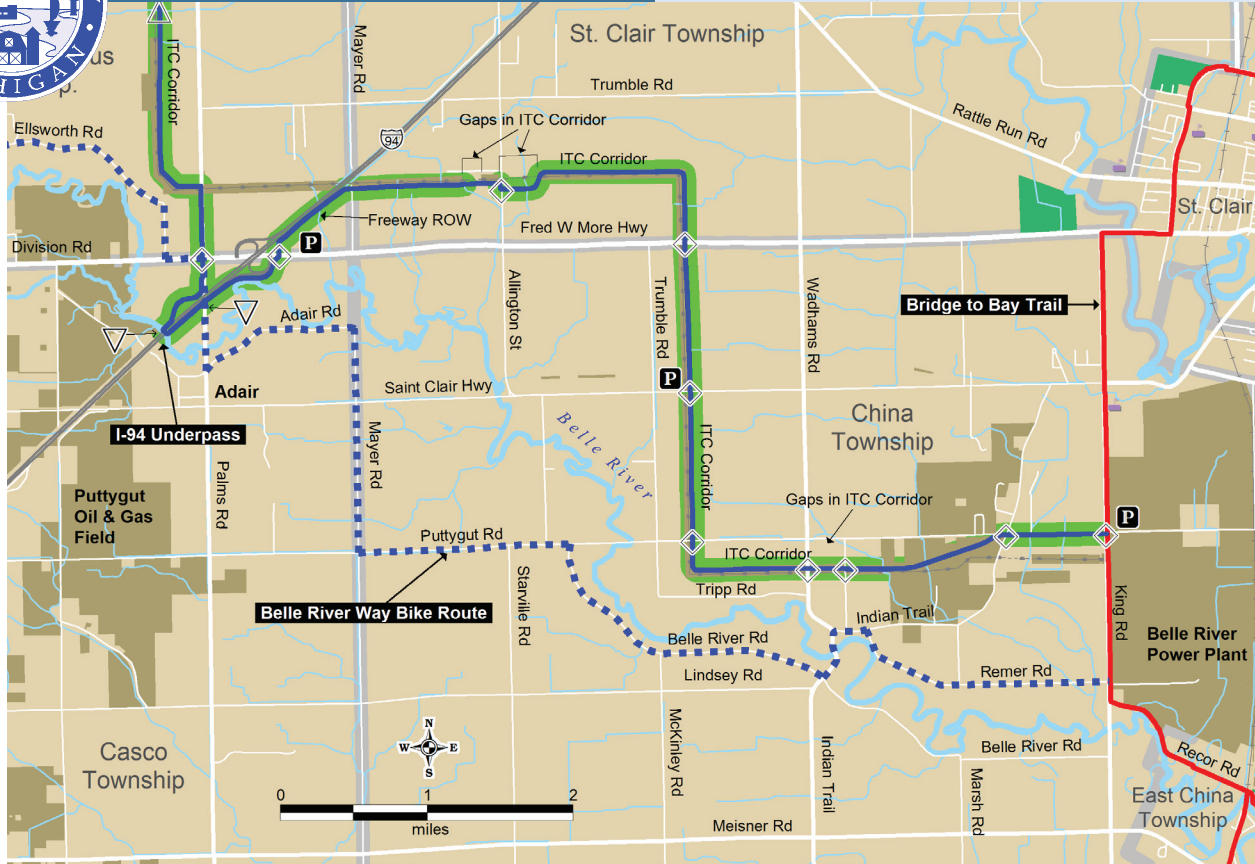
KEY RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Provide a Trail adjacent to the CN Railroad from Richmond to Columbus County Park.
- Provide a loop trail within Columbus County Park.
- Provide a Trail within the ITC Transmission Corridor between Columbus County Park and Palms Road.
- Provide a Shared Use Trail on the East Side of Palms Road, go under I-94 at the Belle River Bridge and follow the east side of the I-94 ROW to the ITC Corridor.
- Provide a Shared Use Trail in the ITC Transmission Corridor from I-94 to just west of King Road.
- Transition the Trail from the ITC Corridor to Puttygut Road and place the trail on the south side of Puttygut until King Road.

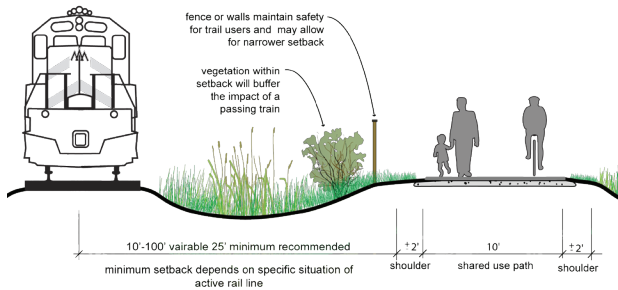


CN Trail and Power Line Trail Eastern Half Overview

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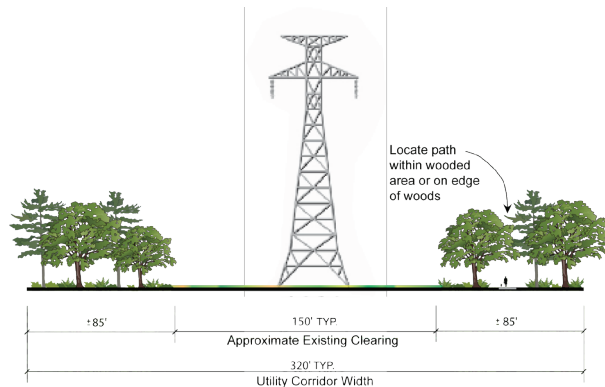


RAILS WITH TRAILS



The CN Trail from Richmond to Columbus County Park for the most part will be a “Rails-with-Trails” project. The trail will be separated from the rail-road by vegetation and potentially a fence when the trail is close to the tracks.

HIGH-VOLTAGE TRANSMISSION CORRIDOR TRAILS



The Powerline Trail from Columbus County Park to King Road will for the most part will be constructed within the ITC High Voltage Transmission Corridor. The ITC corridor is typically 320' wide with vegetation along the sides of the corridor. The trail can be located on the edge of the corridor within the existing vegetation reducing the visual impact of the transmission towers.



Trails and Routes Action Plan Prioritization

Executive Summary



IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

PHASE ONE - 2009

Construction:

- **Wadhams to Avoca Trail** – Upgrade exiting street crossings, construct Lapeer Road Staging Area and Construct Wadhams Road Crossing, \$350,000.
- **Bridge to Bay Trail Guide & Identification Sign System** – Install Guide and Identification Sign System, \$275,000.

Pre-construction:

- **Secure Property/Easements** – For Rail to River Trail between 24th Street and Military Street.
- **Prepare Construction Documents** – For Rail to River Trail between Wadhams to Avoca Trail and 24th Street, \$100,000.
- **Seek Rail to River Trail Funding** – Apply for two years of Enhancement Funding and seek local private funding for the Rail to River Trail.

PHASE TWO - 2010

Construction:

- **Rail to River Trail West Half** – From Bridge to Bay Trail to 24th Street, \$1,000,000.

Pre-construction:

- **Secure Property/Easements** – For CN Trail and Power Line Trail
- **Prepare Construction Documents** – For Rail to River Trail between 24th Street and Military Street, \$100,000.
- **Seek CN and Power Line Trail Funding** – Prepare Trust Fund Application seeking funding for the entire CN and Power Line Trail between Richmond and East China Township to be implemented over four years as well as seek funding from local private public sources.

PHASE THREE - 2011

Construction:

- **Rail to River Trail East Half** – From 24th Street to Military Street, \$1,000,000.

Pre-construction:

- **Prepare Construction Documents** – For CN Trail between Richmond and Columbus County Park and Columbus County Park Loop. \$100,000.

PHASE FOUR - 2012

Construction:

- **CN Trail** – From Richmond to Columbus County Park and Park Loop, \$1,000,000.

Pre-construction:

- **Prepare Construction Documents** – For Power Line Trail from Columbus County Park to Adair, \$100,000.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN (CONTINUED)

PHASE FIVE - 2013

Construction:

- **Power Line Trail** – from Columbus County Park to Adair, \$1,000,000.

Pre-construction:

- **Prepare Construction Documents** – For Power Line Trail from Adair to St. Clair Highway, \$100,000.

PHASE SIX - 2014

Construction:

- **Power Line Trail** – From Adair to St. Clair Highway, \$1,000,000.

Pre-construction:

- **Prepare Construction Documents** – For Power Line Trail from St. Clair Highway to King Road, \$100,000.
- **Re-evaluate Third Priority Trails and Routes** – Determine status of Business Route 69 Reconstruction, Gratiot Reconstruction, Black River Bridge and Toll Plaza Projects are at a stage where the trail and route projects should be initiated.

PHASE SEVEN - 2015

Construction:

- **Complete Power Line Trail** – From St. Clair Highway to King Road, \$1,000,000.

Pre-construction:

- **Secure Easements** – For third priority trails.
- **Prepare Construction Documents** – For first part of third priority trails.

PHASE EIGHT - 2016 THROUGH 2020

- **Third Priority Trails**

PHASE EIGHT - 2020 THROUGH 2024

- **Fourth Priority Trails**