

Industrial
Heartland
Trails
COALITION

2015 ANNUAL REPORT



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ihearttrails.org

IHTC Partners

Allegheny Valley Land Trust
Bike Cleveland
Bike Pittsburgh
Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation
Friends of the Riverfront
George Gund Foundation
Great Ohio Lake-to-River Greenway
Jefferson County Trails & Greenways

Lawrence County
Mill Creek Metroparks
Monongahela River Trails Conservancy
Muskingum Watershed Conservancy District
National Park Service
National Road Heritage Area
Ohio & Erie Canalway
Oil Region Alliance

Ohio River Trail Council
Pennsylvania Environmental Council
Portage County Park District
Progress Fund
Rails-to-Trails Conservancy
Titusville Redevelopment
Trans Allegheny Trails

IHTC Stakeholders

Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study
Allegheny Valley Trails Association
Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study
Armstrong Rails-to-Trails Association
Ashtabula County Commissioners
Ashtabula County CVB
Ashtabula County MetroParks
Bike Cleveland
Bike Erie
Bike Pittsburgh
Buckeye Trail Association
Canalway Partners
Chautauqua Rails-to-Trails Association
City of Clarksburg
City of Cleveland
City of Euclid
City of Mentor
City of Morgantown
City of Parkersburg
City of Shinnston
Clarksburg Parks and Recreation
Clear Lake Authority
Cleveland Metroparks
Columbiana County Park District
Conneaut Port Authority
Country Road Cyclists
Country Trails Bikes, LLC/The Cairo Supply Co.
Cuyahoga County Planning
Eastside Council of Governments
EDEFA Tuscarawas County
Emerge 2040
Environmental Design Group
Erie County Planning Department

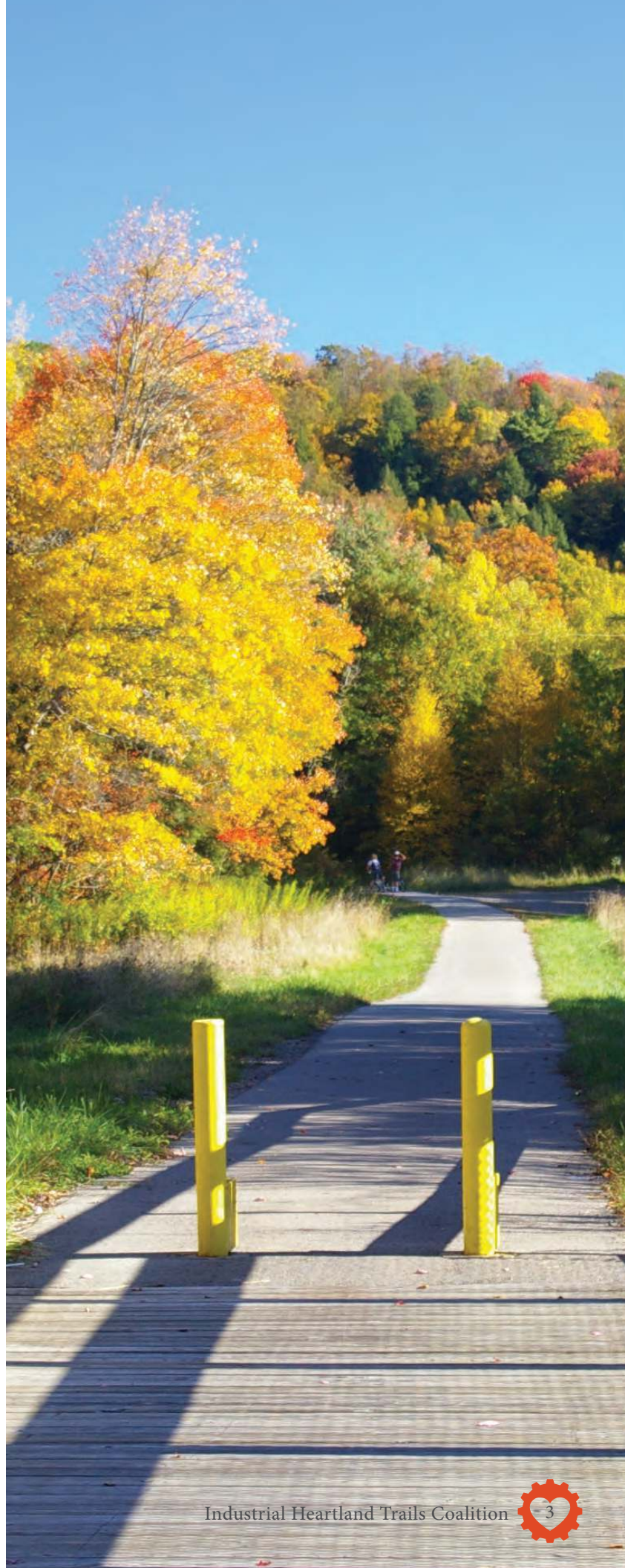
Erie-Western Pennsylvania Port Authority
Fayette County on Sheepskin Trail
Friends of the Riverfront
GLORTC & ORT
Grand Vue Park
Great Ohio Lake-to-River Greenway
Harrison County
Harrison County Commission
Harrison County Planning
Harrison County Parks and Recreation
Historic Canal Dover Association
I-79 Development Council North Central West
Virginia Rail-Trail Committee
Lake Erie Arboretum Foundation
Lake MetroParks
Lawrence County Planning
Marietta-Washington County
Mercer County Trails Association, Inc.
Mid-Ohio Valley Regional Council
Mill Creek MetroParks
Monongahela River Towns
Monongahela River Trails Conservancy
Morgantown City Council
Morgantown-Monongahela MPO
Mosquito Lake Greenway Project
Muskingum Watershed Conservancy District
National Park Service RTCA Program
National Road Heritage Area
North Bend Rail-Trail State Park
North Bend Rails-to-Trails Foundation
Northern W.V. Brownfields Assistance Center
Northwest PA Trails Association
NWPA Trails Association

Ohio & Erie Canal Corridor Association
Ohio River Trail Council
Ohio Valley Trail Association
Oil Creek State Park
Oil Region Alliance
Pennsylvania DCNR
Pennsylvania Environmental Council
Point Marion Town Council
Portage County Park District
Progress Fund Trail Towns
Rails-to-Trails Conservancy
Redbank Valley Trails Association
Region VI Planning and Development Council
Smolen Engineering, Ltd.
Stark County Park District
Stark County Planning
Strong Cities, Strong Communities
Summit County MetroParks
Thrasher Engineering
Titusville Area Trails Association
Trans Allegheny Trails
Trust for Public Land
Tuscarawas County Commissioner
Tuscarawas County Park Department
Wayne County Rails-to-Trails
Wayne National Forest
Western Reserve Land Conservancy
West Virginia DOH
West Virginia DNR State Parks
West Virginia Rails-to-Trails Council
West Virginia Region VI Planning and Development Council
West Virginia University School of Public Health



Leveraging the work of dozens of groups that have built hundreds of miles of trail, the Industrial Heartland Trails Coalition believes that our combined vision of a 1,400-mile network of multi-use trails benefits the health, economic, and recreational needs of our four-state region.

We look forward to seeing you out there.



Who We Are

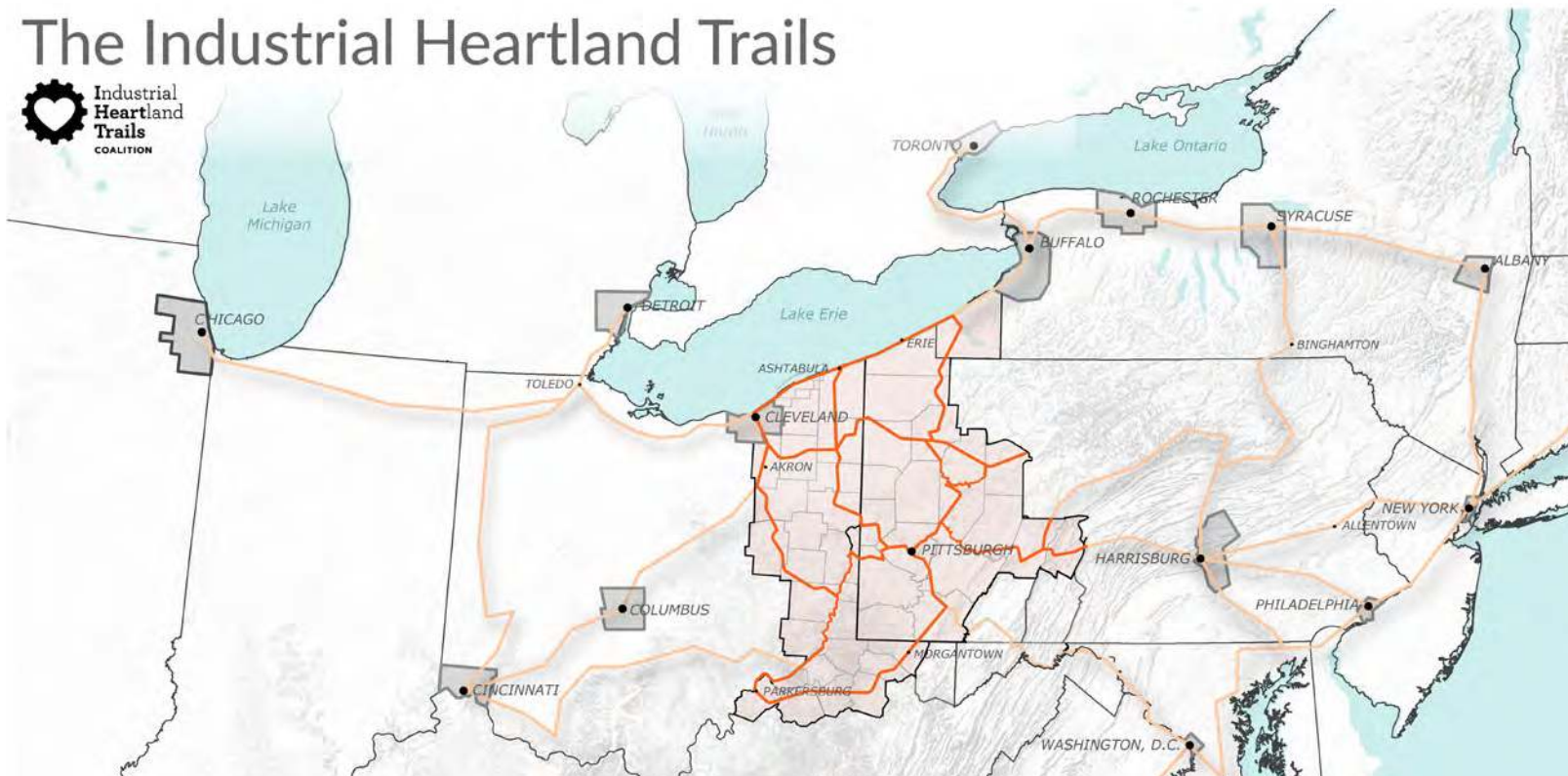
Spurred on by the Power of 32 (powerof32.org), The Industrial Heartland Trails Coalition (“IHTC”) grew out of ongoing trail efforts in Pennsylvania, Ohio, West Virginia, and New York.

Trail groups and supporters in the four states believe that there is power in banding together and building on their successes. We have all agreed that honing a vision of interconnected trails linking major destinations — Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Morgantown, Erie, Akron, Parkersburg, and others — benefits not only the broader region, but each trail project as well.

The map below shows our vision for the IHTC region: 1,400 miles of interconnected trail. Over 600 miles of the envisioned 1,400-mile network is already complete thanks to years and even decades of work by our member groups. We want the rest done by 2033. From the map, you can also see the possible future connections outside the region.

While we are not thinking small, we are also very focused on the individual trail projects and gaps within our region and have developed ways to support each other as those projects move forward. This is our greatest success.

The Industrial Heartland Trails



Why We Are

The IHTC bridges the borders of four states. We come together, not only to provide opportunities for recreation, but also for community development, benefits to the health care system, broadened transportation opportunities, and increased tourism.

As an example, The Progress Fund's Trail Town Program continues to bring new communities to the table, leveraging the economic linkages between trails and their host communities. Regional planning entities include IHTC member projects in long-range plans. Tourism promotion agencies market trails as leading attractions.

The coalition itself is not on the ground building the trail; rather we help trail advocates (including ourselves) get to the point that the trail can be built. The coalition markets the bigger vision, makes the case for funding, provides GIS planning tools, and conducts user counts on open trails to prove the need to close gaps.

IHTC is raising awareness and building excitement, which in turn will help build the trail.





Cleveland to Erie Corridor Meets for the First Time

Building the remaining 600-some miles of trail in the IHTC requires planning, foresight, and the dedication of many tireless individuals. To meet these challenges, we have organized into corridor working groups — each connecting major regional destinations.

The corridors are:

Erie to Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh to Parkersburg, Cleveland to Pittsburgh, Cleveland to Erie, Ashtabula to Pittsburgh, and Pittsburgh-to-Harrisburg Main Line Canalway.

These groups meet regularly to review missing links, collaborate on strategy, and prioritize approaches for success. In many of the communities along these corridors, at least one of our 117 stakeholder groups is focused on completing a trail.

For example, a plan to complete a four-mile gap in Oil Creek State Park will create a 66-mile stretch of the eventual 264-mile Erie to Pittsburgh route.

But not all our efforts are this far along. The stretch from Cleveland to Erie offers new ground for long-distance trail work. Within IHTC, this is the last corridor to come together, but much groundwork is already underway.

On April 10, 2015, Andrea Irland of the National Park Service – Rivers, Trails, Conservation Assistance Program convened a who's who of planners and trail advocates along the shores of Lake Erie to discuss the vision linking Cleveland and Erie by trail.

Already, the City of Cleveland and Cuyahoga County are collaborating on a lakefront bike plan, including connections to the east. The City of Mentor and Lake County are developing plans to link the Mentor Headlands and Fairport Harbor Beach. Ashtabula County is also working hard to reward the county voters who voted to support trails last year.

Crossing into Pennsylvania, the conversation has now turned toward how to make an already designated scenic byway along Route 5 more accommodating.



iTowpath Program Puts a Focus on Trail Amenities

The Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail along the Pittsburgh to Cleveland corridor is well on its way to completion with just 15 of the total 101 miles to go. The Ohio and Erie Canalway National Heritage Area is hard at work on those remaining miles, launching the iTowpath program to put a focus on enhancing completed sections near Akron. Enhancements such as bicycle ramps, bike service stations, music, sculptures, and lighted archways and underpasses activate the trail. The heritage area was able to make the project possible thanks to two consecutive Knight Foundation grants totaling \$750,000.

“It’s not just enough to complete a section of trail, the goal should be to provide an exceptional experience for all trail users,” said Dan Rice, Ohio and Erie Canalway National Heritage Area President and Chief Executive Officer.

“It’s great that we’re involved,” Rice said regarding participation in IHTC. “It elevates the significance of our trail to connect into a multi-state network.”



A group of 23 members, the Industrial Heartland Trails Coalition equips people working on the ground with the necessary tools to continue in trail development.



Trail User Counts Under Way on IHTC Corridors

In November 2015, the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC) worked with project partners to place 30 counters along trail segments in five categories: urban, suburban, small town, rural, and rural destination/parks. These counters will remain in the field for a year, providing a 12-month snapshot of use. Understanding the character of each trail will give us a better model in the future.

As part of the George Gund Foundation's support of IHTC, RTC's Eric Oberg has been working with the University of Minnesota and Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis to develop factor models that predict a year of trail use based on just three to six weeks of counts at a location. Up until now, estimates have relied on having counters in place for long periods and at many locations.

"I hope and believe this will become a way for us to create a more efficient way to monitor trail use," Oberg said. "It's great to get counts at your busiest time of year, but the whole point of the modeling is that it won't matter when you collect them."

Another interesting aspect of this project is the fact that RTC is working to set up a trail counter lending library. Trail groups would be able to borrow counters for short periods of time so long as they share the data collected for the good of the overall IHTC effort. RTC's efforts put resources in the hands of more people and get better information back faster.



Trail Tourism Study Helps to Identify Tourism Opportunities



The IHTC exists, in part, to stimulate the regional economy. Trail user-spending provides a boost to local communities, while longer trails will amplify the impact of trail tourism. This is why we set out to study the tourism appeal, assets, and destination marketing opportunities along IHTC trail corridors. An early step in the project was surveying 160 partners and stakeholders on potential tourism. Those surveyed listed over 400 regional attractions, the basis of a new IHTC attractions inventory.

The study confirms our intuition, that this is a vast region with a variety of assets that can be leveraged. That includes everything from Lake Erie and wine trails to big cities and country villages, along with the Christmas Story House, Carnegie Museums, and The Drake Well Museum. While the trails may connect us, there's a lot "off trail" to be seen and experienced, and this is where a growing tourism exchange will take place.

GoTo Trails a Resource to IHTC



One of the first tasks of the coalition was to map the trail corridors in the four-state region. It quickly became apparent that paper maps were not up to the task. This set IHTC down the path of creating www.gototrails.com, a site containing GIS data for proposed, planned, and existing trails throughout the IHTC footprint. The site serves as a virtual white board, allowing trail advocates to become knowledgeable of trail completion status, to share information, and propose changes. Anyone can draw on, save, and share maps without impacting the source data. While the coalition is the first group actively using GoToTrails, other networks are starting to collaborate using the site.



Titusville: A Small Town With Tenacity



Renovations have already begun at the Blue Canoe Brewery.

Designated as a trail town by The Progress Fund in 2014, Titusville, Pa., along the Erie-to-Pittsburgh Trail, has shown its grit over the last year. A March 2015 fire caused severe damage to the Town Square Building, displacing the Blue Canoe Brewery, Titusville Redevelopment Authority, and several other tenants. The building had been an important center of community life.

Deb Eckelberger, Director of Business Outreach for the redevelopment authority, expects the renovated property to be up and running soon, with the Blue Canoe Brewery to reopen in early 2016.

“We had people that haven’t lived here in 30 years making donations through crowd-funding and other donations,” she said. “People just wanted to help any way they could.”

Titusville has shown its mettle as a trail town. But what are the qualities of a trail community? Obvious are a community’s willingness to connect to its trails, foster a culture of hospitality, and improve downtown amenities. Titusville exemplifies the basic qualities of determination, passion, and never giving in when it comes to caring for our places.

“Light at the End of the Tunnel” for One of PA’s Top Trail Gaps



The Climax Tunnel sits along the Redbank Valley Rail Trail. Photo Credit: Sissy Rutkowski

Listed as one of Pennsylvania’s “Top 10 Trail Gaps,” the Climax Tunnel on the Redbank Valley Rail Trail is being stabilized with plans to open in the fall. The 528-foot tunnel will connect 60 miles of trail along the Redbank and Armstrong trails. That’s 60 miles of trail held up by the one tenth of a mile tunnel. Without the tunnel, the option was a 12-mile detour on area roadways. The project has been made possible through nearly \$2.5 million in state grants and local match (including nine miles of volunteer-built trail, with limestone and equipment donated by local companies).

The Redbank Valley Rail Trail is along the Erie-to-Pittsburgh corridor, and many of the same trail advocates are involved in both. Ron Steffey of the Allegheny Valley Land Trust spoke with IHTC about positive developments along the corridor. He said that the Erie-to-Pittsburgh Trail Alliance views its involvement in IHTC as an opportunity to become more assertive in filling trail gaps.

The 264-mile corridor is 60 percent complete, and EPTA is hard at work on the rest.



Route 22 Graded Pedestrian Bridge to Connect 52 Miles of Trail



A bridge linking the Ghost Town and Hoodlebug trails will connect 52 trail miles. Photo credit: Clare Kaczmarek

Indiana County is just \$200,000 shy of funding a \$2.7 million pedestrian bridge over Route 22. The completed bridge will create a much needed crossing, giving access to services, while also resulting in a critical trail connection. The bridge will link the Hoodlebug and Ghost Town Trails into Blairsville and the Blairsville Riverfront Trail, resulting in 52 miles of continuous trail along the Pittsburgh-to-Harrisburg Main Line Canal Greenway™, a 320-mile corridor.

Projected for 2018 construction, the bridge project grew out of the 2011 Indiana County Regional Trail Connectivity Study. Implementation of the study’s recommendations is being managed by the Allegheny Ridge Corporation.

“Even though it seems awfully audacious to propose a bridge over a major highway, it really was the safest and best option,” the Allegheny Ridge Corporation’s Laura Hawkins said of the bridge project.

Ashtabula Tax Levy Passed in Part Due to Popularity of Trails

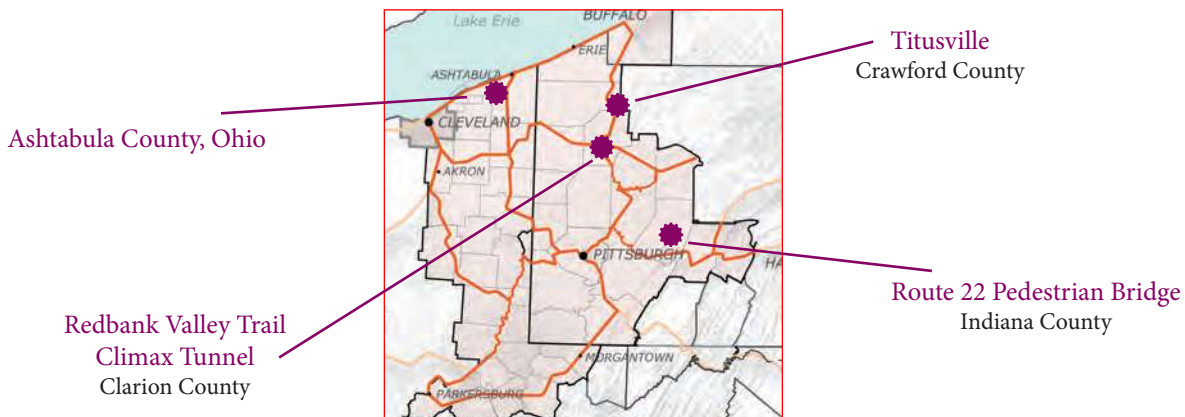


A tax levy is expected to generate over \$350,000 for trails and recreation in Ashtabula County, Ohio.

In November 2014, Ashtabula County, Ohio residents voted to support parks and recreation. The county passed a \$500,000 levy to be managed by the Ashtabula County Park District (with a previous annual budget of \$20,000) and will help to build and maintain trails and other local assets.

“We posted the levy up and down the trail and I do believe that the trail impacted the vote,” said park district board member Charlie Kohli of the Great Ohio Lake-to-River Greenway, part of the Pittsburgh to Ashtabula corridor.

Of the impact a regional system might have on Northeastern Ohio, Kohli noted, “Being able to take a system of trails from Ashtabula to Washington, D.C. will be a major accomplishment, and it can be done.”





Promoting the IHTC Near and Far

While the Industrial Heartland Trails Coalition currently spans four states, coalition members have been sharing all of IHTC's good work throughout the entire country. From conventions and events on the West Coast, the Midwest, and Pennsylvania, IHTC coalition members discussed the growing trail network's development with some of the nation's biggest trail supporters.



The High Trestle Trail Bridge in Iowa is a tourist attraction.

Des Moines, Iowa

For the past decade, trail advocates throughout the Midwest have gathered annually at the Middle America Trails and Greenways (MATAG) event to share successes and plan for the future. In November, IHTC was invited to present about our work and overall organization. The IHTC approach was unique for this group to consider, as much of trail development in the Midwest is coordinated by state agencies. The approach of having such a diverse collaborative process was one that many attendees were interested in hearing more about.

Frank Maguire of the Pennsylvania Environmental Council and Environmental Planning & Design's AJ Schwartz presented on the coordination and planning that happens at the mega-corridor level. In a separate session, RTC's Eric Oberg teamed with Greg Lindsey from the University of Minnesota to break down the trail use modeling and the plans for the trail counter data. Attendees were impressed with the scale and scope of the vision and several people said they are planning trips in the near future to ride the corridors so they can say, "I was there before the crowds showed up!"



Located in Oregon, Mt. Hood elevates 11,239 feet above sea level.

Portland, Oregon

Last May, several people traveled to the International Trails Symposium to present IHTC to a global audience. American Trails, a national organization that promotes trails for all types of users, holds the symposium every two years to gather trail planners, builders, managers, and advocates from around the globe in one place.

RTC organized a great panel discussion on all the different aspects of long distance trail networks. Eric Oberg played master of ceremonies for the IHTC portion of the session, keeping things lively. Frank Maguire focused on the coordination of the six mega-corridors, and the process by which the coalition keeps 117 groups pulling in the same direction. Pittsburgh-to-Harrisburg Main Line Canal Greenway's Laura Hawkins also took part in the IHTC discussion to illustrate how the coalition functions to support the goals of local efforts.



Warren, Pennsylvania

Held biennially by the Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society, the Greenways and Trails Summit took place in September in Warren, Pa. Much like the American Trails Symposium, the Summit brings together people from all reaches of the trail community.

For IHTC, it was a chance to interact with staffers from the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) and trail advocates from across Pennsylvania. The sheer variety of attendees at the conference meant that many of the free-ranging conversations will inspire advances in trails for years to come.

The Industrial Heartland Trails Coalition was a part of several different discussions, including a great dialogue on rails with trails led by coalition member, the Oil Region Heritage Area.



Kim Harris of the Oil Region Heritage Area addresses the audience during a presentation at the Greenways and Trails Summit in September. Photo credit: Gary Lester



Left: Former Pittsburgh Mayor Tom Murphy was the keynote speaker at the 2015 Greenways and Trails Summit. Right: Participants at the Summit take to the trails during a mobile workshop. Photo credits: Gary Lester



What's Next?

The oft-repeated goal of IHTC is 1,400 miles of trails by 2033, connecting all our major destinations and even starting to lead off the map. To reach the goal, the coalition needs to keep sharing successes, moving trails from dreams to plans to construction. Being able to build will only happen if we can continue to support each other's efforts, share our stories, and prove that our communities are indeed better for all your hard work.

So for 2016 and beyond, the coalition looks forward to improving the ways we communicate and spreading the good word of trails. Because across the country, other trail groups are already looking at our progress and beginning to think about potential connections.







Photo credit: Jason Cohn

We  trails.

We all “heart” trails.

And soon, a 1,400-mile network of trails through America’s industrial “heartland” will be waiting for you.

The Industrial Heartland Trails Coalition consists of 23 organizations in four states working to complete and connect America’s largest system of shared use trails. When it’s finished, local and visiting trail users will be able to walk and bike from trail to trail, city to city, and town to town.

So if you’re one of the millions of Americans who  trails, visit us on the web at www.hearttrails.org.

