

2013 Kansas Statewide Rail-to-Trails Plan: Linking Communities through Trails



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Acknowledgements

Beyond the hard work of the committee, special recognition goes to the participation and support of the Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism and Department of Transportation staff. Special thanks to Linda Craghead and Becky Pepper who helped from the start, and to Elaine Bryant, GIS Developer. They will assure this plan is integrated into future statewide trail planning efforts.

Many people participated in the completion of this plan, but these wonderful trails are available thanks to the rail-to-trails

organizations across the state whose volunteers that have made rail-to-trails successful in Kansas. Special thanks to Clark Coan, Kanza and Sunflower Rail-Trails Conservancies and Randy Rasa, KansasCyclist.com for information and photographs.

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Executive Summary

Public and private partners have come together to develop a statewide rail-to-trails plan for Kansas. The purpose of this plan is to review of existing rail-to-trails, to identify the benefits of rail-to-trails, and to provide information on how local trail supporters can develop trails in their own communities.

Railroad tracks linked the earliest communities as Kansas was settled. These same corridors are now becoming trail links that continue providing economic and health opportunities for local residents. Railbanking also preserves the land corridors if railroads are needed in the future.

The plan supports development of a comprehensive trails system across Kansas that creates economic and health benefits for the state's residents. When completed, it will be a supporting document for the future statewide trail plan, scenic byways, and community trails plans.

The first goal of this plan is to make rail-to-trails the core of a state-wide trail system. Potential rail-to-trails that can create the links in communities and to recreationally related tourism opportunities are identified.

The second goal is to leverage multiple sources of funding to pay for trail development.

The third goal is to use trails to increase tourism opportunities. Thanks to the beautiful wide-open spaces of Kansas, outdoor based tourism is an economic asset

for the state. Trails can link communities to parks and greenspaces attracting more visitors to come more often, stay longer and increase the opportunities for them to spend more money in a community.

The last goal is to assist communities to successfully develop and maintain rail-to-trails. There are so many trail opportunities across the state a small group of private citizens or the state government cannot develop and maintain all the trails. Local ownership and management of a trail makes it a community asset. Local supporters can develop the trail fitting with the history or unique theme of the community.

This plan is not an end product of rail-to-trails development, but rather a tool for all future trail development opportunities. Use the information in the plan to further support trail development in local communities as they link the state together through trails.



Introduction:

Vision

Imagine a statewide trails system crisscrossing Kansas' rolling prairies, farmlands and forested hills. Picture a network of trails connecting Kansas communities, generating economic activity and bolstering property values. That is why the ultimate goal is to establish an interconnected network of rail-to-trails for the enjoyment, health and economic wellbeing of the residents of the Sunflower State.

Mission Statement

Supporters of rail-to-trails, in cooperation with state agencies, the Kansas Department of Transportation and Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism, will work in partnership with communities to transform out-of-service rail corridors into outstanding recreational trails which will provide families, youth and seniors a place to walk, bicycle, or horseback ride safely away from traffic.



How to Use This Plan

A rail-to-trail is the conversion of a railway right-of-way into a multi-use path, typically for walking, bicycling and sometimes horseback riding. The characteristics of former railroad corridors--gentle grades, lengthy, frequently running through historical or natural areas--are appealing for various developments. Many rail-to-trails are long-distance trails.

Kansas has been able to create system of well-located rail-to-trails. Now the state is in the position of being able to tie many of these rail-to-trails with community trails to the benefit of state residents and tourists. This plan is important because the opportunity to preserve these corridors will not last forever. By planning now, critical rail corridors will be conserved. Without planning ahead, future rail corridors may be severed, highways rebuilt without adjacent multi-use paths, and bridges built without pedestrian-bicycle access.

This plan provides information and background for trail advocates to use towards linking more communities and trails. Specific topics of economic benefits and trail project implementation are set in one page format so they can be copied and distributed as needed. Many of the sources are cited with an Internet address as it is typically the best source for new information and examples. It is recommended to complete new on-line searches for the latest information.

Background

Kansas Rail-to-trail History

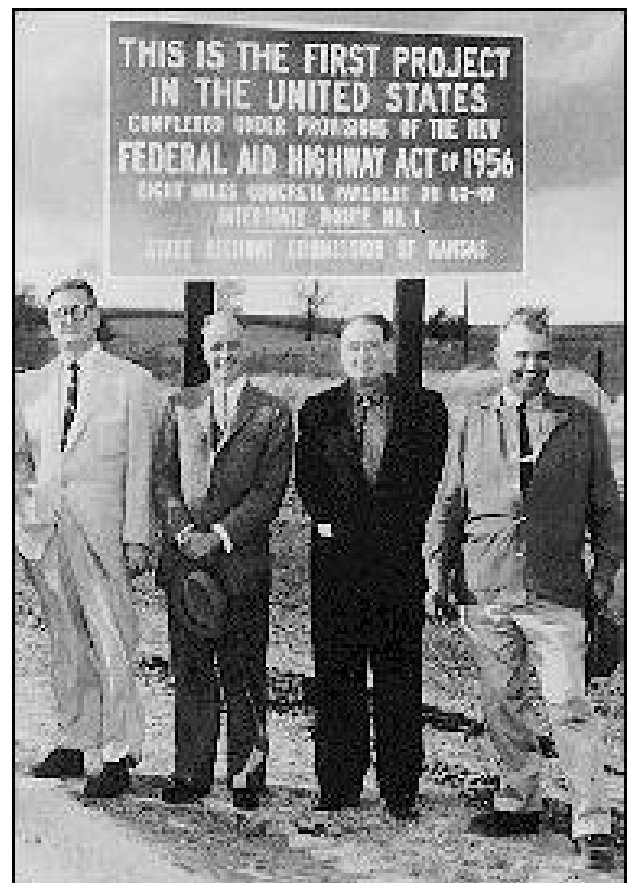
Trails have crisscrossed Kansas throughout the ages. Before Europeans arrived and settled in Kansas, Native Americans traveled across the region on well-defined trails for food gathering, trade, and to religious sites. These trails were logical routes following ridges, avoiding wetlands, and minimizing water crossings. Many of these routes were used by pioneers, the Santa Fe Trail being a major example. When the railroads came they surveyed for the easiest routes that provided water for the steam engines. Many of the Native American trails ended up covered with railroad tracts with communities 7-10 miles apart, and are still the main routes of transportation to this day.

In Kansas, railroad tracks were first built in 1860. By 1917, the state had the most miles of track in the nation totaling 9,367 miles.

As the Interstate Highway System was built starting in the 1950s, railroad use began to decline. Wanting to preserve out-of-service rail corridors until a railroad might need the corridor again for rail service, Congress created railbanking.



The Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad at Clyde, Kansas.



Kansas had the first completed Interstate System in the United States in 1956.

Kansas State Rail-to-Trails Plan

The National Trails System is the network of scenic, historic, and recreation trails created by the National Trails System Act of 1968. These trails provide for outdoor recreation needs, promote the enjoyment, appreciation, and preservation of open-air, outdoor areas and historic resources, and encourage public access and citizen involvement.

The United States Congress added railbanking provisions to the National Trails System Act 16 USC 1247 (d). The 1983 amendment allowed interim use through a voluntary agreement between a railroad company and a trail agency to use the rail corridor for trail use. A railbanked corridor is not considered abandoned so it can be sold, leased or donated to a trail manager without reverting to adjacent landowners. An out-of-service rail corridor then can be a trail until a railroad might need the corridor again for rail service.

A rail-to-trail is typically for walking, cycling and sometimes equestrian riding. Construction of most rail-to-trails is funded through the Federal Highway Administration's alternative transportation funds that do not allow motorized use on the trail.

The characteristics of former tracks—flat, long, frequently running through historical areas—are appealing for many trail users. Many rail-to-trails are long distance trails, but those in communities become alternative routes for transportation.

Since 1917 more than 5,125 miles of rail lines have been abandoned, although over 508 miles have been conserved or railbanked for possible future rail use. The first official rail trail in the state was the one-mile Haskell Rail-Trail which opened in 1991 in Lawrence. The first long-distance

rail-to-trail was the 51-mile Prairie Spirit Trail which was completed in 1998 and stretches between Ottawa and Iola. There are now more than 10 completed rail-to-trails totaling 73 miles; seven partially developed rail-to-trails totaling 226 miles; and, over eight rails-to-trails projects totaling 175 miles in Kansas.



Building a covered bridge on the Blue River Trail.

Railbanking

A vibrant rail system is critical for the economic vitality of the state and nation. However, due to changing economic conditions, out-of-service rail corridors can become available for possible interim trail use over the next decade.

The National Trails Act allows conserving or railbanking out-of-service rail corridors to preserve existing transportation easements. The railroad retains ownership of the rail corridor, a third party makes interim use of the rail corridor, and the federal Surface Transportation Board's jurisdiction over the corridor continues. The trail manager holds railbanking custodianship and a quitclaim deed to the right-of-way. Under railbanking, the corridor is conserved for possible use as a rail line in the future. Restoration of rail service occurs when the Surface Transportation Board revokes the Notice of Interim Trail Use and issues a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity.

The cost of creating a new corridor for rail use would be astronomical. So if corridors are not 'railbanked' or conserved, they are lost forever. Still it may not be appropriate to railbank every rail corridor. Those which meet certain criteria of for recreational or alternative transportation, linking communities' schools, parks, natural areas, and commercial areas, provide the best options for a community and the state.

How to Railbank – Abandonment Timeline and Procedure

Information on how to conduct railbanking and the timeline are available on the **Rail-to-Trails Conservancy** website www.railstotrails.org

Additional resources are available at:

Surface Transportation Board: Public Information: Resources: Rails-to-Trails http://www.stb.dot.gov/stb/public/resources_railstrails.html

General Accounting Office (GAO): "Issues Related to Preserving Inactive Rail Lines as Trails" <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/rc00004.pdf>

American Trails: Rails-to-Trails <http://www.americantrails.org/resources/railtrails/index.html>

The National Park Service: The National Trails System Act <http://www.nps.gov/nts/legislation.html>

THE NATIONAL TRAILS SYSTEM ACT

(P.L. 90-543, as amended through P.L. 111-11, March 30, 2009)

(also found in United States Code, Volume 16, Sections 1241-1251)

AN ACT

To establish a national trails system, and for other purposes.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SHORT TITLE

SECTION 1. This Act may be cited as the "National Trails System Act".

STATEMENT OF POLICY

SEC. 2. [16USC1241]

(a) In order to provide for the ever-increasing outdoor recreation needs of an expanding population and in order to promote the preservation of, public access to, travel within, and enjoyment and appreciation of the open-air, outdoor areas and historic resources of the Nation, trails should be established (i) primarily, near the urban areas of the Nation, and (ii) secondarily, within scenic areas and along historic travel routes of the Nation which are often more remotely located.

(b) The purpose of this Act is to provide the means for attaining these objectives by instituting a national system of recreation, scenic and historic trails, by designating the Appalachian Trail and the Pacific Crest Trail as the initial components of that system, and by prescribing the methods by which, and standards according to which, additional components may be added to the system.

(c) The Congress recognizes the valuable contributions that volunteers and private, nonprofit trail groups have made to the development and maintenance of the Nation's trails. In recognition of these contributions, it is further the purpose of this Act to encourage and assist volunteer citizen involvement in the planning, development, maintenance, and management, where appropriate, of trails.

Outdoor recreation can grow jobs and drive the economy if we manage and invest in parks, waters and trails as a system designed to sustain economic dividends for America.

Conclusion from the 2012 The Outdoor Recreation Economy Report

Benefits of Trails

Trails are recognized for multiple benefits for individuals and communities. Whether a person is walking, running, biking, skating, horseback riding, skiing, or strolling, using a trail promotes a healthy life-style. Trails provide a safe environment for children and adults to travel from their neighborhoods to schools, open spaces, and retail areas. People are most willing to use a trail if it is in close proximity to their neighborhood or community.

The Rail-to-Trails Conservancy has a set of handouts ready to print that provide information on multiple benefits of trails, including:

- ‘Health and Wellness’
- ‘Transportation/Livability’
- ‘Conservation/Environment’
- ‘Economic/Revitalization’
- ‘Historic Preservation/Community Identity’

Each report is in a .pdf file formatted for printing at

<http://www.railstotrails.org/ourWork/trailBasics/benefits.html>.



Tourism

In today's economic conditions people are looking for lower cost, close to home activities. Trails-related tourism can attract visitors to a community or region, creating jobs, putting money into the community.

Businesses need to be created and developed to take advantage of the trail systems. William Flannery, St. Louis Post Dispatch reported the Katy Rail-Trail has the reputation as an economic driver for many communities along its path across Missouri. The first segment opened in 1992 with great flourish and attention, but then the floods of 1993 and 1995 caused damage to both the trail and businesses. Not every community or business feels the trail has made a difference, but there are new shops and restaurants that have been successful. Entrepreneurs need to find opportunities and a niche that provides services, supplies, and food to visitors.

Tourism engages and supports multiple businesses¹. Beyond park fees, it creates the need for advertising, manufacturing of recreation-related equipment, food service, fuel, land acquisitions, scientific research, etc.

Make it easy for tourists to learn about what is all available and why they want to visit. To maximize the economic potential of a trail system, communities must strategically promote their trails, natural resources, facilities and amenities. Visitors will spend money on fuel, food, lodging, equipment, and souvenirs. Tourism related jobs can be

an independent business or a supplemental income for a farm or ranch operation or existing business. Trails can tie-in scenic and historical sites, natural areas, restaurants, activities centers, and attractions in a city or region.



Multiple sources have researched the economic benefits of trails. The Outdoor Industry Association highlighted the impact of the industry in the 2012 report, *The Outdoor Recreation Economy* (http://www.outdoorindustry.org/images/researchfiles/OIA_OutdoorRecEconomyReport2012.pdf?167).

The Outdoor Industry Association reported that outdoor recreation is a larger and more critical sector of the American economy than most people realize. Nearly 50% of Americans ages six and older – 141.9 million people – engaged in outdoor activities. The most popular activities are fishing, running or jogging on trails, bicycling, hiking and camping.²

¹ The Outdoor Recreation Economy. 2012. Southwick Associates, Inc. for The Outdoor Foundation. 4909 Pearl East Circle, Suite 300 | Boulder, CO 80301. www.outdoorfoundation.org

² Outdoor Recreation Participation Report, Topline 2013. The Outdoor Foundation. 4909 Pearl East Circle, Suite 300 | Boulder, CO 80301. www.outdoorfoundation.org

Kansas State Rail-to-Trails Plan

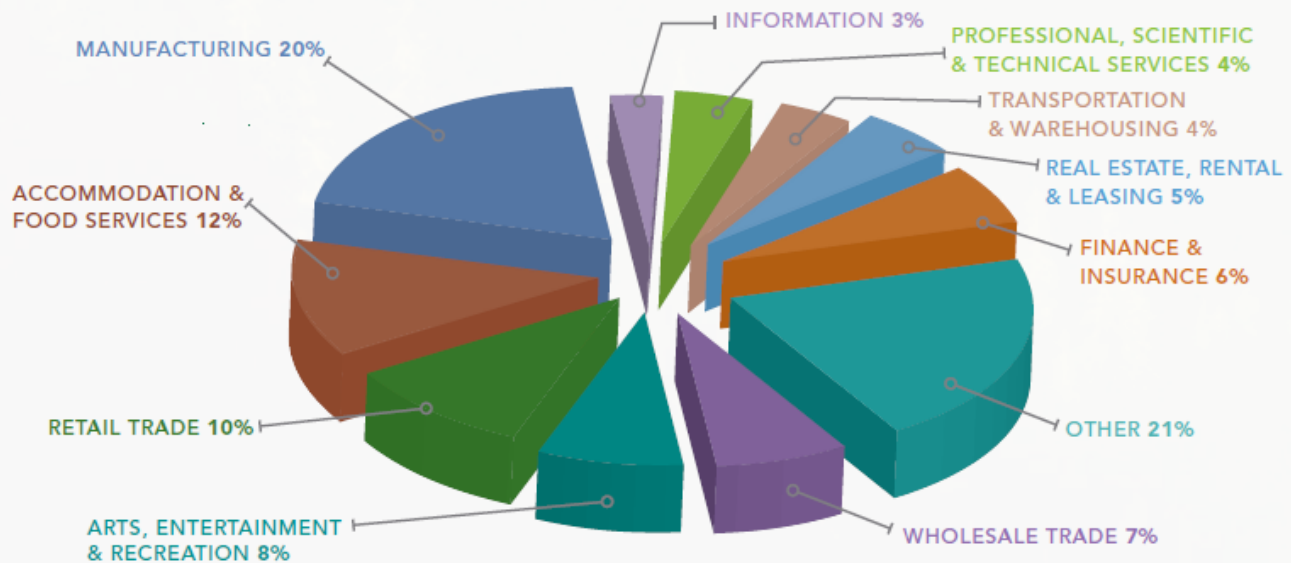
Kansas rail-to-trails can link community and parks by creating multiple layers of tourism activities. Potential visitors want to know what to expect before they travel to a location. To optimize a trail-related trip visitors want to know specifics on the trail, length, difficulty, and type of route. What will they see and experience on a route? What are the food and lodging options, the support services, and nearby attractions?

Trails can keep family and larger groups interested in staying in one location longer. Examples include providing a trail that

connects with a historical site or a guided bike tour on local native flowers or wildlife. Make it easy for visitors to learn information on how to expand and enhance their trail experience.

Outdoor Recreation is Essential to the American Economy

The impact of outdoor recreation reaches far beyond the outdoor industry, directly fueling major traditional American economic sectors.



The Outdoor Recreation Economy Report 2012. The Outdoor Foundation

Preparation Key to Successful Trails Tourism

*The Rail-to-trails Conservancy's **Jake Lynch** was out on the 2012 **Greenway Sojourn** from June 17 to 24. He visited towns and explored trail-related businesses along the route from Washington, D.C., to Pittsburgh, Pa., and blogging about some of his experiences.*

One lesson I have learned visiting the towns and small cities along the route of the Greenway Sojourn this week is that successful trail tourism doesn't happen by accident.

Places in like Confluence, Pa., and Cumberland, Md., which have been very successful in connecting trail users to their local economies, have managed it through study and effort. Allegheny County, for example, employs a person for the express purpose of keeping business owners in Cumberland up to date on trail tours passing through, and creating events and reasons for those trail users to stay overnight. In Confluence, the bike store and lodging places have worked hard over the years to make the town a must-stop destination. For the past few days I have been hearing from businesses in these communities that they are really looking forward to our visit. They are well coordinated and prepared.

But some of the towns we have visited were not quite as prepared. Months prior to the Sojourn, organizers called and emailed local chambers of commerce and visitor hubs, with the heads-up that on these dates a large group of riders would be in their main street, most likely looking for something to eat, a cold drink and supplies. Despite this outreach, the advance notice didn't reach everyone, and a number of diners were closed on those days, and some businesses kept to their regular business hours and therefore missed the after-dinner rush of riders looking for cold ice cream or a beer.

Many of the businesses that were besieged by 50 or 60 hungry riders struggled to cope, happy but flustered. I heard them say if they had of known we were coming they could have put on more staff for the occasion. Not keen for a long wait, some Sojourners moved on and looked for somewhere else to dine.

I have no doubt that this time next year; those businesses that were caught unawares will keep their eyes peeled. And that's always been one of the great successes of the Sojourn-- not only bringing attention to the trails themselves, but priming the trail communities to convert those bikes into bucks themselves, but priming the trail communities to convert those bikes into bucks.

Property Values

University of Cincinnati researches found houses located near nature trails have significant, positive effects on property values when these properties are located within reasonable distance to the trails.³ In 2000 the University of Nebraska Omaha surveyed homeowners living adjacent to trails. The findings revealed a majority of home buyers were willing to pay a premium for homes close to a trail.

A 2001 survey of Nebraska and Iowa residents in small rural communities with rail-to-trails found that people were pleased with the improvements and opportunities of rail-to-trails development. It should be noted rural private property owners in Nebraska who could see a rail trail from their residence still had concerns of privacy and individual property rights, but their expectations did not worsen after the rail trail was built. Iowa rural residents did not have the same concerns.⁴

<http://www.americantrails.org/resources/adjacent/NebRuralTrStudy.html>

Attracting Residents

People and businesses increasingly make decisions on where to locate based upon community amenities. Trails extend and link community green spaces and parks which is attractive to potential residents.


³ Vom Hofe, Rainer and Parent, Olivier. New Research Finds that Homeowners and City Planners Should 'Hit the Trail' When Considering Property Values. 2011. University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, OH

⁴ Greer, D. Nebraska Rural Trails: Three Studies of Trail Impact. University of Nebraska-Omaha and United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Omaha, NE 2001.

They can buffer industrial areas while providing alternative transportation for employees. Trail corridors can be in floodways where other land uses are not allowed. Businesses want to provide services along trails for the attractive setting a trail corridor can provide.

A University of Nebraska Omaha study by Dr. Don Greer found the majority of small rural residents identified trails with increased social interactions, reduction in train noise, and safer areas for children to ride bikes⁵.

Split level home close to walking trails



Date Listed	13-Jun-13
Last Edited	13-Jun-13
Price	\$569,000.00
Address	View map
Bedrooms (#)	5 bedrooms
Bathrooms (#)	2.5 bathrooms
For Sale By	Real Estate Agent

HomeVerified
Start Mortgage Pre-Approval

A real estate advertisement highlighting house's closeness to trails

Health Benefits

Multiple health and trail organizations have sponsored studies showing the health benefits of trails. The combination of increased safety and physical activities makes trails a value-added resource.

The American Hiking Society compiled research consistently demonstrating that regular exercise increases a person's overall

⁵ Greer, D. Omaha Recreational Trails: Their Use and Effect on Property Values and Public Safety. University of Nebraska-Omaha and United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Omaha, NE. 2000.

Bike Path Phobia: Selling Skeptics on Urban Greenway Bike Paths, Parks & Recreation

“Crime rates are generally based on the rate of crime per 100,000 people, not on geographic area.” “A number of studies have now shown that urban greenway trails do not increase crime and, in fact, are commonly regarded as improvements by adjacent property owners. Comparisons of mugging, assault, rape, and murder make it quite clear that rail trail crime rates are almost non-existent on a per capita comparison to other areas.”

Todd Schneider, 2000 MTGA Trails Toolkit

health and results in a longer life. Trails provide a low-cost opportunity to for people of all income levels to control, maintain, or improve their health in relationship to weight, diabetes, arthritis, osteoporosis, mental health, aging, heart disease, hypertension, and back pain. When trail use replaces motorized trips the savings in air pollution can reduce the chances of respiratory tract infections, asthma, and lung cancer.⁶

Well-designed recreational trails encourage children and adults to explore the outdoors and to get much-needed exercise. This in turn can reduce the incidence of obesity, which is a growing problem for both children and adults. For more information on healthy outdoor activities visit the website *Let's Move Outside* - <http://www.letsmove.gov/what-do>.

Quality of Life

The economic benefits of trails include increasing the quality of life for local residents and attracting new people to a community or region. A substantial percentage of Nebraska and Iowa residents

⁶ American Hiking Society. A Step in the Right Directions: The health benefits of hiking and trails. 2001. <http://atfiles.org/files/pdf/AHShalthben.pdf>

surveyed by the University of Nebraska-Omaha believed that the trails have had a positive impact on life in their community⁷.

The American Trails organization has many articles on the benefits of trails and greenways - <http://www.americantrails.org/resources/benefits/index.html>.



Communities are concerned about health effects of inactivity and poor nutrition and are taking action. The Health and Wellness Coalition of Wichita (HWC) promotes people, programs and policies in the community to help ensure sustainable community changes that advocate healthy living. HWC fosters long term partnerships among public health, private business, municipal government, community advocates, planners, developers, schools and neighborhoods.

⁷ Greer, D. Omaha Recreational Trails: Their Use and Effect on Property Values and Public Safety. University of Nebraska-Omaha and United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Omaha, NE. 2000.



Walking and bicycling are not just for big cities...

Summary of the Findings Presented in This Report

- An original analysis of the 2009 National Household Travel Survey for five different types of rural areas improves on previous research lumping all types of rural areas into one category.
- Federal Transportation Enhancements funding goes to rural areas at almost *twice the per capita rate* as urban areas, demonstrating strong demand for walkable, bikeable communities across the landscape.
- Grassroots stories of walking and bicycling from across rural America, from Complete Streets in Tupelo, Miss., to the rail-trail entrepreneurs of Lanesboro, Minn.

Active Transportation Beyond Urban Centers: Walking and Bicycling in Small Towns and Rural America presents a new analysis of the 2009 National Household Travel Survey showing that in every type of rural area, walking and bicycling are already an important part of the transportation picture. Many rural small towns are choosing to invest more in promoting active transportation, and making it safe and convenient, because of the economic, health and demographic benefits these modes return.

The report includes real stories from rural communities across the country where people are walking and biking their way to strong local economies and fitness, and the towns are boosting their attractiveness to young families. These stories also highlight the special role that federal programs like Transportation Enhancements and Safe Routes to School play in empowering rural areas and addressing their particular needs.

For more about the report, including an interactive online tool that allows you to explore your community and a wealth of data, visit the report website:

www.railstotrails.org/BeyondUrbanCenters



Share of Trips on Foot and Bike Across 7 Types of Communities

Travel Mode	Urban Center	Other Urban	Large Rural	Other Large Rural	Small Rural	Other Small Rural	Isolated Rural	Total
Total Walk	11.97%	6.68%	8.46%	6.13%	7.20%	7.33%	7.38%	10.60%
Total Bike	1.10%	0.92%	1.11%	0.82%	1.04%	0.80%	0.78%	1.06%
Walk for Work	3.91%	1.69%	3.26%	2.79%	3.67%	1.66%	3.39%	3.52%
Bike for Work	0.83%	0.38%	0.27%	0.19%	1.61%	0.03%	0.13%	0.71%

Data Source: 2009 National Household Travel Survey / nhts.ornl.gov



Rails-to-Trails Conservancy The Duke Ellington Building / 2121 Ward Court, NW, 5th Floor / Washington, DC 20037
202.331.9696 / www.railstotrails.org

Rail Trail Organizations in Kansas



Sunflower Rail-Trails Conservancy was formed in 1987 as an umbrella of local rails-to-trails organizations. An information clearinghouse and advocacy organization, the 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, is a group of volunteers working to help other organizations develop trails in the state of Kansas. Members live in various parts of the state, and have personal involvement with active trail groups. The Conservancy monitors the availability of railroad abandonments, works to get them railbanked, and mentors local people in the trail area to foster development. Trails are places where families can enjoy the outdoors together and creates a safe location for healthy exercise. One original essential purpose of railroads was to link communities together. Trails, rail-trails particularly, provide this in modern times. The Conservancy believes an essential element of the health for present and future Kansas generations relies upon opportunities and encouragement of an active lifestyle; and that active lifestyle depends upon places where activity can occur.



Kanza Rail-Trials Conservancy, Inc. is a grassroots, non-profit organization of local volunteers. The Landon Nature Trail and the Flint Hills Nature Trail represent KRTC's most ambitious and successful developments, with now over 150 miles of trails nearly completed.



Marshall County Connection, Inc. is a group of committed citizens organized and incorporated in 2006 in order to facilitate the transfer and development of the Kansas portion of this railbed into a public use area.



The Central Kansas Conservancy promotes the appreciation of central Kansas including its unique natural landscape, wildlife, history and culture. The Conservancy encourages health and wellness by providing people of all ages a great place to walk, jog, bicycle, and ride horses safely away from traffic. The Conservancy also provides opportunities for economic growth in the communities along the trails, and to foster local control of resources and deal effectively with concerns of local people. The Conservancy is developing the 13-mile Meadowlark Trail and the 33-mile Sunflower Santa Fe Trail. <http://centralkansastrails.org>

The Central Kansas Conservancy promotes the appreciation of central Kansas including its unique natural



The Southwind Rail Trail is located in Allen County, Kansas, built with support of local residents; it links the communities of Iola and Humboldt. The trail connects in Iola with the 51-mile Prairie Spirit Rail Trail State Park. phaire1880@gmail.com

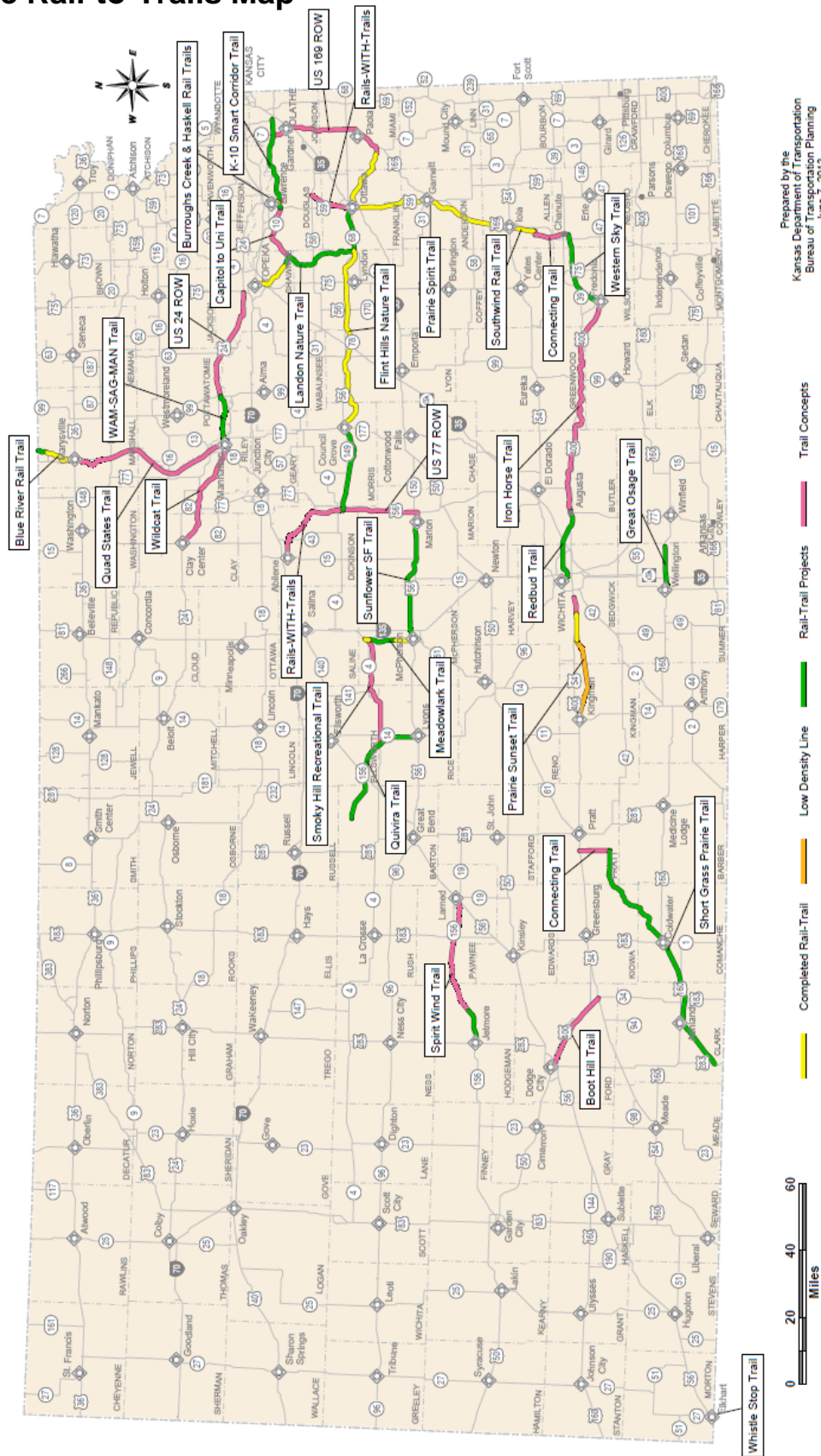


Prairie Travelers
R a i l s T o T r a i l s

The mission of Prairie Travelers is to support the establishment of an inter-connected trails network in the state of Kansas by preserving railroad corridors through interim trail use for the use and enjoyment of everyone. The organization is the result of the cooperative effort of citizens, local trail groups, and outdoor enthusiasts dedicated to expanding recreation opportunities in the state of Kansas. The organization has built the 8-mile Prairie Sunset Trail which stretches between Wichita and Garden Plain. <http://prairietravelers.org>

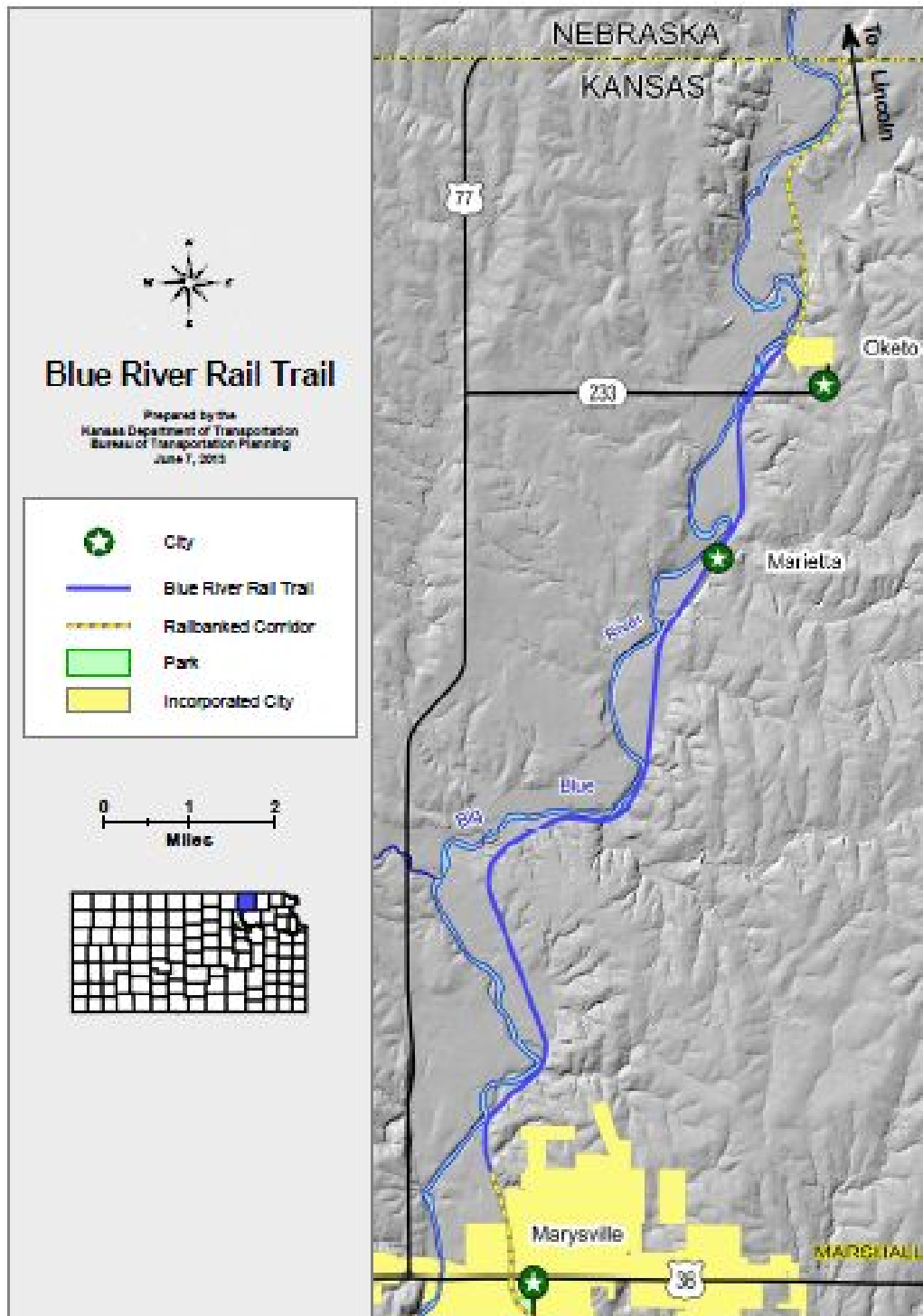
Kansas Statewide Rail-to-Trails Map

Rail-Trails of Kansas



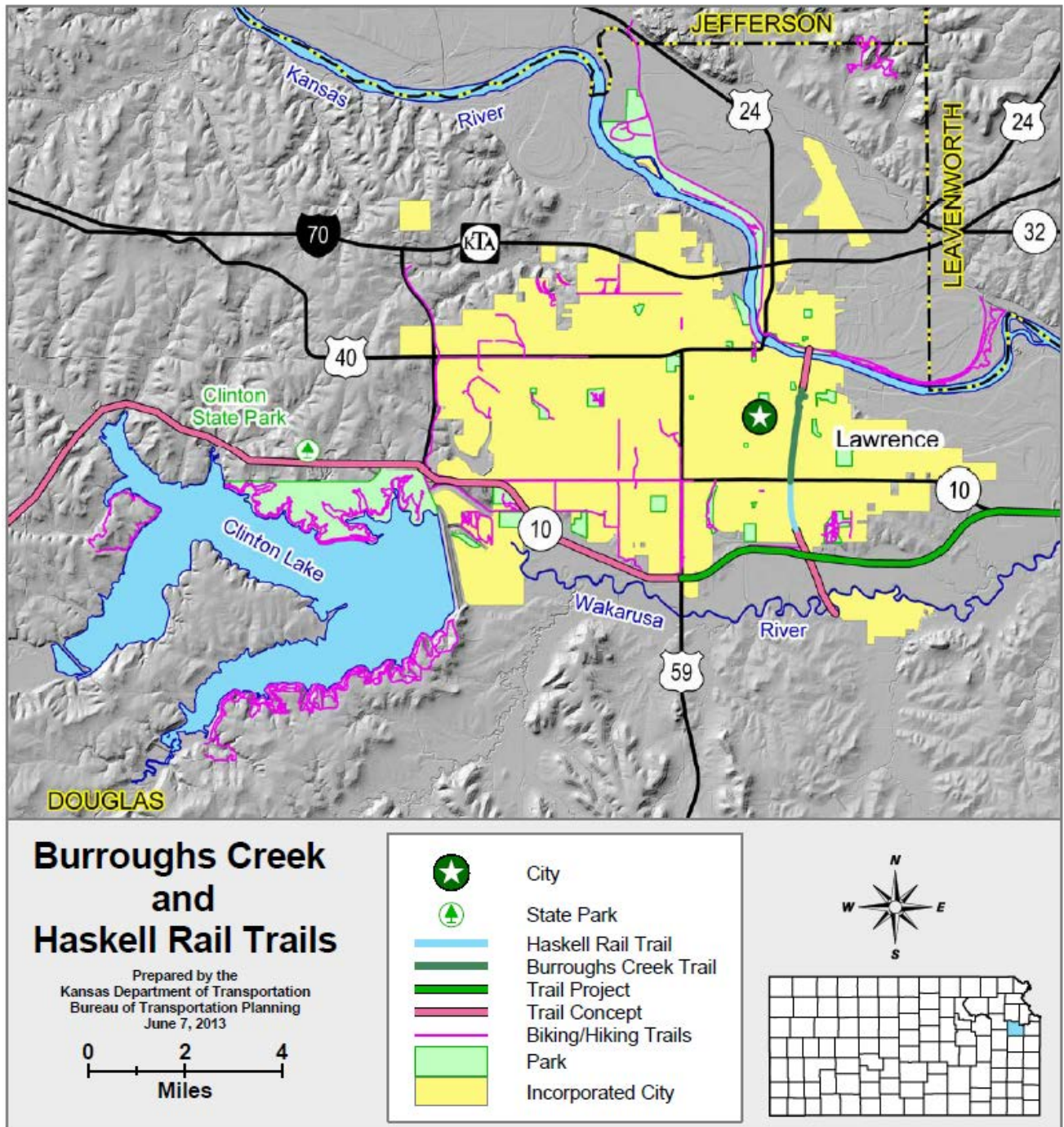
Prepared by the
Kansas Department of Transportation
Bureau of Transportation Planning
June 7, 2013

Blue River Rail-Trail



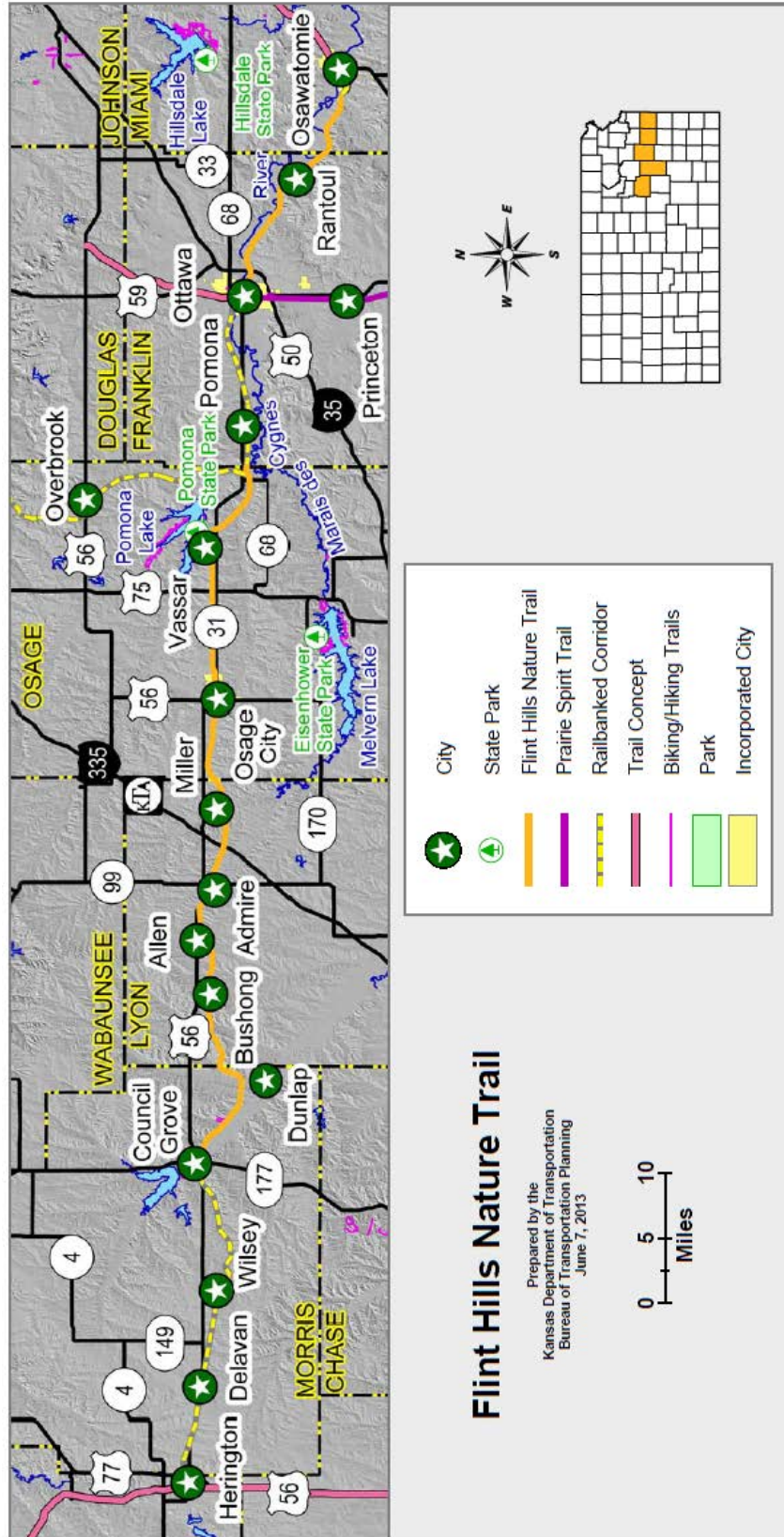
The Blue River Rail Trail in Marysville, Kansas is built on the former right-of-way of the Beatrice Branch line of the Union Pacific Railway. A 12-mile section of the railbanked right-of-way lies within Kansas, from Marysville to the Nebraska state line, with the remainder of the total 68-mile length running to Lincoln, Nebraska (where it's known as the Homestead Trail).

Burroughs Creek and Haskell Rail-Trails



Haskell Rail-Trail was the first known fully developed rail trail in Kansas (1991). Now Haskell is linked with Burroughs Creek with future plans to link the Kaw and Wakanda Rivers.

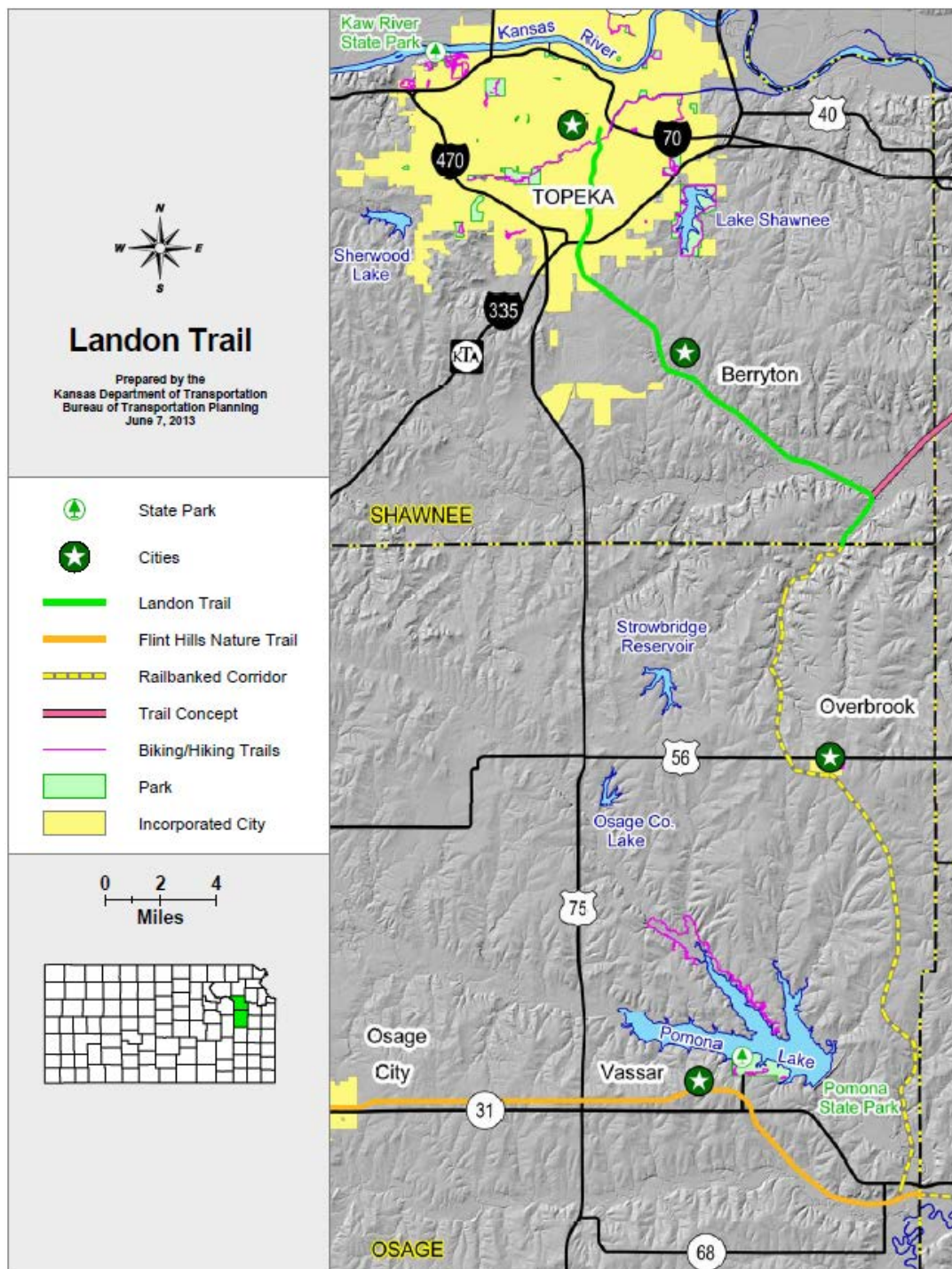
Flint Hills Nature Trail



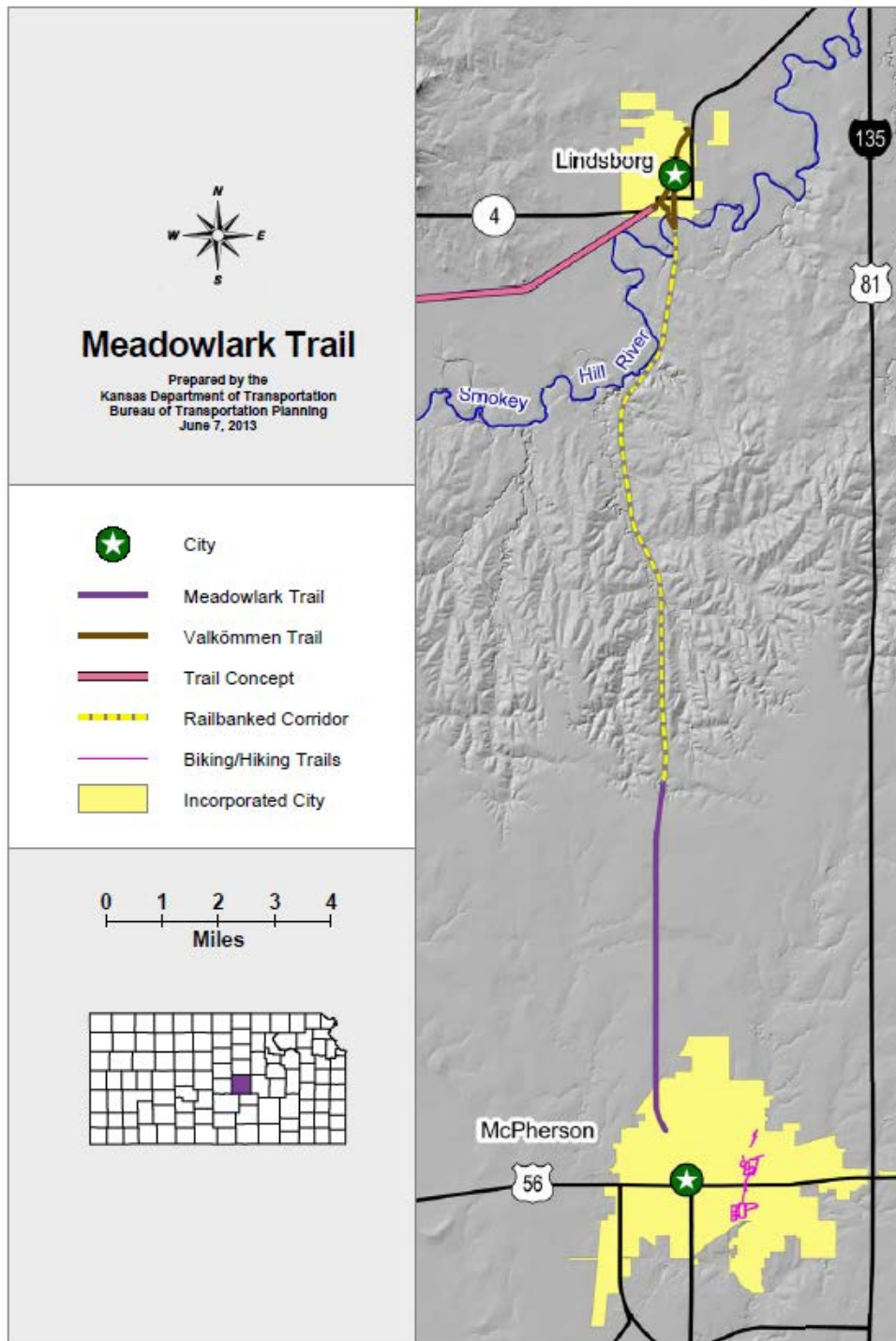
The Flint Hills Nature Trail is a 117-mile rail trail under development in northeast Kansas. It crosses seven counties, and dozens of communities, along its east-west course. As its name implies, it crosses the beautiful Flint Hills. The Flint Hills represent one of the last remaining tallgrass prairie ecosystems in the world. It is home to abundant prairie plant and wildlife species, spectacular views, national historic sites, and a diverse set of recreational areas. The trail is the seventh longest rail-trail in America and the longest trail in Kansas. It follows the general route of the Santa Fe National Historic Trail and forms a component of the coast-to-coast American Discovery Trail. It is being developed by Kanza Rail-Trails Conservancy.

Landon Nature Trail

The Landon Nature Trail is on nearly 40 miles of the former Missouri-Pacific Railroad linking Topeka's Shunga Trail, southward, to Lomax Junction, and to the Flint Hills Nature Trail just east of Pomona Lake in Osage County. This historic rail corridor is now being developed as a trail and wildlife area open to the public for non-motorized use. Visitors are invited to come out and enjoy activities such as hiking, biking, running, horseback riding, and experience some of the most breathtaking scenery in the Midwest.

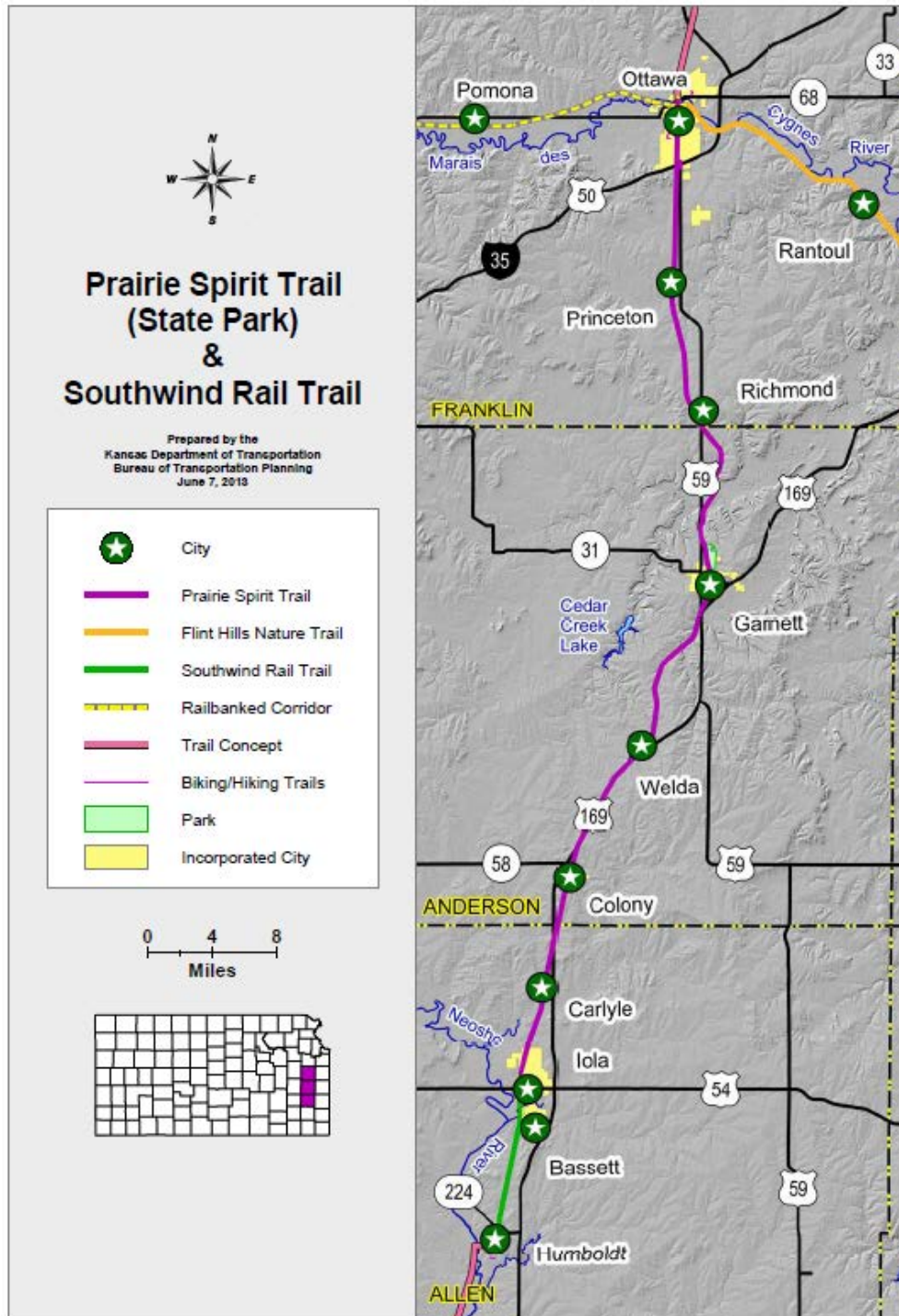


Meadowlark Trail



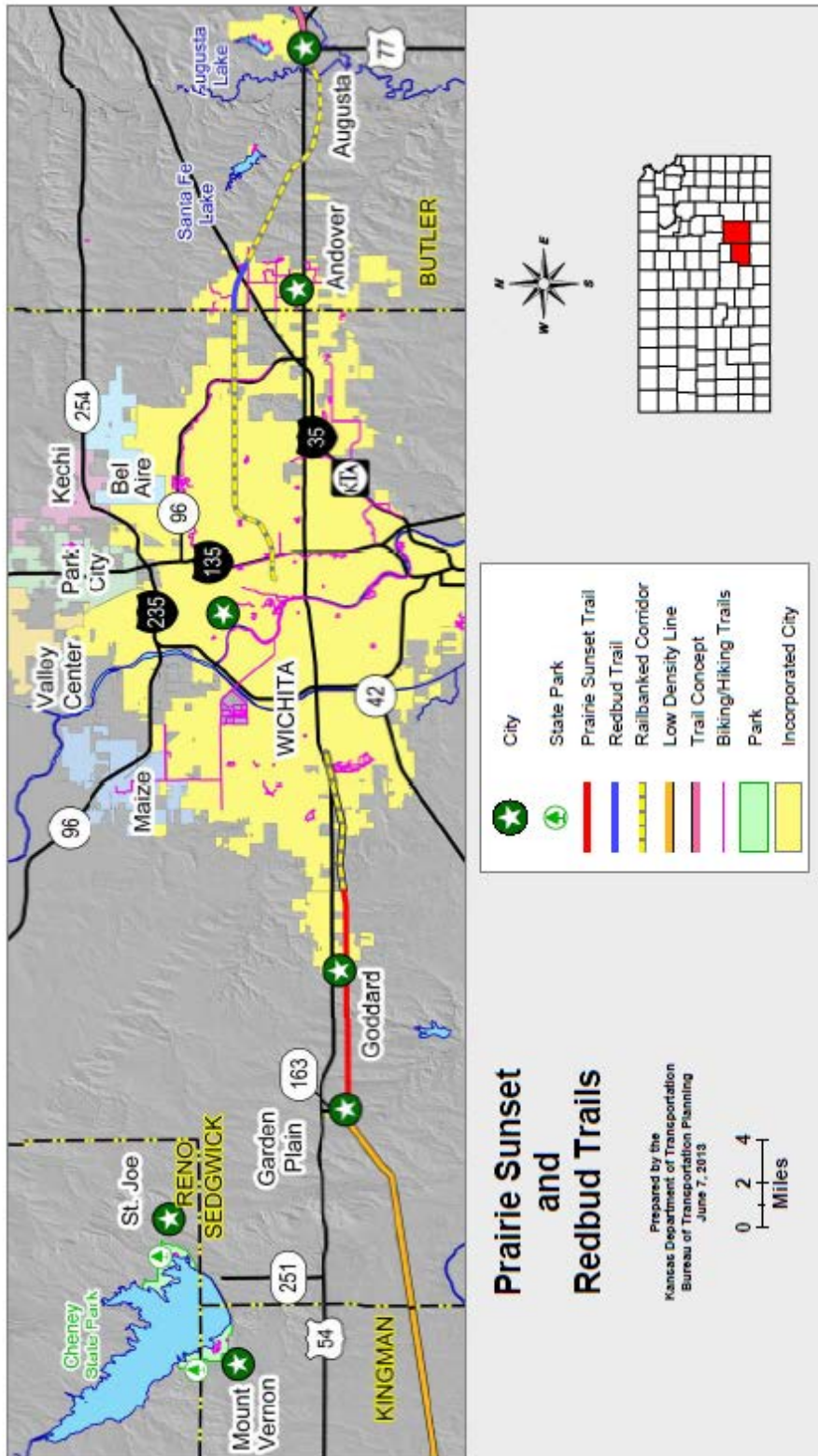
The Meadowlark Trail passes through gentle hills and creek valleys in the 12.6 miles between Lindsborg and McPherson on the old Union Pacific Railroad railbed. It crosses eleven bridges and, at one point, follows the east bank of the Smokey Hill River. Both trails travel through beautiful county – geologically rich area with several different types of soil and an abundance of wildlife. Managed and developed by the Central Kansas Conservancy this trail will link with the Valkommen Trail when completed.

Prairie Spirit and Southwind Trails



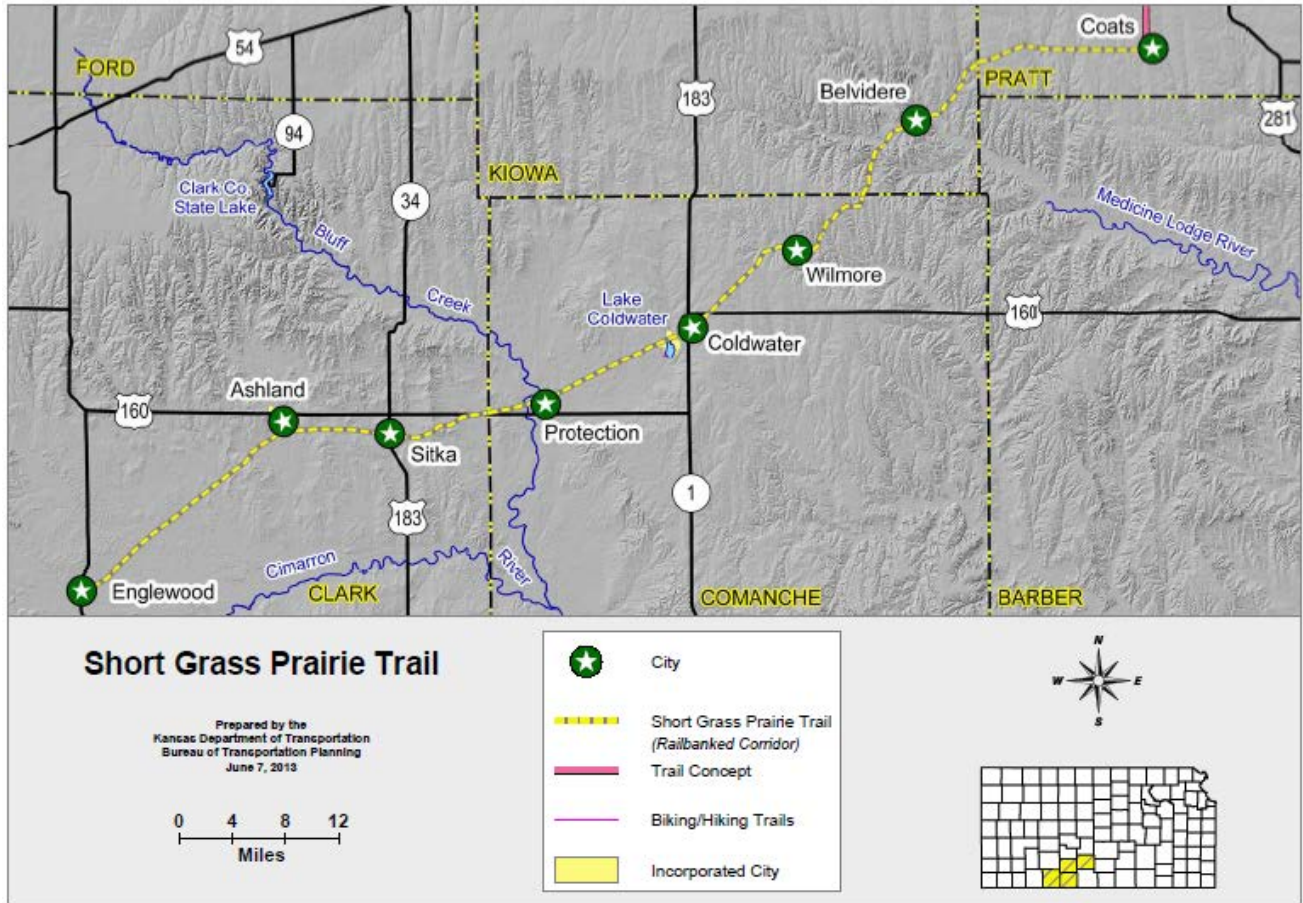
The 51-mile Prairie Spirit Trail leads the state as the first rail-trail in Kansas providing hundreds of visitors each year a glimpse of Kansas' natural treasures and best kept secrets. The Prairie Spirit Trail, a part of the National Rail-Trail Network, is a multi-use trail designed for hiking and biking; non-motorized use and is open year round. The Prairie Spirit Trail links with the 8-mile Southwind Rail Trail in Iola and the 117-mile Flint Hills Nature Trail in Ottawa.

Prairie Sunset and Redbud Trails



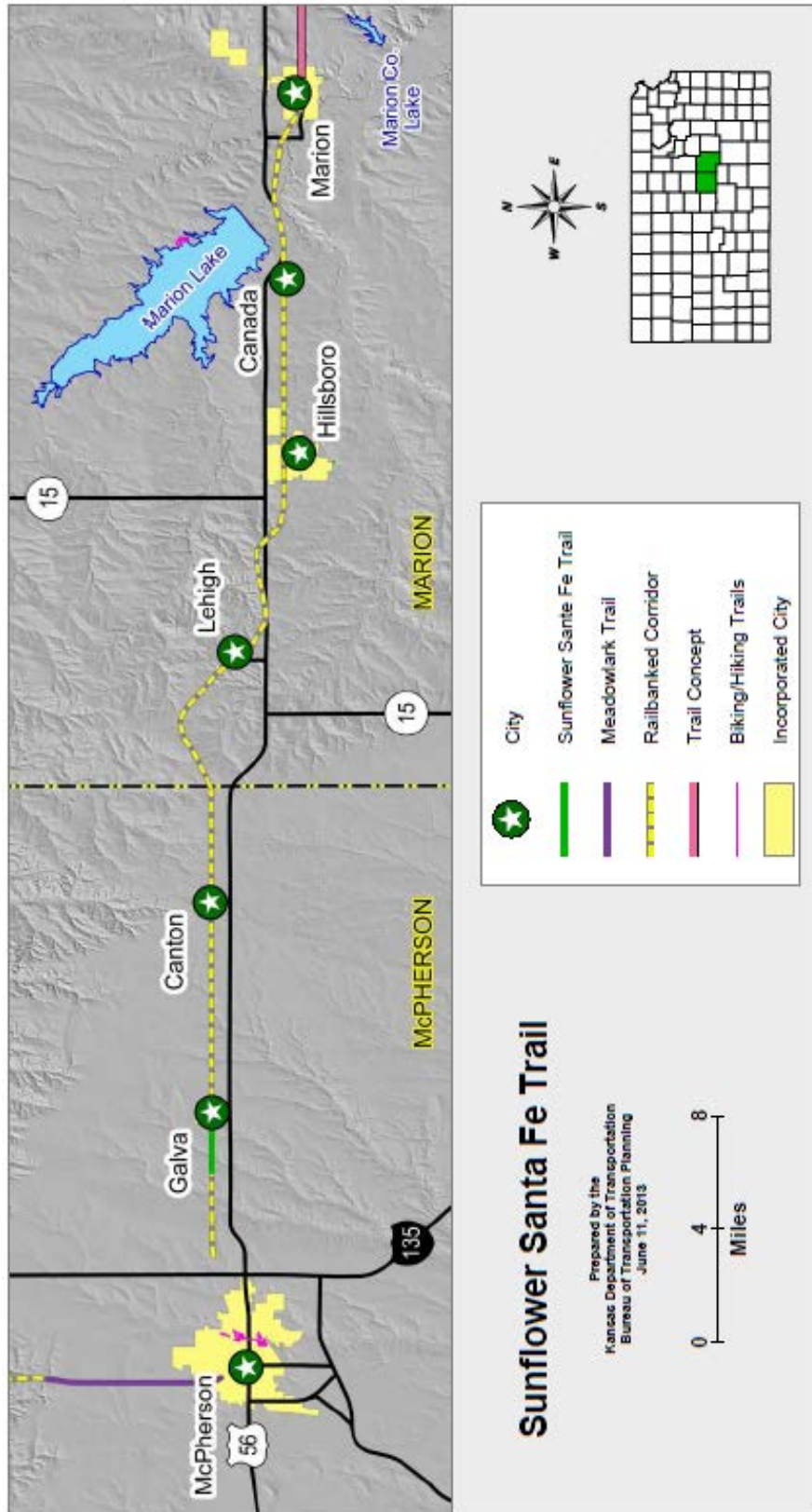
The Prairie Sunset Trail stretches 7.5 miles between Goddard and Garden Plain west of Wichita. The trail follows the route of the old Cannonball Stage Line (1876-1896) and the Wichita & Western Railroad (1884). One of its attractions is a covered bridge on the trail. Since the rail corridor has been railbanked east from Goddard, it is expected the trail will be extended into Wichita. The Redbud Trail stretches from Wichita, past Augusta, linking city parks, employment hubs, and the Wichita State University campus. The trails are managed by Prairie Travelers, Inc.

Short Grass Prairie Trail



The Short Grass Prairie Trail provides a recreational experience through the south-central area of Kansas as the tall prairie grasses give way to the shorter, drier short grass prairie. The trail is 30 miles from Ashland to Englewood.

Sunflower Santa Fe Trail

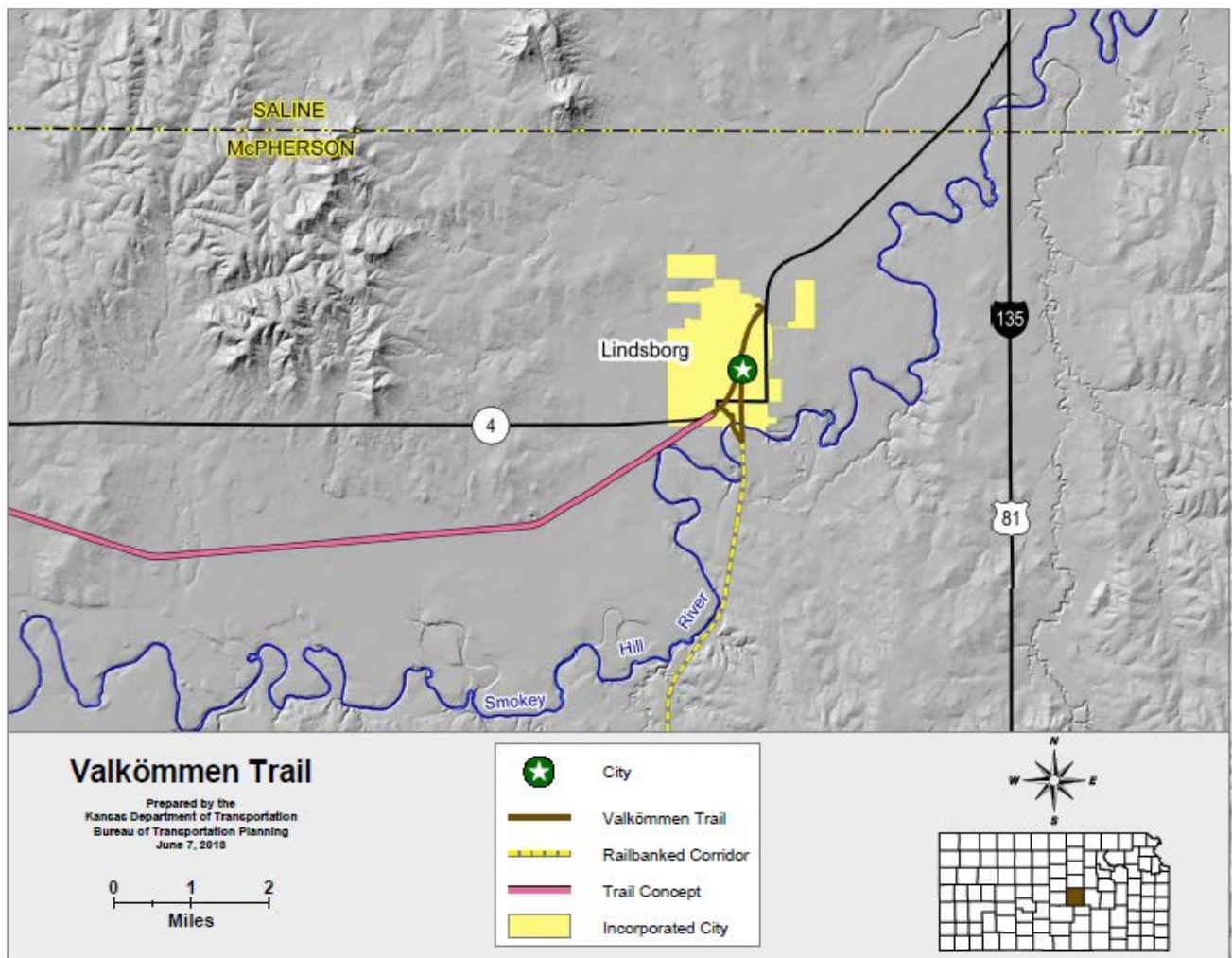


The Sunflower Santa Fe Trail is located on the original Marion and McPherson Railroad that was a leg of the Atchison Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad.

It travels a distance of 33 miles, beginning to the east in Marion and passing through the communities of Hillsboro, Lehigh, Canton and Galva. The trail will eventually connect with the Meadowlark Trail at McPherson.

The length of the trail parallels US Highway 56 and curves gently through cultivated farmland and pastures and crosses near the junction of the historic Santa Fe, Chisholm Trail and Cherokee Trails near Canton.

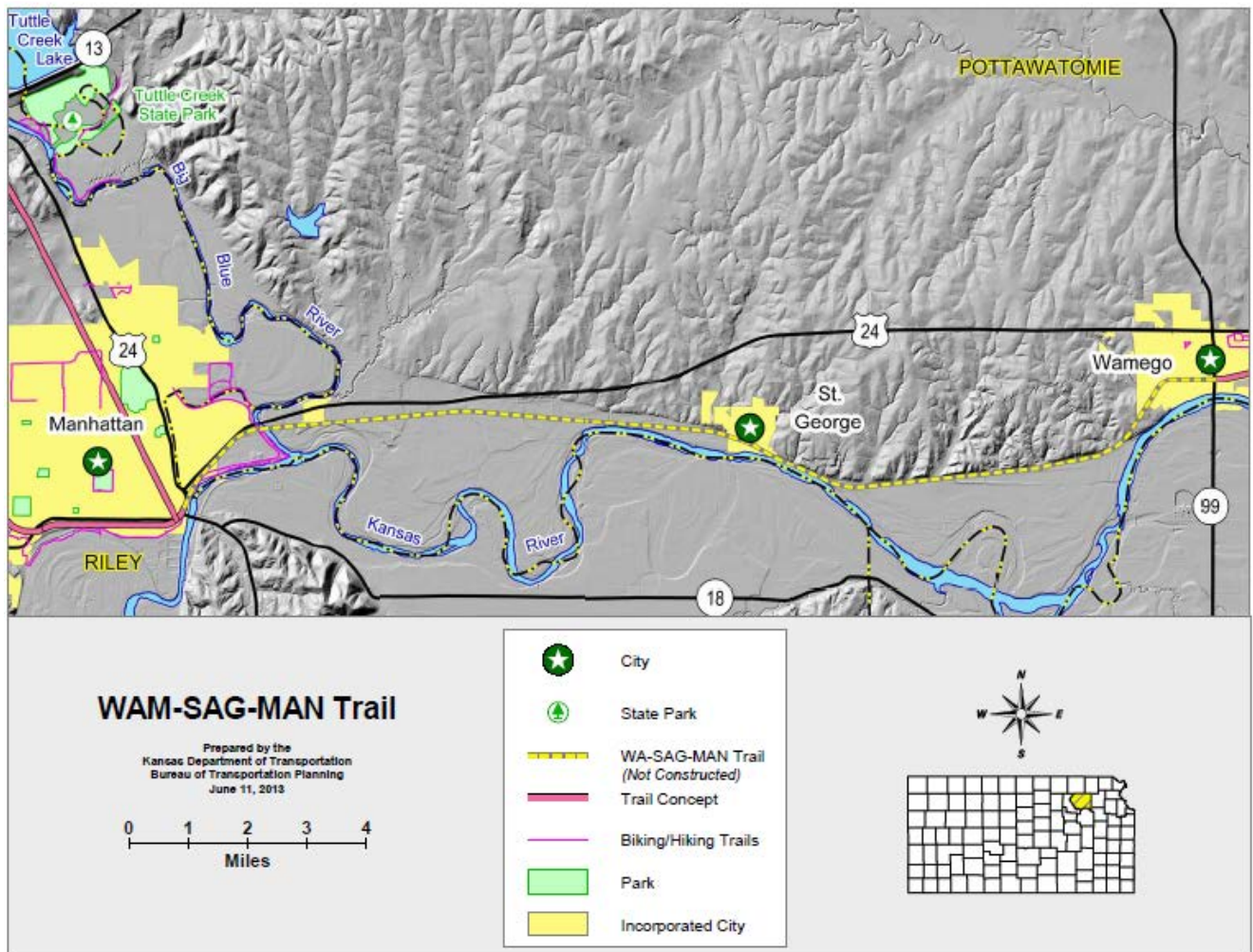
Välkommen Trail



The Välkommen Trail is a 2.5 mile all-weather bicycle and pedestrian trail located in Lindsborg, Kansas. The rail-trail project was converted from abandoned Missouri-Pacific and Union Pacific rail beds. The trail, which meanders through the city, is free for public use year-round. The Välkommen Trail will soon connect to McPherson with the construction of the 13-mile Meadowlark Trail.

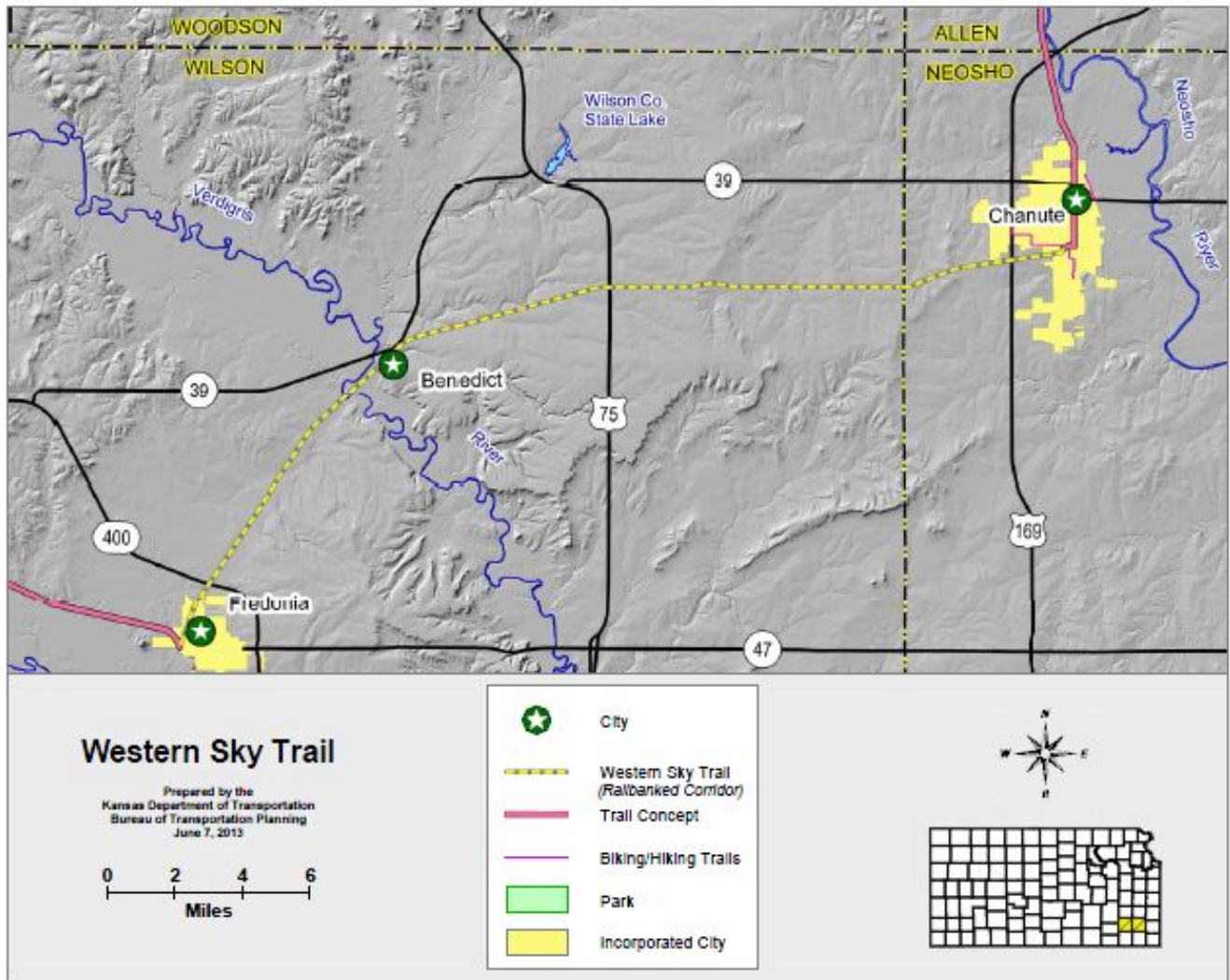


Wam Sag Man Trail



The Wag Sag Man Trail is a partnership between cities, counties and trail advocates in northeastern Kansas. The trail will link Wamego, Saint George, and Manhattan, Kansas. This multi-use trail will use an old highway right-of-way and a portion of an active rail right-of-way. It will be an important link to other major trails Kansas.

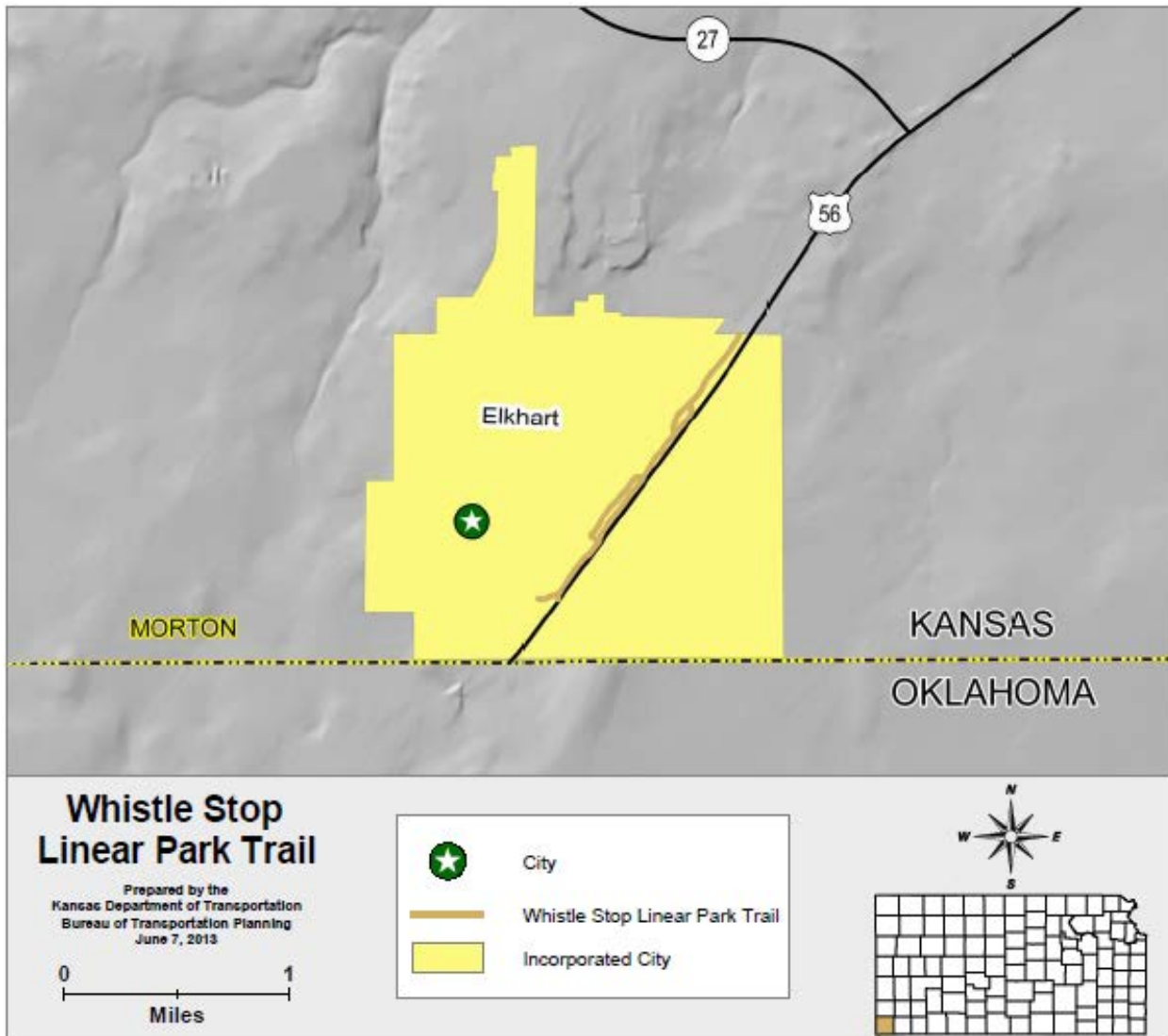
Western Sky Trail



The Western Sky Trail is being developed between Chanute and Fredonia on the right-of-way of the former South Kansas and Oklahoma Railroad. It will be about 19 miles in length, and consist of a crushed limestone surface.

The Western Sky Trail is being built by local groups and individuals in Chanute and Fredonia. No scheduled opening date has been announced yet.

Whistle Stop Trail



Whistle Stop Park is located in the southwest corner at Elkhart, Kansas, and offers about 1.5 miles of paved multi-use pathway, running from North Street to Lucy Drive, paralleling US-56 Highway and the nearby AT&SF Railway. The trail is suitable for walking, roller blading, bicycling, and is dog friendly.

The Plan: Future Needs

The rail-to-trails organizations and state agencies will monitor the availability of railroad abandonments, work to get appropriate corridors railbanked, and find interested local groups or people to develop and manage the trails. An early-warning system will be established with the assistance of the Office of Freight and Rail to ensure that sufficient time is available to railbank corridors as they are taken out of service by railroads.

Goal 1: Make rail-to-trails the core of a state-wide trail system.

Identify specific future rail-banking locations that are logical to acquire and develop linking with trails in communities, state parks, and other greenspaces.

1. Quad-States Trails (Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa and Missouri)

- a. Complete links between Marysville to Manhattan, Wamego to Topeka, and Kansas City to Junction City
- b. Increase trail users using parallel tracks for horseback riders
- c. Build relationships with potential new partners (private land owners, US Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, etc.)



2. North-South Trails

- a. Although there is not a direct north-south rail-trail, look at any type of trail that can link through indirect routes.
- b. Identified potential routes from the Landon Nature Trail to the Flint Hills Nature Trail, along the Prairie Spirit Rail Trail to Humboldt, then on to the Western Sky Trails from Chanute to Fredonia, Severy to Augusta, and then on to Wichita.

3. **Kansas MetroGreen® is an interconnected system of public and private natural areas, greenways and trails linking communities throughout the Kansas City, Kansas and Kansas City, Missouri metropolitan area.**
 - a. The 1,144-mile greenway plan covers Leavenworth, Johnson and Wyandotte Counties in Kansas, and Cass, Clay, Jackson and Platte Counties in Missouri.
 - b. Some sections are rail-to-trails
 - c. There is a current major project in progress to link with the Katy Trail that travels east to west across Missouri.



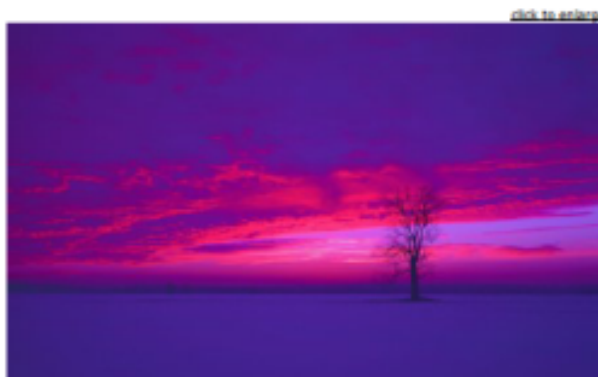
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- Check [TRAIL CONDITIONS & ADVISORIES](#)

4. KS Highway 7 in northeast Kansas

- a. Create and highlight trails as it is part of Glacier Hills Scenic Byway
- b. Local trail supporters need to be in contact with KDOT when planning reconstruction of Highway 7



5. Flint Hills to Santa Fe Trails connections

- a. Use combination of historical and recreational trails to increase tourism opportunities

6. Scenic Byway Regions

- a. The State of Kansas has eleven byways, eight scenic, two of which are National Scenic Byways and three historic byways. Many have rail-to-trails opportunities that would add other recreational activities to the tourism and scenic activities.



Goal 2: Build strategic funding plans for rail-to-trails conversions

Part of the planning process is to develop a funding strategy. Despite the fact that many trail supporters find fund raising the least desirable of trail building activities, it is one of the most important. No trail project is built without monetary support. It is always the ‘elephant’ at the table when planning a trail.

During the planning phase of a trail project a budget is created that includes all potential expenses; acquisition, design, engineering, construction, and maintenance. The Department of Transportation, engineering firms, and Federal Highway Administration can provide general cost estimates. Nationally, the average construction of a trail can cost from \$100,000/mile for a limestone type surface with minimal construction to \$1 million plus for 10 foot wide concrete trails in urban settings. In Kansas, a high-quality rail-trail with a crushed limestone surface can be built for \$35,000 per mile using volunteer labor. A 10-foot-wide concrete path can be built for \$300,000 per mile. Kansas has many examples of quality trails being built with local, private sector funds, volunteer labor, and donated materials.

Most trail construction projects require a mix the financial support from both public and private sources. Local advocates and communities can raise funds towards trails, but rarely can raise the total amount it takes to develop rail-to-trails. Funds can be pooled and leveraged to attract further funding through matching grants and donations. These smaller pools of funds can

be used as the 20-50% match for private and government grants. Some grants require a full cash match; others allow some or the entire match to be in-kind of labor and materials.

Large rail-to-trails projects can rarely be completed in one funding cycle. Most are phased over years to distribute the cost. Locally acquired funds at the start of a construction project can demonstrate to potential funders that the community is dedicated to build their trail system.



Information on Funding Sources

American Trails

<http://www.americantrails.org/resources/funding/index.html>

Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)

http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/transportation_alternatives/guidance/

The Federal Highway Administration implements the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) authorized under Section 1122 of MAP-21 (23 U.S.C. 213(b), 101(a)(29)) provides funding for programs and projects defined as transportation alternatives, including on- and off-road pedestrian and bicycle facilities, infrastructure projects for improving non-driver access to public transportation and enhanced mobility, community improvement activities, and environmental mitigation; recreational trail program projects; safe routes to school projects; and projects for the planning, design or construction of boulevards and other roadways largely in the right-of-way of former Interstate System routes or other divided highways.

Recreational Trails Program Grant -

http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/recreational_trails/guidance/state_practices/progrview_kdwp.cfm

The State of Kansas opted out of the Recreational Trails Program set-aside per provision 23 U.S.C. 213 (g), but continues to fund trails while maintaining flexibility in prioritizing the funding from the Federal Highway Administration.

Federal Highway Administration TIGER Grants

<http://www.dot.gov/tiger>

The Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery, or TIGER Discretionary Grant program, provides a unique opportunity for the U.S. Department of Transportation to invest in road, rail, transit and port projects that promise to achieve critical national objectives. Each project is multi-modal, multi-jurisdictional or otherwise challenging to fund through existing programs. The TIGER program enables DOT to use a rigorous process to select projects with exceptional benefits, explore ways to deliver projects faster and save on construction costs, and make investments in our Nation's infrastructure that make communities more livable and sustainable.

PRIDE Communities Funding Resources

<http://www.kansasprideprogram.ksu.edu/PRIDE/prideresources/funding.htm#Foundation>

This is a funding opportunity provided by Kansas PRIDE Inc. as a 1:1 Match with communities that can provide funding up to a maximum of \$2,000 per project on trail projects.

Kansas Office of Financial Management

This links to state agency grants and financial assistance programs.

<http://www.da.ks.gov/ar/muniserv/GrantsLinks.htm>

Local Funding Sources

<http://www.tgci.com/funding/top.asp?state=Kansas&statecode=KS>

Bond Referendums for Trails

Communities across the nation have successfully placed on local ballots propositions to support trail development. The Charlotte-Mecklenburg County, NC area passed four consecutive referendums that generated more than \$3 million for greenways and trails. Guilford County, NC passed a referendum in 1986 that appropriated \$1.6 million for development of a specific greenway corridor. Residents throughout the United States have consistently placed a high value on local greenway development and voted to raise their own taxes in support of greenway implementation.

Local Capital Improvement Plans

Perhaps the true measure of local government commitment to trails is a yearly appropriation for trail development in the Capital Improvements Program. A trail project does not have to be completed each year, but the CIP funds can build up until they can be leveraged for grants. Trails can also be combined with other infrastructure projects if they are in the same location to reduce costs from having two separate projects.

An example is Raleigh, NC, greenways which continue to be built and maintained, year after year, due to a dedicated source of annual funding (administered through the Parks and Recreation Department). In addition, the City of Raleigh's Real Estate Department has its own line item budget for trail land acquisition.

Trail Trust Fund

Another strategy used by several communities is the creation of a trust fund for land acquisition and facility development that is administered by a private trail advocacy group, or by a local trail commission. A trust fund can aid in the acquisition of large parcels of high-priority properties that may be lost if not acquired by private sector initiative. Money may be contributed to the trust fund from a variety of sources, including the municipal and county general funds, private grants, and gifts.

Local Private-Sector Funding

Local industries and private businesses may agree to provide support for trail development through one or more of the following methods:

- Donations of cash to a specific trail segment
- Donations of services by large corporations to reduce the cost of trail implementation, including equipment and labor to construct and install elements of a specific trail
- Reductions in the cost of materials purchased from local businesses that support trails implementation and can supply essential products for facility development

Adopt-A-Trail or Friends Group Programs

These are typically small local programs that fund new construction, repair/renovation, maps, trail brochures, facilities (bike racks, picnic areas, birding equipment).



Community Development Block Grants <http://www.kansascommerce.com>

Through its State CDBG Program, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) provides States with annual direct grants, which they in turn award to smaller communities and rural areas for use in revitalizing neighborhoods, expanding affordable housing and economic opportunities, and/or improving community facilities and services.

Kansas Department of Health and Environment and EPA Brownfield Grants

<http://www.kdheks.gov/remedial/index.html>

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) provides assistance to states funding projects for brownfields assessment, cleanup, revolving loans, and environmental job training. These funds can be coordinated with trail projects that include brownfields.

State Water Management Funds <http://www.kwo.org>

Funds established to protect or improve water quality could apply to a greenways/trails project if a strong link exists between the development of a greenway and the adjacent/nearby water way. Possible uses of these funds include: purchase critical strips of land along rivers and streams for protection which could then also be used for greenways; develop educational materials, displays; or for storm water management.

Goal 3: Use rail-to-trails to increase tourism opportunities

Integrate into Kansas trails and tourism plans

1. Identify potential funding for rail-to-trails conversions

- a. Leverage funds from multiple sources that assist in promoting Kansas tourism (visitor and convention bureaus, chambers of commerce, tourism boards, etc)



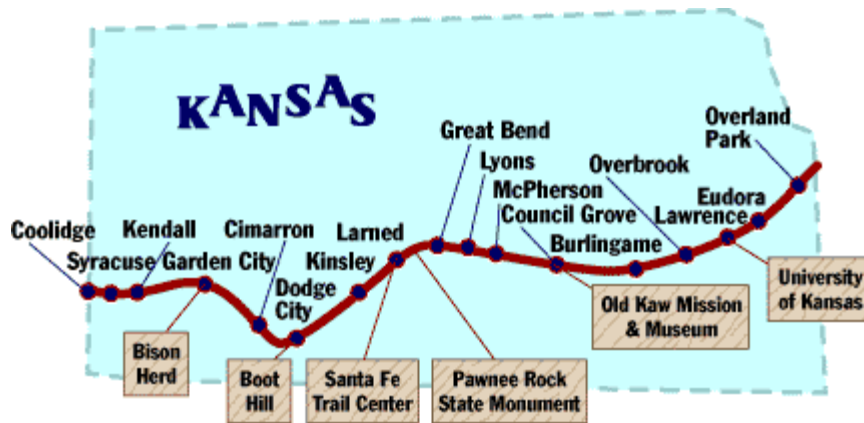
2. Promote businesses along rail-to-trails

- a. Show how visitors can enjoy the local areas trails as they travel through or create a trip by using the trails as the guide
- b. Partner with the Flint Hills tourism effort to develop trail links between communities and destinations
- c. Support development of local businesses
- d. Encourage local communities to create cooperative marketing partnerships with the state tourism and surrounding communities.



3. Highlight Kansas trails as part of the American Discovery Trails System

- a. Promote the Kansas section of the ADT nationwide Kansas contact - kanbike@comcast.net
- b. Identify and prioritize future trails along the ADT
- c. Assist trail managers in applying for construction and recognition of trails that follow the ADT path.



AMERICAN DISCOVERY TRAIL



**MAKING CONNECTIONS...
COAST - TO - COAST**

1999 Integrating Rail-to-trails into Statewide and Metropolitan Long Range Plans Report

The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 supports states establishing a proactive approach to rail-to-trails planning for effective transportation planning into the future. Rail-to-trails can provide a community or region the links to make a trail system effective in both costs and access. Utilizing existing rail corridors reduces construction costs and bisection of neighborhoods.

<http://www.americantrails.org/resources/railtrails/IntegrateRailTrail.html>

Goal 4: Assist communities to successfully develop and maintain trails

1. **Assist inexperienced advocates on filing for rail-banking**
http://www.railstotrails.org/ourwork/trailbuilding/toolbox/informationsummaries/how_to_railbank.html
 - a. Provide contacts for rail-trail questions and encouragement
 - b. Provide advocacy venues and advise (have copies of state trails plan, Rail-to-trail plan, and fundraising publications or Internet links)
 - c. Provide information and assistance with funding resources
 - c. Work with the land manager to increase access to open spaces that are not available for recreation.
 - d. Build awareness of these issues and how to proceed. Provide local communities and trail users' information on how to collaborate. Their support will have more impact on other local residents than someone from outside of their community.
 - e. Create news articles for local papers and electronic media to keep trail issues in front of the public and provide information that can address potential controversies quickly.
2. **Build local support for trails**
 - a. Recognize and encourage the growing interest for more recreational opportunities. Work to coordinate different recreational activities to better support all.
 - b. Improve quality of life for residents
 - f. Provide assistance on how to highlight trails and trail information on electronic media.
 - g. Invite other trail groups to partner on events to build a broader base of support.

3. Encourage communities to create comprehensive community trails systems

- a. Explain the planning process of rail-to-trails development. Have materials ready to share explaining what railbanking is, how trails are developed, and the benefits to a community. See Steps in Building a Community Trail System handout (page 44).
- b. Define what types of trails can work for their community. What makes a trail system safe, comfortable and convenient to use? The best resource for determining trail use and design is the Rail-to-Trails Conservancy web site - http://www.railstotrails.org/ourwork/trailbuilding/toolbox/informationsummaries/design_for_user.html
- c. Support communities to partner with trail user groups, health agencies, businesses and governmental entities to widen the outreach of a trail project. A community trail system can become a linear park and part of a city's infrastructure. A rails-to-trail organization can provide pass-through assistance so the trail becomes an integrated part of a community.
- d. Highlight what is special about a potential rail-to-trails in the specific community. Providing the unique history and amenities in a community that can set their trail apart. Ask for the history of the community and region. Tie-in with regional and state efforts, but look for the niche.
- e. Promote rail-to-trails potential as highly accessible trails due to minimal grade changes and width of the tailbeds. Assure easy access from major destinations in the community. Have a trailhead close to schools, senior living housing, commercial areas, and employment centers.
- f. Provide maps and wayfinding signs to make it easy to find and follow the trail. Create a theme that links the railbanked trail with the community celebrates its special identity and history.
- g. Provide examples of comparable community trails for communities to see different designs and amenities.



Prairie Spirit Trail at the Old Depot Museum, Ottawa, KS

4. Encourage communities to integrate rail-to-trails into their community trail systems

<http://www.americantrails.org/resources/benefits/index.html>

- a. Highlight how trails increase the interconnectedness of a community

linking residential areas to schools, businesses, and parks.

- b. Promote the multiple benefits of trails as different potential supporters may value a trail for different reasons (safety, health, tourism, etc.).



***Sunflower Rail-to-trails
Conservancy***

GOOD NEIGHBOR POLICY

Sunflower Rail-to-trails Conservancy desires to be a good neighbor and build mutual respect with those who adjoin our trails. The goal of our Good Neighbor Policy is to prevent negative impacts on neighboring lands and to ensure a positive experience for trail users.

If one of our neighboring landowners has a concern, we ask that he report it to the trail manager who will address the concern in a good faith manner.

Experience has shown that rail-to-trails make good neighbors and neighboring landowners experience few problems out of the ordinary as active use of rail-to-trails tends to discourage misconduct by trail users or others.

Steps in Building a Community Trail System

Step One – The Vision

- ✓ What do you want to see in the future for your city?
- ✓ This can be non-specific, quality of life topics.

Step Two – Organization & Outreach

- ✓ Share what you want with other members of your community. Invite everyone to participate.
- ✓ The city government is typically the lead, but local citizens can be active members of the planning committee.

Step Three – Research & Inventory

- ✓ What assets and skills exist to start? What is needed?
- ✓ Physical assets – land, potential sites, construction materials, funding, etc.
- ✓ Talents of local citizens – grant writing, public speaking, construction knowledge, record gathering, etc.

Step Four – Conceptual Plan

- ✓ Where a trail could be located?
- ✓ What can be done with the assets and land that the community already has?
- ✓ Create a map and wording to show potential. This is not a final plan or document. It will help guide and explore ideas.

Step Five – Design

- ✓ Take conceptual plans and ideas to create a final design, budget, and timetable for completing the trail.
- ✓ Final plan and specifications are completed by a professional engineer.

Step Six – Acquisition & Construction

- ✓ Work with landowners if there is a need to purchase or obtain easements for a right of way for the trail corridor.
- ✓ Implement fundraising activities to pay for trails (in-kind labor and materials may be an option).
- ✓ Construction can be phased over multiple years depending on funding and land availability.

Step Seven – Management & Maintenance

- ✓ Most trails become part of a city's park system as linear parks or green spaces.
- ✓ Work with city to develop a long-term management and maintenance plan for the trail system.
- ✓ Most maintenance is mowing and rubbish removal.
- ✓ Volunteer groups can do much of the work.

Timeline for Steps 1-5 is typically one year.
Steps 6&7 happen as funding and land becomes available.

Moving Forward: Implementation of this Rail-to-trails Plan

Coordinate with Existing and Future Partners.

Trail planning and construction take many years to accomplish. Each organization supporting trails must maintain existing members and supporters while attracting and developing future members.

- a. Recognize members and volunteers at every opportunity. Hold events to celebrate the completion of trail building and events.
- b. Always be ready to invite new people to join the effort. Many people do not know how to be involved. They will need an invitation to participate. Have outreach materials ready to handout that can provide easy to read facts related to trails. Topics can include: safety, economic benefits, health benefits, enhancement of property values, how trail projects are completed, and how an individual can become involved. Printed or electronic sources can be reproduced as individual handouts as a group develops a trail project.
- c. Consider partnering with organizations that are not directly related to trails. Tourism and economic development organizations see trails as an asset to attract visitors. Historical and natural resources groups can use trails to conduct programs on their special places.
- d. Businesses and cities seek out ways to attract more residents and visitors to their communities. Highlight the attractiveness of a community trail system as part of improving a community's quality of life.

Partner with Other Trail Groups

a. Trail user groups

- Kansas Trails Council – www.kansastrailscouncil.org
- Kansas Cyclist – www.kansascyclist.com
- Kansas Horse Council – www.kansashorsecouncil.com
- There are also many local and regional organizations.

b. State and Federal Contacts

- Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism – www.ksoutdoors.com
- Kansas Department of Transportation Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Program <http://www.ksdot.org/burRail/bike/default.asp>
- National Park Service, Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance – www.nps.gov/rtca
- Federal Highway Administration – <http://www.dot.gov/bicycles-pedestrians>

c. Communities

To help communities find potential partners for trail projects

- Kansas State Trails Plan 2008 provides the most comprehensive list of trails in the state including communities.
- Go Play Kansas is a database of all recreation facilities, including trails, in Kansas. <http://goplaykansas.com/blog/?tag=gis-data>
- Invite people to attend trail events and conferences <http://www.kansasbeos.org/about-the-summit.html>

Maps

Maps can show what exists and where opportunities exist. With today's GIS technology, communities and trail builders can track existing trails and identify where gaps are towards creating a comprehensive trail system for safe and economical travel options.

- a. Build and maintain GIS Layers
Technical support
 - Kansas Department of Transportation
 - Kansas State University
 - University of Kansas
 - Volunteers
- b. Create layers – use Rail-to-Trail Projects List
 - Existing rail-to-trails
 - Other trails
 - State, county, city parks
 - Historic sites on each trail (Coordinate with historical tourism efforts)
- c. Identify potential future rail-to-trails



Integrating Resources

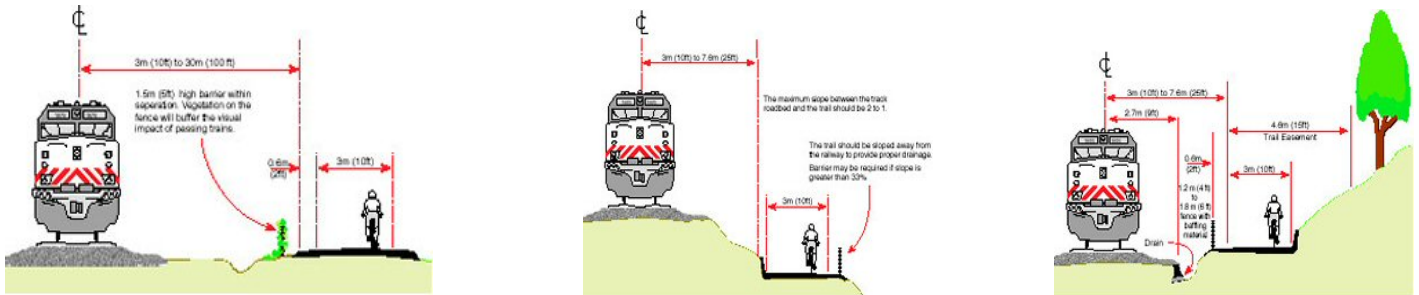
This is not a 'stand-alone' document. It is to be used as a resource for future trail planning to integrate rails-to-trails into the overall trails, recreation and tourism activities in Kansas. The plan should be updated periodically to ensure it continued usefulness.

Trail advocates need to reach out and be the catalysts for rail-to-trail conversions. Blending rail-to-trails project into the larger statewide trail activity.

Rail-to-trails will be an important segment of the future updates of the Kansas State Trails Plan and the plans for the Kansas Scenic Byways (<http://www.travelks.com/ksbyways>).

Information on rail-to-trails will also be an important addition to the next Kansas State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). The SCORP serves as a vision for outdoor recreation in Kansas used to meet the requirements of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965 (LWCF) which requires states to have an approved State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan on file with the National Park Service. Increasing outdoor activities was a major finding and trails are an excellent means to provide low cost physical activities for Kansas residents of all ages and income levels.

Special Topic: Rails-with-Trails



Another option available for completing trail systems is what is known as ‘Rails-with-Trails’ (RWT). Most railroad corridors are 100 feet wide making it possible for a trail to be included. There are successful examples of trails being built within an active rail corridor. The main consideration is meeting the concerns of the railroad owners. Involvement of all affected stakeholders is key. The U.S. Department of Transportation sponsored a study on the rails with trail issues. The conclusion was as follow:

“Based on the lessons learned in this study, it is clear that well-designed RWTs can bring numerous benefits to communities and railroads alike. RWTs are not appropriate in every situation, and should be carefully studied through a feasibility analysis. Working closely with railroad companies and other stakeholders is crucial to a successful RWT. Trail proponents need to understand railroad concerns, expansion plans, and operating practices. They also need to assume the liability burden for projects proposed on private railroad property. Limiting new and/or eliminating at-grade trail-rail

crossings, setting trails back as far as possible from tracks, and providing physical separation through fencing, vertical distance, vegetation, and/or drainage ditches can help create a well-designed trail. Trail planners need to work closely with railroad agencies and companies to develop strong maintenance and operations plans, and educate the public about the dangers of trespassing on tracks.

Railroad companies, for their part, need to understand the community desire to create safe walking and bicycling spaces. They may be able to derive many benefits from RWT projects in terms of reduced trespassing, dumping, and vandalism, as well as financial compensation. Together, trail proponents and railroad companies can help strengthen available legal protections, trespassing laws and enforcement, seek new sources of funding to improve railroad safety, and keep the railroad industry thriving and expanding in its services (freight and passenger).”



Train activated safety gate, Waterloo, NE



**U.S. Department of
Transportation**

Federal Highway
Administration, Federal
Railroad Administration
National Highway Traffic Safety
Administration
Federal Transit Administration

<https://transit-safety.fta.dot.gov/publications/safety/RailsWithTrails/HTML/RailsWithTrails.htm/IndividualStudiesandMasterPlans>

For more information:

Rails-with-Trails: Lessons Learned
Literature Review, Current Practices,
Conclusions
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Rail with trail, Mission City Rail Trail, San Fernando, CA

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