Central Iowa Trails

Central Iowa is home to over 600 miles of trails connecting dense, urban cores to natural, rural landscapes. There are trails for all types of uses, including walking, biking, running, cross country skiing and horseback riding. They range from long-distance treks for the more avid bikers, to family-friendly loops around small lakes, and link Perry to Altoona and Ankeny to Indianola.

The Des Moines Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) annually provides federal funding to regional trail projects through its Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP). This program has helped fund some major trails in the region, including the High Trestle, Gay Lea Wilson, and Chichaqua Valley Trails, among others.

Regional Maps

The Central Iowa Trail network has several resources to help with planning a ride or navigating your way while out on the trails. These include the new Central Iowa Trails Interactive Map, developed by the MPO, and the Iowa By Trail mobile application, developed by the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation (INHF). In addition, the Des Moines Bicycle Collective annually prints a pocket-sized map of the region’s trails that is available for purchase from local bicycle shops.
Trail Usage

Trail Counter Locations

Top 10 Locations

1. **High Trestle Trail (Bridge)**
2. **High Trestle Trail (The Oasis - R38)**
3. **Levee Trail (West Des Moines)**
4. **Clive Greenbelt**
5. **Raccoon River Valley Trail (Dallas Center)**
6. **Colby Woods**
7. **High Trestle Trail (Woodward)**
8. **Walker Johnston Park**
9. **Raccoon River Valley Trail (Deer Ridge Park)**
10. **Neal Smith Trail (NW 66th Ave)**

Annual counts were projected using the National Bicycle and Pedestrian Documentation (NBPD) Project. More information at bikepeddocumentation.org
The MPO began the Central Iowa Trail Count Program in 2012, with 40 infrared counters from TRAFx Research Ltd. to provide a consistent method for collecting trail user data across the region. The counters are available to all members of the MPO and Central Iowa Regional Transportation Planning Alliance (CIRTPA). The MPO and the Bicycle and Pedestrian Roundtable will use data collected from the trail counters to help determine where future trail investments may be needed.

**Regional Averages**

Using trail counters that were in the field in 2014, data was pulled to find hourly, daily, and monthly averages for trail usage in the region. The charts below display breakdowns of these averages.

**WEEKDAY** use is highest in the evening, while **WEEKEND** use is spread more evenly across the afternoon hours. Typically, weekends see more traffic than weekdays.

**Days of the Week**

- **Sunday**: 19%
- **Monday**: 14%
- **Tuesday**: 13%
- **Wednesday**: 13%
- **Thursday**: 12%
- **Friday**: 12%
- **Saturday**: 18%

- **% of Weekly Totals**

**Months of the Year**

- **Winter**
- **Summer**

- **% of Yearly Totals**

On average, **JUNE** sees more traffic than any other month.

**EACH COUNTER SAW AN AVERAGE OF **93** COUNTS PER DAY IN 2014**
Since the approval of Mobilizing Tomorrow, several efforts have moved forward to help close critical gaps in the regional trail network. These include the completion of the Chichaqua Valley Trail Connection, completion of NW Beaver Trail - Phase 1, and the approval of a route for the High Trestle Trail Extension, among others. However, many gaps still exist and will need focused attention in the future to ensure they get filled.

**MPO Planning Area**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Gaps</th>
<th>Miles of Gaps</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>61</td>
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**Miles of Recently Completed Gaps**

| 7 |

**Project Updates**

1. **Trail: Chichaqua Valley Trail**
   Completed in April 2015, this trail segment filled a regional gap by extending the Chichaqua Valley Trail to the Gay Lea Wilson Trail, opening up connections to the entire regional trail system.

2. **Trail: Raccoon River Valley Trail to High Trestle Trail Connector**
   Project is currently in the concept and route location phase. The design and plan production phase will follow once the route is determined.

3. **Trail: Neal Smith/High Trestle Trail Connection**
   Polk City and Polk County began working together to complete a connection from the Neal Smith Trail to the High Trestle Trail.

4. **Trail: NW Beaver Trail**
   City of Johnston completed Phase 1 of the NW Beaver Trail. The entire project will run from the north city limits to NW 66th Ave. and is expected to be completed by June 2017.

5. **Trail: Great Western Trail to Bill Riley Trail Connection**
   Polk County Conservation will begin work this year on a hard-packed limestone trail through Water Works Park, connecting the Great Western Trail to Gray's Lake.