

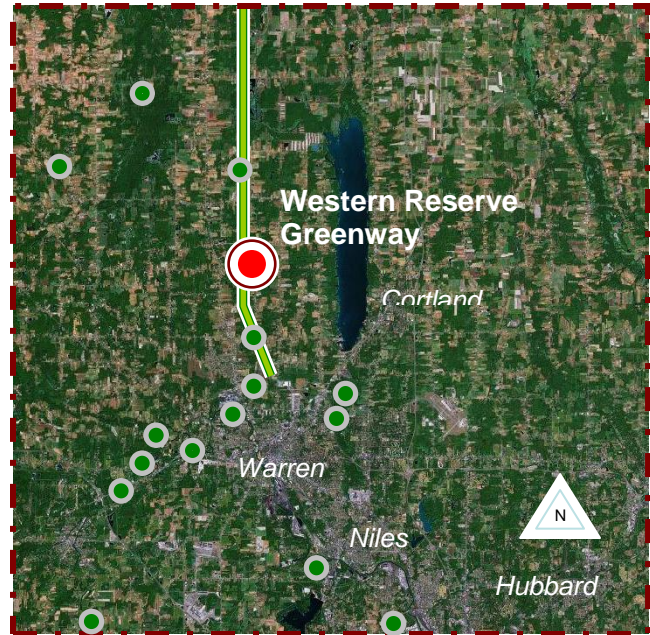


WESTERN RESERVE GREENWAY

Introductions • History • Present Conditions • Future Development Plans • Implementation Strategies • Statistics

Introduction

Spanning 14.6 miles across Trumbull County from Bloomfield to Champion Townships, the paved multi-use Western Reserve Greenway trail is easily the most popular park MetroPark has to offer. Visitors are able to access the trail from two trailheads: Sunside Trailhead located along State Route 305 in Champion Township, and Oakfield Station, located about a mile east of State Route 45 along Hyde-Oakfield Road in Bristol Township. Each trailhead offers visitors parking, picnic areas, portable lavatories, and pavilions. The trail caters to bicyclists, runners, pedestrians, equestrians, and cross-country skiers, and takes its visitors through open fields, sheltering forests, and past suburban neighborhoods. Along with the dramatic change of scenery, Western Reserve



Western Reserve Greenway

- 14.6 miles of paved 10 foot wide bike and hike trail traversing northern Trumbull County and connecting to Ashtabula MetroParks' 27 mile-long Western Reserve Greenway.
- The Western Reserve Greenway makes up part of the 100+ mile Great Ohio Lake-to-River Greenway (about 70% complete) which will stretch from Lake Erie in the City of Ashtabula to the Ohio River in the City of East Liverpool.
- The trail presently features two trailheads, Sunside Trailhead in Champion Township along State Route 303, and the Oakfield Trailhead along Hyde Oakfield Road in Bristol Township while additional parking is available at State Route 88 in Bloomfield Township and at Clarence Darrow MetroPark in Champion Township.
- Phase I and Phase II of the Western Reserve Greenway were completed in 2003 and 2004 respectively while Phase III is anticipated to open in 2010.
- Future opportunities include enhanced and expanded parking areas, educational signage, and possible concessions.

Greenway enthusiasts are offered a close-up view of wildlife throughout their journey.

The Western Reserve Greenway is just one of many trails which make up the 100-mile long Great-Ohio-Lake-To-River Greenway (GOLTRG), a mostly completed paved route that is anticipated to stretch from Lake Erie in Ashtabula City to the Ohio River at East Liverpool. Most of the trails that comprise the GOLTRG offer 10-foot wide asphalt paths with grassy berms. The Trumbull County MetroParks Western Reserve Greenway links to the Ashtabula County MetroParks Western Reserve Greenway in the north and will connect to the Warren Bikeway in the south with the completion of Phase III. Additionally, MetroParks and its partners may pursue



a fourth phase that would entail the construction of a four-mile-long trail between the Warren Bikeway and the Niles Greenway. Those trails presently in development along the GOLTRG from north to south include the following:

The North Shore Trail

Beginning in southern Ashtabula City near US Route 20, the North Shore Trail will extend through the small port city for about 3 miles before reaching Lake Erie. The trail is in the preliminary planning stages and the proposed route continues to be refined.

Ashtabula County MetroParks Western Reserve Greenway

At 27 miles and with six on and off-site parking areas, the Ashtabula County MetroParks Western Reserve Greenway is the longest single trail within the GOLTRG. The completed greenway begins within the City of Ashtabula and extends near the communities of Jefferson, Rock Creek, Roaming Shores, and Orwell before connecting to Trumbull County MetroParks' greenway.

Warren Bikeway

Broken into two development phases, the Warren Bikeway is in its final engineering and design stage. The trail utilizes abandoned rail rights of way, city streets, and underutilized properties in eastern Warren. The project will create more accessibility within the city and may assist in neighborhood revitalization efforts. Construction is anticipated to begin by the summer of 2009.

Niles Greenway

The City of Niles' proposed four-mile trail is expected to break ground in 2009. The trail will originate from Church Street near downtown and follow a rail right of way out of the city, through Weathersfield Township, and end at the county line where the Mill Creek MetroParks Bikeway begins. The trail will also feature a trail head with a shelter pavilion and restroom facilities. As part of the planning for the project, the State of Ohio assisted the city in attaining right of way for sections of an underutilized rail corridor that could serve as a connection between the Niles Greenway and the Warren Bikeway.

Mill Creek MetroParks Bikeway

Featuring about 11 miles of greenway over gently rolling hills, the Mill Creek MetroParks Bikeway begins at the Mahoning County Line and traverses western Austintown Township, Canfield Township, and Canfield City before passing by the Mill Creek Farm and park district headquarters. Approximately five additional miles of trail is planned to make a connection to the Columbiana Greenway, which begins at the Columbiana County line in the village of Washingtonville.

Columbiana Greenway (Little Beaver Creek Greenway Trail)

The constructed portion of the Little Beaver Creek Greenway begins in the Village of Leetonia and extends approximately ten miles before terminating at the City of Lisbon. An additional 20 miles of trail will be required to make the connection from Lisbon to East Liverpool and the Ohio River. Much planning remains, including route



determination and land acquisition. The project is also complicated by the lack of public lands and difficult terrain.

History

Although the existing phases of the Western Reserve Greenway have only been around since 2004, the efforts to develop the trail began in 1989 with a committee of citizens and park experts who saw an opportunity to create a regional trail system. Over time, the committee has formed into the Great-Ohio-Lake-To-River Coalition, which meets quarterly and collaborates to solve problems and share information. Though the process of laying pathway can be relatively quick, along with engineering, design, and even property acquisition, the efforts to attain the funds necessary for such projects can be daunting. Initially, funding for the Trumbull County portion of the Western Reserve Greenway was difficult, as the park district discovered after making its first formal application for funding in 1992. In later years with changing political priorities and in partnership with the Trumbull County Commissioners and the Trumbull County Planning Commission, adequate monies were secured for the development of the Western Reserve Greenway.



Looking northbound on the Western Reserve Greenway

In 1997 MetroParks entered into a 15-year lease with the Ohio Rail Commission, a subsidiary of the Ohio Department of Transportation, to attain 153 acres of the former Penn Central 714 rail right of way. The corridor, which parallels State Route 45 from about a mile east, stretches from the county line in Bloomfield Township, past Hyde Oakfield Station in Bristol Township, and to Champion Avenue East in Champion Township. The first phase, consisting of a 10-foot-wide asphalt trail which ran approximately 8.3 miles from Champion Avenue East to Hyde Oakfield Road, opened on November 10, 2003. The second phase, which was completed the following year, extended the trail approximately 6.3 miles north from Hyde-Oakfield Road to the county line where a link was made to the Ashtabula County Parks Western Reserve Greenway. Phase II officially opened on November 10, 2004.

Present Conditions

The Western Reserve Greenway has been MetroParks' most successful project yet. Aside from the sights, the trail is also punctuated with historical locations, an asset which the Trumbull County MetroParks is working to capitalize upon by providing educational signage along the route. Visitors are encouraged to use several modes of non-motorized transportation on the trail, including bicycling, running, in-line skating, cross-country skiing, and walking. Horses are also permitted so long as they ride alongside the trail and not directly on the pavement, a rule set in place for the health and safety of the animals as well as to keep the trails clear of debris. Snowmobiles, while at one time allowed, have since been banned due to the damage the vehicles



cause. Members of the Trumbull County MetroParks Bike Patrol volunteer their time to help visitors with any problems or questions they may have while on the trail. Bike Patrol members are recognizable by their light green Bike Patrol shirts and they work to keep the trail safe throughout the year. Additionally, signage for the Western Reserve Greenway is posted at each trailhead as well as each public road which the trail bisects. All intersections with roads are marked and feature warning signs to alert motorists to pedestrians and bicyclists. Benches are also available sporadically along the entire course of the route, including at the trailheads and major intersections, such as State Route 87.

Maintaining the multi-million dollar trail and its two trailheads can be daunting and very expensive at times, particularly with springtime and autumn cleanups, pavement patches, mowing, tree clearings, maintenance and repair of amenities, and brush-hogging encroaching branches and plants. All areas of the trail have been subjected to littering and vandalism, including the destruction of benches and portable lavatories. MetroParks has found that keeping certain amenities out of sight from passing motorists tends to help the situation, although every case is different and the correct amount of visibility coupled with police presence could also discourage vandals. Most of the trail features a one-to-three-foot-grassy berm that is mowed for maintenance as well as aesthetic issues. MetroParks maintains a John Deere Gator at its Sunside Trailhead to quickly access the trail and perform the necessary maintenance work along with a leaf blower, mower, chainsaw, and other pertinent equipment. Most of Phase I was brush-hogged in late 2007 to clear away encroaching tree limbs, and similar work is required for much of Phase II. The special process, which was most recently contracted out to the Trumbull County Engineer's Office, is needed about once every five years. Within the Mosquito Lake Wildlife Area, however, MetroParks is permitted to cut the existing grassland no shorter than 10 inches. Also, the canopy over the trail must remain untouched provided that it is at least 30 feet from the ground and does not pose a hazard to pedestrians or bicyclists.



The Western Reserve Greenway starts at Champion Avenue East in Champion Township and flows through Bristol and Bloomfield townships before connecting into Ashtabula's greenway further north

The Trumbull County Planning Commission continues to administer the development, grant writing, and management aspects of Phase III on behalf of the Trumbull County Commissioners and in collaboration with the Park Commissioners. Construction of the trail is anticipated between 2009 and 2010. Additional funding could be required dependent upon the volatile construction materials market. Upon completion, the trail will be donated to the MetroParks and the park district will be responsible for the trail's ongoing maintenance as well as any future improvements.

Additionally, the land leases from the Ohio Rails Commission will expire for



Phase I and Phase II in the next few years and new lease agreements will have to be negotiated. Certain funding opportunities to make improvements along the trails may be limited if the remaining lease period is less than 50 years. Phase III, however, will likely be owned as fee-simple real estate, allowing MetroParks greater freedom and flexibility. Another concern is the continuation of the GOLTRG from the Warren Bikeway to the Niles Greenway, a project which could involve MetroParks. No political entity has declared ownership of the project and additional rights of way remain to be acquired. The planned route would follow an abandoned rail right of way, paralleling State Route 169 from the city limits of Warren into downtown Niles. MetroParks, the Trumbull County Commissioners, and the Trumbull County Planning Commission will need to investigate the possibility of developing the corridor as a fourth phase of the Western Reserve Greenway.

Future Development Plans

MetroParks has the opportunity to further enhance the existing portion of the Western Reserve Greenway and to refine plans for future phases. Though adequate signage is provided along those roads which cross the greenway, the trail may benefit from additional trailhead directional signage along State Route 45 and State Route 46. MetroParks may also benefit by investing in a batter-powered portable counter system which could determine the number of trail visitors at any given point along the trail. Usage data could be valuable in future grant applications or funding requests for the trail. Small counters could be placed out of sight so as not to attract unwanted attention and could be used at MetroParks other properties throughout the year.

Sunside Trailhead

Trumbull County's southernmost trailhead, Sunside, offers visitors 34 parking spaces, sheltered picnic tables, benches, and cook-out grills as well as an information kiosk. It is the busiest parking lot in MetroParks' inventory and is in need of expansion. The present parking lot will likely be extended behind the pavilion, providing 20 new spaces to accommodate present and future demand. MetroParks is also working to procure electricity at the site to provide lighting and to run a vending machine. Other considerations for the site include the creation of a solar station that would serve as an educational exhibit while also offsetting Trumbull County MetroParks' electricity expenses. Additionally, the park district may consider the installation of a vault-style restroom at the premises away from State Route 305 to ensure privacy and discourage vandalism. MetroParks will also consider installing a drinking fountain and yard hydrant.

Phase I Improvements

MetroParks may wish to install direction signage in Champion Township to encourage citizens to use the Clarence Darrow parking areas to access either Phase I or Phase III of the greenway, which may alleviate concerns regarding parking along Champion Avenue East at the trail terminus. Areas of the pavement near the Oakfield trailhead have developed smooth ruts that may require attention in the near future. Otherwise, aside from annual maintenance of the trail, no other major improvements are anticipated for the trail over the next five years.



Oakfield Trailhead

With a new pavilion, information kiosk, and picnic tables, there is little else needed at the Oakfield trailhead aside from continued maintenance and cleanup services. The 2.3 acre area features a 20-car parking lot located immediately off Hyde Oakfield Road, about one mile east from State Route 45. Similar to the Sunside Trailhead, water would be a welcomed amenity at the Oakfield Trailhead. Access to electricity is also readily available should it become desired in the future.

Phase II Improvements

Much of Phase II traverses undeveloped forest and some farmland. Although the trail remains in good shape, MetroParks may enhance the trail with educational and historical signage. MetroParks may also work to enhance parking opportunities where the right of way leased by MetroParks is wide enough at State Route 87 in Bloomfield Township to provide space for a few cars. Through the planning process, however, it was discovered that some visitors who had difficulty locating the unmarked parking area were concerned about taking up parking space at an adjacent business. Initially, MetroParks may mark these spots and place signage to help visitors identify the appropriate parking area. Additionally, the park district could partner with the local business to provide additional spaces to trail visitors. Also, vacant properties north of State Route 87 could be acquired and converted into a trailhead with a restroom facility.

Phase III Developments

Phase III, currently in the engineering and design stage, will extend the Western Reserve Greenway by approximately 2.6 miles from its southern terminus at Champion Avenue to North River Road at the Warren City limits where it will flow into the Warren Bikeway. Completion of the trail is anticipated sometime in 2010, depending upon funding and construction costs. MetroParks is pursuing opportunities for installing historical and educational signage along the trail. Additionally, the park district may wish to coordinate with Kent State University to construct a spur from the Trumbull Campus, which would also service Clarence Darrow MetroPark to Phase III of the Greenway.

Future Considerations

Within the next five years, MetroParks may have the prospect of adding a fourth phase to the Western Reserve Greenway to connect the Niles Greenway with the Warren Bikeway through Weathersfield Township and the City of Niles. The park district is also in need of additional Bike Patrol members, which could be helped with a marketing campaign that includes signage at all trailheads, advertising at MetroParks events, and press releases. In terms of attaining additional funds for the trail, MetroParks may also market the opportunity for interested citizens and corporate organizations to donate a bench, sign, or service. Also, with codification of its rules and guidelines, MetroParks may be in a better position to coordinate with local and county police agencies and attain help in curtailing improper usage of the trail, particularly in the case of ATVs.



Implementation Strategies

Because of the costs associated with keeping the trail clear of debris as well as maintaining berms and servicing trailheads, MetroParks' largest opened park is also its most expensive. On-going funding will be necessary to keep the trail in its present condition. Although the development of Phase III and potential future phases may be coordinated primarily by a separate political entity, it would be best for MetroParks to continue to make involvement in all aspects of the projects a priority.

Western Reserve Greenway Implementation Checklist

Phase I – Sunside Trailhead

- Expand Sunside Trailhead parking area
- Install electric utility at Sunside Trailhead maintenance building
- Establish vending machine at Sunside Trailhead maintenance building/picnic shelter
- Investigate opportunities to establish solar energy demonstration exhibit
- Explore design opportunities to evoke a historic rail station from existing maintenance building

Phase II – Trail Plans

Phase II and I may run concurrently

- Mark or paint parking areas along State Route 87
- Attain additional parking areas near State Route 87
- Place historical and educational signage
- Procure portable counter system
- Plan and conduct trail user survey

Western Reserve Greenway Statistics

Parkland Attributes:

Trumbull County

Phases I – II (Phase III In Progress)

Completed Trail: 14.6 Miles

Trailheads:

- Sunside Trailhead at Champion Avenue East, Champion Township

* Lavatory, Pavilion, Picnic Area Available

* Daily Traffic Counts: SR 305: 4,762

* Daily Traffic Counts: SR 45: 9,090

* 20 Parking Spaces

- Oakfield Station at Hyde Oakfield Road, Bloomfield Township

* Last Trailhead Before Ashtabula

* Lavatory, Pavilion, Picnic Area Available

* Daily Traffic Counts: SR 45: 3,490

Parking Spaces: 97 Available Spaces

- 34 Spaces at Sunside Trailhead

- 20 Spaces at Oakfield Trailhead

- 40 Spaces at Clarence Darrow

- 3 Spaces at State Route 87

* Pavilions Available & Portable Lavatories

* Annual World Of Wildlife Bicycle Tour

* Bike Patrol