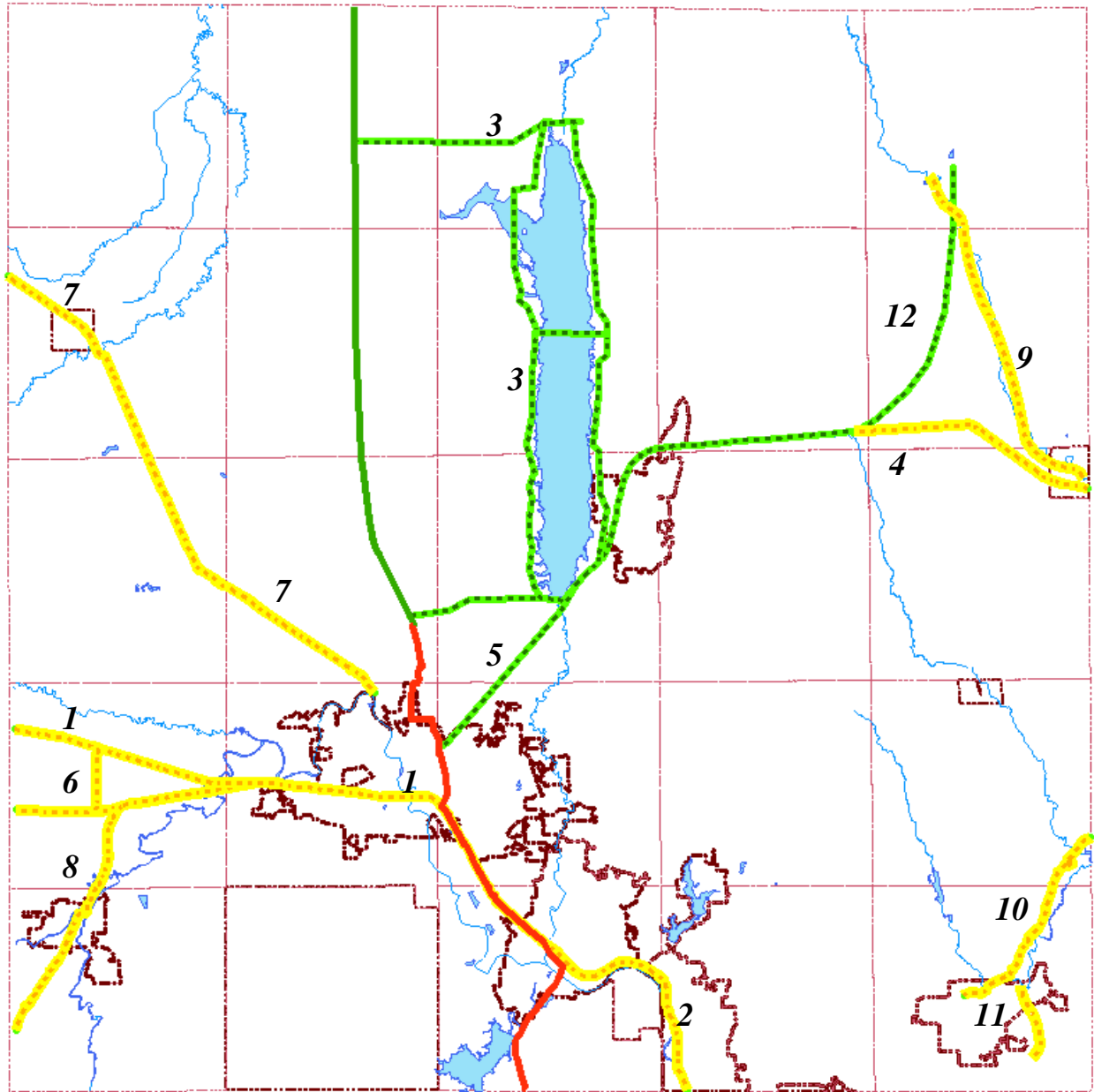


REGIONAL LAND TRAILS

Introduction • Existing Corridors • Trails In Development • Trail Creation Opportunities

Introduction

Throughout Ohio and surrounding states, the importance of regional trails is gaining recognition by all levels of government while citizens demand better recreation amenities and even opportunities for alternative forms of transit. MetroParks provides Trumbull County with its only



-  Completed Greenway
-  Planned Greenway
-  Conceptual Trails
-  Trail Committee

Conceptual Regional Trails – Those trails shown in yellow have been identified for quite some time. Trails shown in green were the creation of the MetroParks Trail Committee



regional trail, the Western Reserve Greenway, which makes connections possible from the northern suburbs of Warren to the City of Ashtabula near Lake Erie. With the completion of the Warren Bikeway, Niles Greenway, and Phase IV of the Western Reserve Greenway, Trumbull County residents will be able to access the Mill Creek MetroPark Greenway. Regionally, the Western Reserve Greenway makes up a portion of the partially completed Great Ohio Lake-To-River Greenway, a collection of individual trails that will ultimately provide a walkable and bikeable link from Lake Erie to the Ohio River.



Phase I of the Western Reserve Greenway

Throughout MetroParks' comprehensive planning process, the need for regional trails in Trumbull County was made evident by the demand expressed by area citizens, community leaders, health advocates, and trail enthusiasts. Greenways have the ability to serve vast populations as they stretch from community to community, adding a new dimension to recreation and even transportation. Whereas a 150-acre park is likely to serve residents from a nearby community, the same 150 acres, as in the case of the Western Reserve Greenway, can be made into a linear

greenway park spanning 14 or more miles, over half the width of Trumbull County. Regional trails promote active lifestyles and encourage education by bringing citizens and their guests to secluded environs that would otherwise be inaccessible. Strategically placed greenways can become alternative transportation corridors, particularly during warmer months.

This chapter outlines several opportunities for regional trail developments in Trumbull County. The paths described for the proposed greenways, as well as the accompanying maps, are intended to serve as generalized concepts. Most of the regional trail concepts within this chapter follow underutilized or former rail rights of way. In other cases, the paths are shown flowing past public and private land. In either instance, the trails depicted are not meant to be definitive routes by any means. As MetroParks and the Trumbull County Planning Commission have experienced in the past with the Western Reserve Greenways, the actual routes of trails may continually change throughout the planning and engineering process for a variety of reasons.

Although the Western Reserve Greenway took many years to develop, it has not been the only trail planned for Trumbull County. Several regional trails exist within close proximity to Trumbull County, including the Stavich Trail near the Ohio border in Mahoning County that leads into Pennsylvania. To the west, the Portage Hike and Bike Trail, beginning in central Portage County, provides a connection to the Towpath Trail that exists between Cleveland and Akron. Additional trail connections may also be possible with neighboring Mercer and Geauga Counties.

Trails can be developed in a number of ways. Natural trails or footpaths are very inexpensive and relatively easy to create. However, they do not lend themselves well to any use other than walking and sometimes mountain biking. Unlike paved trails, nature paths are more susceptible to weather conditions, sometimes becoming impassable after a long rain or snowmelt. Limestone



trails are also popular in northeast Ohio as they comprise the neighboring Portage Hike and Bike Trail, the Towpath Trail, and the Portage County Headwaters Trail. Such trails entail significant expense to install; however they provide a strong and pervious surface suitable for bicyclists and pedestrians. The trails can usually be designed to retain a natural appearance and, because the loose top layer of stones, the surfacing is ideal for walkers and runners. Limestone trails do require continued maintenance as weeds and other plantlife can break through the underutilized areas along the trail, oftentimes appearing along the center of the path as visitors tend to travel along the right. Asphalt and concrete are among the most expensive trail surfacing options, however, they have a very long longevity that may warrant the upfront investment. Additionally, asphalt or concrete trails require less maintenance and can withstand heavy traffic. Maintenance issues for concrete and asphalt include patching as well as sealing. Because of their flat surface, they are the most accessible of all trail types and are particularly ideal for bicyclists and those with disabilities.

Outside of the Western Reserve Greenway and Howland Township's Mosquito Creek Boardwalk, actual construction of an additional regional trail will be unlikely within the next five years. Planning and perhaps engineering, however, could be accomplished on one or two key trail routes. Additionally, it is unlikely that MetroParks will be able to take sole responsibility for the development of each trail, as there are limited park district resources and because vast portions of the suggested trails would traverse municipalities and other political jurisdictions. Rather, the following trail opportunities serve to demonstrate the most viable and important corridors within Trumbull County for establishing a solid trail network. MetroParks can strongly encourage the proposed trail routes through donating its services, time, resources, and efforts into trail development projects when reasonable. Nevertheless, MetroParks may capture any opportunity it may come across to establish viable links between population centers and attractions.

Existing Trail Corridors

Trumbull County's existing trail corridors are the Western Reserve Greenway and the Howland Township Boardwalk. Smaller trail networks existing along Mosquito Lake provide area residents and many tourists with nature trails. These popular trails arguably attract thousands of visitors each year and are also in the process of being extended.

Western Reserve Greenway Phase I and Phase II

Phases I and II of the Western Reserve Greenway comprise a 14.6-mile stretch of paved multi-use trail that extends from northern Bloomfield Township to southern Champion Township. The first phase of the trail, which reached from Champion Avenue East in Champion Township to Hyde Oakfield Road in Bristol Township, was completed in 2003. The remainder of the trail, which continued north from Hyde Oakfield Road to the Ashtabula MetroParks' Western Reserve Greenway at the county line, was in place by late autumn of 2004. The trail features two trailheads equipped with pavilions, picnic areas, parking, portable restrooms, and kiosks. The Western Reserve Greenway is a vital link along the Great Ohio Lake-To-River Greenway (GOLTRG), a conceptual collection of trails that chart a path from Lake Erie to the Ohio River. There has been tremendous



Western Reserve Greenway Oakfield Trailhead
(Pictometry 2006 Aerial via Microsoft Virtual Earth)

advancement in the development of the corridor in just the last few years. Although significant gaps in the route remain in Trumbull County, substantial progress is being made to complete the connections, of which MetroParks' involvement has been instrumental. MetroParks will continue to work with its trail-development allies, including Friends of the Greenway, the Bike Patrol, and governmental agencies, in order to enhance the existing trail as well as develop future connections to other trails. *Please see Western Reserve Greenway Chapter for detailed information.* A survey conducted in the summer of 2006 found that over 60 people utilized the trail over a 12-hour period in rainy weather. Since that time, MetroParks personnel have observed that trailhead parking lots along the Western Reserve Greenway become full with greater frequency, so much so that the Sunside Trailhead is in need of additional spaces to accommodate demand. MetroParks may conduct more extensive surveys as well as implement a counter system to monitor usage.

Mosquito Lake Trails

Several small and separated nature trail systems surround the southern portion of Mosquito Lake, providing a total of 20 miles of foot trails and an additional five miles of natural pathway exclusively reserved as bridle trails. Most of the trails are managed by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources and are part of the Mosquito Lake State Park.

Mosquito Creek Boardwalk Trail

Trumbull County's latest trail is located in Howland Township along Mosquito Creek. With the first phase of the trail completed in mid 2008, the limestone and boardwalk trail takes visitors through sensitive wetland environments from Howland Township Park and out to a nature trail which leads to the a commercial area along East Market Street in eastern Warren. Upon completion, the trail



will stretch nearly two miles across Howland Township from E. Market Street to North River Road. In the future the trail could even be extended further northward to Mosquito Lake.

Additional Trail Locations

Several township and city parks feature walking and hiking trails, including the City of Warren's Packard Park and Perkins Park as well as Girard-Liberty Park (Liberty Memorial) near Interstate Route 80. The City of Newton Falls provides its citizens with a mile-long paved walking trail through its downtown area with plans of extending the trail further north to meet up with proposed regional trails. Additionally, Howland Township Park provides patrons with a paved walking trail as well as a connection to Howland's new Mosquito Creek Boardwalk Trail.

Trail Corridors In Development

The primary trails in development comprise the Trumbull County portion of the GOLTRG and the Mosquito Creek Boardwalk. Although most of the GOLTRG trail corridor has been built in Ashtabula County, Trumbull County has the opportunity to become the first county to complete its portion of the corridor, as all major routes have been defined and all but a few miles are presently designed and engineered.



Phase III Area of the Western Reserve Greenway

Western Reserve Greenway Phase III - Phase III will extend the Western Reserve Greenway 2.6 miles south to the starting point of the Warren Bikeway at North River Road. The project is presently in the design and engineering phase, which is expected to be completed in mid-year of 2009 at which time construction will commence. The trail should be opened in late 2009 or early 2010. After its completion, MetroParks may collaborate with other agencies and organizations in

order to construct a spur from the Western Reserve Greenway to Kent State University's Trumbull Campus and Clarence Darrow MetroPark. The park district may continue to explore other opportunities for developing connections to key locations as they arise.

Warren Bikeway

The approximately three-mile-long Warren Bikeway is in the final stages of engineering, and construction is planned to commence shortly. The trail will take visitors south of North River Road through open fields, past North End Park, and onto Paige Street before following a gently curving rail right of way and terminating at the southern city limits. North End Park will also be equipped with a new pavilion and restrooms.



Western Reserve Greenway Phase IV

Trumbull County MetroParks continues to collaborate with the Trumbull County Planning Commission in developing Phase IV of the Western Reserve Greenway, which will provide the critical three mile link to the Warren Bikeway to the Niles Greenway. The most ideal location for Phase IV is along the same rail right of way utilized by the Warren Bikeway that roughly parallels State Route 169. Acquisition, design, and engineering have yet to be completed for this project.

Niles Greenway

The City of Niles is planning to move forward with the construction of the Niles Greenway in the near future. The paved trail will begin near downtown Niles and travel south along an abandoned rail right of way for about four miles before connecting with the Mill Creek MetroParks Bikeway in Austintown Township. The Niles Bikeway will also feature a trailhead with a pavilion and restrooms.

Mosquito Creek Boardwalk

The second phase of Howland Township's trail will extend the existing trail by approximately 2,800 feet over a primarily dry land trail. Due to its relatively flat streamside environment, additional boardwalks may be necessary to create a safe passage over the Mosquito Creek corridor's existing wetlands. The cost of installing the raised walkways rival that of asphalt trails. Boardwalk projects can also demand substantial time to complete. Nonetheless, the development of the route offers citizens an opportunity to travel into critical environmental areas that would otherwise remain inaccessible.

Conceptual Trails

Many of the following conceptual trails have been in planning for years and are grounded with extensive research and citizen inquiry. However, these trail projects have yet to be adopted and made a priority of any governmental organization. Time, staff resources, and money all limit the further development of these routes. However, as the GOLTRG is constructed through Trumbull County and national, state, and local interest continues to intensify upon building trail networks, opportunities for making these concepts a reality are as bright as ever.

Funding constraints are typically the most difficult hurdle in creating trails. However, with good coordination, volunteer efforts, and willing land owners, costs can be significantly diminished. Federal funds are a substantial source of revenue for trail creation and, in many cases, are the only means by which communities can afford to build recreation routes. Typically, communities must provide 20 to 30 percent of the total project costs as a local match in order to attain additional funding. However, the cost and time it takes to complete a trail project can be multiplied by the detailed procedural and administrative requirements that communities must follow when accepting money from federal programs. Some communities may find that simpler trail projects can be completed quicker and possibly with less out-of-pocket expense with volunteer help and local investment rather than by accepting federal funds.



Most of the development proposals target rail rights of way for trail creation. Many of the former rights of way have been placed out of service and stripped of their tracks and ties. Others remain inactive but relatively intact while a few continue to be routinely used. Although railroads throughout the Midwest tended to fall out of service in past decades as freight shipping moved to highways and airports, recent economic trends have brought about a swift resurgence in railroad investment and refurbishment. It is possible that certain corridors may become unavailable for trail creation as they are targeted for revitalization in order to accommodate the region's future transportation needs. Still, many opportunities remain in constructing trails, particularly through the county's rural areas.



Ohio Department of Transportation Statewide Bike Trail Map

It is also important to note that many of the conceptual trails utilize portions of existing or other proposed routes, similar to how the GOLTRG is made up of several smaller paths that connect. MetroParks has not committed to developing these projects as park district, but will assist other communities and organizations where it is able to in order to support the creation of these important greenways. The following is a description of the most popular regional trail concepts that could reach across Trumbull County in the future.

1 - Western Reserve Heritage Trail

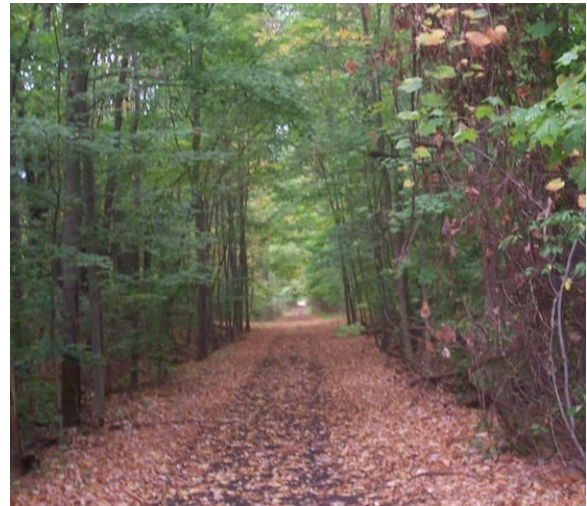
The proposed Western Reserve Heritage Trail would ultimately serve to connect the cities of Cleveland and Pittsburgh via the Mahoning Valley. The regional corridor would be comprised of several smaller and connecting trails, including Portage County MetroParks' Headwaters Trail, which follows a gently curving path between the villages of Garrettsville and Mantua. In Trumbull County, the route would likely travel from the northwest to southeast and connect Thomas A. Swift MetroPark, Canoe City MetroPark, and downtown Warren before reaching the GOLTRG, specifically the Warren Bikeway. The path would then follow the GOLTRG through Niles before branching off at the Mahoning River and traveling southeast once more into Youngstown along the Mahoning River Corridor Trail. Ultimately, the Western Reserve Heritage Trail would reach the Stavich Trail near the Ohio border and continue on to Pittsburgh, from where existing



paved trails lead to the nation's capital. Much of the proposed trail would ideally follow abandoned rail rights of way, although there may be interest in repairing and reactivating certain portions of the rail corridor. The Headwaters Trail is paved with limestone and the Stavich Trail with asphalt.

2 - Mahoning River Corridor Trail

Although recreation will likely be its primary use, the Mahoning River Corridor Trail would offer the best alternative transportation opportunity of all other trails, the only exception being the stretches of the Great Ohio Lake-To-River Greenway that traverse urbanized areas. The conceptual trail would serve the core of the Mahoning Valley, greatly enhancing recreational opportunities for a significant portion of the region's population that reaches from Niles, through Youngstown, and past Struthers. In Trumbull County there are two existing proposals for portions of the corridor, the Girard Bikeway and the McDonald Hike & Bike Trail. These trails seek to connect to the Niles Greenway upon completion and route trails along the Mahoning River with spurs and loops running through nearby neighborhoods. As the trails are developed, they would likely merge and continue south into Mahoning County where the trail would continue through downtown Youngstown as well as the cities of Campbell and Struthers before reaching the Stavich Trail. Additionally, a proposed Youngstown Southern Rail-Trail Link would merge into the Mahoning River Corridor Trail near downtown Youngstown and lead visitors south into Columbiana County where the trail would eventually link again to the Western Reserve Greenway.



An abandoned rail right of way in Vienna Township

3 - Mosquito Lake Loop & Connections

Another important regional trail concept is the Mosquito Lake Loop Trail which would feature connections to the Western Reserve Greenway. The paved bicycling and hiking trail established around Mosquito Lake would be approximately 23 miles in length. Coupled with two or three east-to-west connections into the Western Reserve Greenway, a third bicycling loop would be created. The vast majority of the land that would be required to develop such a trail is federally held and leased to the State of Ohio, making acquisition for such a major project simpler. Portions of the trail would require the purchase of easements along the edges of private residential lots as well as detours away from the lake shore, particularly in Bazetta Township and the City of Cortland where lakeside developments already exist. The easements for the remainder of such a route,



however, could likely be negotiated with a relatively few land owners. Lightly traveled roads could also be utilized as part of the trail as is common practice in many state and national parks. Connections to the Western Reserve Greenway will be vital in providing greater accessibility and visibility. A northern connection could be constructed almost entirely within the Mosquito Lake Wildlife Preserve, also a governmentally owned property. A southern connection could be made in Bazetta Township near the Mosquito Lake Dam. Such a route could parallel State Route 305; however, a substantial amount of private property would have to be traversed. Lastly, an inter-loop connection could be made by incorporating the State Route 88 Bridge that crosses the lake. The specific portion of State Route 88 has lowered speed limits during warmer months and could be investigated to determine if it could safely accommodate an independent bicycling lane. An additional connection could also be created by building a spur into the later proposed Orangeville-to-Cortland trail.



The Portage County Hike & Bike Trail

4 - Orangeville to Cortland

Orangeville, a small village of about 200 residents, is located on the Ohio border at the southern end of Pymatuning Creek, about five miles northwest of Sharpsville, Pennsylvania. The city of Cortland is located about 11 miles west of Orangeville and has about 6,500 residents. The Orangeville-to-Cortland route concept would likely require the purchase of a former rail right of way which travels between the two population centers. The Mercer County Trails Association is presently working on plans to construct the Trout Island Trail that would utilize the same rail right of way immediately east of Orangeville. The proposed Trout Island Trail would meander for nine mile around the Shenango Valley Reservoir before crossing an existing railroad trestle

and ending in Sharpsville. In Trumbull County, the rail right of way has been abandoned between Orangeville and the Johnston Township line. Portions of the rail have been removed altogether. Beyond the township line, however, the rail is in active use, providing freight service from Ashtabula into the City of Warren via Cortland. It is possible that the rail could be placed out of service within the next five years. As the rail right of way passes very close to the proposed Mosquito Lake Loop prior before curving south into the City of Warren, an opportunity exists to build a one-mile connector trail.

5 - Cortland to Warren

A significant trail opportunity could develop if the rail corridor paralleling State Route 5 between the Cities of Cortland and Warren is placed out of service on or about 2015, as has been suspected by municipal leaders for some time. An alternative route may be achieved by extending the Mosquito Creek Boardwalk through Bazetta Township to Mosquito Lake and into Cortland.



6 - Warren to Mid-Portage County

MetroParks may continue to collaborate with property owners and other organizations, including the Portage County MetroParks, in working to promote the development of a trail between the City of Warren and Portage County. Once the connections to the neighboring county can be made, Trumbull County will be linked into the Portage Hike and Bike Trail and ultimately the Towpath Trail in Summit and Cuyahoga Counties. The proposed trail nearly parallels the conceptual Western Reserve Heritage Trail until the two routes merge in eastern Warren Township, at which point the rail rights of way continue on to connect with the planned Warren Bikeway just south of State Route 422.

7 - Geauga County - West Farmington - Warren

Large sections of the old Baltimore & Ohio Railroad sit abandoned with its rails removed in northwestern Trumbull County and southeastern Geauga County. The route follows a southeasterly course that leads past Geauga County MetroParks' Swine Creek Reservation, through West Farmington Village, and across Bristol Township and Champion Township before reaching the city limits of Warren. Portions of the rail corridor are still intact and have recently become active near the county seat; however, the vacated northern portion of the route could very easily serve to connect West Farmington with Swine Creek Reservation. With a modification, the same trail could also connect Swine Creek Reservation with the West Farmington Nature Preserve. Trumbull County MetroParks believes that such a connection would positively impact the West Farmington community and Trumbull County tourism in general. Furthermore, MetroParks may coordinate with Geauga County MetroParks in order to develop a connection from its West Farmington Nature Preserve to Geauga County MetroParks' Swine Creek Reservation. An alternative to creating a trail along the rail right of way or other private property could be found in utilizing Curtis-Middlefield Road and Swine Creek Road. With minimal improvements and directional signage, the lightly traveled chip-and-seal roads could accommodate bicyclists and pedestrians. The practice of using quiet back roads as part of trail systems is common in Ohio, such as at Punderson State Park. The distance from the West Farmington Nature Preserve's proposed western parking lot and the closest entrance to Swine Creek Reservation is a little over two miles when following the existing roads.

8 - City of Newton Falls to Braceville

MetroParks continues to collaborate with the City of Newton Falls to further develop the city's existing walking trail and create a connection with the proposed Warren to Mid-Portage Route and the Western Reserve Heritage Trail. The path would most likely utilize a rail right of way extending from the existing trail, a portion of the proposed Warren to Mid-Portage Route, and lastly a third rail right of way connecting the Western Reserve Heritage Trail. The proposed route would traverse the center of Braceville Township.



9 - Pymatuning Creek Corridor

Pymatuning Creek is a relatively untapped recreation resource reaching over seven miles from Kinsman Center to Orangeville. With most of the land surrounding the creek being owned by the US Army Corps of Engineers, a regional pathway could be constructed from Kinsman to Orangeville. The corridor features a game preserve near its center and a canoe launch at Orangeville's Andy Dorick Park. MetroParks has also targeted the Pymatuning Creek for the development of a water trail that would initially extend between Orangeville to State Route 87 and eventually further north to a location near Kinsman Center. Northeastern Trumbull County, with its close proximity to three reservoirs, is an area rich in water recreation, but little else. A hiking and mountain biking trail could be constructed almost entirely with volunteer effort and existing parking areas at Andy Dorick Park in Orangeville, and Mulligan East Road could double as trailheads. Additional parking and signage would be necessary, particularly for the northern portion of the route. Also, it would be best to place the trail away from wetlands, bogs, and any hazardous areas within the gaming preserve.



The Warren Riverwalk

10 - Masury to Hubbard

A four-to-five-mile trail could exist between unincorporated Masury and the City of Hubbard in the future if agreements could be made with area property owners. Ideally, the route would follow an existing rail right of way that parallels the Little Yankee Run, a tributary of the Shenango River. The connection would provide a substantial amenity to an area with few recreational opportunities. The trail would also serve a significant population in Trumbull County as well as in the Sharon, Pennsylvania, area.

11 - Mud Run Corridor

The Mud Run creek presents a possibility for a hiking trail that could link East Liberty Street in eastern Hubbard to Harding Park near Roosevelt Drive. Although the route would be relatively short in nature, it could be extended into other areas in the future, particularly to the proposed Masury-to-Hubbard route. Nature trails could be constructed along Mud Run with intersecting loops. Additionally, an appropriately constructed trail could also encourage mountain bikes.

12 - Johnston Township to Kinsman

Another trail creation opportunity exists along an old rail corridor that begins in extreme southeastern Johnston Township, at the proposed Orangeville-to-Cortland Trail. The rail right of way takes a northeasterly course through Kinsman, terminating about a half mile east of Kinsman Center. By connecting into proposed trail systems further south, the route would link the Kinsman Center area to other population centers in the county while providing a valuable recreation amenity.