



2024

TrailLink Unlimited 

Guides



**North Bend  
Rail Trail**  
*West Virginia*



## North Bend Rail Trail

West Virginia

*History beckons around every rocky bend and in every chilly tunnel on the North Bend Rail Trail, which follows an old railroad corridor*



History beckons around every rocky bend and in every chilly tunnel on the North Bend Rail Trail, which follows an old railroad corridor through hill and hollow in northern West Virginia. Winding through the counties of Wood, Ritchie, Doddridge and Harrison, it is the second-longest rail-trail in the state—after the [Greenbrier River Trail](#).

Previously closed for over a year for the installation of fiber-optic cable, the entire 72-mile North Bend Rail Trail is now open to the public. The trail surface is primarily crushed stone or gravel and is typically 10-feet-wide. In West Union, there is a 0.8-mile paved section from about 0.7 miles east of Bridge #24 (over old U.S. Route 50) to Bridge #22 (over Middle Island Creek). There is a paved section roughly 4-miles long meandering through Salem

between Moore Street and Brandy Gap Tunnel #2. For the unpaved sections, cyclists are advised to use tires 1.5-inches or wider. A flashlight is recommended as the tunnels can get very dark.

The rail-trail carries travelers down a corridor built for the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad (B&O) between 1853 and 1857. Known as the Parkersburg Branch, it carried Federal troops during the Civil War and served a string of towns between Parkersburg and Clarksburg as it became the system's mainline to St. Louis. After more than 120 years, passenger operations ceased in 1971. The dwindling freight business was handled by CSX Transportation, which sold the corridor to the state in the 1980s. Work on the trail started in the 1990s.

Of the original 13 tunnels the builders bored through the rugged Allegheny Plateau to shorten the route, 10 are still passable today. Visitors in the summer will feel a blast of cool, moist air at the stone-block tunnel portals—quite a change from the smoke, cinders, and heat that filled the tunnels as 19th-century locomotives passed through. Some are long enough inside to require a flashlight.

At 2,207 feet long, the Central Station Tunnel, located at milepost 49.5 near West Union, is the longest on the trail and played a role in a 1915 train robbery that netted some \$1 million in today's value. The Silver Run Tunnel (1,376 feet long), at milepost 22.8 between Cairo and Petroleum, is reputed to be haunted. Tunnel No. 13, the Bonds Creek Tunnel near Cornwallis, was the site of a deadly train crash in 1956 when a westbound train emerged onto the scene of a fresh avalanche and plummeted into the creek below.

Other human-made features of the trail include the 36 bridges and trestles that visitors cross. The longest bridge spans Middle Island Creek on the east side of West Union. Old, refurbished B&O depots are still standing in Pennsboro, Smithton, and Salem. These towns and others along the route offer dining and refreshment to travelers, as well as marble



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**States:** West Virginia

**Counties:** Doddridge, Harrison, Ritchie, Wood

**Length:** 72 miles

**Trail end points:** Happy Valley Rd/CR 47/26 (Cedar Grove) to School St/Old US 50 (Wolf Summit)

**Trail surfaces:** Asphalt, Boardwalk, Concrete, Crushed Stone, Gravel

**Trail category:** Rail-Trail

**Trail activities:** Horseback Riding, Mountain Biking, Walking, Cross Country Skiing

- Mile marker 65 (Salem): Parking is available at the depot and services can be found in town.
- Mile marker 66.6: A pit toilet, shelter, and camping are available at this rest area.
- Mile marker 70.9 (Wolf Summit): Parking is available here at the current end of the open trail.

## Parking & Trail Access

There are numerous access points and parking areas along the entire route; refer to the [TrailLink map](#) for all options and detailed directions

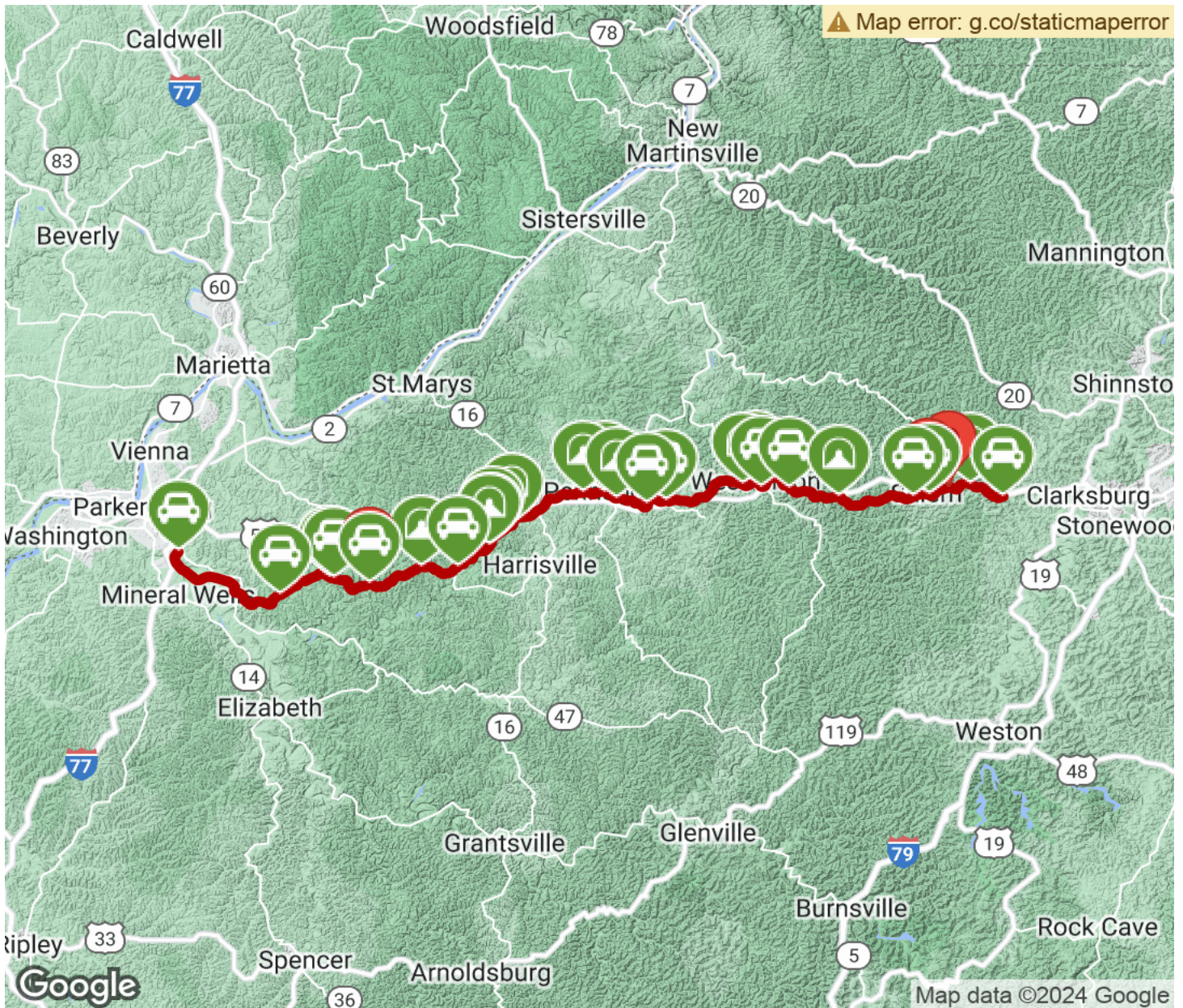
Along the breadth of the trail, parking, restrooms, and other facilities are available at numerous points, including (from west to east):

- Mile marker 0.9 (near Parkersburg): Parking is available on the west side of Happy Valley Road.
- Mile marker 11.8 (Walker): Parking is available where the trail crosses Walker Road (east side of the road).
- Mile marker 18.8 (Petroleum): At Goose Creek Road, parking, a shelter, pit toilet, fire ring, camping, and picnic tables are available.
- Mile marker 26 (Cairo): The town has parking and stores. This will also be your first chance for food, water, and a bike shop (if coming from the west side).
- Mile marker 28.9 (North Bend State Park): You can access the park from the trail in approximately three-quarters of a mile; in two miles, you'll reach the park's lodge and opportunities for food. The park offers camping sites, restrooms, and parking.
- Mile marker 33.4 (Ellenboro): Parking, food, and restrooms are available in town.
- Mile marker 38.7 (Pennsboro): Parking is available at the train depot; food and restrooms are available in town.
- Mile marker 42.1 (Toll Gate): Parking can be found along the trail on the west side of the road.
- Mile marker 50: A pit toilet, shelter, and camping can be found in the rest area here.
- Mile marker 51.5 (West Union): Parking can be found here, as well as other services in town.
- Mile marker 54.2 (Smithburg): Parking, picnic tables, and a shelter are available behind the depot, as well as primitive camping in the county park.



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Trailhead



Restroom



Parking



Water Fountain



Tunnel



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