



2024

TrailLink Unlimited



Guides



Slippery Elm Trail

Ohio



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In 1875, the Bowling Green Railroad Company operated its first train from its namesake city in Ohio south to Tontogany on rails made from the wood of the local slippery elm tree. The trees were ubiquitous in the Great Black Swamp of northwest Ohio, which was a barrier for the development of farmland and roads in the area due to the expense of draining it. Selling the slippery elm wood to the railroad produced an opportunity to finance the draining. With this lucrative partnership in place, a corridor was cleared for the railroad and farmland was gained. By 1890, the route had been extended to North Baltimore, providing access to a rich gas and oil belt in southern Wood County. For 103 years, the railroad operated along this corridor, until eventually discontinuing service in 1978.

Today, the 13-mile Slippery Elm Trail follows the route of the former rail corridor, running south from Bowling Green through the small town of Rudolph and ending in North Baltimore. Its half-marathon length is ideal for runners in training, and the smooth, flat surface is a joy for cyclists and in-line skaters. Between Rudolph and the southern endpoint, expansive agricultural landscapes impart the quiet charm visitors have come to expect from this area of the country.

Start in Bowling Green, taking time to explore this vibrant college town, which is brimming with great little shops, restaurants, and cafés. The Sand Ridge Road trailhead is on the south end of town; from there, you'll head south on the paved trail. At 0.5 mile, pass through the Black Swamp Preserve, where restrooms are available.

After 1 mile, the trail ducks under US 6. When you emerge on the other side, the urban surroundings melt away and the countryside takes over. With a keen eye, you may catch sight of red-tailed hawks, white-tailed deer, red squirrels, or the many birds found here. Be sure to take note of the unique terrain: as far as the eye can see, the land here—as in much of northern Ohio—is as flat as a pancake, thanks to the glaciers that moved south through Ohio, leveling everything in their path. This area used to be the Great Black Swamp, leaving behind the rich, fertile farmland that now yields corn, soybeans, and livestock.

In Portage, you'll find a bike repair station, water fountain, and portable restrooms. Continuing south, admire the native plants and pollinator gardens that line the route. If you're here in July, keep your eyes open for blackberries and mulberries, which you are free to pick if you're lucky enough to find them!

Approaching the small, charming community of Rudolph, you'll pass the Rudolph Savanna, a beautiful natural oasis, where you'll find wildflowers, tall prairie grasses, and sand dunes. On your way through town, you'll encounter arguably



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States: Ohio

Counties: Wood

Length: 13.1miles

Trail end points: Sand Ridge Road and Ontario St. (Bowling Green) to E. Broadway St. near Rhodes Ave. (North Baltimore)

Trail surfaces: Asphalt

Trail category: Rail-Trail

Trail activities: Bike,Inline

Skating, Wheelchair Accessible, Walking, Cross Country Skiing

Parking & Trail Access

Access the northern trailhead in Bowling Green by taking I-75 to Exit 179. Head 2.2 miles west on US 6, and turn right onto Rudolph Road/County Road 133. Go 0.7 mile, and turn right onto Sand Ridge Road. Trail access and parking is located 0.9 mile ahead on the right at the Montessori School of Bowling Green.

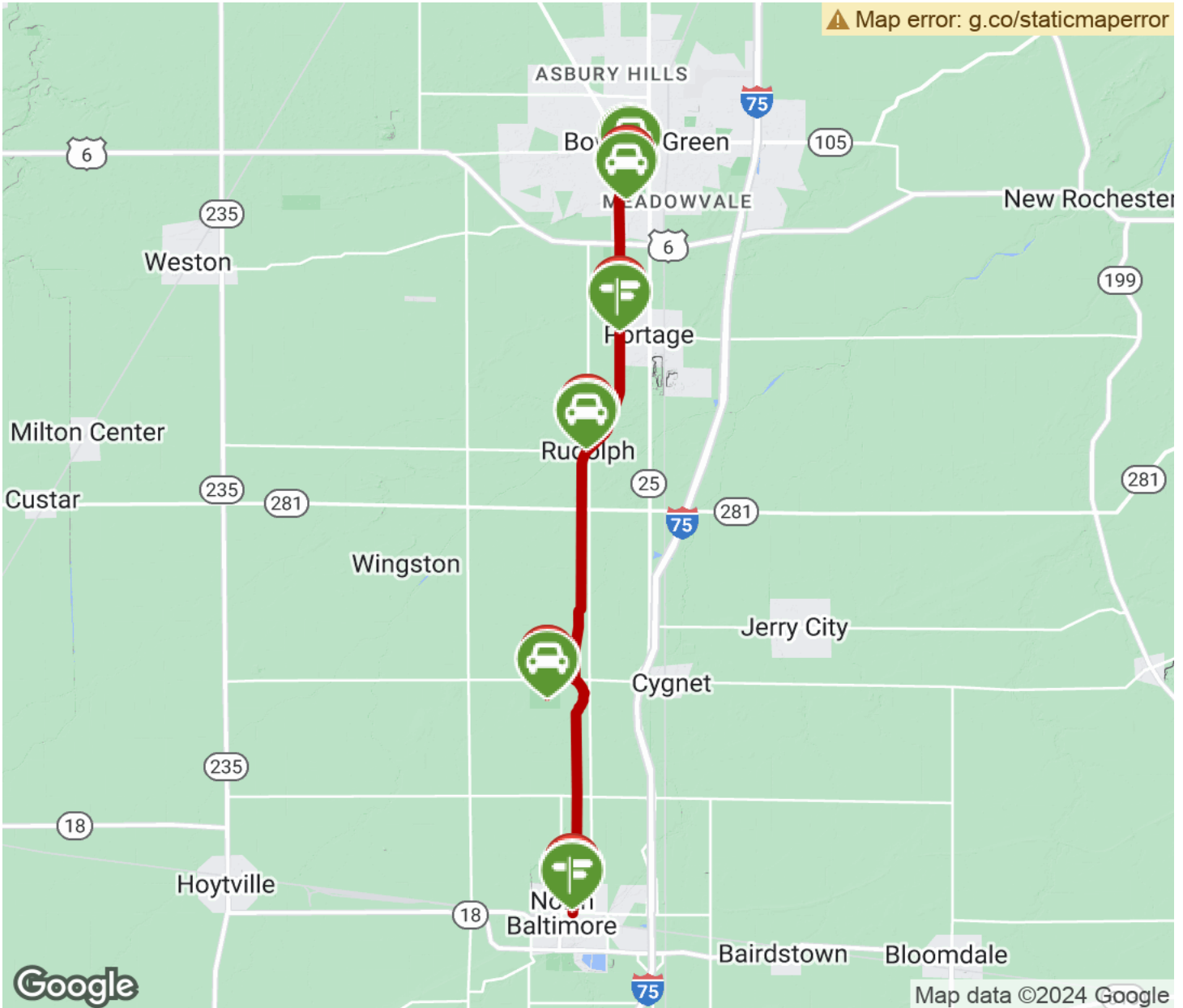
To reach the southern trailhead in North Baltimore, take I-75 S to Exit 168. Turn left onto Insley Road, and in 0.3 mile, turn right onto Eagleville Road, which becomes E. Broadway St. Go 1.2 miles; the parking lot is on the right just after Beecher St. From I-75 N, take Exit 168, and turn right onto Grant Road. In 0.1 mile turn right onto Eagleville Road, and follow the directions above. This trailhead has parking and restroom facilities.

Please note that parking in the private lot at the Sand Ridge Road trailhead is prohibited while school is in session on Monday through Friday from 8am to 4pm.



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Trailhead



Restroom



Parking



Water Fountain



Tunnel



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by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

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