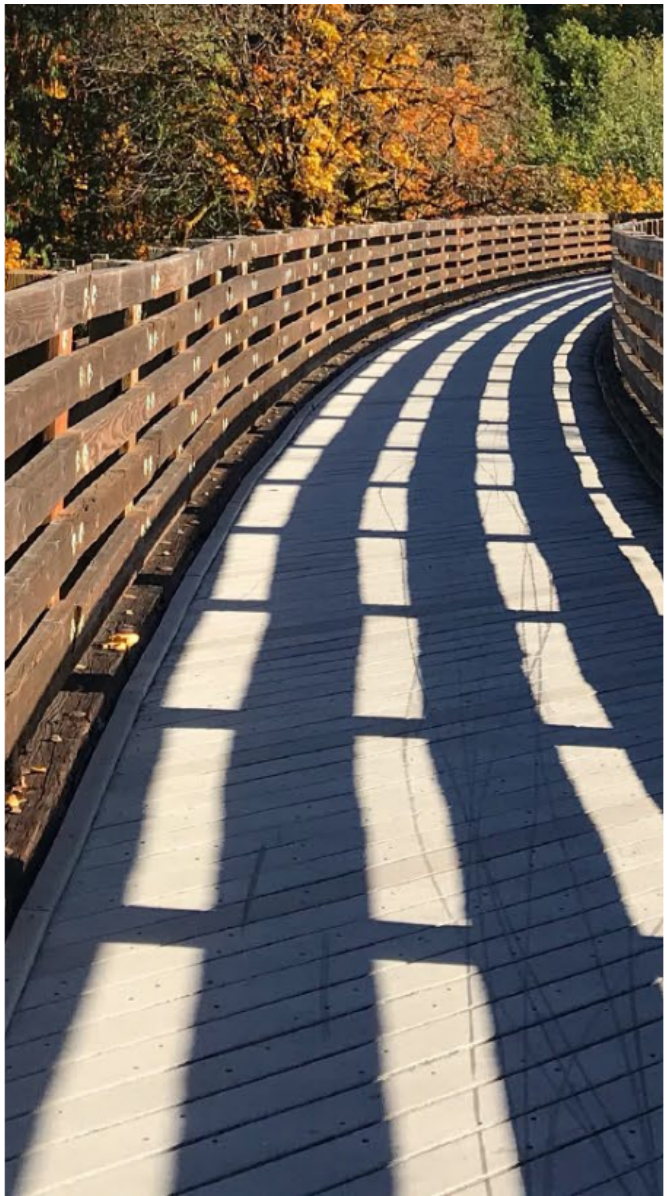
TrailLink
by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

2026

TrailLink Unlimited Guides



Rolling Prairie Trail

Iowa

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When complete, the Rolling Prairie Tri-County Trail System will connect several communities and two state parks as it travels through quintessential northeastern Iowa prairie. The railroad on which the trail is built was originally begun in 1871 by the Iowa-Pacific Railroad Company. Over the years, the line changed hands and was last owned by Union Pacific Railroad. Following an 80-mile east-west route, it will traverse the counties of Franklin, Butler, Bremer, and Fayette. The rail-trail is being built in phases, and there are currently several separate sections.

Stretching about 20 miles through Butler County, the longest of the rail-trail segments provides an enjoyable paved route as it connects the cities of Bristow, Allison, Clarksville, and Shell Rock. For those interested in a shorter adventure or in using the trail to commute between cities, the distances are as follows: Bristow to Allison is about 6 miles, Allison to Clarksville is 7.3 miles, and Clarksville to Shell Rock is 6.5.

In Clarksville, the the trail provides access to the Heery Woods State Park, which offers fishing, boating, camping, and picnicking, as well as a nature center. Leaving Clarksville and heading towards Shell Rock, the route utilizes what is known as the Shell Rock River Trail (or the Butler County Nature Trail) for 5.5 miles. The rail-trail heads east and then south to reach the city of Shell Rock.

Please note that in Clarksville, the trail makes use of city streets and Country Road C33 (E Superior St/E Superior Rd) for just over a mile before returning to the off-road path. This section of the C33 does have a paved shoulder for bicyclists.

In Franklin County, there is also a section runs 9 miles between the city of Coulter and the town of Hampton. The eastern end of the segment is only a block north of Hampton's Progress Park, which provides numerous recreational amenities, such as an aquatic center, skate park, playground, and tennis, basketball, and volleyball courts.

East of Shell Rock, another section picks up in Waverly. The 7-mile Waverly Rail Trail links directly to the 6-mile Readlyn Grump Trail, for a continuous 13-mile ride. Along the way, you can also take a short 2-mile spur on the Denver-Jefferson Trail to visit the city of Denver, affectionately called the Mile Wide City.

In the future, the trail will continue further east to end in Oelwein.

Rolling Prairie Trail

Iowa

States: Iowa

Counties: Butler,Franklin

Length: 21miles

Trail end points: Gull Ave (Coulter) to Montrose Ave (Dumont); Elm St (Bristow) to Heery Woods (Clarksville) to Superior Rd/C33 & Temple Ave (Clarksville) to N Public Rd & Wrangler Rd (Shell Rock)

Trail surfaces: Asphalt,Crushed Stone

Trail category: Rail-Trail

Trail activities: Bike,Inline

Parking & Trail Access

Parking is available at a number of locations along the trail.

In Coulter, there is a very small parking area by the Coulter Freedom Rock, across the street from the trailhead and around the corner on Barrett Street.

In Hampton, parking is available in two small parking area near the trail--a gravel pull-off area by the trail's northern connection with Nettle Ave on the western outskirts of town and a slightly larger gravel lot closer to the center of town by the intersection of 8th Place NW and 1st Street NW.

In Bristow, there is a small crushed-stone parking lot on Grand Ave/Walnut St/IA-326, just south of Railroad Street. The trailhead has a bike repair station and a kiosk with maps and information.

In Allison, there is a trailhead one block east of downtown off South Railroad Ave with a small parking lot, a kiosk with maps and information, and a bike repair station. More parking and restrooms are available at Wilder Park (22301 IA-3, Allison). The trail entrance is at the back (northeast) section of the park.

In Clarksville, the trailhead is located in Volunteer City Park on E Oakland Street. The park has multiple linear parking lots, restrooms, and a bike repair station. From the park, the trail heads southwest through Heery Woods State Park (N. side: 19195 Highway 188; S. side: 27887 195th Street), which also has a parking lot and restrooms.

In Shell Rock, the trailhead is at the southern endpoint by the intersection of N Public Road and Wrangler Road. There is a small parking lot and a kiosk with maps and information. A small picnic shelter, restrooms, and a bike repair station are located at city hall (802 N Public Rd, Shell Rock).

Visit the TrailLink map for all options and detailed directions.

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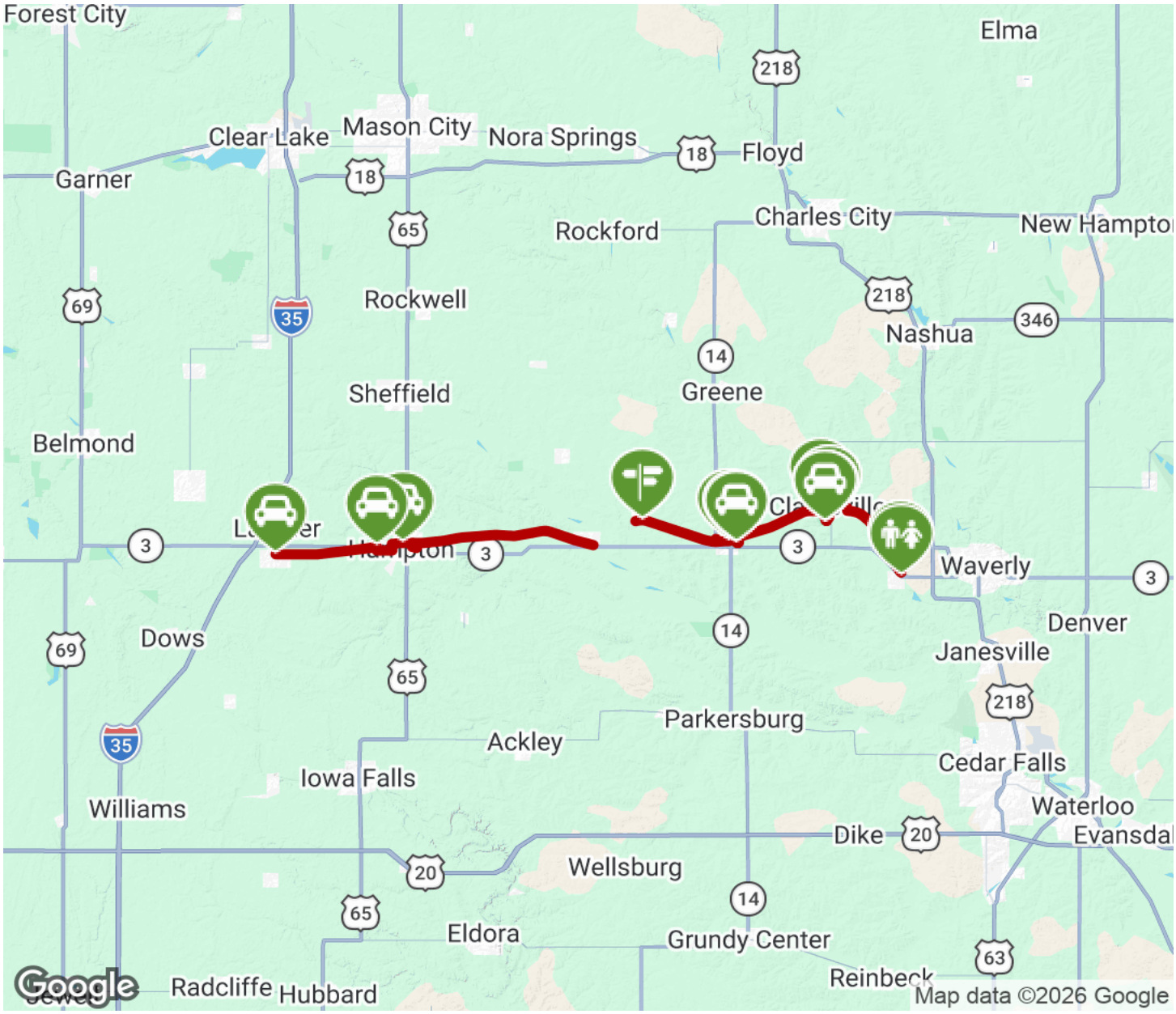

Trailhead Restroom Parking Water Fountain Tunnel

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