



2024

TrailLink Unlimited



Guides



**Thermal Belt  
Rail Trail**  
*North Carolina*



# Thermal Belt Rail Trail

North Carolina

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## Overview

The Thermal Belt Rail Trail lies at the heart of communities in Rutherford and Polk County. The name of the trail comes from the surrounding Isothermal Belt region which results in mild temperatures and longer growing seasons for the communities surrounding the trail.

The entire trail is paved on a 12-ft wide asphalt surface and is relatively flat and shaded by surrounding tree cover. The trail does not allow horses. E-bikes are allowed.

## About the Route

The trail's northern endpoint is located in Gilkey along

Oak Springs Rd. From here, the trail heads south along the route. This northern section of the trail is a lot more rural and has sparse road crossings.

In Rutherfordton, the Thermal Belt Rail Trail merges with the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail. If you're visiting in October, trail users may want to check out the annual Overmountain Victory Trail March along this route.

As the trail continues south, the route passes through the charming small towns of Spindale, Rutherfordton, and Ruth. A highlight of the route is its passage by the Bechtler Mint Site Historic Park, where gold was mined and gold coins were minted in the mid-1800s.

There are a number of amenities offered along the route. At mile 7 on Springdale St., there are pickleball courts along the route. At Mile 8 and 11, there are outdoor exercise stations just off the trail.

Off the trail on Harris St. at mile 10.5, there is access to a golf course, public pool, and basketball court. In the Forest City Pavillion, near mile 11, there is a splash pad, accessible by trail.

The trail reaches its southern end at Forrest W Hunt Dr., where parking is available.



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**States:** North Carolina

**Counties:** Rutherford

Length: 13.6miles

**Trail end points:** Oak Springs Road (Gilkey) to  
Forrest W Hunt Drive (Forest City)

**Trail surfaces:** Asphalt

**Trail category:** Rail-Trail

**Trail activities:** Bike, Inline

Skating, Wheelchair Accessible, Walking

## Parking & Trail Access

The Thermal Belt Rail Trail runs between Oak Springs Road (Gilkey) and Forrest W Hunt Drive (Forest City), with parking available at both ends.

Parking is also available at:

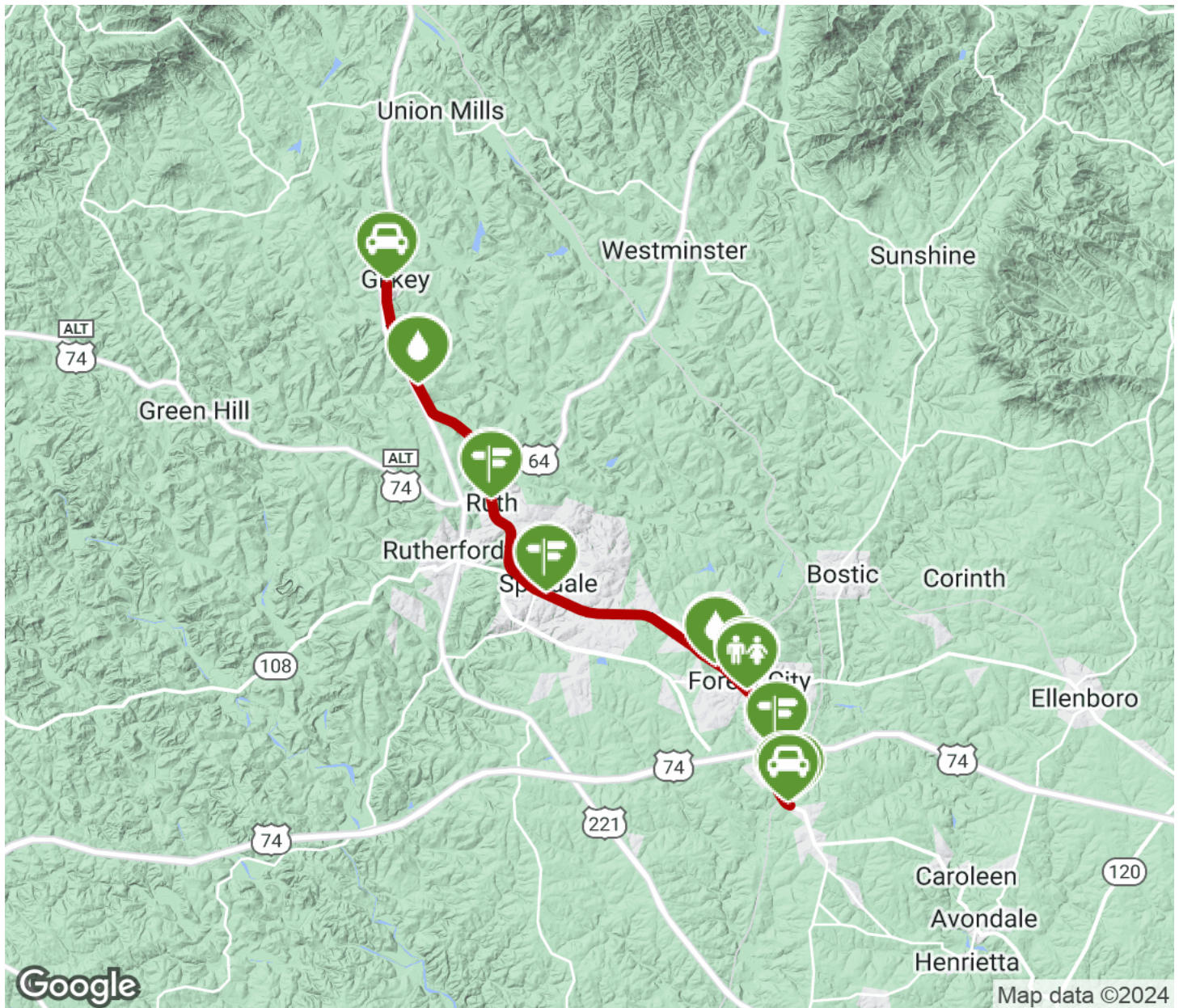
- Bechtler Mint Historic Park, 342 Gilboa Church Rd (Rutherfordton)
- 891 Railroad Ave (Rutherfordton)
- 122 Park St (Forest City)

See [TrailLink Map](#) for all parking options and detailed directions.



# Thermal Belt Rail Trail

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Trailhead



Restroom



Parking



Water Fountain



Tunnel



**TrailLink**  
by Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

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