

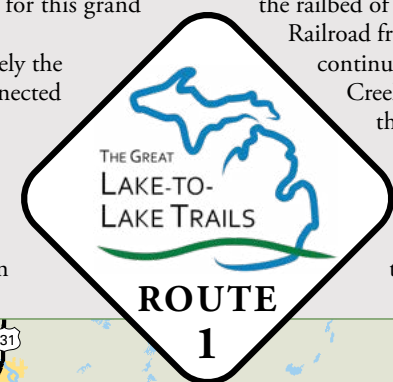
Explore Great Lake-to-Lake Trail Route 1

As Michigan's network of nonmotorized trails has grown over the past four decades, a vision emerged of an interconnected series of trail routes linking one Great Lake to another. The vision was first realized in 2011 when the Michigan Trails and Greenway Alliance (MTGA) convened a meeting among a wide range of trail advocates and government officials from around the state to focus on this intriguing idea. This meeting of the minds produced five potential routes, two in Michigan's Upper Peninsula and three in the Lower Peninsula – and created a name for this grand vision: The Great Lake-to-Lake Trails.

Route 1 of the Great Lake-to-Lake Trails was likely the most ambitious and challenging of the five interconnected trail routes, stretching 275 miles from South Haven to Port Huron. What made Route 1 a promising concept was that most of the trails were built on the remnants of the original Michigan Air Line Railroad. Built in 1883, the Michigan Air Line was one of Michigan's first major railroads, running from

Port Huron to Niles, Michigan. When most of the rail corridor was abandoned in 1975, several sections were acquired by the Michigan Departments of Transportation or Natural Resources, and other county and local governments, with the urging of local "Friends" groups, for development as nonmotorized recreational trails. This major stretch of the Great Lake-to-Lake Trails Route 1 currently runs from Richmond (Macomb Orchard Trail) to Concord (Falling Waters Trail) near Jackson. From the west, Route 1 follows the Kal-Haven Trail State Park on the railbed of the former Kalamazoo & South Haven

Railroad from the Lake Michigan shoreline to Kalamazoo. It then continues east on the Kalamazoo River Valley Trail, the Battle Creek Linear Park and Calhoun County Trailway. Despite the development of so many nonmotorized rail trails, several gaps remained in the Route 1 trail system. Over the past decade, MTGA has worked closely with local governments and the Michigan DNR and DOT to prioritize the completion of existing rail trail corridors and the development of connector trails



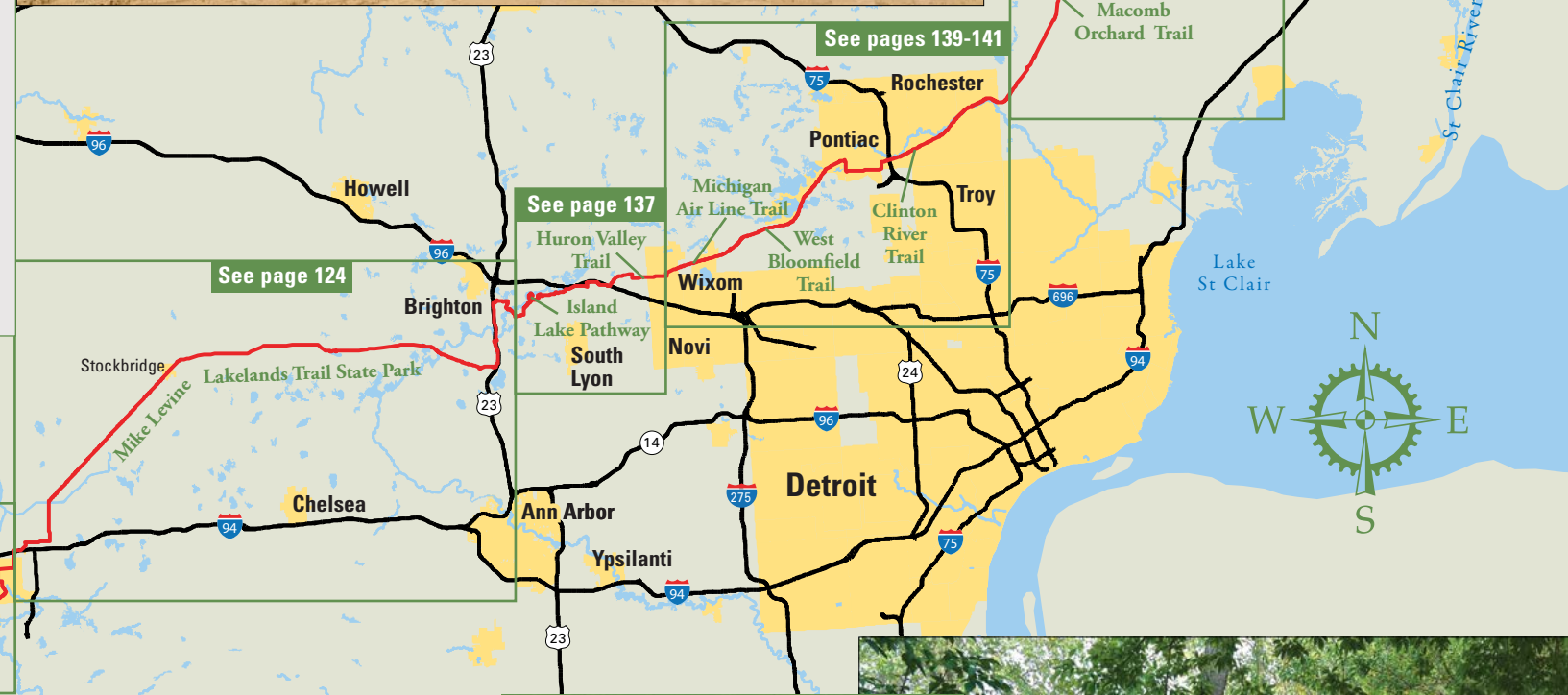
and road routes to help close those gaps. This collaborative effort, funded in part by philanthropist, Mike Levine, has made great strides in connecting these trails into one continuous trail route. Progress continues on closing some of these major gaps. In Jackson County, construction could begin this summer connecting the Mike Levine Lakelands Trail State Park to the Grand River ArtsWalk and Falling Waters Trail in Jackson. This past summer, the Michigan Air Line Trail was completed in Wixom, connecting the Huron Valley Trail to the West Bloomfield Trail. MDOT is currently working on plans to connect the Mike Levine Lakelands Trail State Park to the Island Lake Pathway, through Green Oak Township, passing along the US-23 corridor.

The dream of a completed Great Lake-to-Lake Trail Route 1 began to take shape in 2019, as major rail trails were nearing completion and connecting road routes were established bridging the gaps. That same year, two retired navigational buoys were refurbished, repurposed as trail markers, and placed at each end of Route 1 in South Haven and Port Huron. To celebrate development of the trail route, MTGA hosted its Inaugural Great Lake-to-Lake Trail ride in September of 2019. The seven-day tour included a "dipping of the tires" ceremony in Lake Michigan at South Haven, six overnight stays, and a final dipping of tires in Lake Huron at the Fort Gratiot Lighthouse in Port Huron.

Today, the Great Lake-to-Lake Trail Route 1 is one of America's great destination trails, passing through 9 counties, 42 townships, 34 cities, towns and villages, and some of Michigan's most scenic landscapes.



MTGA hosted its inaugural Great Lake-to-Lake Trail Route 1 ride in 2019. The tour began with a dipping of the tires ceremony in South Haven.



To plan your Route 1 adventure, visit the GreatLakeToLakeTrails.org website for more detailed information on lodging, camping, navigation and points of interest along the route. If you can't find time to ride the entire trail system in one trip, you can always ride it one trail section at a time – a great way to explore the natural beauty of southern Michigan.

Better yet, this summer, you can join other trail riders to explore the eastern section of the Great Lake-to-Lake Trail Route 1. The League of Michigan Bicyclists is hosting the annual Michigander Bicycle Tour, July 22-28. Starting and finishing in Ann Arbor, this year's tour will follow the route from the Mike Levine Lakelands Trail State Park to the Macomb Orchard Trail. Named one of the "Top 10 Multi-Day Rides in America" by Bicycling Magazine, the Michigander is a fully supported ride with accommodations, delicious meals, local attractions and plenty of social events to keep you entertained along the way. To learn more about The Tour, visit the "lmb.org" website. Have some fun, enjoy the scenery, and share your love of the trails with like-minded cyclists from throughout the country.



The trail crosses a covered bridge on the Kal-Haven Trail.



Philanthropist and trail advocate, Mike Levine, has been a strong supporter of the Great Lake-to-Lake Trail Route 1. Pictured here on the Mike Levine Lakelands Trail State Park.