

Mike Levine Lakelands Trail State Park

Nearly a half-century in the making, the Mike Levine Lakelands Trail State Park made another great leap toward completion in 2022 when 3.7 miles of the abandoned rail line, from the Herb Amster Trailhead to Cooper Road, was surfaced with finely screened and compacted limestone. The last quarter-mile was surfaced with asphalt running through Jackson State Prison. Oddly enough, both ends of the trail are built on State Prison (correctional facility) property. You'll see lots of "No Trespassing" signs in those areas.

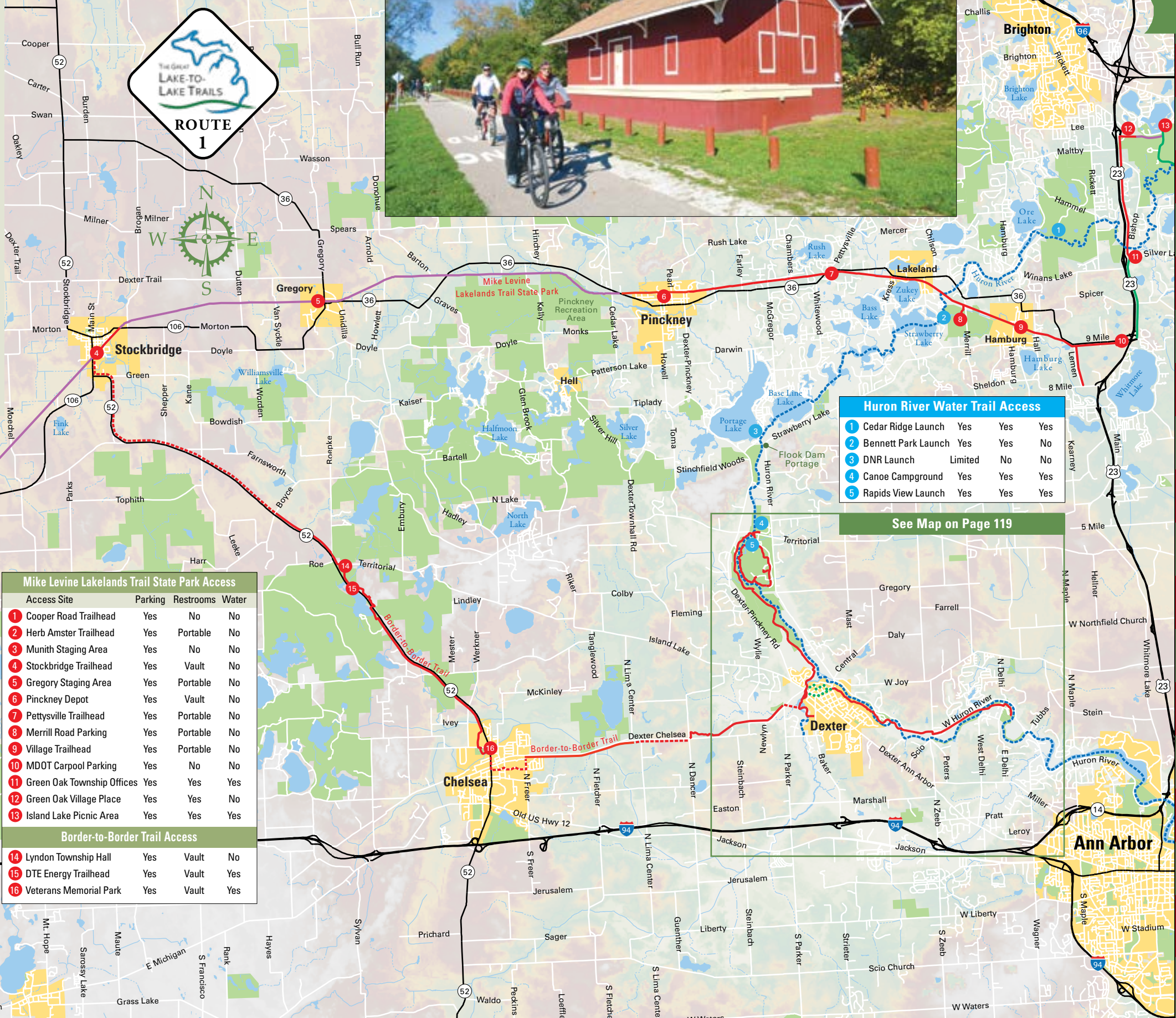
One of Michigan's five "linear" state parks, the trail currently consists of nearly 45 miles of nonmotorized pathway, from Cooper Road to Island Lake Picnic Area, passing through a landscape of woodlands, wetlands, small country towns and quaint family farms.

The trail includes 10 miles of asphalt pavement, with an unpaved equestrian side path, from Whitmore Lake Road (near Hamburg) to M-36 in Pinckney. The 29-mile section from Pinckney to Cooper Road is surfaced with fine limestone. Equestrian use is permitted and popular along the entire trail. Be cautious and courteous when approaching horses.

The linear state park was developed on the remnants of the original Michigan Air Line Railway, built in 1883, which ran between Port Huron and Niles. It was known as the Grand Trunk Western Railroad when the rail corridor was abandoned and acquired by MDOT in 1975.

The old Michigan State Police post on Cooper Road now serves as a trailhead on the western end of the trail. Jackson County Parks will soon begin construction on the final 2+ miles of trail in Blackman Township connecting with the Grand River ArtsWalk in Jackson.

In 2023, Green Oak Township resolved to officially add their section of trail from Silver Lake Road to Island Lake Pathway (a.k.a. Green Oak Township Trail) to the Mike Levine Lakelands Trail State Park. Township officials are currently working with MDOT to develop a paved trail along US-23 connecting the gap between Whitmore Lake Road and Silver Lake Road. Until that section is built, you can make the connection from the MDOT Carpool Parking Area to Green Oak Township Hall by riding the shoulder east under under the US-23 bridge and proceeding north on Fieldcrest Road.



Trail riders at the Pinckney Depot enjoy a beautiful fall day.

