

Industrial Heartland Trails COALITION

Project Summary

The Industrial Heartland Trails Coalition (I Heart Trails) is leading a planned multi-county, multi-state shared use network of connected trails. The network includes trails within a 51-county, 4-state area including New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and West Virginia. Over 1,500 miles of shared use trails are proposed as part of the network with 48% of the total mileage already completed.

The economic impact from trail visitors, both within this network, as well as from trails nearby, has proven to be significant. In 2013, a study on 66 miles of the proposed Erie to Pittsburgh Trail corridor showed an annual impact of \$7 million.

I Heart Trails is a coalition of trail advocates including non-profit organizations, private foundations, and government entities working together to position trail development as a regional priority. The goal is to connect the entire 1,500-mile network so that local and visiting trail users can bike from trail to trail, city to city, and town to town.

The plan builds upon past efforts to organize the trails community and stimulate the regional economy. The most recent effort was the Power of 32 regional visioning project. The Power of 32 named "completion of a comprehensive regional trail network" as one of its regional goals.

IHeart Trails has been formed to realize that vision.

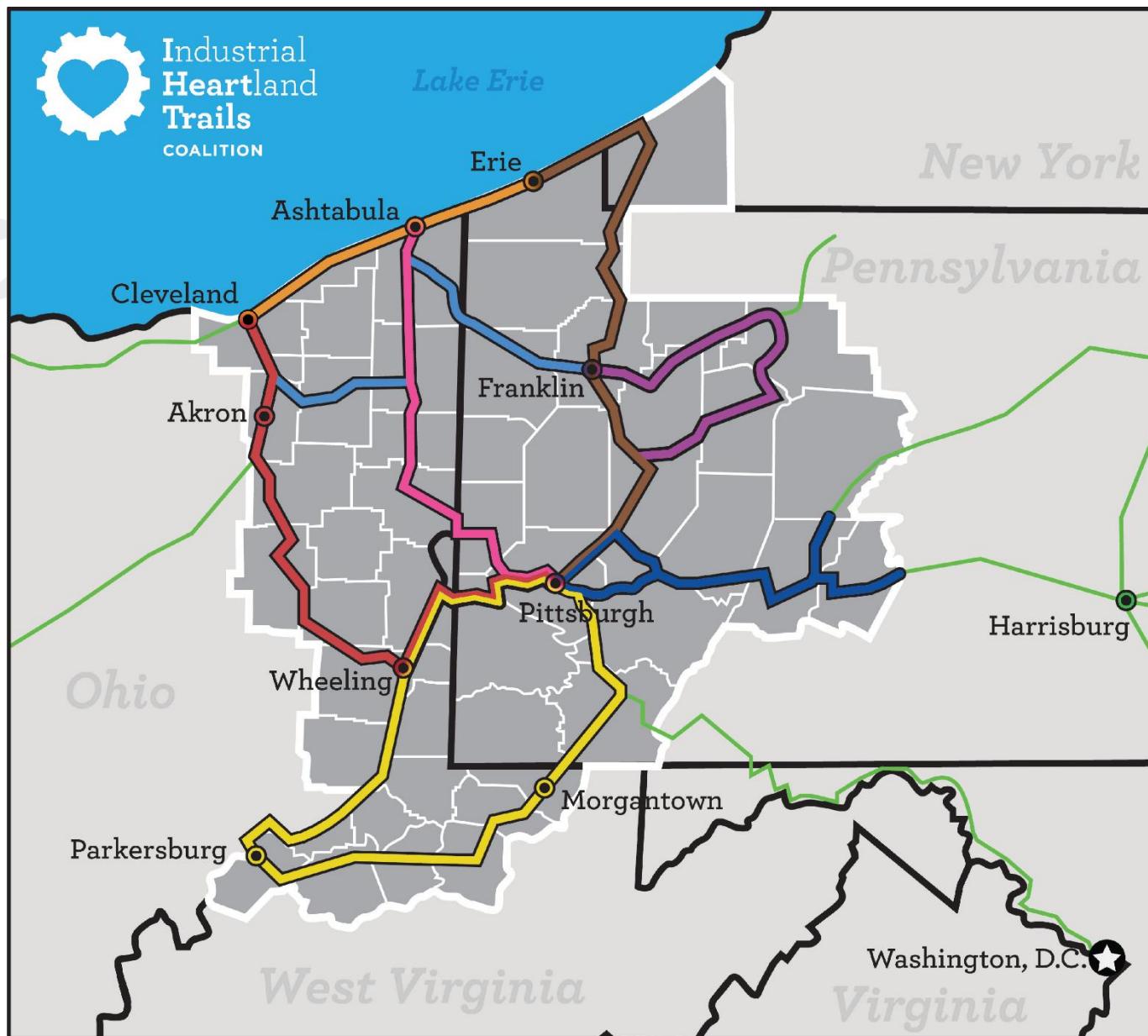
To date, successes include:

- Forming the Industrial Heartland Trails Coalition defining a network of over 1,500 miles
- Launching www.gototrails.com to support planning efforts
- Establishing corridor working groups to engage stakeholders at the local level to move important trail connection projects forward
- Conducting a one-year project to create a trail traffic count model for the project area
- Conducting economic and business impact studies
- Creating a series of travel itineraries highlighting connections between completed trails and communities

Next Steps:

Moving forward, I Heart Trails will work to fine-tune the understanding of each gap in the system and what is needed to close each gap. Economic impact studies along major portions of open trail in the system are needed to show both current as well as potential impact when the entire system is complete. Continued gathering of stakeholders at the corridor working groups will be vital to keep the momentum going. Identifying support to undertake initial corridor analysis and feasibility studies along parts of the system is still necessary. These efforts are intended to support all of the on-the-ground trail planning, development, and maintenance that existing groups already lead by demonstrating that a system of trails – when completed and connected to each other – will yield significant benefits to the region.

Project Map:



For more information go to: www.ihearttrails.org