

= Hudson Valley Rail Trail =

The Hudson Valley Rail Trail is a paved 4 @-@ mile (6 @.@ 4 km) east ? west rail trail in the town of Lloyd in Ulster County , New York , stretching from the Hudson River through the hamlet of Highland . The trail was originally part of the Poughkeepsie Bridge Route , a rail corridor that crossed the Hudson via the Poughkeepsie Bridge . Controlled by a variety of railroads throughout the 19th and 20th centuries , the bridge was damaged and became unusable after a 1974 fire . By the 1980s the corridor 's then @-@ owner , Conrail , had routed all rail traffic in the region north through Selkirk , and was eager to relieve itself of the bridge and adjoining rights @-@ of @-@ way . In 1984 , it sold the entire property for one dollar to a felon who did not maintain it or pay taxes on it . The section of the corridor west of the Hudson was seized by Ulster County in 1991 and transferred to the town of Lloyd .

During the 1990s , a broadband utility seeking to lay fiber optic cable paid the town to pass through the former corridor . The town used part of its payment to pave the route and open it as a public rail trail in 1997 . The creation of the trail was supported by a local Rotary club , which built a pavilion along the trail . The pavilion includes a donated antique caboose . While the trail originally ended at Route 44 ? 55 , it was extended eastward between 2009 and 2010 , intersecting Route 9W and continuing to the Poughkeepsie Bridge . The extension was paid for by stimulus funding .

The bridge , now a pedestrian walkway called Walkway Over the Hudson , connects the trail with the Dutchess Rail Trail to the east , creating a 30 @-@ mile (48 km) rail trail system that spans the Hudson . The trail is expected to be extended west , where it will border Route 299 . As it passes through Highland , the trail is carried by several bridges , connects to four parking areas , and traverses a wetlands complex .

= = History = =

= = = Declining rail usage = = =

The Hudson Valley Rail Trail is part of the former rail corridor that comprised the Poughkeepsie Bridge Route . It ran east through the hamlet of Highland in the town of Lloyd over the Hudson River via the Poughkeepsie Bridge . Highland has historically been Lloyd 's largest population center . The corridor was , throughout its history , operated by the Central New England , Philadelphia and Reading , New Haven , Erie , Ontario and Western , Lehigh and New England and Penn Central railroads . Under the ownership of Penn Central , traffic along the bridge route was discouraged in favor of a northern route through Selkirk ; the use of newer technology at Selkirk Yard to improve efficiency was cited as the primary reason . At one point the Poughkeepsie corridor had been the primary thoroughfare for freight being shipped to New England , and the New Haven yard at nearby Maybrook was once " the largest railroad yard east of the Mississippi River " . Rail traffic over the Poughkeepsie Bridge stopped entirely after the bridge was damaged in a 1974 fire .

After Penn Central went bankrupt , Conrail assumed control of the corridor , but opposed renovating it due to budgetary concerns . Rail traffic up to the bridge continued until March 1982 , when Conrail received permission from the Interstate Commerce Commission to completely cease using the corridor ; the tracks were removed the following year . Donald L. Pevsner , a transportation lawyer from Florida , secured a first @-@ refusal option for purchasing the corridor to create restaurants and tourist attractions , but allowed it to expire on November 1 , 1984 , because he could not secure financial backing ; he claims that Conrail expressed a desire to sell the corridor , at that point a potential liability , to the " first warm body " that would buy it . Conrail immediately sold the Poughkeepsie Bridge and adjoining rights @-@ of @-@ way on November 2 , 1984 , for one dollar to Gordon Schreiber Miller , a convicted bank fraudster who " seemed uncertain what he wished to do " with the corridor . Miller did not pay taxes , fines or insurance on the corridor , or maintain it . He went bankrupt in 1990 and sold the corridor for one dollar to his friend Vito Moreno , who also did not pay taxes on it . In 1991 , Ulster County seized the right @-@ of @-@ way west of

the Poughkeepsie Bridge and gave over 5 miles (8 @. @ 0 km) of the abandoned corridor to the town of Lloyd .

= = = Conversion to trail = = =

Parcels of the right @-@ of @-@ way between Lloyd and the neighboring town of New Paltz were sold off by the county shortly before ownership of the remaining corridor was transferred to Lloyd and converted to a rail trail . Roughly \$ 400 @, @ 000 in funding to convert the corridor to a trail was acquired through an easement from the town of Lloyd to a broadband utility for the laying of fiber optic cable , though only \$ 70 @, @ 000 was needed to pave the trail . The trail remains a right @-@ of @-@ way for the fiber optic line . The development of the trail was supported by Highland 's Rotary club , which has since built several utilities for trail users , including a pavilion , garden and parking lot . The corridor was officially opened as a trail in 1997 . Initially 2 @. @ 5 to 3 miles (4 @. @ 0 to 4 @. @ 8 km) long , it stretched from Riverside Road in the west to Vineyard Avenue in the east ; the removal of an overpass on Vineyard Avenue , as well as a blockage under a bridge on U.S. Route 9W , prevented the trail from continuing east to the Poughkeepsie Bridge .

Lloyd received a \$ 224 @, @ 000 state and federal grant in the summer of 2000 to create such a connection . Additional funding for the eastern extension was provided in November 2006 , when the state granted \$ 1 @. @ 5 million to construct a bridge and a tunnel , and to complete the path . Lloyd received a \$ 7 @, @ 500 grant in 2002 to extend the trail west to the Black Creek Wetlands Complex ; the town received an additional grant for \$ 20 @, @ 000 in May 2005 to complete the Black Creek extension .

In 2006 , a local businessman donated an antique caboose to the trail Association ; this was placed beside the pavilion . Built in 1915 , it was " one of ... the first cabooses made of steel instead of wood " . An October 2007 study of paint chips from the caboose found the paint contained lead . The study was released less than a week before a town supervisor election in Lloyd ; one of the candidates , Ray Costantino , was president of the Hudson Valley Rail Trail Association , and one of the early proponents of the trail . He claimed the timing of the study was politically motivated . Costantino subsequently became town supervisor , and the caboose had its paint replaced and was repaired at a total cost of \$ 4 @, @ 500 . A second caboose , dating from 1926 , is located at the trail 's parking lot on Haviland Road .

Lloyd 's police department became the first in the county to purchase a Segway , in 2007 , for the express purpose of patrolling the rail trail . The trail has been occasionally vandalized . Lloyd 's Police Chief felt that use of such a vehicle would enable officers to patrol the trail for longer periods of time , and that it could also be used to patrol other areas of the town . Seven officers were expected to use the Segway , which contains an automated external defibrillator , and can go as fast as 12 1 ? 2 miles per hour (20 @. @ 1 km / h) .

In March 2009 , Ulster County received almost \$ 21 million in stimulus funds . The funding included a \$ 3 @. @ 16 million project to complete the trail between Lloyd and the Poughkeepsie Bridge . Some funding for the architectural and engineering aspects of the project came from the reserve fund created after the town 's fiber optic deal . The Rail Trail Association also received a \$ 1 @, @ 500 grant from a public @-@ benefit corporation , the Hudson River Valley Greenway , to print brochures . Construction for the 1 @. @ 28 @-@ mile (2 @. @ 06 km) section was underway by that September . In March 2010 , a portion of New Paltz Road was closed pending the replacement of a bridge over the trail .

The official groundbreaking ceremony took place on May 4 , 2010 , and the trail was expected to be completed by October . The bridge over Vineyard Avenue was opened to pedestrian traffic on July 16 , 2010 . The only remaining obstruction was the placement of a bridge carrying Mile Hill Road over the trail , which was expected to be completed in August . The crossing at US 9W had been remedied ; the new section let " users to cross either over or under " the highway . To celebrate the opening of the Vineyard Avenue bridge , Route 44 ? 55 throughout Highland (which includes Vineyard Avenue) was shut down for the day . The eastern expansion does not deviate from the original route of the corridor , and officially opened on October 2 , 2010 .

Between June 23 and 24 , 2011 , parts of the trail were spray @-@ painted with " dozens of [...] words and images " . Volunteers who removed some of the graffiti believed that different types of paint were used . Lloyd 's highway superintendent noted similar vandalism elsewhere in the town , and Town Supervisor Ray Costantino stated that the incident would cause Lloyd residents to feel a personal connection to the trail and become outraged .

Future expansion to the trail includes a 1 @-@ mile (1 @.@ 6 km) extension to the west , to State Route 299 . Lloyd has received a \$ 1 @.@ 93 million state grant to complete the western expansion , which will reach New Paltz by 2012 . Both Lloyd and New Paltz have received grants to establish a connection between the Hudson Valley Rail Trail and the Wallkill Valley Rail Trail . There has never been a direct link between the Poughkeepsie Bridge and the Wallkill Valley corridor . Other plans include the development of commercial zones along the trail , and a project to connect the trail to Illinois Mountain .

= = Route = =

The east ? west trail begins at the Poughkeepsie Bridge , by Haviland Road . The 1 @.@ 28 @-@ mile (2 @.@ 06 km) Poughkeepsie Bridge was opened as a pedestrian walkway in 2009 . The bridge is a National Recreation Trail , and connects to the Dutchess Rail Trail to the east , creating a contiguous 18 @.@ 2 @-@ mile (29 @.@ 3 km) rail trail system that spans both Ulster and Dutchess counties .

The Hudson Valley trail continues 0 @.@ 5 miles (0 @.@ 80 km) west from the Poughkeepsie Bridge to a bridge over Mile Hill Road , then another 0 @.@ 1 miles (0 @.@ 16 km) to a crossing at US 9W . At the 1 @-@ mile (1 @.@ 6 km) mark , the trail reaches a bridge over Vineyard Avenue . About 1 @.@ 5 miles (2 @.@ 4 km) from the bridge , the trail crosses under New Paltz Road . Almost 0 @.@ 5 miles (0 @.@ 80 km) from this road , the trail reaches the Black Creek Wetlands Complex . Black Creek is one of the two " principal streams " to run through Lloyd ; it bisects the town as it flows north and pools in a pond . The wetlands complex itself is important for water drainage . Part of New York State Department of Environmental Conservation region 3 , the complex contains Plutarch Swamp and one of the region 's largest dwarf shrub bogs , hosting a variety of rare species . The complex also includes the Swarte Kill , Lloyd 's second major waterway . The trail continues an additional 0 @.@ 5 @-@ mile (0 @.@ 80 km) past the beginning of the complex to Tony Williams Park .

There are four parking areas along the trail , by Haviland Road , Commercial Avenue , the Rotary pavilion , and at Tony Williams Park . The trail is 12 feet (3 @.@ 7 m) wide and 4 miles (6 @.@ 4 km) long ; it is paved with asphalt and suitable for hiking , bicycling , horseback riding , roller blading , and cross country skiing .