

A Passage to the West

A great life is one whose early dreams carry you through to old age. As a young Virginia colonist, George Washington dreamed of the Potomac River as “an easy communication” between the Chesapeake Bay and the Forks of the Ohio River, a pathway for commerce and industry. To venture along today’s Great Allegheny Passage—its historic towns, parks, rivers, and scenic natural beauty—is to share Washington’s dream.

The Passage fulfills Washington’s vision to connect—for trade then, for heritage tourism and recreation now—the eastern seaboard via the Chesapeake Bay to the Ohio River. This first-ever, seamless connection from Potomac tidewater at Chesapeake & Ohio Canal Mile 0, 184.5 miles to Cumberland, MD, and on to Pittsburgh, PA, completes the promise of the C&O Canal.

Before railroads, canals best carried goods long distances over rugged country. Just think: George Washington could travel no faster than Julius Caesar. But on the same day in 1828 that the C&O Canal broke ground—as successor to Washington’s vision—the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad broke ground, too. In the race westward the iron horse would beat the mule.

The B&O Railroad, today’s CSX, not only bested the canal but beat out its Western Maryland Railway competitor, making recreational reuse of these transportation corridors possible now. Seen and heard along the way today, CSX parallels the trails from Washington, D.C., to Pittsburgh.

Rich in history and natural beauty, this is your passage through time and the timeless mountains.

Cumberland Station, near Mile 0 of the Great Allegheny Passage

The C&O Canal Towpath joins the Passage near the Cumberland (MD) Station, where the Western Maryland Scenic Railroad departs for Frostburg, carrying sight-seers and trail users. This 15-mile rail-with-trail provides a scenic ride through “The Narrows” where rail, road, and trail pass through Wills Mountain. **Trail users are urged to use caution at rail crossings and tunnels.**

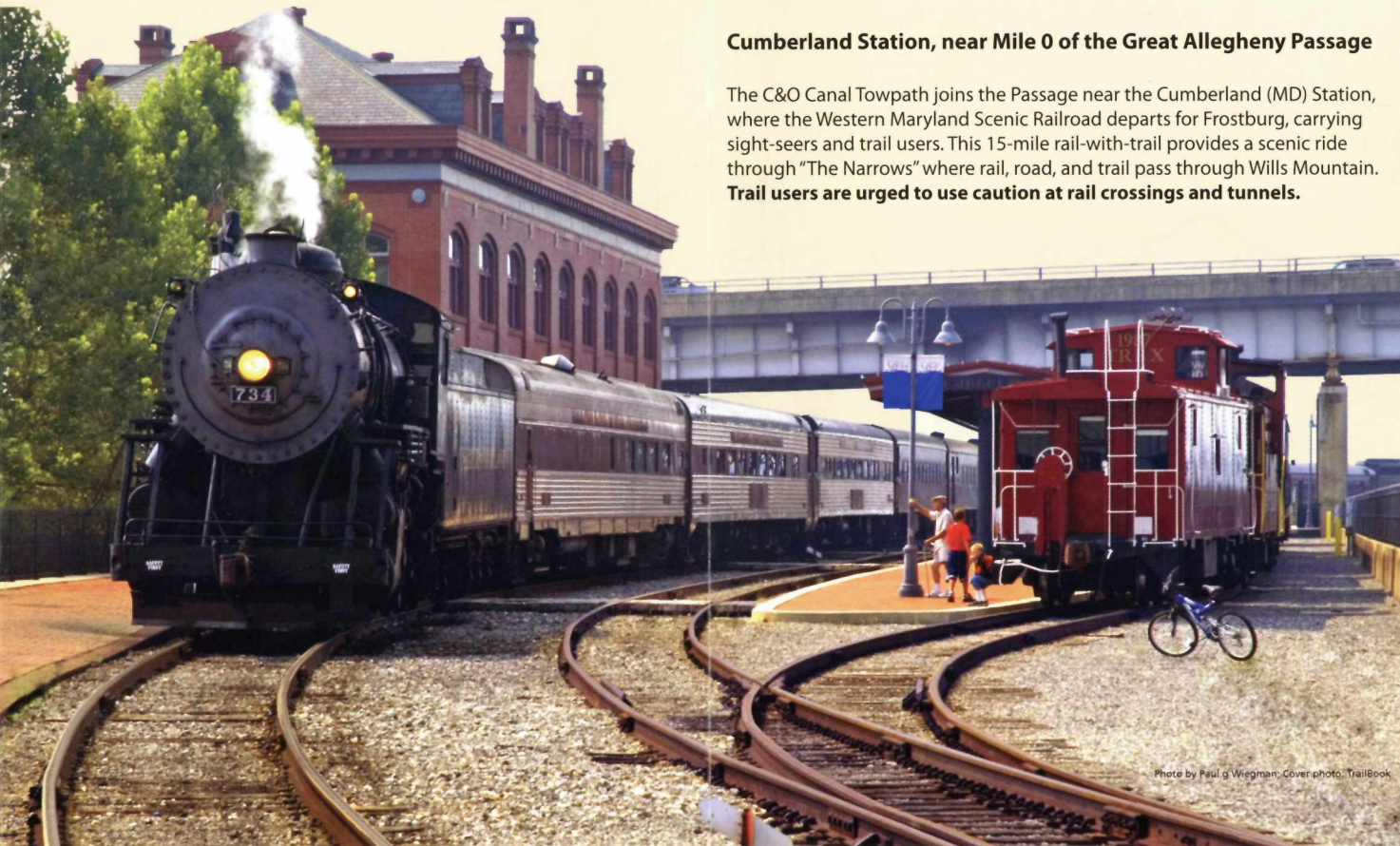


Photo by Paul g Wiegman, Cover photo: TrailBook

Planning Your Visit

Now complete from Duquesne, PA to Cumberland, MD, the Passage offers 135 continuous, nearly-level miles over abandoned rail lines smoothly surfaced with crushed limestone. At Cumberland it joins the 184.5-mile C&O Canal Towpath. In Ohiopyle State Park the Youghiogheny River cuts two gorges, through Laurel Hill—Pennsylvania’s deepest water gap—and Chestnut Ridge.



Follow these wayfinder signs to major trailheads between McKeesport and Meyersdale.

Massive structures like viaducts and tunnels made possible a near-level grade for the Western Maryland Railway through the Allegheny Mountains and across the Eastern Continental Divide (pictured right).

Tourism is revitalizing communities that once relied on coal, coke, steel, and the railroads that moved on them. New businesses that cater to the trail tourists have sprung up in towns along the Passage (far right).



The Great Allegheny Passage is a segment of the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail, a partnership to establish a continuous trail network between the Potomac River mouth and Allegheny Highlands. For more information visit www.nps.gov/pohe.

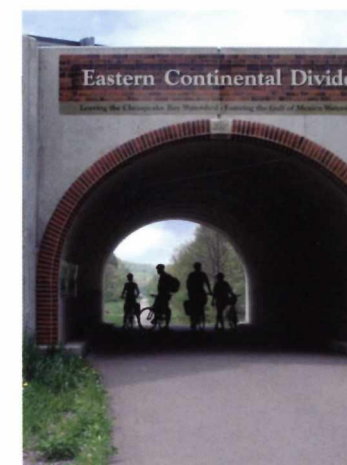
Funding for this map was provided by the Commonwealth of PA, the Somerset County Tourism Grant Program, the Westmoreland County Tourism Grant Program, Fayette County Tourism Grant Program and the City of Cumberland.



Published by the Allegheny Trail Alliance, 2010



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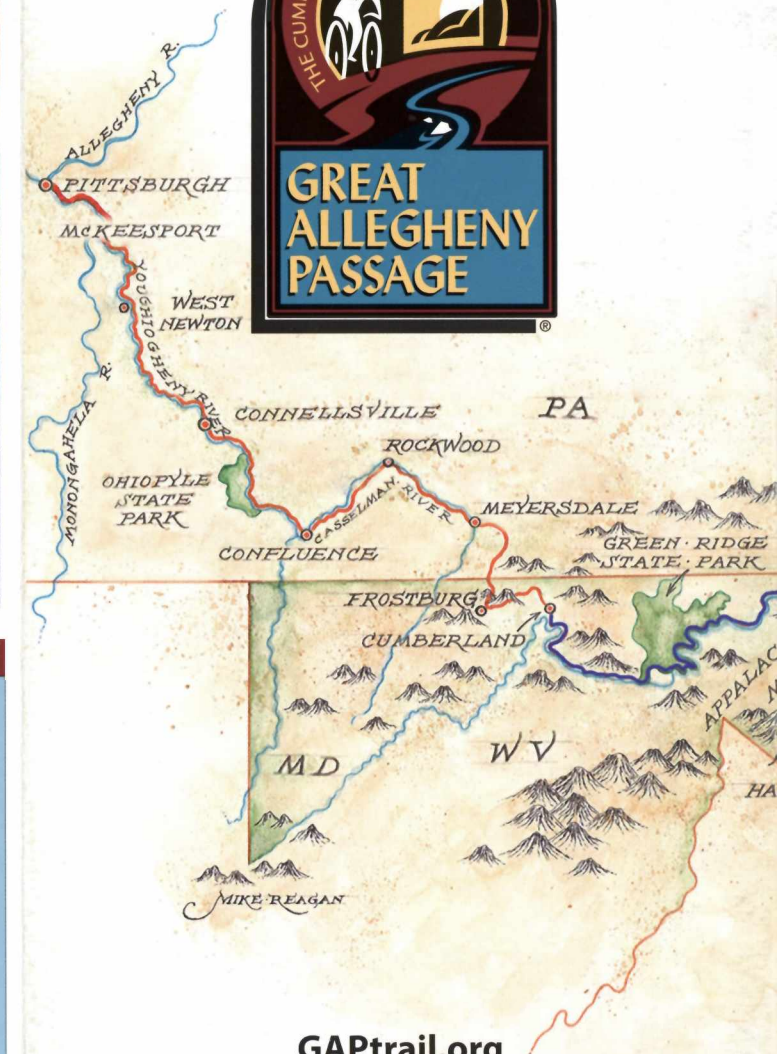
Paul g Wiegman

Mileage Table

GREAT ALLEGHENY PASSAGE														
Pittsburgh	McKeesport	Boston	West Newton	Connellsville	Ohiopyle	Confluence	Rockwood	Meyersdale	Frostburg	Cumberland	Hancock	Harpers Ferry	Washington, DC	C&O CANAL TOWPATH
16	20	34	59	76	87	106	119	135	150	211	274	335		
4	18	43	61	71	90	103	114	130	146	196	259	320		
	14	39	56	67	86	98	114	130	146	196	259	320		
		25	42	53	72	85	101	116	132	191	254	315		
			17	28	47	59	75	91	107	177	240	301		
				11	30	42	58	74	90	152	215	276		
					19	31	47	63	79	124	187	248		
						12	28	44	60	105	168	229		
							16	32	48	93	156	217		
								16	32	77	140	201		
									61	124	185	246		
										63	124	185		
											61	124		

NOTE: Distances are approximate and may not coincide with mileposts. Distance between Rockwood and Confluence includes the 1.5 mile detour around the Pinkerton Horn.

TRAIL MAP & GUIDE



GAPtrail.org

with 2010 updates

