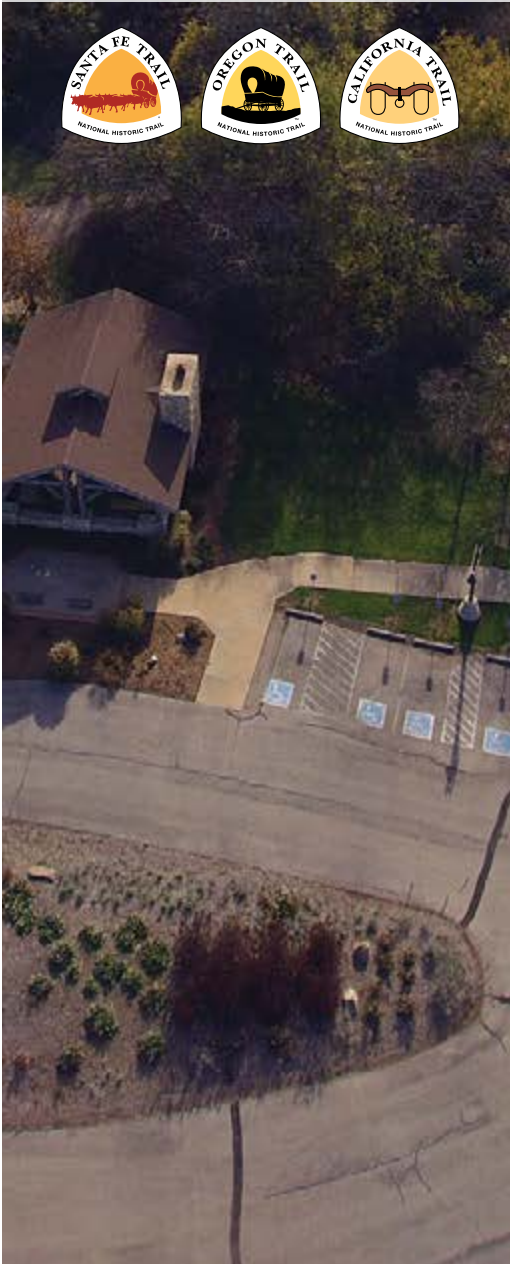


Conceptual Strategy Plan

Retracing the Santa Fe, Oregon and California National Historic Trails in Greater Kansas City



Executive Summary

October 2018



This document outlines plans for the development of retracement trails approximating three national historic trails across the Kansas City metro area. Retracement trails are modern, non-motorized routes that follow historic routes as closely as is practicable under modern conditions. They provide opportunities for the public to experience these historic routes of travel by visiting historic trail sites, traversing trail landscapes and following in the footsteps of historic trail travelers. Signage, trail features and interpretive elements can expand opportunities to connect with the historic routes and the nationally significant stories that accompany them.

What is a national historic trail?

National Historic Trails (NHTs) are designated by an act of Congress. These official routes reflect the research, review and recommendation of many trail experts. They commemorate trade, migration, and other routes of importance to American culture, and are part of the National Trails System. Currently, there are only 19 NHTs in the United States, and four of them cross the Kansas City region. This plan addresses the Santa Fe, Oregon and California NHTs. (The fourth is the Lewis & Clark NHT).

Project area

The project area includes all designated routes of the three NHTs, beginning at jumping off points at



A constructed segment of the Kansas City, Missouri, 6th District Pedestrian Intermodal Transportation Connector (PITC) plan near Hickman Mills School, Kansas City, Missouri.
Photo: A. Allen for NPS

Missouri River landings in Sugar Creek and Kansas City, Missouri, and passing through a number of other cities in the metro, including Independence, Raytown, Leawood, Prairie Village, Overland Park, Lenexa, Olathe and Gardner.

Background

The region has a long history of interest in and volunteer activity around developing and promoting historic trails in the Kansas City area. This played a significant role in encouraging Congress to designate these trails as NHTs. Local organizations, including the Oregon-California Trails Association, Santa Fe Trail Association, Kansas City Area Historic Trails Association, and Three Trails West, Inc., have devoted significant resources over the past 30 years to developing historic sites and trail segments; interpreting trail stories through on-site wayside exhibits, brochures or other media; leading in-person tours; and continuing to develop understanding of trail history through ongoing research. Thanks to these efforts and work by local governments, the Kansas City area has a density of existing opportunities to experience the national historic trails that is unusual, if not unique, in the National Trails System.

The Kansas City region's interest in trails goes well beyond the NHTs. In 1991, the local chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) created a new vision that built upon the concepts introduced by George Kessler, a noted landscape designer and engineer. He worked to create a network of corridors that would connect communities in Greater Kansas City with a system of trails, open space and parklands. Kessler's vision became a core concept in the ASLA's creation of a broader and more ambitious greenprint for the Kansas City region, MetroGreen®. The Mid-America Regional Council (MARC), the metropolitan planning organization and association of local governments serving the bistate Kansas City area, has continued to promote further development of the MetroGreen system, including the protection of green corridors and construction of multi-use trails.



Rice-Tremonti Home entrance off of E 65th Street, Raytown, Missouri. Photo: Vireo

In March 2014, the Oregon-California Trails Association, Santa Fe Trail Association, and Kansas City Historic Trails Association co-hosted a meeting focusing on development of the three NHTs in the Greater Kansas City area. In addition to trail association leadership and members, attendees included staff from National Trails Intermountain Region-National Park Service (NTIR-NPS), MARC, several local governments, and Three Trails West, Inc. Input from participants at this meeting indicated broad interest in pursuing a plan for NHT development that would extend Kansas City's Pedestrian Intermodal Transportation Connector plan across the entire metro area. In March 2016, MARC and National Trails Intermountain Region (NTIR-NPS) entered into a cooperative agreement to complete a planning project with the affected cities and counties to define a route for developed and retraceable NHTs across the metro area.

These alignments were identified as part of a collaborative process facilitated by Vireo and MARC, including cities and counties

along the route, historic trail associations, other local organizations and NTIR-NPS. According to National Trails System Act guidelines, the planned route of an NHT should "follow as closely as possible and practicable the original trails or routes of travel of national historic significance." This phrasing recognizes contemporary challenges of land use and development, which may prevent the trail from following the historic route precisely. With this in mind, NTIR-NPS developed a list of factors to be considered in identifying proposed alignments, including:

- Proximity to historic route.
- Connection to historic trail sites.
- Convenience of public right of way.
- Convenience of existing proximate trail.
- Quality of scenic experience.
- Quality of historic experience.
- Active transportation value – transit.
- Active transportation value – commercial.
- Active transportation value – business.
- Recreation value – parks.
- Recreation value – trail connections.
- Education value – schools.

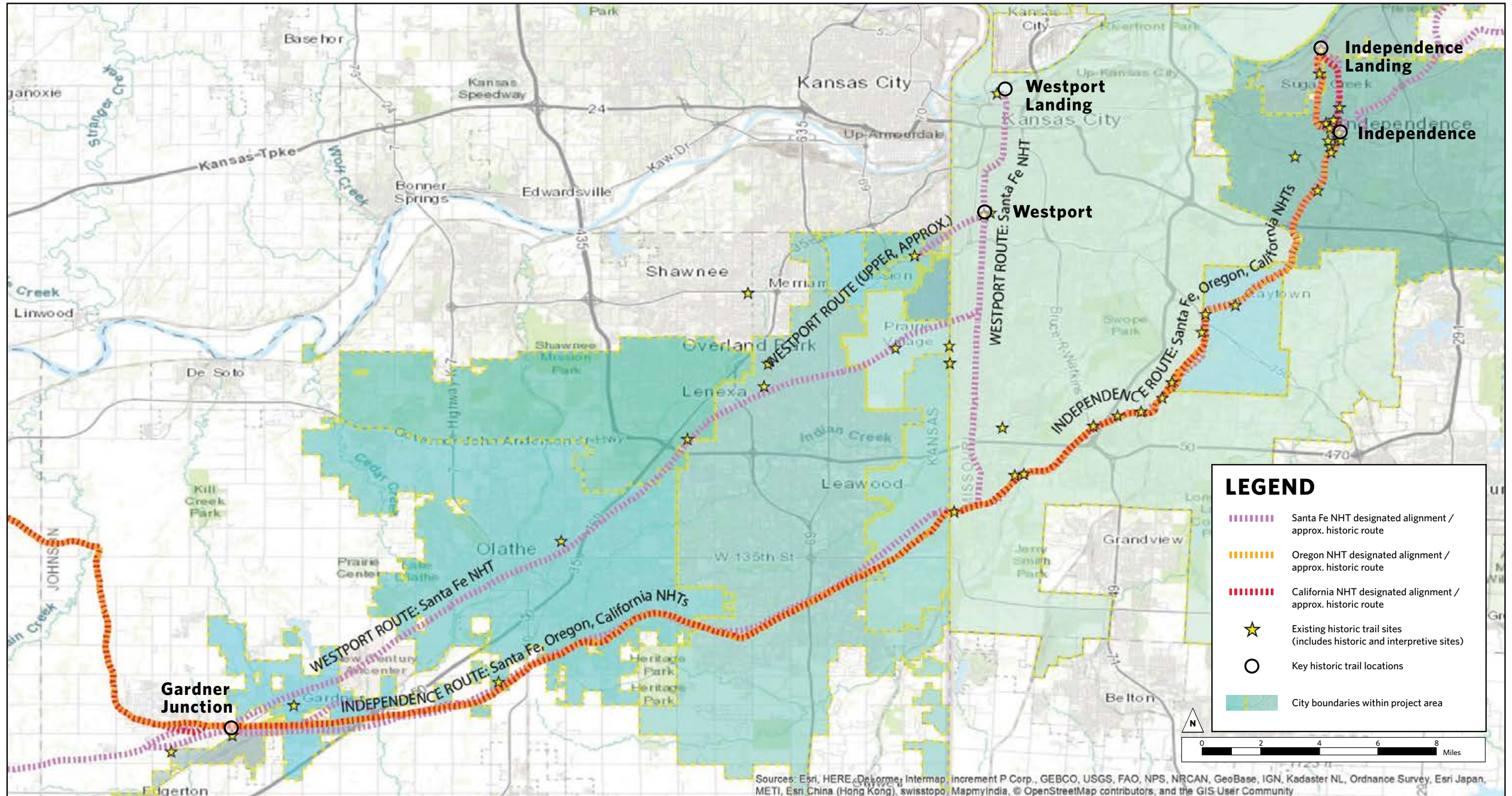
This list addresses federal priorities, as well as qualities of a trail route that are likely to make it more effective as a place to vicariously experience historic trail travel, or more valuable to adjacent communities for outdoor recreation and non-motorized transportation.



Trail swale area, Santa Fe Trail Park in Independence, Missouri.
Photo: Vireo

Project Area Map

Santa Fe, Oregon and California National Historic Trails

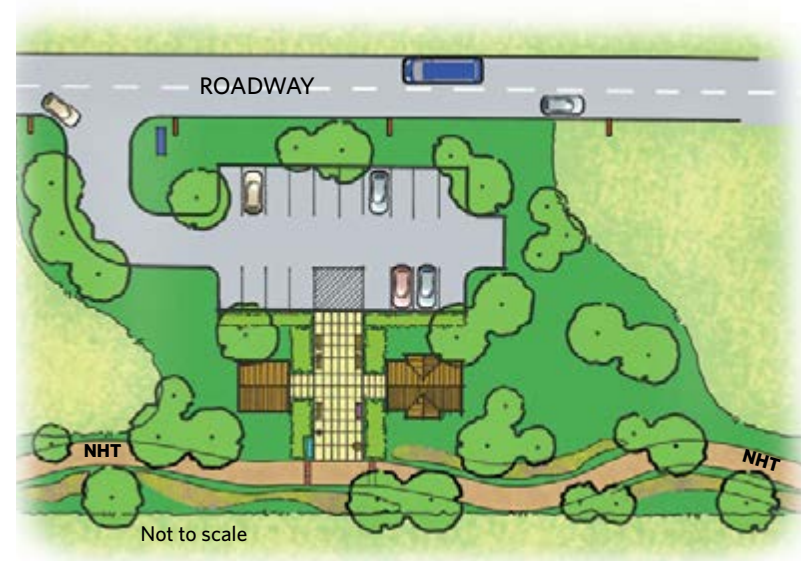


Layout and Description of Trail Segments

The plan outlines preferred alignments identified by the project team and the communities along the route. Most of the route is documented in segments of approximately 0.75–2 miles in length, and is shown on maps at 1:10,000 scale, which also illustrate:

- Historic route or routes of the NHTs in the area, as applicable.
- Existing NHT-affiliated sites, including both historic and non-historic interpretive sites or trailheads.
- Existing nearby parks, schools, trails or other pedestrian and bike infrastructure, and public transit routes and stops.
- Potential trailhead locations.

Segment pages also include brief outlines of potential issues, corridor connections, opportunities, and the spatial/geographic relationship between the proposed alignment and the historic route of the NHTs. Images show existing conditions along the segment. The descriptions are organized by state, then by city, extending roughly from east to west along the Independence Route, then returning west to east along the Westport Route. As segments are grouped overall by city, they are not always in consecutive order from east to west or west to east.



Large sample trailhead design.



Existing sidewalk in McCoy Park, Independence, Missouri. Photo: Vireo

Trail Design

The NHTs take many different forms across their lengths, based on the surrounding landscape type, land manager or road jurisdiction needs, local design standards, and many other considerations. Even within the metro area, different levels of urbanization, local conditions, and city or county governments create different requirements for trail width and user types. The cross sections included in the plan show a variety of sample situations that may exist in the Kansas City area, sometimes incorporating sidewalks and/or bike lanes instead of off-road, multi-use trails. All of these conditions may be considered part of the NHT, although a complete segment must also include some type of identification using the trail logos, through ground-plane applications, signage or banners.

Cross sections shown are based on design guidelines found in the 2002 MetroGreen plan update. The corridor types included are subsets of those used in MetroGreen — Type 4: Multi-Use Paved Trail Development, and Type 5: Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities within the Right of Way. The two types are intended to capture a sample of existing or planned trail conditions in the metro that are likely to become part of the national historic trails as a result of this project. The illustration style of the original MetroGreen cross sections has been modified to highlight the elements of a given trail setting or streetscape that relate

to NHTs, and the sections have been reorganized and given titles specific to this NHT project, but they are intended to fit within the scope of MetroGreen and other regional planning efforts.

Trailheads for the NHTs in the Kansas City metro serve the typical functions of trailheads everywhere: they are access points with places to park or get on or off public transit; find guidance about the trail ahead, including options, distances and safety considerations; rest; use restrooms or get water, etc.

NHT trailheads additionally serve as orientation points to the particular historic trail or trails as a whole. They may also convey, through their character and design, some aspects of the unique history and historic significance of the trail. Whether the orientation includes a physical map, exhibit, digital app or tour guide, these are places that a visitor can learn basic facts about the trail and begin their trip with confidence that they can find their way. NHT trailheads will frequently be located at existing public places. This kind of development may only require the addition of a few new elements to create an NHT trailhead.

National historic trail awareness and experience

While many will use the national historic trails on a regular basis, as they would any other trail — for recreation or transportation — these trails should be recognizable as distinct from purely recreational trails. The plan presents various NHT options, tools and ideas available to cities, counties and partner organizations for identifying and interpreting the NHTs in their communities. It includes guidance on markings for the historic trail, including ground surface logos, pedestrian signage, entrance signage, banners, and limestone posts; and materials, including crosswalks, paving and planting. It also offers guidance on how to increase awareness and allow visitors to experience the historic trail through silhouettes, historic images, landscape images and viewports. The plan also offers suggestions for interpretation of the history for visitors through various media types, marking and interpretation.

Implementation and Next Steps

The concept plan outlines steps that MARC and local communities could take to advance implementation. This project has been drafted with the help of over two dozen local agencies throughout a multi-year process. MARC coordinated joint discussions among local groups and facilitated the regional distribution of this NPS report. Formal adoption of this NPS report by each city is strongly encouraged to ensure the long-term success of this effort. The MARC Board of Directors will consider adoption of this concept plan as part of the regional MetroGreen Greenway Trails Plan in 2018.



Lackman house at Lackman Thompson Farm (1885), Lenexa, Kansas. Photo: NPS

A number of regional funding sources are available to communities that wish to implement NHT trails, trailheads, or other trail elements related to this project. Many of these funding sources, such as the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP), Surface Transportation Program (STP), the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ), and the Recreational Trails Program (RTP), give priority to projects that align with existing regional plans or provide regional or national significance.

See the full concept plan online:
www.marc.org/trailretracement

Santa Fe, Oregon and California National Historic Trails TIMELINE



- **1821-1880** — Santa Fe Trail in use between Franklin, Missouri, and Santa Fe, New Mexico.
- **1821** — Town of Independence, Missouri, founded.
- **Mid-1830s** — Main trailheads for Santa Fe moved up the Missouri River to Independence and Westport.
- **1841-1848** — Oregon Trail in use between Independence, Missouri, and Oregon City/Portland, Oregon.
- **1841-1869** — California Trail in use between Independence, Missouri, and Sacramento, California, as well as various other destination points in California and Oregon.
- **1968** — National Trails System Act signed by President Lyndon B. Johnson.
- **1978** — Designation of Oregon National Historic Trail by U.S. Congress.
- **1987** — Designation of Santa Fe National Historic Trail by U.S. Congress.
- **1991** — American Society of Landscape Architects, Kansas City chapter introduces new 'greenprint' vision, MetroGreen, based on Kessler's open-space plan.
- **1992** — Designation of California National Historic Trail by U.S. Congress.
- **2002** — MetroGreen further defined in comprehensive update.
- **2010** — Kansas City, Missouri, 6th District Pedestrian Intermodal Transportation Connector (PITC) adopted by city council.
- **2014** — Meeting between key stakeholders in region on NHT development.
- **2016** — MARC and National Park Service start work on historic retracement strategy.



President Lyndon B. Johnson at the signing of the National Trails System Act, Oct. 2, 1968.

MARC

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Cover photos (from left to right): Lone Elm Park, Independence Square and Minor Park. Photos by Brian Turner.