

Examples of Train Trestles that have been Restored and Adapted for Trail Use.

Here are some examples of restored trestles. Some of these trestles are taller and/or longer than the Willow Glen Trestle, others are shorter; many are wood, but some are steel; and there are a variety of decking and railing alternatives.

Houston, Texas

The Houston TX trestle is most comparable to the Willow Glen Trestle. It is on the “Heights Hike & Bike Trail” leading straight into downtown Houston. The photo to the right shows the trail-user’s experience: a smooth concrete deck and steel railing; the only indication that one is on a trestle is if one looks over the side and sees the shadow.



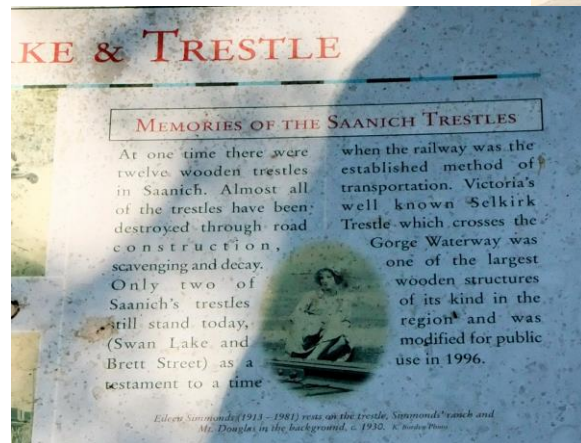
In the photo below, you can see that it is quite similar in structure to the WGT: same pile & cap construction. The city did not bother replacing damaged piles, but it looks like a couple braces are new. The ties have been removed and concrete decking placed directly on the stringers, just as proposed in the CofSJ Engineering Study. (A few years back, Houston got 50 inches of rain in a couple-day

period, and the bayou filled with water nearly to the trail-deck. My nephew tells me that the trestle didn’t budge a bit and is still straight-and-true.)



Victoria, British Columbia (Canada) →

This is more of a causeway than a trestle: shorter piles, but still with caps and stringers. This has a wood plank deck and railing. Of note is that it includes “bulb-outs” where one can be outside of the traffic flow. There’s even room for art: that’s a bronze statue by the railing. And there was a plaque lamenting the loss of other causeways and trestles in the Saanich District of Victoria.



Anacortes, Washington:

This is a roughly 2,000-ft-long train trestle that has been converted into a bike path, the Tommy



Thompson Trail. In the photo, you can see that this too has a “bay window” bulb-out to provide space for a bench. I don’t recall the decking and railing, and didn’t take any photos of the trail itself, but from Google Streetview, it appears to be wooden planks and a chain-link fence. →

In 2014, my wife and I biked from Minneapolis to Milwaukee, mainly following a number of Rail-to-Trails, which utilized quite a few minor trestles:

This trestle is on **the Cannon Valley Trail** → in Minnesota. Wood decking and wood railing. (I don’t like the railing: the height of the horizontal rails seem to be optimized for snowmobilers, and a bicyclist losing control could easily miss them and get their wheel snagged in the vertical beams.)



This trestle on ***the Great River Trail*** in Wisconsin had a third horizontal rail, at a height better suited for bicycle wheels. Note the decking is at a diagonal, perhaps to smooth the ride for snow mobiles. (I asked park staff about their maintenance issues, and they all involved snow mobiles: not a problem for us here in San Jose!) →

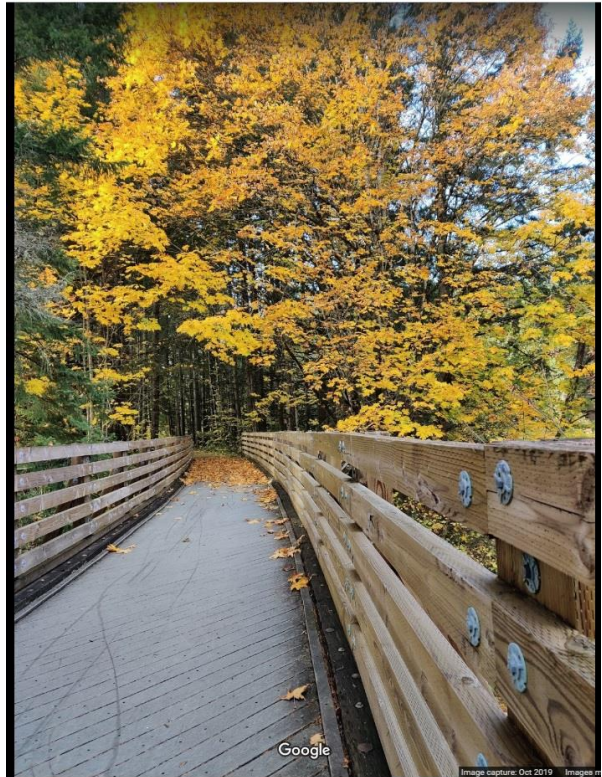


← The Johnson Creek bridge, on ***the Glacial Drumlin Trail*** in Wisconsin, also has diagonal wood decking and three-horizontal railing.

One of the longest Rail-to-Trail conversions in the country is ***the “Great Allegheny Passage” (GAP) Trail*** in Pennsylvania, 150 miles long, from Pittsburgh PA to Cumberland MD, where it connects to the 185-mile Chesapeake & Ohio Canal Tow-path trail that goes into downtown Washington DC. There were quite a few train bridges on the GAP that had been converted to trail use. This being in the heart of “steel country”, these bridges were all of steel, but they still provided good trail connectivity, and some, like the Salisbury Viaduct, provided fantastic views.



I personally have biked over all of the above trestles. One I have yet to try is the Buxton Trestle on the ***Banks–Vernonia State Trail***, about 30 miles NW of Portland OR. The trestle is 600 ft long and 80 ft high (longer and taller than the 210 ft long, 25-ft high the Willow Glen Trestle.) The Buxton Trestle is almost a decade older than the WGT, built in 1913. It was restored and opened to the public in 2010.



These examples are provided to show the different ways that the Willow Glen Trestle could be restored and adapted for trail use, and how it might even become a local attraction.

~Larry Ames
6/14/20