

## RAIL

Rail transportation remains a vital part of the transportation assets of the BHJ region. Four railroads, the Norfolk Southern (NS), the Wheeling and Lake Erie Railway (W&LE), the Columbus & Ohio River Railroad (C&OR), and the Ohio-Rail Corporation currently operate on approximately 135 miles of main and secondary lines. In several locations, dual rail service and multi-modal connections are available. Figure 4 presents the location of each of these operational transportation resources.



Chief among the rail needs of the BHJ region is the preservation of rail competition through maintenance of dual rail service, upgrade of multi-modal capabilities, such as rail-to-barge transfers, and expanded rail yard capacity. Recent investment in rail infrastructures has been significant in helping to preserve a competitive rail environment in the region. The Ohio Rail Development Commission (ORDC) has provided grant funding to aid the upgrade of the East-West Panhandle Line, the Ohio-Rail Line south into Bergholz, the North-South River Line of the W&LE, and the Valley Line into Adena. The Valley Line represents the most direct route between the Panhandle Rail Line and the Warrenton River Terminal in Rayland while the River Line provides dual rail service for the NS and W&LE to vital industries located along the Ohio River on the Ohio side.

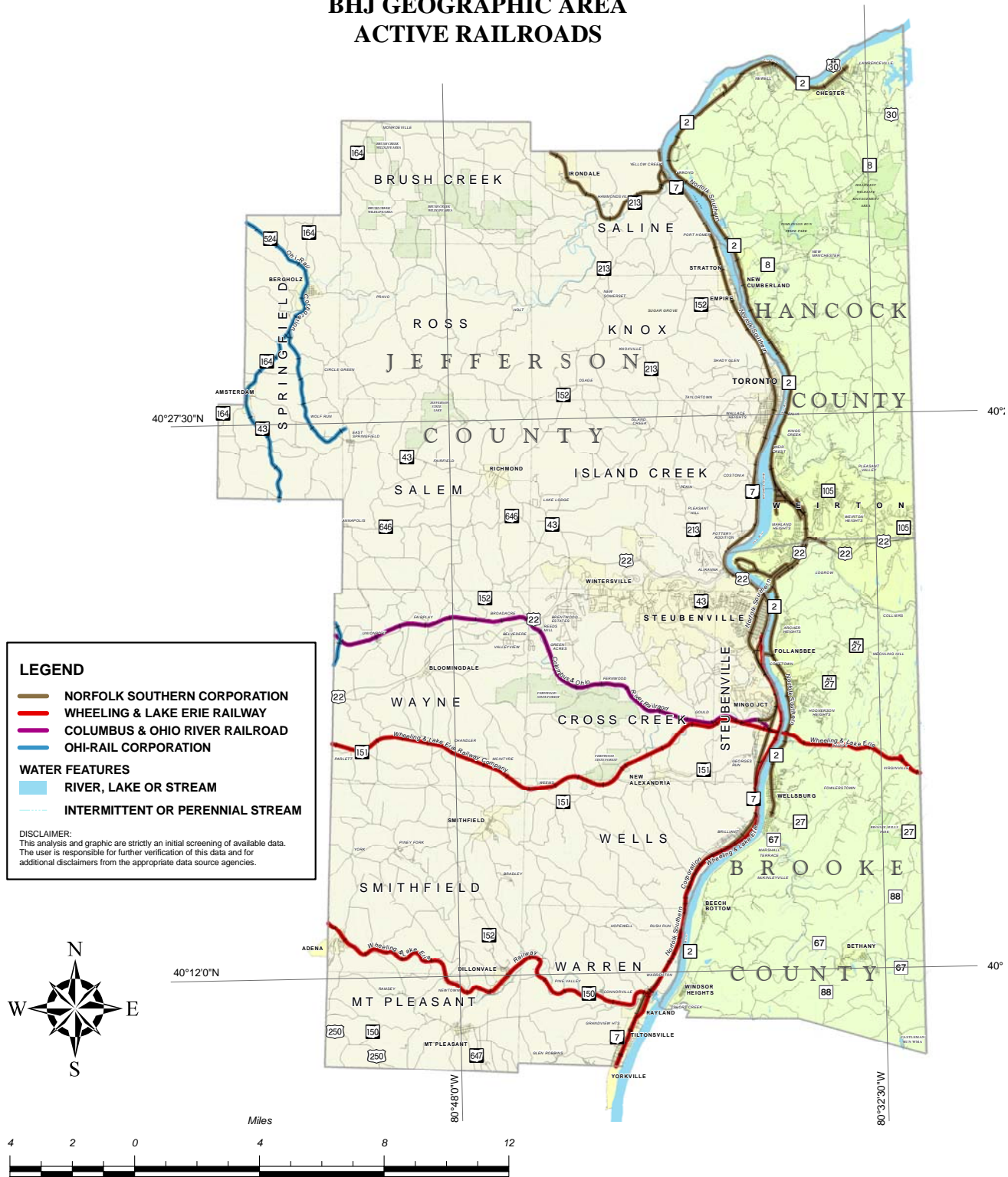
A potential threat to the preservation of rail competition is through the sale of the state-owned Panhandle Rail Line. In 1991, Jefferson County along with neighboring counties to the west successfully preserved the rail corridor. Since that time, state ownership has restored the Panhandle Rail Line to a viable transportation link between central and eastern Ohio. In early 2000, the ORDC entertained the idea of selling the line and continually explores this option. Federal designation of the Panhandle Rail Line as a high-speed rail corridor is among the goals stated by the ORDC. BHJ has supported the designation and will aid in any effort to develop the Columbus-Steubenville-Pittsburgh corridor for both the high-speed passenger option as well as enhanced freight service.

### 6.6 BICYCLE/PEDESTRIAN FACILITIES

Three rail-trail facilities are operational in the three-county area, the Panhandle Trail, Yankee Trail and the Pioneer Trail. The Panhandle Trail was the first trail initiative within the region to successfully apply for and receive funding. The Panhandle Trail was converted from the former Pennsylvania Railroad beginning near the US-22 Harmon Creek Interchange in Weirton, WV. A four and one-half mile ride to the Pennsylvania State Line, the Panhandle Trail is a western terminus of a more than 400-mile interstate rail-trail from three miles east of the Ohio



**Figure 4**  
**BHJ GEOGRAPHIC AREA**  
**ACTIVE RAILROADS**



River in Weirton and ending at the Potomac River in Washington, D.C. The Panhandle Trail in Pennsylvania connects to the Great Allegheny Passage trail system at McDonald in Allegheny County, PA. The Brooke Pioneer Trail connects with the Yankee Trail just south of the City of Wellsburg at the mouth of Buffalo Creek in Brooke County. Together with the Yankee Trail in Wellsburg, the two trails combine to create nearly five miles of off-trail along the Ohio River terminating at the north end of Beech Bottom. Plans include connecting the Brooke County network to the Greater Wheeling Trail network in the south at the Ohio County Line.

In addition to the above rail-trail system, several other bicycling locations are available within the region. For example, in Jefferson County, this is Old State Route 7 between Toronto and Empire, OH along the Ohio River in the north end of the county, as well as Jefferson State Park situated near Richmond, OH and Friendship Park just north of Smithfield, OH. In Hancock County, Tomlinson Run Park east of New Cumberland, WV, has off-road trails often frequented by bicyclers.

Other communities in the area have also identified opportunities to build bicycle and pedestrian facilities in the near future. The Pioneer Trail Association has considered development of an interconnected network of trails through Brooke County generally along Buffalo Creek to connect to the historic Town of Bethany and Bethany College. However, due to the topography and the limited right of way available, completing this interconnected network will be challenging. Another location is along the Ohio River in Steubenville from the marina (at the Fort Steuben Bridge) south to a site near the Ohio River Scenic Byway Visitor Center at the foot of the Market Street Bridge. Other rail-trail possibilities may also occur as railroads make existing corridors available by abandonment.

In 2000, a group of trail enthusiast envisioned an ambitious plan to connect the Great Allegheny Passage to the Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail in northeast Ohio. If constructed, this Tri-State Trail Initiative would ultimately connect the nation’s capital to the Great Midwest. The initiative places an emphasis on connecting trails outside of the region such as the Conotton Valley Trail in Harrison County, OH and converts Old US Route 22 in Jefferson County, OH, thereby creating an on-road link from Cadiz, OH to the Ohio River. Then, the trail crosses the Ohio River by way of either converting one of the two older highway bridges, Fort Steuben or Market Street, to a bicycle/pedestrian only facility, and connects to the Panhandle Trail in Weirton.

**Figure 5  
THE TRI-STATE TRAIL CONCEPT**



