



# The National Park Service launches the Emancipation National Historic Trail Feasibility Study



ABSOLUTE EQUALITY, REGINALD C. ADAMS, PUBLIC ARTIST

Reginald C. Adams led a team of artists known as the Creatives to bring to life, "Absolute Equality," a 5000 square foot mural that was completed and dedicated on June 19, 2021 in Galveston, TX, the birthplace of Juneteenth.

Dear Friends,

The National Park Service (NPS) is conducting a study on the Emancipation Trail to evaluate its eligibility as a new national historic trail. The study addresses the route described as being used by previously enslaved people to emigrate from Galveston to Houston, TX following Emancipation.

We invite you to learn about and participate in the study process.

Visit [go.nps.gov/Emancipation](https://go.nps.gov/Emancipation) to connect to the study's webpage where you can provide comments and track updates.

As we begin the study, we invite the public to submit comments. Your thoughts and ideas are important to us. Guidance for submitting comments is included at the end of this newsletter. The public comment period is open through March 31, 2022.

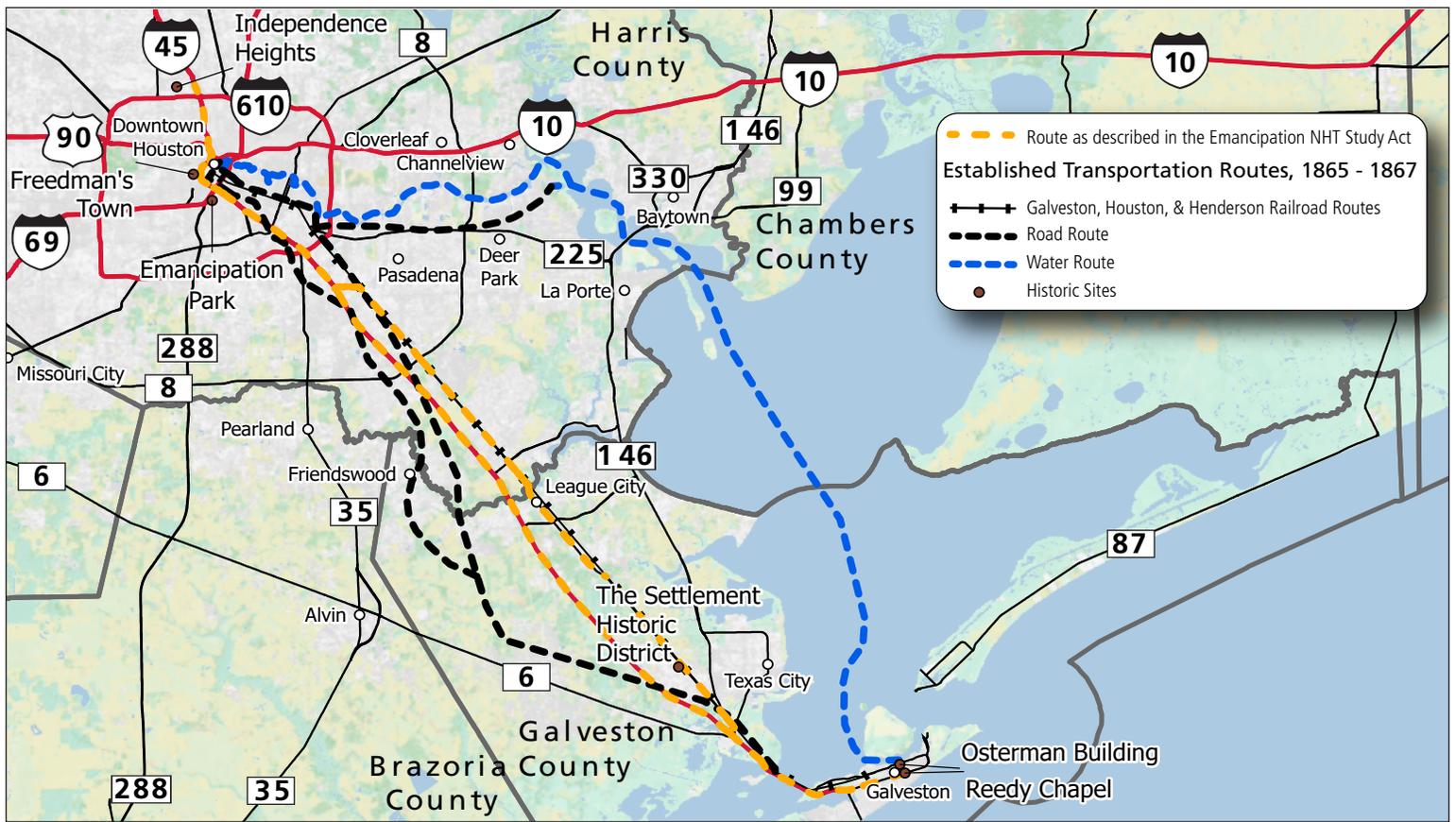
After the public comment period closes, the NPS will evaluate the Emancipation Trail using congressionally-established criteria for eligibility, suitability, feasibility and desirability. Our findings will determine if the trail meets criteria for designation as a new national historic trail.

Findings of the study will then be sent to Congress. Congress has the sole authority to enact legislation to designate a new national historic trail.

To our old trail friends, I'm grateful for your continued support and interest in the National Trails System. To those who are learning about National Historic Trails and the feasibility study process for the first time, my staff and I look forward to meeting you and hearing your thoughts and concerns.

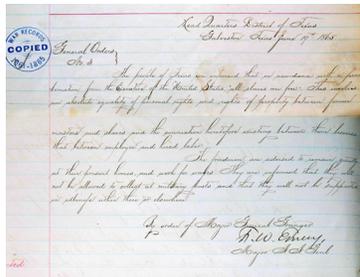
Sincerely,

Aaron Mahr Yáñez  
Superintendent  
National Trails (Interior Regions - 6, 7, 8)  
National Park Service



The route described in the Emancipation National Historic Trail Study Act (P.L. 116-111) is shown as a dashed yellow line from Galveston, TX to Houston, TX along Texas State Highway 3 and Interstate Highway 45 North.

NPS MAP



General Order #3 issued by Order of Major General Granger. The order represents the Federal Government's final execution and fulfillment of the terms of the Emancipation Proclamation.

NATIONAL ARCHIVES IDENTIFIER 182778372

## Emancipation National Historic Trail Study Act, passed by Congress January 27, 2020

“The Emancipation National Historic Trail, extending approximately 51 miles from the Osterman Building and Reedy Chapel in Galveston, Texas, along Texas State Highway 3 and Interstate Highway 45 North, to Freedmen’s Town, then to Independence Heights and Emancipation Park in Houston, Texas, following the migration route taken by newly freed slaves and other persons of African descent from the major 19th century seaport town of Galveston to the burgeoning community of Freedmen’s Town, located in the 4th Ward of Houston, Texas”

## What is a National Historic Trail?

National historic trails recognize past routes of travel that are significant in the history of the United States. These historic routes are designated so that the public can enjoy, visit, connect with, and understand them. Examples of other national historic trails include Lewis and Clark, Selma to Montgomery, and Nez Perce (Nee-Me-Poo).

Created by the National Trails System Act of 1968 (P.L. 90-543), national historic trail designations are continuous from end to end, often cross state boundaries, and a variety of types of land ownership.

However, national historic trails are not hiking trails, open to public use from end to end. Rather, discrete locations on public lands and participating private property along the alignment are open to visitation. Designation of a national historic trail does not establish public right-of-way or change land ownership or authority over private property.

Visit [www.nps.gov/subjects/nationaltrailssystem](http://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationaltrailssystem) to learn more.

# Frequently Asked Questions

## What is a Trail Feasibility Study?

The purpose of the Emancipation National Historic Trail (NHT) Feasibility Study is to evaluate the national historical significance of the route, as well as the feasibility, suitability, and desirability of designating the route as a national historic trail. The Emancipation NHT Feasibility Study was directed and approved by Congress on Jan 27, 2020 through an amendment to the National Trails System Act (P.L. 116-111).

## How Does the NPS Evaluate the Route?

To determine the route's feasibility, suitability, and eligibility as a new national historic trail, the Emancipation route will be evaluated according to three criteria in the National Trails System Act of 1968 (P.L. 90-543). To qualify for designation as a new national historic trail, a trail must meet all three of the following criteria:

1. It must be a trail or route established by historic use and must be historically significant as a result of that use.
2. It must be of national significance with respect to any of several broad facets of American history, such as trade and commerce, exploration, migration and settlement, or military campaigns. To qualify as nationally significant, historic use of the trail must have had a far reaching effect on broad patterns of American culture. Trails significant in the history of Native Americans may be included.
3. It must have significant potential for public recreational use or historical interest based on historic interpretation and appreciation. The presence of recreation potential not related to historic appreciation is not sufficient justification for designation under this category.

## When Will We Know the Results of the Study?

Based on experience, trail studies typically take approximately two and half years to complete. After the trail study is complete it will be transmitted to Congress and the NPS will publicly release the study report. The timeline for transmission to Congress is Fall of 2023.

## How is the Decision Made to Designate a National Historic Trail?

Only Congress has the authority to enact legislation to designate new national historic trails. Congress may or may not act on or follow the findings of the study. There is no timeframe for legislative action.

## What Happens if Congress Designates the Emancipation Trail as a New National Historic Trail?

Should the route be found eligible for consideration as a new national historic trail, and Congress subsequently votes in favor of designating the route a new national historic trail, that will trigger a set of additional actions, to include a Comprehensive Management Plan for the trail. At the Comprehensive Management Plan stage details on how the trail is to be managed would be assessed and determined. The Comprehensive Management Plan is where the rubber meets the road, so to speak. Details on interpretive signage, location of historic sites, educational programming, and places where the public could visit, connect and understand the route would be fleshed out. The Comprehensive Management Plan would involve a great deal of additional public engagement and comment.

## How Would the Trail's Designation Impact Private Property Owners?

Designation does not give the federal government any ownership or control over private property along a NHT. Private property rights remain intact. Landowner participation is entirely voluntary. Non-federal landowners are under no obligation to participate or to allow the public on their lands.

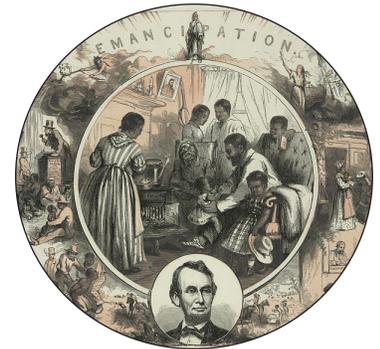
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*Public Comments must be received by*

*March 31, 2022.*

*To submit comments visit*  
[go.nps.gov/Emancipation](https://www.nps.gov/Emancipation)

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**Thomas Nast's celebration of the emancipation of Southern slaves with the end of the Civil War. (1865)**

THOMAS NAST/LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

# Public Comment

Public input is critical to the trail study process. It helps the National Park Service gauge public interest and identify concerns, and can bring new information about the trail to light. The NPS has identified a series of questions to help solicit input.

## Outreach and Engagement Questions:

1. What can you tell us about emigration out of Galveston and into Houston after Emancipation? Do you have family or community stories that help to explain this historical activity?
2. Are there historic sites or trail remnants associated with post-Emancipation migration along the Galveston to Houston corridor, or anywhere else, that might be protected and/or developed for public appreciation?
3. Where can the public visit sites or areas associated with the post-Emancipation era for recreational opportunities or historic appreciation (e.g. historic sites, educational exhibits, museums, hiking or outdoor access)?
4. How might recognition of post-Emancipation migration from Galveston to Houston, and recognition of post-Emancipation sites and events, affect you or your community?
5. How would you like to see migration after Emancipation recognized and commemorated?

## How to Participate

Public Comments must be received by March 31, 2022 to be considered as part of the study. There are three ways to participate:

1. Submit Comments Online:  
[go.nps.gov/Emancipation](https://go.nps.gov/Emancipation)  
Note: This is the preferred method for comment submission.
2. Write or e-mail the Project Manager with questions or comments

**Jill Jensen**

Attn: Emancipation NHT Feasibility Study  
National Trails  
National Park Service  
50 W. Broadway, Suite 950  
Salt Lake City, UT 84101

**E-mail**

[jill\\_jensen@nps.gov](mailto:jill_jensen@nps.gov)

3. Attend an online public meeting.

## Attend an Online Public Meeting

The primary purpose of the online meetings is to explain the study process, answer questions, and gather information. Three Zoom meetings will be held. If you are unable to access Zoom, there is the option to phone in and listen to the meeting. A preview of the presentation portion of the meeting can be viewed at [go.nps.gov/Emancipation](https://go.nps.gov/Emancipation).

Zoom meetings will allow you to view the presentation and type comments into the “chat” box. Participants can listen in by calling the meeting’s conference phone number. Callers will not be able to speak during the meetings. All phone lines are “listen only.”

**Friday, February 25, 9:00 AM MST**

<https://zoom.us/join>

Zoom Meeting ID: 818 9782 5051

Zoom Passcode: study

Call-in number: 346-248-7799

Phone Password: 671949

**Saturday, February 26, 9:00 AM MST**

<https://zoom.us/join>

Zoom Meeting ID: 872 1094 9979

Zoom Passcode: study

Call-in number: 346-248-7799

Phone Password: 870597

**Saturday, February 26, 4:00 PM MST**

<https://zoom.us/join>

Zoom Meeting ID: 894 7118 8995

Zoom Passcode: study

Call-in number: 346-248-7799

Phone Password: 430412

