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Since 1986, more and more people have come to understand how trails add value to our lives. Having access to trails gives us more transportation options, improves our health, spurs economic development and creates powerful community connections. The benefits that trails bring to the economy, public health and transportation have become the foundation of healthy, sustainable communities. Now, people are seeking more than independent rail-trails; they’re looking for trail networks that help get them safely where they want to go by bike or on foot.

As the potential for regional trail networks continues to emerge in urban, suburban and rural communities across the country, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC) has worked to develop model trail-building projects, create network-building tools and inform policies that will ensure trails are essential components of a thriving, connected country.
We believe that interconnected trail networks are at the heart of healthy, thriving communities, but we know that it takes hard work to build these vibrant public spaces. That’s why we’re investing in tools and models that can empower communities to advance trail systems in their cities, towns and regions.

**Projects of National Significance**

RTC’s Projects of National Significance are network-building initiatives that have the power to spur trail-network development nationwide, creating healthier places for healthier people. The heart of this work comes through smart investments that close gaps in trail systems and improve access to major destinations across communities and entire regions. The scope of this work is a placemaking strategy, with trails as the catalyst.

In 2015, we grew our Projects of National Significance portfolio to five, developing models that are representative of the challenges and opportunities that exist in communities across the country.
Trail Building

Baltimore Greenway Trails Network

RTC worked with local partners, including the nonprofit Bikemore, to formally launch the planning process for a, game-changing urban trail network in the city of Baltimore. Building on a century-old vision conceived in 1904 by Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., the project will connect three existing city trails and create a 35-mile loop through the city’s diverse neighborhoods and the downtown core. When complete, this trail network—intended to reverse the urban fragmentation found in many underserved parts of the city—will greatly open up bike and pedestrian access to major civic institutions and destinations, including universities, hospitals, museums, parks, schools, waterfronts and employment centers. Only 10 additional miles are needed to close critical gaps.

To expedite project planning and development, RTC is working with other initiatives emerging in the city, including Parks & People’s One Park Concept, Baltimore City’s Growing Green Initiative, the updated Baltimore City Bicycle Master Plan, the Open Space and Parks Task Force and a revitalized master plan for the Middle Branch.

Learn More: railstotrails.org/Baltimore | Facebook.com/BaltimoreGreenwayTrailsCoalition

Bay Area Trails Collaborative

Originally conceptualized in the spring of 2014, the Bay Area Trails Collaborative recognizes the importance of integrating the San Francisco Bay Area’s trails into a cohesive network that will connect the area’s nine counties through more than 1,000 miles of trail. The completed trail system will connect local communities with jobs, resources and open space, and provide healthy recreation and active-transportation options, including hundreds of miles of trails, bicycle and pedestrian paths, and greenways that abound in the region. The coalition that serves as the driving force for this initiative grew into a grassroots advocacy and planning powerhouse in 2015.

Currently comprising more than 40 nonprofits, public agencies and private entities representing transportation, recreation, public health, equity and open space and conservation interests, the diverse group is speaking in a unified voice to regional and state planning authorities on behalf of trails. Together, coalition members are working to expand trail policy and funding opportunities; leverage resources and knowledge; and improve trail network planning, including integrating trails with the Bay Area’s roadways and public transportation system.

Learn More: rtc.li/uniting-the-bay-blog
**The Circuit Trails**

The Circuit Trails—hundreds of miles of connected trails in Greater Philadelphia—continues to build momentum since launching in 2012. New portions of the trail network were completed this year, resulting in an additional 9.15 miles of trail. Included in new trail developments were the iconic Manayunk Bridge over the Schuylkill River that established key links between the city and the suburbs as well as the Schuylkill Banks Boardwalk, which represents the final segment in a set of trail segments funded by federal TIGER dollars allocated in 2010.

As the Circuit evolves, it has become increasingly important to establish an identity for the trail network to engage trail users and generate enthusiasm for the project. RTC led the Circuit through a branding process in 2015, introducing The Circuit Trails as the formal name for the trail network and developing a new logo. The process offers best practices in place branding that can be applied to the branding and marketing of regional trail networks nationwide. The Circuit is made possible with generous support from the William Penn Foundation.

**Learn More and See a Full Network Map:**
[circuittrails.org](http://circuittrails.org)

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**Industrial Heartland Trails Coalition**

The Industrial Heartland Trails Coalition (I Heart Trails) is a regional trail project with a mission to revitalize the Rust Belt. I Heart Trails, which was formally branded in 2015, will eventually connect 48 counties in Ohio, Pennsylvania, West Virginia and New York through an off-road trail network of more than 1,450 miles, ultimately becoming the largest destination trail network in the country.

RTC, in partnership with the Pennsylvania Environmental Council, took a coalition leadership role in 2015. In our role, we’re leading efforts to collect and analyze trail-traffic and trail-use data. To guide this effort, we’ve developed a groundbreaking trail traffic modeling project that will allow large trail systems to be segmented in a way that will guide the strategic placement of automated trail counters throughout the network. We also organized a three-meeting series with key funders that yielded investments crucial for project advancement.

I Heart Trails is supported by a variety of partners, including the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation, the George Gund Foundation and the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program (U.S. National Park Service).

**Learn More:** [ihearttrails.org](http://ihearttrails.org)
Trail Building

**Route of the Badger**

RTC joined forces with the Wisconsin Bike Fed in 2015 to build support for Route of the Badger, an idea for a world-class, 500-mile-plus trail network in Southeast Wisconsin. In a series of partnership-building trips throughout the year, potential funders, local organizations and industrial firms shared their support for a regional trail system that stems from Southeast Wisconsin’s existing 340 miles of trail. The Route of the Badger vision emphasizes the value of making relatively small investments that build upon existing infrastructure and can improve the connectivity of the region’s trail system. RTC is leading this approach to trail-system development—a placemaking strategy that positions trails as community necessities, rather than nice-to-have amenities. When more people can use trails to get where they want to go, the benefits to the economy, public health and transportation systems become the foundation of healthy, sustainable communities.

Learn More: railstotrails.org/RouteoftheBadger
New Grant Program Launched to Support Trails Across U.S.

In June 2015, RTC launched the Doppelt Family Trail Development Fund to support communities across the U.S. seeking to build and improve their multi-use trails. Established by a grant from Jeff Doppelt of Great Neck, New York, and an anonymous donor, the program has made it possible for RTC to award $85,000 annually over five years to qualifying trail projects in two official categories: community support and project transformation.

The unique fund—which supports smaller, often hard-to-fund projects—will help local trail developers build capacity, enhancing trail networks critical to the transportation connectivity of their regions and supporting economic growth and healthy lifestyles. Learn More: rtc.li/doppelt-fund

The first round of grantees, announced in the fall and summer of 2015, included:

- Allegheny Trail Alliance (Pennsylvania): $40,000 for the renovation of the Pinkerton Tunnel along the Great Allegheny Passage
- Erie to Pittsburgh Trail Alliance, Inc. (Pennsylvania): $1,000 to help match a $10,000 grant from the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources to complete a three-year strategic plan for the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail
- Harrison County Commission (West Virginia): $11,000 to reopen the 12-mile Harrison County Northern Rail Trail
- Missouri Rock Island Trail, Inc.: $15,000 to support trail development on a 145-mile segment of an eventual cross-state trail system and to provide trail consulting services
- Nebraska Game and Parks Commission: $10,000 to engage communities along 126 miles of undeveloped corridor to complete the Cowboy Recreation and Nature Trail
- Redbank Valley Trail Association (Pennsylvania): $8,000 to help build a 1-mile section in a 9-mile gap of the Redbank Valley Rail Trail
RTC was pleased to honor the late Deb Hubsmith as the organization’s 2015 Rail-Trail Champion for her tireless efforts to advance trail development and bike/ped policy over two decades.

During her career, Hubsmith collaborated with many of the nation’s top visionaries in active transportation, first as a leader of Marin County Bicycle Coalition in California in the late 1990s, and later in 2005 as the founder and executive director of the Safe Routes to School National Partnership. She also was vital in securing ratification that same year of the Nonmotorized Transportation Pilot Program (NTPP), for which Marin County served as one of four test communities in the U.S.

RTC notified Deb of her Rail-Trail Champion designation shortly before she passed away on Aug. 18, 2015, after a two-year battle with acute myeloid leukemia. A set of benches located above San Francisco Bay, south of the Cal Park Hill Tunnel (part of the California NTPP project), bears an inscription honoring Deb’s memory.

“There are few for whom it can be claimed that they were necessary to the advocacy efforts that brought walking and biking to the fore in American communities,” said Marianne Wesley Fowler, RTC’s senior strategist for policy advocacy and a longtime friend and colleague of Deb’s. “Deb stands among them, and she will be missed.”
Trail Advocacy

Since the early days of RTC, we have worked tirelessly to ensure public investment in rail-trails at all levels of government. In 2015, RTC’s policy team focused on opportunities to support communities in building critical biking and walking infrastructure that boosts local economies, preserves cultural sites and natural resources, and promotes healthier lifestyles.

Voters Support Federal Investments in Active Transportation

In an effort to better understand public sentiment regarding federal funding for biking and walking, RTC engaged leading Republican and Democratic pollsters to analyze the attitudes of likely 2016 voters. The findings, which were presented at two Capitol Hill briefings on Dec. 8, 2014, showed that voters on either side of the aisle strongly support federal investments in biking and walking. The poll—a survey of 1,000 likely 2016 voters representative of the national voting population—found that four times as many voters favor increasing or maintaining current levels of federal investment in walking and biking paths as decreasing them (74 percent vs. 19 percent), regardless of party affiliation.

These survey results are an important component of RTC’s efforts to counter proposed cuts to biking and walking infrastructure, a popular strategy among federal lawmakers looking to gain political points by highlighting their fiscal conservatism. These findings demonstrate that congressional opponents of active transportation are out of step with their own constituents. The poll also undermined the frequent refrain of critics that investing in biking and walking is not fiscally responsible, with the message that active transportation is affordable and produces a strong return on investment resonating strongly with voters.

Learn More: rtc.li/support-for-investment-blog
Multiple coordinated efforts during the year led to two victories for trails, biking and walking in the new federal transportation legislation: Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act, or Fast Act, passed in 2015.

With the federal surface transportation bill, Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century, or MAP-21, set to expire in 2015, RTC mobilized the national trails community in a petition effort urging Congress to protect and increase federal investment in trails and active-transportation networks in the new bill. RTC gathered more than 21,000 signatures in the winter and early spring and personally delivered them in early April to congressional leaders with key roles in shaping the new legislation, including Reps. Bill Shuster (R-Pa.-09), Peter DeFazio (D-Ore.-04), Sam Graves (R-Mo.-06) and Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-D.C.), and Sens. Jim Inhofe (R-Okla.), Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.), Bruce Vitter (R-La.), Tom Carper (D-Del.), Thad Cochran (R-Miss.) and Ben Cardin (D-Md.). RTC also sent a personalized email to every member of Congress—and every transportation-related staffer—to inform them of the thousands of signatures collected.

In June, after Rep. Sam Johnson (R-Texas-03) suggested eliminating the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)—a component of the surface transportation bill and the largest dedicated source of funding for trails, walking and biking in the U.S.—RTC delivered a letter signed by 302 organizations from all 50 states urging the 114th Congress to support TAP.

In early December, the trails community celebrated the results of its efforts when President Obama signed the new FAST Act into law, which increased TAP from $820 million to $835 million per year for the first two years and provides another $15 million increase for the final three years. Though RTC continues to advocate for larger gains in TAP to help meet the needs of a rapidly growing biking and walking movement in the U.S., the increase was a substantial achievement in a fiscally constrained political environment where TAP is routinely targeted for reductions and eliminations.

In an exciting related development, RTC also successfully advocated for a new source of low-interest financing for communities looking to connect and accelerate the completion of trails and biking and walking networks. The Transportation Infrastructure Financing and Investment Act—or TIFIA—has historically provided loans at a high threshold of $25 million to $50 million or more for rural or urban/suburban projects, respectively, and involves a complicated and expensive application process, making it hard for many smaller communities or projects to participate. RTC worked with Congress to enact several reforms that benefit active transportation projects, including:

- lowering the threshold to $10 million for local government projects;
- enabling the bundling of projects to meet the threshold;
- requiring that the application process be streamlined; and
- allotting $2 million per year for application fee waivers for small projects.

The reforms will give communities of all shapes and sizes opportunities to access sufficient funds to accelerate a suite of projects to complete trail networks and create safe routes for people to walk and bike.

Learn More: railstotrails.org/policy
We know that trails matter to people’s lives. Trails offer safe places for outdoor recreation, options for getting around and more ways to be healthy. RTC’s trail use initiatives provide tips for getting out on the trail and connect people with local trails and bucket-list destinations.
Be Alert.  
Stay alert to your surroundings.

Standing Still?  
Stand Aside.  
Take your break—and your chat—off trail.

Use Safe Speeds.  
Be courteous.

Keep Right, Pass Left.  
Know which side to use and when.

Mind Your Pets.  
Keep pets leashed and close by.

Know and Follow the Rules.  
Stick to the rules and be a hero!

“We’re all in this together!”  
RTC Launches National Share the Trail Campaign

In 1996, there were approximately 800 known rail-trails in the U.S. Now, two decades later, that number has more than doubled to just under 2,000. That growth speaks to the growing demand across the country for trails for physical activity, recreation and active transportation.

In July 2015, in response to this growing demand, RTC launched its three-year national Share the Trail Campaign. The goals included: educating Americans on the fundamentals of trail etiquette, encouraging trail users to be “trail ambassadors” in their neighborhoods and promoting a national culture of safe and courteous trail use.

During the summer, RTC encouraged people to sign an official pledge to make respect and courtesy the guiding principles of each and every trail experience. RTC also created and promoted a series of resources focused on six top “Trail Tips” for safe trail use—along with stories and sharable graphics to encourage dialogue about trail etiquette. We also published a special “What’s Your Trail Etiquette IQ?” quiz to our national e-list and via social media, which have a reach of an estimated 1 million trail users.

Learn More: railstotrails.org/SharetheTrail
RTC’s Third Annual Opening Day for Trails Was the Best One Yet!

More than 17,000 walkers, runners, cyclists, birdwatchers, horseback riders, nature lovers—and everyone in between—turned out for RTC’s third annual Opening Day for Trails, on March 28, 2015.

To celebrate the start of trail season, RTC encouraged Americans to get out on their favorite pathway and show how vital trails are in communities from coast to coast. Dozens of organizations hosted official Opening Day events in partnership with RTC—like our friends in California who organized a great ride on the Richmond Greenway (see photo right!). Thousands of trail users shared photos from their Opening Day activities on social media using the hashtag #RTCOpeningDay. Check out some of our favorites on the RTC TrailBlog: rtc.li/opening-day-2015-blog

Opening Day sponsors included REI, Fuji Bikes, Yakima Racks, Camelbak and Clif Bar. Each organization offered support for official Opening Day events and provided great giveaway swag.

Learn More: railstotrails.org/OpeningDay
For the first time in 2015, RTC hosted two sojourn rides, bringing the popular Pennsylvania Rail-Trail Sojourn to West Virginia to showcase ways to create stronger trail networks.

In April 2015, 82 people from 12 states came together for RTC’s first West Virginia Rail-Trail Sojourn, a three-day bike ride along seven rail-trails. Centered in Morgantown, the Sojourn helped demonstrate how completing gaps between the burgeoning Mon River Trails system and other rail-trails in West Virginia and Pennsylvania could result in 180 miles of trail that unite with another well-known trail system, the Great Allegheny Passage (GAP). This connection would create an unparalleled three-state network from Parkersburg, West Virginia, to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

RTC’s 14th Annual Pennsylvania Rail-Trail Sojourn, which took place over six days in June, led 300 bicyclists of all ages along a 200-mile route on the Montour Trail and legendary GAP between Coraopolis, Pennsylvania, and Cumberland, Maryland. Participants also learned about an incredible trail in development, the Sheepskin Trail, which will connect the GAP to West Virginia.

The sojourns demonstrated that trail networks can have an amazing impact on communities—supporting trailside businesses, encouraging healthy lifestyles and creating safe walking and biking routes for commuters and families. All told, our West Virginia Sojourn’s positive economic impact to the Morgantown area was $38,176, and more than $248,000 were spent in the GAP region by our sojourn riders. Combine that with the incredible experiences had by the participants, partners, volunteers and local communities—it’s safe to say it was a truly impactful ride.

Learn More: railstotrails.org/Sojourns
In 2015, RTC made two inductions into the Rail-Trail Hall of Fame: Minnesota’s Midtown Greenway and the connected trail pair of Pennsylvania’s Heritage Rail Trail County Park and Maryland’s Torrey C. Brown Rail Trail, which meet at the border of the two states.

The Midtown Greenway has become a commuter’s paradise since it opened in 2000—it is nestled 20 feet below street level, incorporates eastbound and westbound biking lanes and includes a separate walking path. Built on a disused rail corridor that was little more than a dumping ground by the 1990s, the completed trail sparked a wave of real estate investment and is now an anchor of Minneapolis’ active-transportation community—no small feat for a city boasting a bicycle commuter rate nearly seven times the national average. The trail has helped forge the way for Minneapolis to become one of the world’s top biking cities—a formal designation the city received in 2015.

The Heritage Rail Trail County Park and Torrey C. Brown Rail Trail together form a seamless 44-mile route along the rail line that once carried President Lincoln to deliver his now famous Gettysburg Address in November 1863 and that served as a portion of the way for his funeral train procession in 1865. This iconic rail-trail pair is also a key link in the growing 300-mile Grand History Trail, which will eventually connect Washington, D.C.; Baltimore and Annapolis in Maryland; and York, Hanover and Gettysburg in Pennsylvania. The visionary trail system will take users on a tour through 250 years of American history.

Selection into the Hall of Fame is based on a variety of merits, including scenic value, high use, trail and trailside amenities, historical significance, excellence in management and maintenance of facility, community connections and geographic distribution. These diverse trails provide a mix of utilitarian and recreational uses and are highly valued by their respective communities.

Learn More: railstotrails.org/HallofFame
Trail Use

TrailLink: America’s Portal to Multi-Use Trails

As the public’s demand increases for trails that offer recreational use and alternative transportation solutions—reflected in part by the 22,000-plus miles of multi-use trails developed since the 1980s and the more than 8,000 miles of projects currently underway—TrailLink.com has become more important than ever for connecting people with trails. In 2015, 6.4-plus million individuals viewed more than 16.4 million trails on TrailLink, an impressive 30 percent growth over the previous fiscal year.

RTC’s searchable online database has grown to include more than 30,000 miles of multi-use trail nationwide, and has stayed on the edge of technical advances that help millions of Americans find, use and share trail information via enhancements such as the TrailLink mobile phone apps. In 2015, RTC added day-by-day travel itineraries to the website for 150 scenic trails across the country, which include recommendations for lodging, restaurants, bike rentals and local attractions to provide travelers with everything needed to make the most out of these exciting destinations. This valuable new content was made possible through a grant provided by American Express.

Learn More: TrailLink.com
Trail Use

Trailblazer Tour Engages Loyal Trail Community

In July 2015, members of the Trailblazer Society joined RTC’s President, Keith Laughlin, for the annual Trailblazer Tour, which was a four-day ride in Southeast Wisconsin along existing trails that are part of RTC’s proposed Route of the Badger trail network. It was a wonderful opportunity for them to explore some of our nation’s most magnificent trails and learn how their support is being leveraged to help people safely enjoy the outdoors, connect to their communities and build healthy lifestyles.

The Trailblazer Society is an important and loyal segment of RTC members who provide leadership donations of $1,000 or more annually. This serves as a powerful source of funding for the preservation of historic rail corridors and the creation of trails that connect families, workplaces, neighborhoods and cultural attractions across America. RTC recognizes the Trailblazer Society’s tremendous commitment with special events, trail information and reports that exclusively connect them to the impact of their support.

Contact: Katie Guerin at katie@railstotrails.org or 202.974.5143 to learn more.

Revenue

- Membership $3,166,281 36%
- Contributions $3,821,494 43%
- Grants and Contracts $1,237,703 14%
- Corporate Sponsorships $135,428 1%
- Royalties, Investments and Other Income $530,317 6%
- **Total Operating Revenue** $8,891,223 100%

Expenses

- Trail Development $2,165,587 25%
- Research $438,917 5%
- Public Information/Events $2,316,681 26%
- National and State Policy $1,415,079 16%
- Other Program Services $366,036 4%
- Administrative $821,795 9%
- Fundraising $1,292,719 15%
- **Total Operating Expenses** $8,816,814 100%

Net Income from Operations $74,409
Non-Operating Income* ($134,368)
Change in Temporarily Restricted $1,145,136
Total Change in Net Assets $1,085,177
Net Assets Beginning of Year $5,266,627
Net Assets End of Year $6,351,804

*Non-operating income represents realized and unrealized gains and losses on investment of restricted assets.
Rails-to-Trails Conservancy is a nonprofit organization as qualified under Section 501(c)(3) of the IRS Codes.
Board of Directors

Reflects board members and their affiliations at the end of fiscal year 2015.

Guy Williams (Chair)
G.O. Williams & Associates, LLC
Ypsilanti, Michigan

Katherine Kraft, Ph.D. (Vice Chair)
America Walks
Princeton, New Jersey

Gail Lipstein (Secretary)
Malvern, Pennsylvania

John Rathbone (Treasurer)
Virginia Beach, Virginia

Chip Angle
Angle Associates
Guilford, Connecticut

Kathy Blaha
Kathy Blaha Consulting, LLC
Miami Beach, Florida

Kenneth V. Cockrel, Jr.
Detroit Future City
Detroit, Michigan

Matthew Cohen
Stoel Rives, LLP
Seattle, Washington

David Ingemie
SnowSports Industries America
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Rue Mapp
Outdoor Afro
Oakland, California

Charles N. Marshall
Pottstown, Pennsylvania

Douglas Monieson
Chicago, Illinois

Frank Mulvey
Bethesda, Maryland

Timothy Noel, Ph.D., CFA
T. Rowe Price Associates, Inc.
Baltimore, Maryland

Tom Petri
Washington, D.C.

Staff

Reflects staff members at the end of fiscal year 2015

Keith Laughlin, President
Development and Communications

Mary O’Connor, Vice President of Development and Communications

Milo Bateman, Manager of Membership Operations

Orhan Belding, Trailblazer Society Manager

Ben Carter, Senior Director of Development

Ryan Cree, Manager of Online Campaigns

Brian Gerhardstein, Online Media Manager

Katie Harris, Campaigns and Media Coordinator

Amy Kapp, Content Strategy Manager and Editor-in-Chief of Rails to Trails

Katie McKinney Guerin, Major Gifts Officer

Donald Minor, Customer Service Coordinator

Elizabeth Striano, Director of Communications and Marketing

Deborah Zwick, Development Coordinator

Finance and Administration

Cindy Dickerson, Chief Operating Officer

Elton Clark, Human Resources Manager

Irma Joseph, Senior Staff Accountant

Roxana Kiely, Controller

Jonathan Rayer, GIS Specialist

Frederick Schaedtler, Senior Director of TrailLink.com and Technology Marketing

Laura Stark, Staff Writer and TrailLink.com Content Manager

Policy and Trail Development

Kevin Mills, Senior Vice President of Policy and Trail Development

Liz Thorstensen, Vice President of Trail Development

Jim Brown, Trail Development Manager

Drew Dupuy, Manager of Policy Outreach

Marianne Fowler, Senior Strategist for Policy Advocacy

Eli Griffen, Trail Development and TrailLink Coordinator

Tracy Hadden Loh, Ph.D., Director of Research

Kelly Pack, Director of Trail Development

Leeann Sinpatanasakul, Advocacy Coordinator

Elissa Fay Southward, Healthy Communities Manager

Ana Valenzuela, GIS Analyst

Patrick Wojahn, Director of Government Relations

Florida Office

Ken Bryan, State Director

Midwest Regional Office

Eric Oberg, Director of Trail Development

Brian Housh, Midwest Policy Manager

Northeast Regional Office

Tom Sexton, Regional Director

Any Saretzky, Project Manager for Trail Development

Elizabeth Sewell, Trail Development Manager

Western Regional Office

Laura Cohen, Regional Director

Yamelith Aguilar, Western Region Program Coordinator

Barry Bergman, Trail Development Manager
Our Mission
Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to creating a nationwide network of trails from former rail lines and connecting corridors to build healthier places for healthier people.