At Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, we believe that trail networks can deliver smart transportation, strong economic growth, healthy people, a flourishing environment—and social equity. Our Trail Nation projects are regional network-building projects—implemented in partnership with local organizations—that have the power to catalyze the development of trail networks nationwide, creating healthier places for healthier people. The heart of this work will come through strategic investments that close gaps and improve access to trail networks across communities. The scope of this work expands to become a placemaking strategy, with trails at the center of healthy, thriving communities.

**Expanding Transportation Options**

More than one-quarter of all trips we make are less than a mile—an easy walking distance—and nearly one-half are within 3 miles—an easy biking distance. Trail networks create the infrastructure that encourage and enable people to walk and bike as part of their daily lives.

**Fueling Strong Businesses and Economies**

As trail systems grow, they spark new investment in trailside businesses and commercial opportunities along the trail route. In urban areas, this supports trail-oriented development on the neighborhood scale; in rural and suburban communities, this spurs and supports tourism, bringing new dollars into the community.

**Promoting Social Equity**

Comprehensive trail systems can bridge gaps within and between communities, creating new access to jobs, physical activity and outdoor recreation—offering connected active transportation options to the more than 90 million Americans without a car.

**Protecting the Environment**

The environmental benefits of green infrastructure are strongest when open spaces are connected. Trail networks contribute to a healthy environment by protecting precious open space while encouraging active modes of transportation that reduce air pollution, traffic congestion and climate change.

**Improving Health and Wellness**

When people have safe places to walk within 10 minutes of their home, they are one-and-a-half times more likely to meet recommended activity levels than those who don’t. Comprehensive trail systems can give people new access to outdoor recreation opportunities.

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1 Safe Routes to Everywhere, Partnership for Active Transportation, 2014
2 Active Transportation for America: The Case for Increased Federal Investment in Bicycling and Walking, 2008
3 Green Infrastructure, American Planning Association, 2007