IMPACT
A Report of Rails-to-Trails Conservancy’s Outcomes
Fiscal Year 2018
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Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC) is the nation’s largest trails organization—with a grassroots community more than 1 million strong—dedicated to connecting people and communities by creating a nationwide network of public trails, many from former rail lines.

For more than 33 years, RTC has stood shoulder to shoulder with local and state trail partners to grow the nation’s trails, preserving America’s heritage and inspiring movement in its communities. Today, more than 24,000 miles of completed rail-trails traverse the nation, often serving as backbones for regional trail systems that are transforming the places where we live, work and play. These rail-trails are delivering economic opportunity, safe places to walk and bike, equitable transportation choices and new connections to the outdoors.

Explore the incredible progress we’ve made this year—thanks to the passionate support of our members, partner organizations and trail advocates nationwide.
Point of View

Reprinted from the Spring/Summer 2019 Issue of Rails to Trails magazine and published here in an edited format.

Thank you for welcoming me into your community. I’m delighted to join Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC) as its third president and to partner with you in advancing our vital mission. It’s a profound honor to follow Keith Laughlin, whose dedicated leadership for 18 years helped support the creation of so many trails we enjoy today. It’s been just a few months for me in the role, but I can honestly say it’s the most fun I’ve ever had in a new job!

And while this joyous work is filled with personal rewards, I joined RTC because I know how well trails can connect each of us to the things we value most: our families, our friends and neighbors, our communities and our cultural heritage.

Trails hold deep personal meaning for me. My father is Chinese; my mother is of Swedish descent. I’ve always valued the cultural richness of being of mixed heritage, but I regretted not learning Chinese and the communication barriers it presented with my grandparents. Trails provided a bridge. Some of my fondest childhood memories are walking with my grandparents on the trails near their home in Colorado, where generational and cultural barriers disappeared, and we could share the universal bonds of nature, activity and togetherness. And while I treasure these memories, I know they are by no means unique to my experience, as I’m sure each of you have fond memories of connecting in powerful and personal ways on the trail.

The value of trails is demonstrated every day in how they serve as pathways to opportunity. I look forward to discovering what my experiences in community reinvestment and social impact can bring to the table as RTC continues to prove just how indispensable trails are to America’s health and civic infrastructure.

See you on the trail!

Ryan Chao, President
Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

Photo by Anthony Le
For more than three decades, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy has stood at the forefront of the trails movement—serving as the national voice for trails, setting the precedent that rail-trails are need-to-have community assets, and establishing policies and practices that ensure these trails are built.
We advocate on Capitol Hill for investments and policies that support safe trails and active transportation networks for people of every age, background and ability. The results of our leadership are evident in the 54,000 projects supported to date through the two largest federal programs for trails, walking and biking—which we fought to establish and continue to protect and grow for the vitality of communities everywhere.

We advocate in our state and local legislatures for innovative funding programs and policies—harnessing the collective energy of our partners and trail advocates around the country to drive trail building for economic growth, community revitalization, equitable transportation, safer commuting and healthier lifestyles. Between 2016 and 2018, RTC-led state campaigns generated $2 billion+ in funding to support trails over the next decade.

We mobilize and empower people to advocate in their own neighborhoods for safe walking and biking infrastructure, with a goal of instilling a passion for trails and inspiring trail stewardship. Over the last three decades, we’ve alerted communities to 8,700 miles of potential trails through our Early Warning System and collectively organized hundreds of thousands of individual advocacy actions for trails now on the ground across the nation.

We partner with nationally respected organizations; federal, state and local agencies; public leaders; and trail advocates to build trails and educate Americans on their value. Through these valued partnerships, we’ve developed cutting-edge research and programs that have driven trail building across all 50 states—making communities more walkable and bikeable and creating new opportunities for commerce, travel and exploration.

We plan and develop regional trail networks that help create healthy, thriving communities and raise the quality of life for Americans. Through our TrailNation™ program, we are leading this charge with a portfolio of eight diverse projects—unique in size, scope and geography—that will ultimately touch the lives of hundreds of millions of people over countless generations and serve as models for the entire country.

We provide resources in the form of trail planning, capacity-building grants, technical support and best practices for communities of all shapes and sizes seeking to build trails and connected systems. Since 2008, our pass-through grant programs have distributed $1.5 million+ to support all aspects of trail development, from closing critical gaps in trail systems to promoting the economic and environmental impact of local pathways.

We protect trails as the only national organization committed to defending the preservation of former rail corridors for continued public use. Our work to shape the industry’s legal framework is demonstrated in the 70+ cases we’ve participated in since 1986 on behalf of rail-trails—including the landmark 1990 Supreme Court case in which the constitutionality of railbanking was upheld—making possible thousands of miles of rail-trails.

We promote rail-trails and their champions across the country, spreading the word about these transformative pathways and the passionate people who have made them a reality. As we embark on a new challenge to complete the 3,700-miles-plus Great American Rail-Trail™ and connect the country by trail—we continue to highlight and honor the more than 2,100 completed rail-trails that sparked and collectively fuel our movement.

We speak out about the transformative power of trails, building collective awareness and appreciation for these vital assets, encouraging their use and generating demand for trails across the United States. Through our national grassroots community—made up of more than 1 million people—we send our message to Congress, elected officials and public leaders loud and clear: Our lives and our communities are made better because of trails.
Since 1986, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC) has served as the national voice for the rail-trail movement.

As the country’s largest trails organization, it’s our job to speak up for trails, showcasing their power in bringing incredible benefits to communities and elevating the passionate work of trail supporters and advocates across the nation. Our vision of trails at the heart of healthy, thriving communities everywhere inspires our big ideas and ensures we’re working with discipline as we pursue a nation connected by trails.

RTC’s strategy is built on three pillars of change: 1) changing infrastructure to build the connected systems that maximize the benefits of trails; 2) changing policy to encourage investment in trails and active transportation; and 3) changing behavior to increase awareness and use of trails so that trails, walking and biking become part of people’s daily lives.

Our flagship initiatives—TrailLink.com, TrailNation™ and the Great American Rail-Trail™—bring that strategy to life, connecting millions of people in every state by trail.
**CHANGES IN INFRASTRUCTURE**

*We support the development of connected walking and biking infrastructure that brings transformative and equitable transportation, economic, health and environmental benefits to communities.*

More than 24,000 miles of completed rail-trails across the country and more than 2,100 rail-trails to date.

3,500+ miles of TrailNation™ trails built to date in eight TrailNation network projects around the country:

- Baltimore Greenway Trails Coalition
- Bay Area Trails Collaborative
- Capital Trails Coalition
- The Circuit Trails
- Industrial Heartland Trails Coalition
- Caracara Trails (formerly the Lower Rio Grande Valley Active Plan)
- The Miami LOOP
- Route of the Badger

**CHANGES IN POLICY**

*We advocate at the federal, state and local levels for innovative funding programs and policies that support trails and active transportation networks for people of every age, background and ability.*

$20 billion+ in Transportation Alternatives and Recreational Trails Program funds allocated to date.

$2 billion+ generated between 2016 and 2018 in new state funding for trails for the next decade.

Nearly 4,300 messages in support of trail projects and policies sent by 2,000+ constituents to elected officials in FY 2018.

**CHANGES IN PERSONAL BEHAVIOR**

*We engage millions of Americans, encouraging trail use by sharing information and educating about the benefits trails bring to people and places.*

**IN FY 2018:**

- 1 million+ railstotrails.org visitors
- ~246,000 RTC TrailBlog visitors
- 327,000 eNews subscribers
- 170,000+ social media community
- 7.45 million TrailLink.com visitors

**SINCE 2009:**

- 99 million+ trail pages served on TrailLink.com
- 43 million TrailLink maps viewed
- 600+ Opening Day for Trails events
Today, more than 35,000 miles of rail-trails and multiuse trails exist nationwide. Rails-to-Trails Conservancy’s (RTC’s) focus is on linking these corridors—creating trail networks that connect people and places in ways that deliver powerful outcomes. We continue to witness and pay testament to the many ways trails transform communities: strengthening economies, providing balanced and equitable transportation choices, promoting health and protecting our environment.

As we forge ahead, our eyes are fixed on connecting America’s walking and biking infrastructure and ensuring trails are at the heart of healthy, thriving communities. RTC’s three-year strategic plan guides our work toward that vision, with five goals to anchor our efforts.

1. **Creating Models of Success**
   In partnership with local organizations and communities, RTC is creating and advancing a vibrant portfolio of nationally significant trail-system projects through our TrailNation™ program to demonstrate what is possible when trail networks are central to our lives.

2. **Advancing Innovative Trail and Active Transportation Policy**
   Securing an increased and sustained investment in public funding to support trails requires persistence and creativity. RTC is leading the pursuit of federal, state and local policies and funding streams that can advance the creation of trail and active transportation systems.

3. **Increasing Demand for Trails by Encouraging Trail Use**
   It’s not enough to build trails and hope people will come. RTC provides resources and public education—including TrailLink.com, the nation’s most comprehensive database of rail-trails and multiuse trails—to encourage people to make trails part of their daily lives.

4. **Expanding Reach and Encouraging Replication**
   Our vision will be realized with leadership from communities across the country as we use our national platform and influence to showcase and encourage the replication of successful projects and policies nationwide.

5. **Building the Backbone by Strengthening RTC**
   RTC is a national leader in the trails and active transportation movement. It is imperative that we invest in our own strength and sustainability, including a commitment to ensuring diversity and equity in all facets of our work.
TrailNation™ brings to life our vision of trails at the heart of healthy, thriving communities from coast to coast.

At Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC), we believe that connected trail systems can be powerful game changers for America—improving our mobility, our health and the environment, while spurring economic development and creating more equitable and balanced transportation systems. Through our TrailNation portfolio, we’re putting this theory to work in eight diverse places across the country, investing in projects and partnerships that will serve as replicable models to accelerate trail development nationwide.

We’re working with hundreds of partners across the TrailNation footprint to bring connected regional trail systems to life—organizing communities and advocates, leading coalitions, advocating and securing funding, providing technical planning expertise and generating public enthusiasm for trails. The pages that follow provide a snapshot of critical TrailNation project advances we made in FY 2018.

Learn more: railstotrails.org/TrailNation

TrailNation Collaborative

Leading trail network projects from across the country are joining RTC’s efforts to educate and engage a broad coalition of stakeholders committed to the rapid replication of these vital assets nationwide. The TrailNation Collaborative came together for the first time in June 2018 in Milwaukee at the TrailNation Summit and continues to stay connected via RTC’s virtual learning networks.
Clockwise from upper left: Ohio’s Towpath Trail winding beneath the Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad | Photo by Bruce S. Ford; Bahia Grande, Texas | Photo by Frontera Media; Miami’s M-Path Trail in Florida | Photo by David Henderson; Schuylkill River Trail in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania | Photo by Thom Carroll; Crissy Field in San Francisco, California | Photo by Cindy Banks; Mount Vernon Trail along the banks of the Potomac River outside of Washington, D.C. | Photo by Brandi Horton
RTC’s leadership of the Baltimore Greenway Trails Network is bringing connectivity and physical activity into sharp focus in Baltimore. Currently, the Baltimore Greenway Trails Coalition seeks to create a 35-mile trail system that will provide new places to walk and bike for more than 60 neighborhoods throughout the city.

In FY 2018, RTC led an effort to secure a $250,000 federal grant for the Baltimore City Department of Transportation to implement the design phase of a 0.8-mile trail extension along the Middle Branch of the Patapsco River—a crucial next step in closing the gap between the Gwynns Falls Trail and the popular inner harbor. What’s more, the project will begin to open up waterfront access for many South Baltimore neighborhoods.

Looking ahead, the current focus is to continue community engagement across the city with an emphasis on West Baltimore, and trail planning and development in South Baltimore.
Sweeping climate change legislation, a burgeoning demand for safe, equitable walking and biking infrastructure, and economic growth are driving the Bay Area Trails Collaborative’s efforts to create a 2,700-mile trail network across nine counties.

RTC’s advocacy efforts in FY 2018, in collaboration with local partners, helped secure more than $180 million in combined funding through the state’s Active Transportation Program; Proposition 68, known as the Parks, Environment, and Water Bond; and a bridge toll measure to support the San Francisco Bay Trail and the Safe Routes to School Program. These major wins will help drive the completion of many trails in the network while contributing to the state’s ambitious transportation, health and greenhouse gas reduction goals.

Moving forward, RTC is leading efforts to cultivate project champions and increase state funding that can be used to close critical infrastructure gaps in the trail network.
CONNECTING AMERICA’S TRAIL NETWORKS

As demand for walking and biking continues to grow in our nation’s capital, RTC is working with the Washington Area Bicyclist Association (WABA), the National Park Service and more than 40 organizations through the Capital Trails Coalition to connect the region’s trails and transform public life for millions of people.

Over the past few years, RTC has led the coalition in defining an 840-miles-plus route, with 456 existing miles and 386 planned miles, assessing hundreds of project plans; negotiating trail routing across city, county and state boundaries; providing geographic information system (GIS) mapping expertise; and engaging partners to determine a plan for equitable trail development. Through this foundational work, we identified 40 priority projects that will catalyze trail development across the region.

RTC is actively providing technical assistance to priority trail development projects, and designing a toolbox to support equitable trail development within the network—wth the intention of replicating the approach nationwide.

CAPITAL TRAILS COALITION  Metropolitan Washington, DC

Creating Safe Walking and Biking Connections in the DC Metro Region
With more than 350 miles complete to date, the developing 800-mile Circuit Trails network is generating major impact in Philadelphia and Camden, New Jersey, where RTC and a broad coalition of partners are connecting 30 trails across nine counties to revolutionize the way people walk, bike and roll.

In FY 2018, RTC’s advocacy was essential in advancing the first phase of Camden County’s 12-mile Atlantic Avenue Trail. This trail will create safe walking and biking connections to schools, jobs, transit and the outdoors for people living in 15 neighborhoods—and will ultimately open up foot and bike access between Camden and the Atlantic county line as part of the 32-mile Cross Camden County Trail.

RTC’s trail development efforts are concentrated on four projects (the Richmond Industrial Trail, Hamilton-Robbinsville Trail, Atlantic Avenue Trail and the Burlington-Camden Trail), which will connect a total of 20 miles of Circuit Trails—providing direct trail project assistance, advocacy and communications expertise. In addition, RTC leads the Circuit Trails marketing campaign, which reaches millions of trail users each year, generating new enthusiasm and support for the trail network.
The creation of a 1,500-mile world-class trail network across 51 counties in Ohio, Pennsylvania, West Virginia and New York has been a long-standing goal of the Industrial Heartland Trails Coalition—a project led by RTC, the Pennsylvania Environmental Council and the National Park Service to amplify the region's trail systems and spur outdoor tourism.

In 2018, RTC completed a comprehensive feasibility study of the 150-mile Parkersburg to Pittsburgh Corridor in West Virginia—including a blueprint to close six trail gaps within the next decade and create a 238-mile rail-trail connecting West Virginia and Pennsylvania. What's more, the study found that the project could open the door to an outdoor economy worth $40 million+ annually.

RTC is leading efforts to advance more than 212 miles of trail development along the Ashtabula to Pittsburgh, Cleveland to Pittsburgh, and Parkersburg to Pittsburgh corridors— spearheading feasibility studies and design, and on-the-ground trail development.
In 2017, RTC joined efforts with The Valley Baptist Legacy Foundation, the University of Texas School of Public Health (UTHealth) and 11 municipalities in Cameron County, Texas, to implement the Caracara Trails—a 428-mile trail network designed to promote active lifestyles and stimulate tourism across the region.

In FY 2018, RTC and the City of Brownsville secured critical funding and support to complete a 1.8-mile extension of the Historic Battlefield Trail—phase one in an effort to connect Brownsville and Los Fresnos by trail. It’s estimated that this connection and five other catalyst projects could generate $367 million in out-of-town visitor spending in the first 10 years of completion.

RTC is managing project implementation, organizing municipal, nonprofit and regional partners into a coalition with a long-term strategy for rapid build-out of the trail network, while also leading efforts around community organizing, project branding and marketing.
THE MIAMI LOOP  Miami-Dade County, Florida

Creating New Avenues for Active Transportation in Miami and Beyond

The Miami LOOP is a 225-mile trail vision led by RTC and the Miami-Dade Trail Alliance, a coalition of local partners, to generate green space, trail transit, and cultural and health connections that will spark a new era of active transportation and regional competitiveness for Miami-Dade County.

RTC mobilization efforts in September 2018 successfully capped off a decades-long effort to secure voter support for the purchase of a 5-mile portion of disused rail corridor to help complete the 6.2-mile Ludlam Trail—a key connector that will serve 34,000 residents living within a half-mile of the corridor. In addition to helping avert millions of vehicle miles over 15 years, it’s estimated that the trail could generate upwards of $1.8 billion in retail spending over 20 years.

RTC is playing a key role in accelerating completion of the 225-mile Miami LOOP by securing state and local funding, building political will for trail connections, uniting local trail leaders and identifying impactful local policies.
RTC has been leading a dogged coalition of partners since 2016 to connect 700 miles of trails to deliver transformative benefits for tourism, active transportation and health across seven counties in southeastern Wisconsin.

In fall 2018, our advocacy efforts in collaboration with the Wisconsin Bike Fed to secure more support for trails in the state legislature paid off with the formation of the Wisconsin Legislative Trails Caucus. This unique bipartisan group of lawmakers, championed by Rep. Evan Goyke of the 18th District, ensures trails—including the 286 miles needed to complete the Badger route—will have a place at the table at state budget discussions and legislative sessions.

RTC leads the coalition in engaging trail partners and regional and county governments in formalizing the network components, while building on-the-ground support to build out key trail infrastructure.
For more than three decades, RTC has led a broad and diverse movement of nonprofits, trail advocates and legislators to secure and safeguard trail funding at every public level. Our stalwart goal remains constant—to establish a funding pot that will meet America’s growing demand for trails.

In FY 2018, our efforts to move federal trail policy into a new era, one with people and mobility as the prime focus—and to generate support for state and local funding programs—helped produce billions of dollars in funding and new innovations for trails in our state legislatures.

**Federal Support for Trails**

Since 1992, RTC has led the nation in advocating for federal trail funding—securing more than $20 billion to support more than 54,000 trail and active transportation projects through America’s two largest federal programs dedicated to trails.

RTC continues to mobilize on Capitol Hill with a big ask: that Congress deliver a visionary transportation policy that meets the burgeoning demand for trails and active transportation infrastructure, with an emphasis on investing in connecting trails. This includes protecting and enhancing the Transportation Alternatives and Recreational Trails programs—together the largest source of federal trail funding in America and a critical focus of our advocacy agenda.

Our eyes were fixed on two major federal policy opportunities in FY 2018: 1) a potential infrastructure bill in 2019, and 2) the next reauthorization of the federal transportation bill in 2020. Through our Trails Transform America campaign—we are sending a powerful message to Congress: Trail networks are as fundamental to America’s infrastructure as roads and rail lines and deserve robust federal investment.

Throughout FY 2018, our efforts to educate decision-makers and the public on the transformative impact of trails extended from the grassroots level to the top ladders of government—including dozens of meetings with members of Congress and staff and a letter-to-the-editor campaign reaching millions of people.

Nearly **4,300 MESSAGES**
sent to elected officials in FY 2018
Trails Transform America

RTC’s Trails Transform America campaign has a clear message: Trails deliver incredible benefits to people and places. RTC’s growing selection of research and case studies on a variety of developing projects underscores that message, proving the collective impact of trails: hundreds of millions of dollars in trail user spending, thousands of jobs and massive reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

Learn more: railstotrails.org/trailstransform

Nation’s Largest Data Exchange on Federal Trail Spending

RTC manages TrADE, the country’s largest data exchange for the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP). TrADE tracks spending for tens of thousands of projects, with a goal to make TAP the most accountable and transparent transportation funding source for trails in the nation. The 2017 TrADE annual report, published in July 2018, found that while some states are obligating new TAP funding at record levels, others are transferring staggering amounts of funds out of the program as well—even as demand for trails continues to grow. What’s more, reports indicate that nearly half the projects that applied for TAP in 2017 (more than 2,500 projects) were left unfunded, demonstrating the unmet need for trail funding across the country.

Learn more: rtc.li/TrADE2017

Meeting the Needs of Every Trail User: Recreational Trails Program

Since 1992, the Recreational Trails Program (RTP) has supported more than 22,000 trail projects benefitting millions of Americans. In FY 2018, RTC and the Coalition for Recreational Trails developed bills in both the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate to strengthen the program’s authorizing language and grow its funding resources. This program—at a time when trail upkeep needs are outpacing public funds available—is the only federal program that not only allows, but also encourages, its use for trail maintenance.

The bill was introduced to the Senate in October 2018 by U.S. Sens. Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.), Jim Risch (R-Idaho), Richard Burr (R-N.C.) and Jeanne Shaheen (D-N.H.) and to the House in November by U.S. Reps. Peter Welch (D-Vt.) and Mike Simpson (R-Idaho).
**States Go Big For Trails**

RTC’s state policy efforts are designed to generate growth in public funding available for trails and active transportation, while building coalitions, driving innovative policy solutions, amplifying the need for visionary federal policy and providing direct support to priority projects and TrailNation™ initiatives.

Grassroots advocacy was at the heart of RTC’s state policy efforts in FY 2018. Our shared leadership with hundreds of members and partners led to major legislative victories throughout the year—through which we helped secure hundreds of millions of dollars for trails and active transportation infrastructure.

- RTC’s advocacy resulted in major wins at the state level in FY 2018, securing new money for trails in California, Connecticut, Florida, Kansas, Maryland, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Tennessee and Utah equaling $730+ million in funding.

- In August, we mobilized Californians to contribute to the passage of a bill for the 300-mile Great Redwood Trail, which will feature some of the North Coast’s most treasured natural assets.

- In Kansas, we contributed to a successful campaign for legislation to put the Flint Hills Nature Trail under the auspices of the state park system, ensuring the trail thrives with stable future funding and maintenance.

- In FY 2018, RTC constituents sent more than 4,300 messages to elected officials and decision-makers in support of trail projects that will expand and complete safe walking and biking networks for millions of people.

**$180 Million Home Run for Trails in California**

California led the way in trail funding in FY 2018. RTC was a persistent voice in efforts to secure $180 million—including a $100 million annual increase over 10 years for the Active Transportation Program—in collaboration with the California Active Transportation Leadership Program. The funding will benefit communities of all shapes and sizes, with a focus on connecting underserved neighborhoods to schools, jobs, commercial centers and healthy recreation options.

**Tapping New Jersey for $23 Million for Trails**

RTC mobilized partners and advocates in New Jersey to safeguard the allocation of millions of dollars in critical federal TAP funds before their expiration date at the end of the fiscal year. More than 170 constituents participated in a letter-writing campaign to the New Jersey Department of Transportation, which responded by allocating $23 million for 30 transformative trail, walking and biking projects.

**Standing With Our Partners in Minnesota**

Through our State Policy Action Fund, we supported the Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota’s lobby day in Saint Paul, which yielded an estimated $45 million in trail earmarks within the state’s capital budget. Metropolitan Regional Parks and Trails received $10 million to support 26 multiuse trail projects—such as the Wagon Wheel Trail, the Mesabi Trail and the Gitchi-Gami State Trail—nearly $8 million of which was appropriated for Minnesota state trail development.

**A Year for Trails in Ohio**

Some of our most exciting advocacy work took place in Ohio, which voted 2018 the “Year of the Trails”—demonstrating the growing legislative energy around trail building—following an effort to secure the designation by RTC and local partners. Other advocacy wins include a $6.25 million annual renewal of the Clean Ohio Trails Fund and the City of Oxford’s passing of a $10 million levy for trails over the next decade.
RTC’s efforts to encourage elected leaders to invest in robust outdoor recreation and active transportation programming have led to a new policy innovation—the Legislative Trails Caucus—designed to ensure trails have a seat at the table in our state legislatures. This bipartisan model taps the collective energy of like-minded members who support trails and are critical to establishing policies and sustainable funding mechanisms that will accelerate their development.

In 2017, RTC spearheaded the creation of the country’s first Legislative Trails Caucus in conjunction with the Ohio Network and the Ohio Trails Partnership. Chaired by state Sens. Sean O’Brien (D-Bazetta) and Steve Wilson (R-Maineville) and committed to creating a statewide trail network, the Ohio Legislative Trails Caucus is building momentum as a powerful influencer in state-level trail development. The caucus also is inspiring the creation of similar groups in states seeking to rapidly advance trail building.

In fall 2018, RTC helped usher in another groundbreaking group in the Badger State with the launch of the Wisconsin Legislative Trails Caucus. Championed by Rep. Evan Goyke (18th District) in collaboration with RTC and the Wisconsin Bike Fed, the caucus has committed to the development of the 700-mile Route of the Badger, an RTC TrailNation project that will connect dozens of neighborhoods across seven counties. Moving forward, RTC will glean the strategies and successes generated by the caucuses and share them with other states to further amplify trail development at the state level.

**11 MAJOR STATE-LEVEL FUNDING WINS** in FY 2018

$2 BILLION+ generated between 2016 and 2018 in new state funding for trails over the next decade

$58 MILLION+ in new one-time state funds (Florida, Maryland, Ohio, Kansas, Connecticut, Utah)

$1.5 BILLION+ in total new annual recurring state funds (California, Florida, Ohio, Kansas)

$528 MILLION in multiyear funds (Florida, New York, Tennessee, California, Maryland, Minnesota)

**Trails Caucus Innovations in Our State Legislatures**

RTC’s efforts to encourage elected leaders to invest in robust outdoor recreation and active transportation programming have led to a new policy innovation—the Legislative Trails Caucus—designed to ensure trails have a seat at the table in our state legislatures. This bipartisan model taps the collective energy of like-minded members who support trails and are critical to establishing policies and sustainable funding mechanisms that will accelerate their development.

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At RTC, we believe in the transformative power of connected trail networks for health, community mobility, social equity, environmental sustainability and economic growth. Over a three-day period in June 2018 at the Milwaukee County War Memorial Center in Wisconsin, we convened more than 250 hand-picked leaders from across the country at our inaugural TrailNation™ Summit. There, we harnessed the energy and knowledge that is fueling the national movement to connect communities and regions by trails.

Creating Transformative Trail Models

At our 2018 TrailNation Summit, we gathered a team of celebrated experts; public officials; trail and active transportation advocates; and philanthropic, public health and economic development professionals from RTC’s eight TrailNation projects and 12 TrailNation Collaborative communities to share best practices and real-world challenges, gathering the best approaches for building trail networks across America with the intention of sharing the knowledge and evidence necessary to foster the rapid replication of trial networks nationwide.

The TrailNation playbook is a strategic approach to trail building that leverages best practice and lessons learned to encourage effective, efficient development of trail networks nationwide.

Special thanks to the TrailNation Collaborative, leading trail network projects from across the country representing communities diverse in size, culture and geography that have joined RTC’s TrailNation Projects in an effort to educate and engage a broad coalition of stakeholders committed to the rapid replication of these vital assets nationwide.
“When trail networks are embraced as vital community assets, they bring powerful solutions for addressing issues as far-ranging as chronic disease, resiliency, mobility, social equity and economic growth.”

-Keith Laughlin, former RTC President
RTC has envisioned a cross-country trail since the late 1980s, when co-founders David Burwell and Peter Harnik, joined by the organization’s early staffers, first dreamed of a trail for the nation.

Spanning more than 3,700 miles across 12 states and the District of Columbia, the Great American Rail-Trail is a new signature project of RTC that will highlight some of America’s most pristine geography, iconic landmarks and renowned cultural treasures. The “Great American” will serve more than 50 million people within 50 miles of the corridor, as well as the millions of others who will explore America in new ways via the trail.

Learn more: greatamericanrailtrail.org
A Road Map for the “Great American”

While the team at RTC knew the potential for a cross-country trail, we also knew that it would be a massive undertaking. Thus we set two non-negotiable criteria for committing to the historic project: 1) a viable route that was more than 50 percent complete, and 2) a pathway across the rugged mountains of the West.

As the nation’s capital and home to RTC’s national headquarters, Washington, D.C., had always been identified as the eastern terminus. In December 2016, RTC traveled to Wyoming and Montana to explore solutions in the West. In 2017, preliminary GIS analyses revealed multiple potential routes that were more than 50 percent complete for a cross-country trail between Washington, D.C., and Washington State.

In FY 2018, RTC began a 12-month route assessment—meeting with hundreds of trail managers and public officials and collecting mapping data for over 125 trails. The resulting report, which outlines the preferred route of the Great American, will serve as a guiding document for closing 1,700 miles of trail gaps and completing this iconic American trail.

A selection of photos taken by RTC’s trail development staff during route-finding trips and meetings with local officials in Montana, Wyoming, Maryland and West Virginia | Photos by Kevin Belanger, Eli Giffen and Leah Gerber
Central to RTC’s work in supporting trail development is establishing strong, impactful connections with individuals, organizations and other partners at the national, regional and local levels. We support the hard work and ingenuity of our broad and diverse trails community by sharing expertise gleaned over three decades of work, creating peer networking and learning opportunities, and providing trail groups with expert advice and innovative resources to secure vital project funding.

Securing Vital Funds for Trail Networks

The Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)—the largest source of federal funding for trails—is a major focus point for RTC, which has a three-pronged strategy: 1) protect and grow the program at the federal level; 2) enhance state-level investments from the program; and 3) partner with trail groups and advocates to get funds allocated to impactful local projects.

In FY 2018, RTC worked with partners in Maryland to help secure a $250,000 federal TAP grant, awarded to the City of Baltimore. The TAP grant will help develop a key segment of the 35-mile Baltimore Greenway Trails Network, which will open up access to the waterfront and other key destinations for South Baltimore neighborhoods.
Supporting Our Trail Communities

Recognizing that real transformative change can come not just in big leaps but also in small bounds, RTC continues its efforts to support communities seeking to complete trails and trail networks with pass-through grants. These programs serve as supplemental resources for smaller regional projects that are vital to trail systems but often fall through the cracks of traditional funding streams.

Doppelt Family Trail Development Fund

In 2018, through the Doppelt Family Trail Development Fund, RTC awarded more than $120,000 to nine trail projects across the country. Awards ranged from $5,000 to $30,000 and addressed vital enhancements for urban, suburban and rural connectors. The fund was bolstered by an additional $40,000 legacy gift from North Carolina Rail-Trails, Inc. and a $20,000 gift from an anonymous donor.

RTC received more than 180 applications seeking nearly $5.5 million in the FY 2018 grant cycle. The sheer number of applications reflects the incredible demand for rail-trails and trail networks across the country and demonstrates the national reality of unmet trail funding needs.

Metropolitan Grants Program

For the past decade, The Coca-Cola Foundation has supported RTC’s Metropolitan Grants Program, which provides much-needed funding to build and improve trails in urban areas and supports groups that encourage healthy, active living through trail use and community stewardship.

In FY 2018, RTC focused on our eight TrailNation™ projects in diverse areas around the country where we’ve increased our involvement and visibility. Through the Metropolitan Grants Program, we directed $128,000 in grants to the cities and inner suburbs where small but vital enhancements could have a big impact on mobility, social cohesion and economic impact. In total, we provided grants to 24 organizations—the most out of any program year.

$1,528,000 awarded to trail projects since 2008

$248,000+ awarded to 33 trail projects in FY 2018

Funds awarded to projects in 17 states and Washington, D.C., in 2018
SUPPORTING AMERICA’S TRAIL BUILDERS

Trailblazer Society

RTC thanks our Trailblazer Society members who provide leadership donations of $1,000 or more annually, creating a powerful funding pool for trails.

In June 2018, RTC brought Trailblazer Society members together for a tour of Missouri’s 240-mile Katy Trail State Park to see firsthand the trail’s impact on the state’s outdoor economy—which clocks in at $18.5 million annually. Highlights included meeting with Columbia Mayor Brian Treece, Columbia City Council Member Ian Thomas and the late Darwin Hindman, a former Columbia mayor and Rail-Trail Champion. Riders also explored the connecting 144-mile Rock Island Railroad corridor (Windsor to Beaufort), which—pending trail transformation—could bring economic benefits to more communities in Missouri.

Grassroots Momentum: Missouri’s Rock Island Trail

Missouri’s 144-mile Rock Island Railroad corridor—which would connect to the famed Katy Trail State Park, creating a nearly 500-mile destination loop—could have a transformative impact on tourism and economic development in the small towns along the route.

In fall 2018, when Missouri State Parks hosted public meetings to determine the corridor’s fate, RTC activated the power of its grassroots community to encourage support of this important project. Hundreds of people attended and spoke passionately on behalf of the trail’s completion. In 2019, the state will decide whether to accept the corridor from its owner, Ameren Corporation, to pursue railbanking the route for rail-trail conversion.

Learn more: railstotrails.org/Rock-Island-Line

Trail Expert Network

Through our Trail Expert Network (TEN)—which currently engages nearly 6,000 trail managers, operators and friends organizations—RTC provides the latest news and cutting-edge tools and resources to help our national trail-building community develop and steward trails.

Our captivating TEN webinar series features leading experts on topics ranging from trail development standards to best practices in trail network development and understanding legal issues affecting rail-trail conversions. The RTC website also features a newly redesigned Trail-Building Toolbox, which provides a wealth of information for creating vibrant trails in urban, suburban and rural communities.

Since 1995, RTC’s Early Warning System has helped inform local trail advocates about nearly 800 rail corridors (stretching 8,700 miles) up for requested abandonment through the federal Surface Transportation Board and ripe for trail transformation. In FY 2018, our Early Warning System sent alerts to help jump-start trail development in Colorado, Georgia, Minnesota, Ohio, Texas and West Virginia.
For decades, RTC has played a critical role in defending rail-trails and railbanking, a legal tool that allows rail corridors to be preserved for future use through interim conversion into trails.

Since RTC’s founding, we have been the nation’s foremost—and in most cases, only—legal advocate for rail-trails in the nonprofit sector, participating in more than 70 cases to date. This includes landmark cases that have been critical to shaping the country’s legal framework around rail-trails. Below are highlights from RTC’s legal program under the direction of General Counsel Andrea Ferster.

Learn more: railstotrails.org/legal

Protecting Vital Trail Corridors in Washington State

In 2017, our legal team helped secure victories for trail managers in two cases: 1) Hornish Joint Living Trust, et al. v. King County, and 2) Kaseburg, et al. v. King County, et al., involving the 11-mile East Lake Sammamish Trail and the planned Eastside Rail Corridor Trail in King County, Washington. At the heart of the cases were attempts to limit the rights of trail managers to use the full widths of the rights-of-way, including for utilities and public transit.

RTC’s legal team filed amicus curiae (“friends of the court”) briefs in support of King County and the other defendants named—and in August 2018, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in favor of King County and the defendants in both cases. These decisive victories set an important precedent for other trail groups defending their railbanked rail-trails against similar legal challenges.
RTC’s cutting-edge tools and research assist communities across the country in successfully building, maintaining and generating public support for trails and connected walking and bicycling infrastructure.

Our research agenda is driven by a simple but powerful goal: to assist communities in creating trails and trail networks in which the benefits are maximized, with an emphasis on mobility, health, economic growth and a more vibrant quality of life. In FY 2018, our work focused on improving connectivity in places where key projects have the potential to open up safe walking and biking access for hundreds of thousands of people.

In Cleveland, a majority of urban trips fall within a bike-friendly distance, but currently only 55 percent of Clevelanders can access a majority of key destinations via low-stress bicycling routes. The analysis found that a build-out of the city’s planned bicycling network could increase low-stress route access by 82 percent.

Learn more: railstotrails.org/bikeable
CELEBRATING OUR CHAMPIONS

Cardinal Greenway Voted 2018 Rail-Trail Hall of Fame Inductee

Established in 2007, RTC’s Rail-Trail Hall of Fame honors exemplary rail-trails that have a demonstrated impact on their communities, with an emphasis on scenic value, high use, trail and trailside amenities, historical significance, excellence in management and maintenance, and community connections.

RTC is pleased to recognize Indiana’s Cardinal Greenway as our 2018 Rail-Trail Hall of Fame inductee. The greenway was chosen by the public from among four other trails, garnering more than 50 percent of the votes in a national competition.

Stretching nearly 62 miles between Marion and Richmond, the Cardinal Greenway is Indiana’s longest rail-trail. It was a flagship project built upon strong community leadership and volunteerism when its development began more than 25 years ago.

Along its length, the Cardinal Greenway offers countryside views, bridges over picturesque waterways and two restored depots on the National Register of Historic Places. These tranquil sections are interspersed with a handful of city centers that offer places to eat and enjoy cultural attractions. As a tourist driver and regional economic engine, the greenway has earned its place in the Rail-Trail Hall of Fame, serving as a national model for other rural rail-trails.

Railbanking Hero Named 2018 Doppelt Family Rail-Trail Champion

Since 2011, the Doppelt Family Rail-Trail Champions Award has honored more than 30 individuals around the nation who have made significant contributions to the rail-trail movement through their hard work, volunteerism or support—in short, people who have gone above and beyond in the name of trails.

On the 50th anniversary of the National Trails System Act, RTC named Peter Raynor, a Bethesda, Maryland, resident, the 2018 Doppelt Family Rail-Trail Champion for his role in writing the 1983 Railbanking Statute—two short sentences that laid the legal foundation for the entire rail-trail movement.

A former National Park Service staffer, Raynor was recognized for his creativity in crafting what he called a “good little law”; legislation simple in its intent but with incredible impact to allow disused rail corridors to be “banked” for future transportation use through interim use as trails. To date, more than 4,200 miles of trails—nearly 20 percent of the country’s rail-trails—have been railbanked. This includes some of the nation’s most well-known trails, such as Katy Trail State Park, which spans 240 miles across Missouri.
EXPANDING THE MOVEMENT

As the national voice of the trails movement, RTC shines a spotlight on the entire trails experience—encouraging people to make trail use part of their daily life, celebrating exemplary trails and the heroes who make them possible, providing resources for people to find and access trails, and inspiring movement.

Reflections of the Ride: A Look Back at the Sojourn Series

In June 2018, RTC brought together 300 riders from 33 states for our last Sojourn Series tour, which explored Pennsylvania’s D&L Trail. From 2001 to 2018, RTC led thousands of riders on 19 sojourns in six states and Washington, D.C., showcasing the transformative impact of trails via an unparalleled, on-the-ground experience. These multiday rides infused communities with a total of approximately $2 million—fueling trailside businesses and local economies.

Share the Trail Resources

To date, our Share the Trail videos have been viewed by more than 16,500 people.

Our comprehensive online Share the Trail toolkit—outlining the six golden rules for trail users—has received hundreds of thousands of views to date, with resources including printable posters, award-winning videos, blogs, sharable graphics and information for safe, fun experiences on America’s pathways.

Learn more: railstotrails.org/sharethetrail
Opening Day for Trails: Celebrating Community Connectors

RTC’s annual Opening Day for Trails serves as a national kickoff for the trail season, highlighting the transformative benefits of trails and generating support for developing projects around the country. In 2018, RTC helped to organize or inspire an estimated 180 Opening Day events in 30 states—co-hosting featured events with key partners in six of our TrailNation™ priority project areas, including: California, Maryland, New Jersey, Ohio, the Washington, D.C., area and Wisconsin.

Learn more: railstotrails.org/openingday

Celebrating 20 Years of Rails to Trails Magazine

Our first issue of Rails to Trails magazine was published in 1998. For two decades, we’ve been dedicated to exploring America’s remarkable rail-trails and trail networks, with a focus on the positive impacts they have on people’s lives and the inspirational efforts of trail advocates, volunteers and community leaders who make them possible. With a circulation of 112,000+, our quarterly publication builds awareness of the growing trail movement and ensures that these powerful stories are shared nationwide.

Learn more: railstotrails.org/magazine
EXPANDING THE MOVEMENT

New Guidebooks Feature New England’s Top Trails

RTC’s regional guidebooks play an important role in helping outdoor enthusiasts across the country discover, explore and build appreciation for America’s exceptional trails and trail communities. In 2018, we offered a pair of exciting New England guidebooks featuring 112 of the most scenic, celebrated and vibrant trails across six states, including Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Connecticut, Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

A Powerful Grassroots

RTC’s members are the lifeblood of the trails movement. More than 160,000 members and supporters take action on behalf of trails—showing how important trails are to their daily life—by writing to their elected officials, making phone calls to decision makers, showing up to trail celebrations and rallies, and donating to strengthen the movement. These dedicated members, and RTC’s broader grassroots base that is 1 million strong, make a difference for trails, making possible RTC’s grand vision of a nation connected by trails.

Building the Movement

Partnership is essential to a strong movement, and RTC prioritizes partnership across sectors to demonstrate the breadth of the impact trails can deliver for people and places. Through the TrailNation™ projects, RTC’s leadership of the Partnership for Active Transportation, and partnerships with corporate brands interested in trails, walking and bicycling, RTC engages with hundreds of organizations nationwide—leading a powerful movement committed to bringing trails and active transportation to the fore.

TrailLink.com: A Guiding Companion for Trail Enthusiasts

RTC’s trail-finder website, TrailLink.com, leads the country in promoting trail use and satisfying the growing demand for trails for recreation and active transportation—to date cataloguing more than 4,100 multiuse trails spanning nearly 35,000 miles as of FY 2018. In FY 2018, TrailLink.com also reached an exciting milestone: More than 1 million trail enthusiasts used the website in a single month, and another 50,000 used TrailLink’s complementary mobile apps!

7.45 MILLION TrailLink.com visitors in FY 2018
99 MILLION+ trail pages served since 2009
43 MILLION maps viewed on TrailLink.com since 2009
Summary of Activities and Changes in Net Assets for the Fiscal Year Ending Sept. 30, 2018

**Revenue**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Membership</td>
<td>$3,220,568</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributions</td>
<td>$4,346,072</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grants and Contracts</td>
<td>$2,064,524</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate Support</td>
<td>$736,785</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royalties, Investments and Other Income</td>
<td>$600,455</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Operating Revenue</strong></td>
<td>$10,968,404</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Expenses**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trail Development</td>
<td>$4,398,504</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Information and Events</td>
<td>$2,223,455</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National, State and Local Policy</td>
<td>$1,143,509</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>$255,457</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Program Services</td>
<td>$395,413</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative</td>
<td>$1,115,151</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundraising</td>
<td>$1,392,581</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Operating Expenses</strong></td>
<td>$10,924,070</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Net Income from Operations** | $44,334

**Non-Operating Income** | $310,786

**Change in Temporarily Restricted** | $2,113,771

**Change in Permanently Restricted** | $163,250

**Total Change in Net Assets** | $2,632,141

**Net Assets Beginning of Year** | $7,308,350

**Net Assets End of Year** | $9,940,491

*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.
The board members of Rails-to-Trails Conservancy come from diverse backgrounds, but with a common purpose—to enrich the lives of millions of Americans by creating a nationwide network of trails that support active transportation, health and wellness, environmental sustainability and economic vitality in communities across America.

Reflects board members and their affiliations at the end of FY 2018. For a current list, go to railstotrails.org/board.
In 2018, Keith Laughlin, RTC’s president, announced that he would retire after 18 years at the helm. Under his bold vision and direction, RTC’s scope of work grew from supporting the creation of trails to developing seamless, integrated networks of trails that would connect expansive regions of the country across hundreds of miles. Laughlin is leaving RTC in a strong position to fulfill this ambitious and important work.

Following the announcement, we embarked on a comprehensive nationwide search for RTC’s next president. In February 2019, we welcomed Ryan Chao, formerly the vice president of the Center for Civic Sites and Community Change at the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Chao brings a wealth of knowledge in community development and social equity to his new role as the third president of RTC.
STAFF

Reflects staff members at the end of fiscal year 2018. View a current list at railstotrails.org/staff.

President's Office
Keith Laughlin, President
Katie Guerin, Head of Strategic Initiatives
Ryan Chao, President (As of February 2019)

Communications
Brandi Horton, Vice President of Communications
Amy Kapp, Content Strategy Manager and Editor-in-Chief, Rails to Trails
Joe LaCroix, Graphic Design Specialist
Anthony Le, Web and Multimedia Manager
Suzanne Matyas, Marketing and Social Media Manager

Development
Milo Bateman, Manager of Membership Operations
Jorge Brito, Trailblazer Society Manager
Ben Carter, Senior Director of Development
Ryan Cree, Manager of Online Campaigns
Donald Minor, Customer Service Coordinator
Jimmy O'Connor, Major Gifts Officer
Mary O'Connor, Vice President of Development and Partnerships
Deborah Zwick, Development Coordinator

Finance and Administration
Leslie Bethke, Controller
Elton Clark, Human Resources Manager
Cindy Dickerson, Chief Operating Officer
Irma Joseph, Senior Staff Accountant
Frederick Schaedtler, Senior Director of TrailLink.com
Laura Stark, Staff Writer and TrailLink.com Content Manager
Derek Strout, GIS Specialist

Policy
Andrew Dupuy, Manager of Policy Outreach
Marianne Wesley Fowler, Senior Strategist for Policy Advocacy
Kevin Mills, Senior Vice President of Policy
Leann Sinpatanasakul, Advocacy Manager
Patrick Wojahn, Director of Government Relations

Trail Development
Kevin Belanger, Trail Planner
Torsha Bhattacharya, Director of Research
Shane Farthing, Senior Director of Active Transportation Programs
Leah Gerber, Trail Planner Coordinator
Eli Griffen, Manager of Trail Development Resources
Yvonne Mwangi, Trail Development and TrailLink Coordinator
Kelly Pack, Director of Trail Development
Philip Shutler, GIS Analyst
Liz Thorstensen, Vice President of Trail Development

Baltimore Office
Jim Brown, Trail Development Manager
Avery Harmon, Community Outreach Coordinator

Florida Office
Ken Bryan, Senior Strategist for External Relations

Midwest Regional Office
Brian Housh, Policy Manager
Eric Oberg, Director of Trail Development

Milwaukee Office
Willie Karidis, Project Manager

Northeast Regional Office
Anya Saretzky, Project Manager
Elizabeth Sewell, Trail Development Manager
Tom Sexton, Regional Director

Western Regional Office
Laura Cohen, Regional Director
Ben Kaufman, Trail Development Manager
Learn more about our movement to create a nationwide network of trails that deliver incredible benefits to people and places.

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy
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2121 Ward Court, NW, 5th Floor
Washington, DC 20037
202.331.9696
info@railstotrails.org

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Impact Hub Baltimore
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Baltimore, MD 21202
410.207.2445

Florida Field Office
P.O. Box 15227
Tallahassee, FL 32317
850.942.2379

Midwest Regional Office
716 Xenia Ave., Suite 2
Yellow Springs, OH 45387
614.837.6782

Milwaukee Field Office
423 East Dover St.
Milwaukee, WI 53207
414.688.4367

Northeast Regional Office
230 South Broad St., 17th Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19102
267.332.4267

Texas Field Office
780 Ringgold Road
UT Health Building S1.400
Community Outreach Room S1.408
Brownsville, TX 78520
956.338.1800

Western Regional Office
1736 Franklin St., Suite 550
Oakland, CA 94612
510.992.4662

Find us on social media:  

Visit us online:

rails-to-trails.org
TrailLink.com
TrailNation.org
greatamericanrailtrail.org