For Immediate Release
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‘Great American Ride’ virtual cross-country cycling event kicks off on March 20

2nd annual event challenges cyclists to ride 3,700-mile route across America

Richmond, VA – In the second edition of the ‘Great American Ride’ hosted by Sports Backers in partnership with Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, participants in teams of four, eight, or 12 will attempt a virtual ride across America. The virtual route tracks along the developing 3,700-mile Great American Rail-Trail™, a signature project of Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, the nation’s largest trails advocacy organization. The Great American Rail-Trail™ is over 53% complete and connects more than 145 trails between Washington, D.C., and Washington State.

The ride kicks off on March 20, and teams will have two months to complete the east-to-west course. Registration is now open at www.GreatAmericanRide.org.

During the event, teams will ride and track their mileage each day and report how far they have gone. An online map will track each group’s virtual progress across the course and a live leaderboard will display the standings in real time, with groups in male, female, and co-ed categories. Teams will depart from Washington, D.C., on March 20, and the first group to virtually ‘reach’ the section of trail in La Push, Washington, on the Pacific coast of Washington State, will be declared the winner. All participants will receive a pair of exclusive cycling socks, unique finisher medal, pre-mapped route across the country, virtual finisher’s badge, and virtual travel experience with destination highlights featured along the route.

“The Great American Ride helps make the dream of riding across the country a little more real for participants, while combining the camaraderie of team cycling with the fun of a long-distance solo ride,” said Molly Johnson, Event Director of the Great American Ride. “At Sports Backers, we are always looking for ways to inspire active living and encourage people to be active on a daily basis and the Great American Ride is a unique way to accomplish those goals.”

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, the official charity partner for the Great American Ride, has long championed the vision of the Great American Rail-Trail™.

The Great American Rail-Trail™ aims to become an iconic piece of American infrastructure by connecting the country by trail over 3,700-plus miles in 12 states between Washington, D.C., and Washington State. In 2020, the trail crossed the 2,000-mile mark, achieving an important milestone on its way to completion. Participants can support Rails-to-Trails Conservancy’s vision for the Great American Rail-Trail™ by donating during event registration or fundraising during their ride.

(more)
“We are thrilled to join forces with Sports Backers again for the Great American Ride. As people continue to seek ways—and the motivation—to be active outdoors, the Great American Ride offers the inspiration and the encouragement many of us need to get outside and create bicycling adventures close to home,” said Brandi Horton, vice president of communications for Rails-to-Trails Conservancy. “This is a great opportunity for people all over the world to be active and get to know America’s first cross-country trail, which will make it possible to bike from coast to coast completely separated from vehicle traffic.”

“After my experiences as a participant in 2020, I know there’s nothing like the Great American Ride, and I can’t wait to put in the miles across the U.S. again with my teammates,” said Gordon Wadsworth, a professional cyclist who took part in the first year of the event and is planning to ride again this year. “It was great to share in such a big effort with my team and all the other riders and I’m really looking forward to the challenge again in 2021.”

In addition to sharing the ride experience with teammates, Great American Ride participants can also take advantage of the referral rewards program to recruit others to join. Participants who refer five other riders will receive an exclusive Great American Ride Specialized water bottle, and participants who refer 10 other riders will receive the water bottle and a pair of Goodr Sunglasses. To refer others, a rider can share their unique referral link (found in the registration confirmation email) through email, social media, or text message.


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**About Rails-to-Trails Conservancy**
Rails-to-Trails Conservancy 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. Connect with RTC at [railstotrails.org](http://railstotrails.org) and @railstotrails on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

**About the Great American Rail-Trail™**
The Great American Rail-Trail is a signature project of RTC and the most ambitious in its portfolio of TrailNation™ projects—the organization’s initiative to encourage the rapid replication of regional rail networks across the country. To learn more about the Great American Rail-Trail and RTC and to view the preferred route, visit [greatamericanrailtrail.org](http://greatamericanrailtrail.org) and follow @greatamericanrailtrail on Facebook and Instagram.

**About Sports Backers**
With a key message of Let’s Go, RVA, the mission of Sports Backers is to inspire people from all corners of the Richmond community to live actively. A non-profit organization, Sports Backers is dedicated to producing nationally recognized quality sporting events and programs that motivate residents and visitors alike to be more active, supporting youth running and fitness programs, and advocating for safe and connected networks of bike and pedestrian infrastructure. Learn more at [sportsbackers.org](http://sportsbackers.org).