



PRESS RELEASE

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'Great American Ride' virtual event challenges cyclists to ride 3,700-mile route across America

Route aligns with the iconic Great American Rail-Trail™ between Washington State and Washington, D.C.

Richmond, VA – In the new 'Great American Ride' from Sports Backers, participants in teams of four, eight, or 12 will attempt a virtual ride across America, including already completed segments of the developing 3,700-mile Great American Rail-Trail™, a signature project from Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC), the nation's largest trail's advocacy organization. The Great American Rail-Trail connects over 145 trails between Washington State and Washington, D.C. The ride kicks off on July 11, and teams will have two months to complete the 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. The first group to virtually 'reach' Washington, D.C., will be declared the winner. All participants will receive a pair of exclusive cycling socks, unique finisher medal, virtual finisher's badge, and virtual travel experience with destination highlights featured along the route as well as Great American Rail-Trail swag.

"Our mission at Sports Backers is to inspire active living and encourage people to get active on a daily basis, and the Great American Ride is another way for participants to team up and take on a big challenge right now," said Molly Johnson, Event Director of the Great American Ride for Sports Backers. "Our hope is that the ride will combine the camaraderie of team cycling with the fun of a long-distance solo ride, and help make the dream of riding across the country seem a little more real for participants."

The Great American Rail-Trail (greatamericanrailtrail.org) is a vision of the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC), the official charity partner for the Great American Ride. The Great American Rail-Trail aims to become an iconic piece of American infrastructure by connecting more than 145 existing trails and 90 trail gaps over 3,700-plus miles in 12 states between Washington, D.C., and Washington State. The trail is over 50 percent complete and when finished it will serve tens of millions of people living along the route as well as those who visit the trail from around the country and the world. Participants can support RTC's vision for the Great American Rail-Trail by donating during event registration or fundraising during their ride.

"We are very excited to partner with Sports Backers for the Great American Ride, and we encourage participants to envision the possibilities for pedaling across the country—and the unmatched experience of doing that on a seamless and scenic pathway like what the Great American will deliver," said Brandi Horton, vice president of communications for Rails-to-Trails Conservancy.

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“As so many of us across the country have flocked to the outdoors to find space for physical activity and respite during COVID-19, trails have proven their value. Trail use nationwide is up over 200% compared to 2019, which shows how important it is to continue to develop space where we can safely walk and bike separated from vehicle traffic—whether that’s a cross-country route like the Great American Rail-Trail or an effort to repurpose streets in your neighborhood to deliver access to trails immediately. Participants in this ride show that momentum for the Great American Rail-Trail continues to grow as we realize the importance of trails even more during these challenging times.”

“Riding across America was a huge challenge and life-changing experience for me, and I’m excited to help bring a similar opportunity to our participants,” said Brantley Tyndall, Director of Community Outreach for Sports Backers’ Bike Walk RVA program and a finisher in the 2019 TransAmerica Bike Race from Astoria, Oregon, to Yorktown, Virginia. “The team element in the Great American Ride will add to the excitement and allow participants to work together to set goals and achieve something big this summer.”

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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 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 trail networks across the country. To learn more about the Great American Rail-Trail and RTC and to view the preferred route, visit 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.