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Public Officials, Advocates and National Experts Join Rails-to-Trails Conservancy at First TrailNation™ Summit

The greatest minds in trail networks and active transportation will gather at the TrailNation Summit in June to harness power of trail networks movement nationwide.

MILWAUKEE—Today, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC) announced details for the 2018 TrailNation Summit—a first-of-its-kind gathering that will convene the best thinkers, leaders and doers focused on making a more connected, walkable and bikeable America a reality.

The summit—June 5–7 in Milwaukee—will dig deep into strategies for planning trail and active transportation networks that spur mode shift, create more equitable places, support local economic development, protect the environment and create a culture of healthy living.

“The trails movement has been more successful than anyone ever could have imagined—with thousands of trails and tens of thousands of miles of trails crisscrossing the country. These trails are the foundation of separated, accessible and connected trail systems that span the country and create an unprecedented opportunity to build seamless active transportation networks in every community in America,” said Keith Laughlin, president of RTC.

“But we’ll only be successful if that movement grows to include everyone who has a stake in redefining mobility: public officials; trail and active transportation advocates; and philanthropic, public health and economic development professionals to name a few. The TrailNation Summit will bring these voices together to develop strategies for the rapid growth of trail networks nationwide,” said Laughlin.

The invitation-only event will gather the nation’s public and philanthropic leaders, as well as active transportation, health and economic development advocates and experts in a comprehensive exploration of the transformative power of trail networks to address challenges that every community in America is facing: chronic disease, resiliency, mobility, social equity and economic growth.

The event will feature the knowledge and expertise of RTC’s TrailNation Projects—which includes trail network initiatives in Baltimore, the industrial heartland, the Lower Rio Grande Valley, Miami, Philadelphia, the San Francisco Bay Area, southeast Wisconsin and Washington, D.C. These projects are being implemented with hundreds of local partners to prove the potential of trails in delivering significant outcomes on a local and national level.

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The event will also mark the first convening of the TrailNation Collaborative—representatives from 12 other trail network initiatives from across the country who will serve to educate and engage a broad coalition of stakeholders committed to the rapid replication of these vital assets nationwide. These communities include Billings, Montana; Colorado Springs, Colorado; Houston; Lincoln and Omaha, Nebraska; Memphis, Tennessee; New Orleans; Portland, Oregon; Rochester, Minnesota; Sacramento, California; Salt Lake City; San Jose, California; Seattle; and St. Louis.

“Since 2012, the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy team has been hard at work with our partners to build model trail network projects that are diverse in scale, scope and geography. These projects are the core of our TrailNation program and are designed to test our theories about trail networks: what it takes to build them and what they can deliver to people and places,” said Liz Thorstensen, vice president of trail development at RTC.

“At the TrailNation Summit, we’ll bring the teams working on the ground in these locations together with others building trail networks across the country to ensure that best practices are being shared, challenges understood and relationships built that will bring our collective vision to life as quickly as possible,” said Thorstensen.

During the TrailNation Summit, RTC will showcase the inspiring work that’s underway in Milwaukee—the urban hub of the Route of the Badger TrailNation Project—exploring the ways in which Milwaukee can serve as a national model for leveraging trails as important tools to advance strategies for equitable access to transportation and recreation.

Learn more about RTC’s TrailNation program and the TrailNation Summit at railstotrails.org/trailnation.

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](#).