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CONTACT:

Jake Lynch
Media Relations
Rails-to-Trails Conservancy
202.974.5107
jake@railstotrails.org



RESULTS IN ON NATIONAL BIKE/PED INFRASTRUCURE PILOT

With Increases in Ridership, Accidents Decrease; 85 Million Miles Car Travel Avoided

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The results of the first ever experiment into the impact of pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure on American communities have revealed that people will shift from driving to walking or biking if local infrastructure enables it.

The latest findings of the groundbreaking Nonmotorized Transportation Pilot Program (NTPP), which measures the effect of new multi-use paths, bike lanes, pedestrian routes and trails in four test communities, show that an estimated 85.1 million vehicle miles of travel were avoided between 2009 and 2013, relative to the 2007 baseline.

The walking mode share across the four test communities increased 15.8 percent from 2007 to 2013, while the bicycling mode share increased 44 percent over the same period. This resulted in a 22.8 percent and 48.3 percent increase in the number of pedestrian and bicycle trips in these locations.

Established and funded by federal transportation legislation SAFETEA-LU (Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users) in 2005, NTPP set aside \$100 million for biking and walking infrastructure in four communities of varying size across the country – Columbia, Mo., Marin County, Calif., Minneapolis, Minn., and Sheboygan County, Wis.

Of particular interest to transportation officials will be the remarkable findings related to safety and accident rates. Despite large increases in biking and walking, the pilot

communities collectively observed a 20 percent decline in the number of pedestrian fatalities and a 28.6 percent decline in the number of bicycle fatalities from 2002 to 2012. Pedestrian injury rates (incidents per number of trips) declined between 17.9 percent and 55.1 percent in each of the four communities. Bicycling injury rates declined between 8.6 and 38.2 percent in each of the four communities.

“What this pilot has proven is that providing a dedicated pathway for walking and biking greatly reduces accidents, and that conflicts between the various modes of travel are unnecessary if you build correctly,” says Marianne Fowler, RTC’s senior vice president of federal relations, and an architect of NTPP. “But what we have also seen is that by drawing attention to biking and walking, and doing basic education for road users, you boost the level of awareness among drivers, riders and walkers. Good infrastructure and signage, along with public outreach and education, replaces conflict with a more harmonious transportation system where each mode has its own place.”

The documented improvements in safety is a finding that is sure to interest U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx, who has indicated that making biking and walking a safer transportation option will be a focus of his administration.

“These four pilot communities are vastly different places – from the metropolitan environment of Minneapolis, which already has a strong biking culture, to the more rural landscape of Sheboygan County,” Fowler says. “To see the positive results of this experiment repeated in each of these places proves once and for all that all American communities can benefit from dedicated investments in active transportation.”

“In transportation infrastructure terms, \$25 million over four years is a relatively small amount of money,” Fowler says. “The transformative impact of this dedicated investment is now firmly documented. Congress must be compelled to recognize that continued investment in walking in biking represents terrific value for American taxpayers.”

The NTPP also improved access and mobility, an indicator of a community’s economic strength. The pilot program extended bicycle networks to within a quarter of a mile of approximately 240,000 people, 106,000 housing units, and 102,000 jobs. More than 70 percent of all NTPP infrastructure projects connect to employment centers, schools, parks, and recreation areas.

“With a growing number of Americans choosing not to drive a car for their primary mode of transportation, communities that give people another way to get around are the ones that are thriving,” Fowler says. “Active transportation investments quickly repay their cost in increased property values, business and employment activity, and visitor spending. This is without even touching on the costs of traffic mitigation and congestion. 85.1 million vehicle miles averted is a lot of people not sitting in traffic, but instead improving their health, improving the capacity of their local transportation system, and getting where they need to go quickly and safely.”

Based on the added bicycling trips observed in 2013 alone, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates a reduced economic cost of mortality of \$46.3 million.

The full report is available at www.smartmobility.us

Local contacts:

Sheboygan County: Aaron Brault, aaron.brault@sheboygancounty.com. 920.459.3060

Transit for Livable Communities, Minn.: Hilary Reeves, hilaryr@tlcminnesota.org. 651.789.1415

County of Marin: Craig Tackabery, CTackabery@marincounty.org. 415.473.6582

Columbia City Council: Ian Thomas, ward4@gocolumbiamo.com. 573.239.7916

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, a nonprofit organization with more than 100,000 members, is the nation's largest trails organization dedicated to connecting people and communities by creating a nationwide network of public trails, many from former rail lines and connecting corridors. Founded in 1986, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy's national office is located in Washington, D.C., with regional offices in California, Florida, Ohio and Pennsylvania. For more information visit www.railstotrails.org.