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## **Route of the Badger Coalition Highlights Trail Network Progress in Racine County—Including Future Tourism and Active Transportation Benefits to Southeast Wisconsin**

*The \$1.5 million public land acquisition of a 10.7-mile former railroad corridor marks a major advancement for the 700-mile Route of the Badger trail network, which will connect seven counties in Southeast Wisconsin by trail*

**UNION GROVE, Wis.**— Today, the Route of the Badger coalition joins state and regional representatives to celebrate progress in its vision to create a 700-mile trail network across Southeast Wisconsin, with a focus on the newly acquired White River State Trail extension. The 10.7-mile former railroad corridor was acquired by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources in a long-pursued deal that was made possible with the Wisconsin State Assembly, Racine County and the community.

“The Route of the Badger will connect seven counties, which will no doubt attract tourists and bring economic development to southeast Wisconsin,” said Wisconsin State Assembly Speaker Robin Vos, who was instrumental in the purchase of the state trail extension. “I am happy to have helped secure \$1 million from the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program in the 2019–2021 budget. This land acquisition is an exciting next step forward in the development of a regional trail network.”

The funding for the \$1.5 million land purchase was secured through efforts led by Racine County Executive Jonathan Delagrave and Speaker Vos to acquire the section of the Canadian Pacific Railway between Kansasville and Sturtevant.

When developed, this critical trail segment will help create an additional 56 miles of uninterrupted trail within the Route of the Badger trail network—connecting the Racine County towns of Sturtevant, Mount Pleasant, Yorkville, Union Grove and Dover to surrounding counties and to new economic and tourism opportunities. The purchase will benefit Racine County, where the land acquisition took place, as well as the other six counties that are part of the developing Route of the Badger trail network—Milwaukee, Kenosha, Ozaukee, Walworth, Washington and Waukesha. The Route of the Badger is part of Rails-to-Trails Conservancy’s (RTC’s) TrailNation™ portfolio of trail network projects designed to demonstrate what is possible when trails are connected within and between communities.

“The Route of the Badger is an opportunity to create connected trail infrastructure for the benefit of our current and future generations,” said Willie Karidis, Route of the Badger project manager at RTC.

“Access to the outdoors is critical for everyone living in Wisconsin. What makes this trail network so

important is that it will provide seamless walking and biking routes for recreation, transportation and connect communities across seven counties in Southeast Wisconsin.”

A recent RTC study found that the net economic impact of trails and active transportation annually in Wisconsin is as much as \$1.5 billion, including direct trail user spending of \$686 million and health costs avoided of \$833 million—economic benefits that increase exponentially as the connectivity between trails, people and places improves.

“We are very excited that the White River State Trail extension is finally coming to fruition, involving many years of dedicated work to get to this point,” said Larissa Gallagher, president of Union Grove Rails to Trails. “The trail extension will positively impact Racine County and its communities by stimulating tourism, local economies, the quality of life for residents and visitors and improved environmental impacts such as transportation alternatives and additional green space for both people and wildlife.”

A recording of the Route of the Badger coalition meeting is available to press upon request. To learn more about the Route of the Badger, visit [RTC’s website](#). For history on the land acquisition of the White River State Trail, visit [RTC’s TrailBlog](#).

*Rails-to-Trails Conservancy is the nation’s largest trails organization—with a grassroots community more than 1 million strong—dedicated to building a nation connected by trails, reimagining public spaces to create safe ways for everyone to walk, bike and be active outdoors. Connect with RTC at [railstotrails.org](http://railstotrails.org) and @railstotrails on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).*