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RAILS-TO-TRAILS CONSERVANCY SPOTLIGHTS TRANSFORMATIVE IMPACT OF REGIONAL TRAIL NETWORK, ALONG WITH NEED FOR SUSTAINED FUNDING, AT QUAD CITIES EVENT

As decisions for funding trails and active transportation are debated in Iowa, Illinois and Congress, the Riverfront and Great River Trails represent the power of connected trail systems to deliver transformative benefits to people and places

QUAD CITIES—Today, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC) gathered the region’s trails community, tourism and economic development leaders and elected officials to celebrate the Quad Cities regional trail network, highlighting the benefits and future potential of the area’s cross-state trail system.

At the event, RTC and partners the [Quad Cities Bicycle Club](#), [Visit Quad Cities](#), [Ride Illinois](#), the [Bi-State Regional Commission](#) and the [Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation](#) (INHF) showcased how the Riverfront Trail and the Great River Trail—segments of the Great American Rail-Trail, which stretches more than 3,700 miles between Washington, D.C., and Washington State—are delivering transformative benefits to the region. The group also focused attention on important state and federal strategies for filling critical trail gaps that are essential to a balanced transportation system.

“Now is an important time for trails, active transportation and the outdoor economy,” said Patrick Wojahn, director of government relations for RTC. “The nation stands ready to complete vital trail connections. There are more than 35,000 miles of trails nationwide and the vision of the Great American Rail-Trail is inspiring new energy in trail development.”

“As Congress debates the next iteration of the federal transportation bill before funding expires in 2020, it’s critical that they prioritize investment in trails and encourage connectivity and active transportation, all while supporting the burgeoning outdoor recreation economy—the country’s fastest growing economic sector,” said Wojahn.

In Iowa, the Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund is a permanent and protected funding source that was created in 2010 and has the potential to direct resources to myriad initiatives that improve water quality, protect soil, enhance wildlife habitat and increase outdoor recreation statewide—including trails. After the majority of Iowans voted to pass the constitutional amendment creating the fund, it remains empty pending a decision by the state legislature and governor to approve a sales tax increase that would provide the needed revenue.

“INHF is a proud leader of efforts to complete and connect trails in Iowa—we believe that trails are essential to people and places because they provide new connections to nature, places to be outside and physically active, and opportunities to generate new economic strategies for all types of communities,” said Anna Gray, public policy director for INHF. “The Outdoor Recreation Trust Fund is a

vital tool that—when funded—will provide dedicated, protected resources that can be used to close critical trail gaps and hasten the completion of projects that will be powerful for Iowa, like the Great American Rail-Trail.”

In the Quad Cities, communities and local partners are working together with RTC to build networks of trails that safely connect people by bike or on foot to places within their communities, while also completing trail “spines” that build connections across counties, regions and states. Both the Riverfront Trail and the Great River Trail are key segments of the Great American Rail-Trail, which will transform the nation, bringing tourism, economic and transportation benefits to the communities it connects.

“The vision of the Great American Rail-Trail, and what it will deliver to the Quad Cities regional destination is powerful, meaningful and will drive our future tourism experience,” said Dave Herrell, president and CEO of Visit Quad Cities.

“Walking, running, cycling and being connected to our QC Outdoors are important values of the Quad Cities—and the trail system is an economic development engine and brand builder for the region. We need to continue the positive momentum in support of the trails and we’re making progress with critical and transformative projects like the I-74 pedestrian bridge. But we need to keep up the pace, identify the funding mechanisms, compete, share our story and invest strategically to close the gaps that will improve and enhance connectivity, trail use and, ultimately, bolster the economic vitality and prosperity of our region.”

The celebration included two sister events—one in Davenport, Iowa, at LeClaire Park Bandshell and the other in Moline, Illinois at Bass Street Landing. Between the two events, dozens of bicyclists joined RTC and the Quad Cities Bicycle Club for a ride on the Riverfront Trail, the Arsenal Bridge and the Great River Trail. Mayors Bob Gallagher of Bettendorf, Frank Klipsch of Davenport and Mike Thoms of Rock Island City, and Richard Brunk, Chair of the Rock Island County Board joined RTC and its partners in celebrating the trail system.

Through its Trails Transform America campaign, RTC is advocating that Congress pursue a visionary and transformative transportation bill that provides an increase in funding dedicated for active transportation, focused on completing trail and active transportation networks. In addition, RTC is calling on Congress to build upon thoughtful approaches to increase funding for the Transportation Alternatives Program included in the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee’s America’s Transportation Infrastructure Act of 2019 with a focus on improving program implementation, providing the policy direction necessary to ensure that all states invest in safe places to walk and bike.

Learn more about RTC’s efforts to inspire a visionary transportation reauthorization bill at railstotrails.org/trailstransform, and follow the commentary on social media using the hashtag #TrailsTransformUS.

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](#).