

America's Trail Networks are Essential

Across the country, trail networks are delivering transformative benefits in hundreds of communities. That's because as the nation's 40,000+ miles of trails are connected, their impact grows exponentially. With increased connectivity, the use of trail systems increases by as much as 80%ⁱ and the economic, health, climate and transportation benefits they deliver are maximized.ⁱⁱ

The Status of America's Trail Networks:ⁱⁱⁱ

150 trail networks are documented nationwide, including networks in every state, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. At least **half of people in the U.S.** (49.75%) live in a county that is home to a developing trail network. Of the counties where trail networks are being developed, **74% are majority suburban/urban and 26% are majority rural populations.**

What is a trail network?

Trail networks are critical components of an active transportation system, prioritizing infrastructure that is separated from vehicle traffic to create safe, convenient connections, delivering an experience and purpose that is different than that of each independent trail segment.

Growing Demand for Connecting America's Trail Networks

Across the country, federal funding to support the development of trails, walking and biking infrastructure is at an all-time high.^{iv} That funding, paired with the demand from people and places for more safe, convenient ways to walk, bike and be active outside, has created a perfect storm for advancing the connectivity of the country's trails and active transportation infrastructure.

A recent national opinion poll demonstrates strong public support for trails and trail networks.^v

People say that connectivity and active transportation infrastructure would help them walk and bike more where they live. Top five factors include:

(Q22.) Which of the following would make it more likely for you to choose to walk or bike to get around in your neighborhood? Select all that apply.

- 1 More destinations within a 10-to-20-minute walking distance (37%)**
- 2 More friends or family to walk or bike with (34%)**
- 3 Trails and greenways separated and protected from traffic (30%)**
- 4 More sidewalks (30%)**
- 5 Protected bike lanes (29%)**



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Nearly one third of people (29%) say that trail networks would make it easier to walk and bike where they need to go instead of drive.

(Q36.) Trail networks are a group of interconnected trails that connect people, places and communities. Here are some benefits that trail networks may bring to communities. Which THREE are most important to you? Please select up to 3 from the list below.

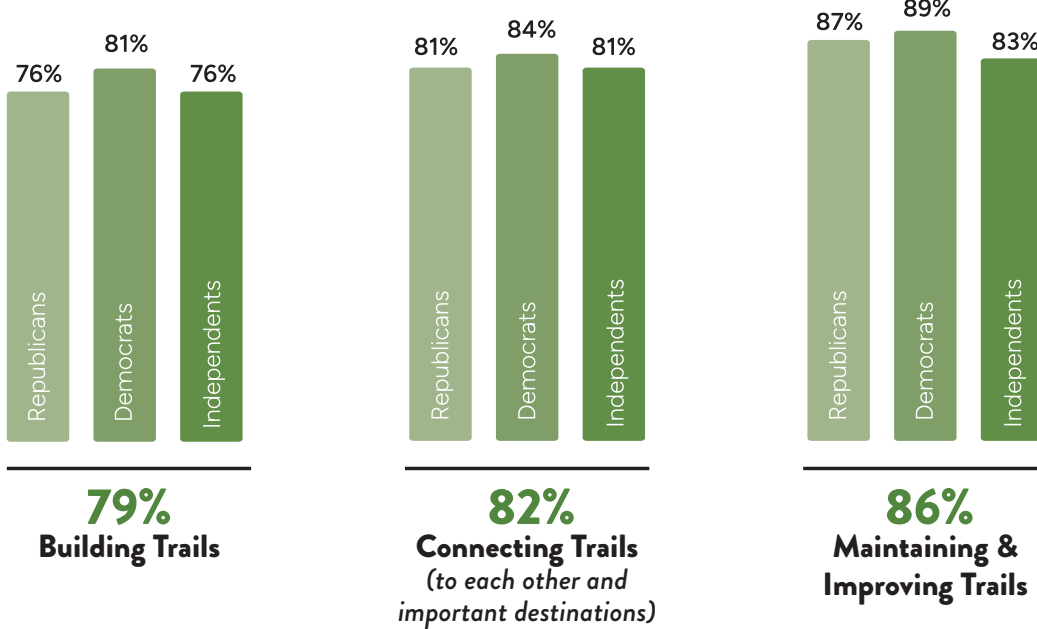
People agree that tax dollars should be spent on trails.

(Q34.) How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

Tax dollars should be spent on building trails. [n=581]

Tax dollars should be spent on building trails that are connected to each other and the places I want to go. [n=619]

Tax dollars should be spent on maintaining and improving trails. [n=1200]



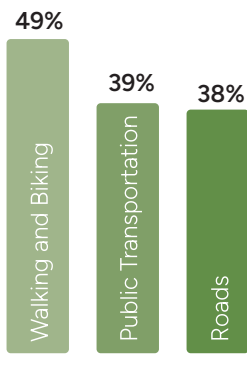
Many people think that the government spends too little money on walking and biking infrastructure.

(Q24.) Do you feel the government currently spends too much money or too little money on each of the following...?

Walking and biking infrastructure like sidewalks, protected bike lanes and trails

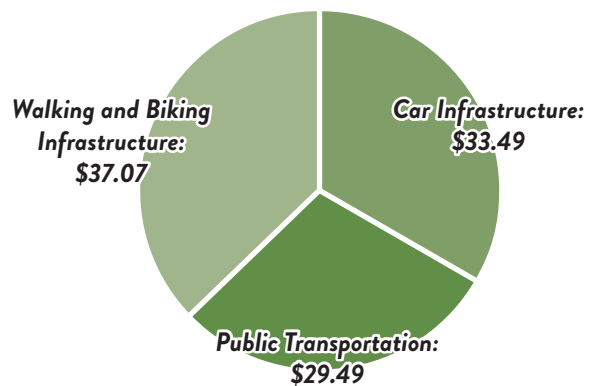
Public transportation like buses and trains

Roads and other infrastructure related to driving



People want more public funding invested in walking and biking infrastructure.

(Q23.) If you were the government and you had \$100 to support transportation, how would you distribute it among each of the following: Car infrastructure like highways and bridges; Public transportation like buses and trains; Walking and biking infrastructure like sidewalks, protected bike lanes, and trails



- i A 2018-2019 study conducted by RTC in partnership with Strava to understand the impact of connectivity to induce demand found that in the places where trail connections were made, trail use increased by between 40% and 80%.
- ii Active Transportation Transforms America, www.railstotrails.org/atta.
- iii All population numbers based on 2020 U.S. Census.
- iv Rails to Trails Conservancy, New Federal Funding for Trails: railstotrails.org/funding
- v RTC's national opinion poll was conducted online by the firm Stratalys Research between September 14-23, 2022, with a sample size of 1,200 adults over age 18, including an oversample of 200 Black and 200 Latino respondents.