

CIRCUIT TRAILS

PENNSYLVANIA AND NEW JERSEY

Strengthening the Region With Healthy Transportation, Recreation and Green Space for All

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Circuit Trails is a developing 800-mile regional trail network in Pennsylvania and New Jersey that seeks to connect residents of all ages in the Greater Philadelphia–Camden area to businesses, employment centers and cultural destinations. When complete, which is expected to be in 2040, more than 50 percent of the region’s population—more than 3.1 million people—will live within 1 mile of the Circuit Trails network.

The impact of the Circuit Trails is already being felt across the project footprint; for example, a 2009 study of the Schuylkill River Trail—a major spine for the trail network—found that the trail had a direct economic impact of \$7.3 million.¹ Additionally, an economic impact study implemented by the New Jersey Department of Transportation found that active-transportation-related infrastructure, businesses and events contributed nearly \$500 million to the state economy in 2011.

Of note is the Circuit Trails’ impact on transportation equity for youth and adults living in underserved neighborhoods in both Philadelphia and Camden. Through Rails-to-Trails Conservancy’s (RTC’s) Watershed Education by Bike program, youth were empowered to travel by bike—some for the first time in their lives—to various points in Philadelphia. Likewise, a disused rail line in a disadvantaged area of Pennsauken, New Jersey, between the Catto School and the “Merchantville Mile” rail-trail, is poised to provide a safe off-road connection to the Ben Franklin Bridge (and into Philadelphia), opening up new walking and biking opportunities for thousands of nearby residents. The endless additional connections created across the trail network will result in economic, social, health and environmental benefits for every community in the project footprint.

Today, the Circuit Trails network stretches 334 miles across nine counties, and more than 70 miles are currently in development. As the trail network is built out, it will continue to increase in value as a recreational and transportation asset.



Schuylkill Banks Boardwalk, Philadelphia | Photo courtesy Montgomery County Planning Commission

CAMPAIGN OVERVIEW

LEAD AUTHORITY:	The Circuit Trails Coalition
TOTAL PROJECT COST:	\$182,378,211
FUNDING PLEDGED TO DATE:	\$137,428,211
FEDERAL:	\$70,307,797
MIXED FED/STATE:	\$9,472,435
STATE:	\$23,000,062
LOCAL:	\$18,602,262
PRIVATE:	\$16,045,655
SHOVEL-READY:	Immediately, depending on segment
TYPE:	Suburban, urban

TRANSFORMATIVE IMPACT

JOB CREATION

An estimated 764 jobs directly³

ECONOMIC IMPACT

A study by the New Jersey Department of Transportation found that active transportation contributed nearly \$500 million to the state’s economy in 2011.² Another 2011 study of Southeast Pennsylvania found that open spaces attracted visitors, helped create/sustain 7,000 jobs and resulted in \$566 million in expenditures.⁴

HEALTH IMPACT

A 2011 study showed that recreation on open space in Southeast Pennsylvania helped avoid \$800 million in health-care costs annually.⁴

ENVIRONMENT

The Circuit Trails network served as the springboard for youth education programs to visit local watersheds and become stewards of the environment with other fellow youth and public leaders.⁵



SOURCES

- ¹Schuylkill River Trail 2009 User Survey and Economic Impact Analysis, available at: <https://www.railstotrails.org/resource-library/resources/schuylkill-river-trail-2009-user-survey-and-economic-impact-analysis/>
- ²Economic Impacts of Active Transportation in New Jersey, 2011, available at: <http://njbikaped.org/portfolio/economic/>
- ³Estimated at 17 jobs per \$1 million spent, according to a study commissioned by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) on American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) job creation; jobs in terms of full-time equivalents
- ⁴Return on Environment, available at: <http://www.circuittrails.org/sites/default/files/ValueOfOpenSpace.pdf>
- ⁵Youth Engagement, available at: <https://www.railstotrails.org/our-work/building-communities/youth-engagement/>