

Nov. 20, 2025

# **Innovative State Legislative Approaches: Addressing a Challenging Environment**

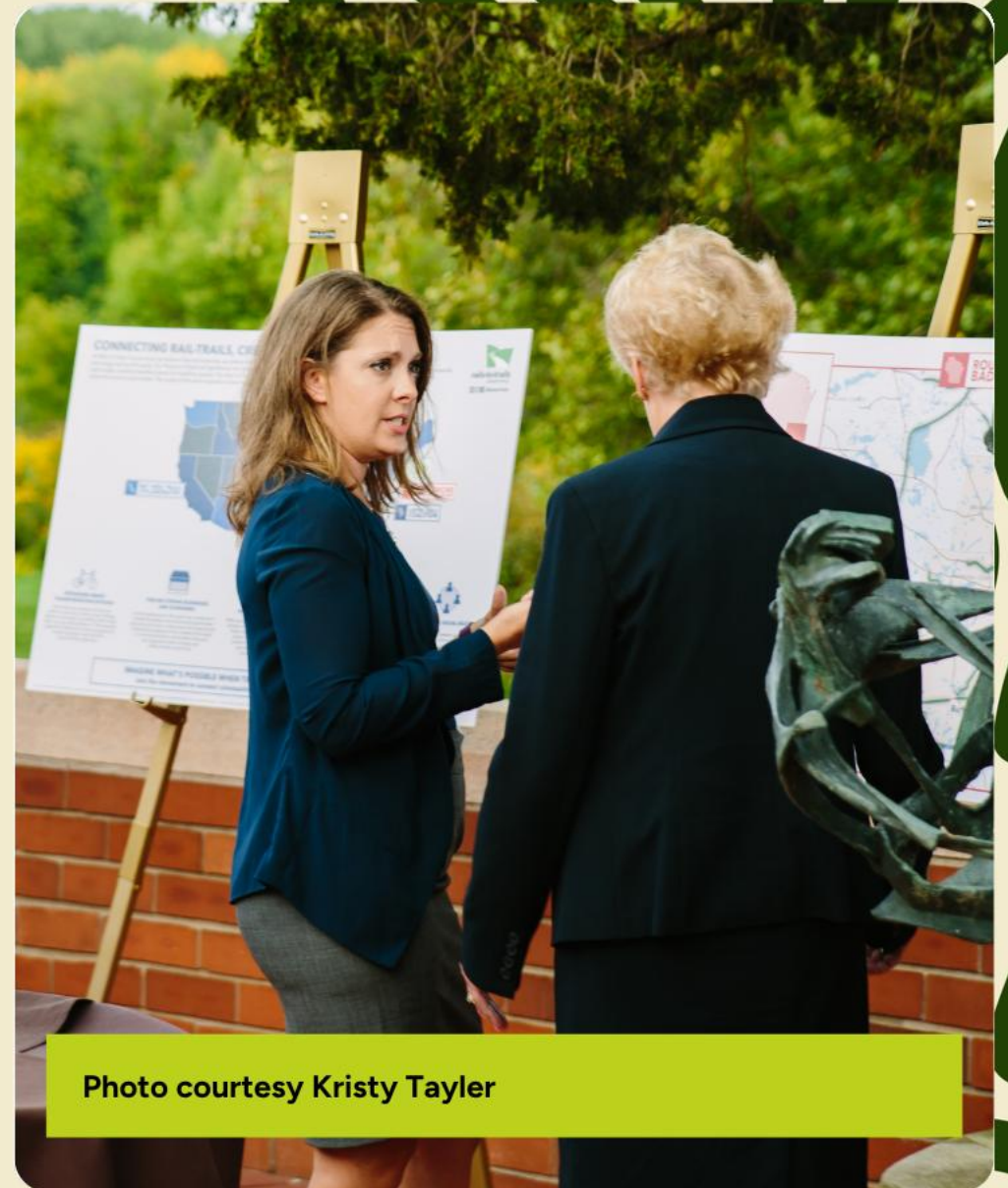


Photo courtesy Kristy Tayler

# Before we begin:

- Drop your questions in the Q&A box.
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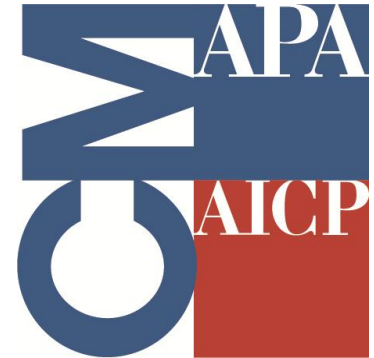
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**Innovative State Legislative Approaches: Addressing a Challenging  
Environment**

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# Meet Our Panelists



Iman Sylvain,  
Western Regional Director  
Rails to Trails Conservancy



Andrew N. Dupuy, Director  
of State-Level Policy  
Rails to Trails Conservancy



Luke Hoffman,  
Executive Director,  
Iowa Bicycle Coalition



Lily Bostrom, Senior  
Environmental Planner,  
Ascent



# Trails Connect Everyone, Everywhere



At Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, we are building a nation connected by trails. We reimagine public spaces to create safe ways for everyone to walk, bike and be active outdoors.



*Washington D.C.'s Metropolitan Branch Trail*

# Billions for Trails and Active Transportation



RTC has worked to secure **\$10 billion** in state funding over the past 5 years, supported by Democrats and Republicans



Bipartisan support, funding in GOP-led states (FL, IN, NE, OH, UT), Dem-led states (CA, NY), & divided government states (NC, VA)



Significant increases in state-administered, federal Transportation Alternatives funding

**Winning political issue: *voters like trails!***

# Funding Sources and Policies

- Stand-alone bill (*see Active Transportation Policy Hub for real bill text examples: [rtc.li/policyhub](https://rtc.li/policyhub)*)
- Earmark bill (where allowed) or budget rider
- Governor's budget or other executive goals (e.g., State of the State)
- In-house agency action or funding agency staffing positions; state trails office; trail plan
- Ballot/bond measure
- Via transportation sources: gas tax (where permitted), state active transportation funds, state climate plans
- Via natural resources sources: trail-specific, parks, outdoor recreation, climate, land and water conservation, tourism
- Statewide trail plan (inter-agency)

# Current Political Landscape

- Tough fiscal environment
- Political headwinds
- Need to play defense
- Look for non-funding policies
- Ballot initiatives



*Washington D.C. Bike Lanes*





# Luke Hoffman

Executive Director,  
Iowa Bicycle Coalition





Results out now!



IOWA  
BICYCLE  
COALITION

# ECONOMIC IMPACT STUDY CYCLING & TRAILS

*The Iowa Bicycle Coalition is conducting a study on the economic impact of cycling and trails in Iowa.*

Help us understand how cycling & trails supports our economy here in Iowa.



cyclists  
bike clubs



trail users  
bike shops  
local government  
representatives





# STUDY PARTNERS & SPONSORS







# cycling and trails generate **\$1.4 billion** for Iowa's Economy

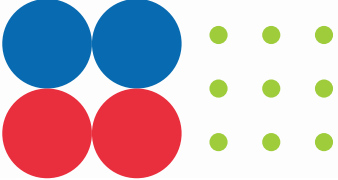
**We estimate that this is the total annual economic impact of recreational riding of 900,000 annual riders .**



The background of the image is a photograph of a bicycle shop. Numerous bicycles are parked in rows on a wooden floor. In the background, a bright yellow cycling jersey hangs on a display. A sign with "TEAM U.S.A." is visible at the top. The image is framed by decorative borders on the left and right sides, consisting of repeating blue and green circular patterns.

cycling is a **top**  
**50** industry in  
lowa





# Luke Hoffman of the Iowa Bicycle Coalition seeks to make Iowa a ‘world capital’ of cycling

BY BILL STEIDEN | DECEMBER 23, 2024



**T**he way Luke Hoffman handled a brush with death says a lot about how he approaches life. Hoffman is director of the Iowa Bicycle Coalition, a statewide assemblage of cycling interests whose agenda for 2025 is topped by an all-out push to win passage of long-sought legislation requiring that drivers' use of communications devices like cellphones be hands-free while they're at the wheel. The goal: rining in distracted driving, the cause of an average of nine fatal accidents a day in the United States, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Which makes what happened to Hoffman last June particularly ironic. Hoffman, one of the Des Moines Register's 15 People to Watch in 2025, was on the route inspection pre-ride for the 2024 edition of the Register's Annual Great Bicycle Ride Across Iowa, preparing to climb a hill 19 miles outside Knoxville. He was hugging the white line on the right edge of a county road when he heard a vehicle coming up behind him.

Luke Hoffman, executive director of the Iowa Bicycle Coalition, prepares for an evening ride from Des Moines to Normal with allies and supporters.

The other riders in the group were "a baseball toss" ahead of him, he said. He recalled that he signaled the driver to pass him and wondered why the two-door pickup didn't move faster to do so. The truck instead swerved toward Hoffman, and its passenger side mirror smashed him across the left shoulder blade. He said he briefly lost his balance and was sideswiped by the truck. The truck, its mirror dangling by a wire, continued on as though the driver wasn't aware of the collision. Hoffman somehow managed to regain control of his bike. "I never fell. And that was probably what saved my life," he said. But he was angry at the driver and in shock and pain from the massive bruising that would soon cover his back. "He was still going, and I yelled at him," he said, adding sheepishly, "I used one of those words you use in a situation like that." The driver pulled over and climbed out with a small dog in tow. Apologizing profusely, he explained that the dog had jumped on him, causing a distraction that drew his attention off the road. "I was just like, I'm lucky to be alive right now," Hoffman recalled. And then he did what he does: Lobbied for his cause — the safety of cyclists. "I'm mad at you, but let me just educate you for a second," he told the young man, launching a plea for drivers to maintain safe distance when passing people on bikes. "Can you please give a full lane, if not a full lane, at least 3 feet, if you

can manage it, that'd be great. ... Can you please do that next time?" Hoffman loves to ride, but that the accident had left him so shaken he questioned — briefly — whether it was worth the risk. "In that moment I lost so much joy because, you know, I could have died from this," he said. "But I also gained so much purpose because I was like, I can look at this one of two ways. I can take this so personally and let a negative experience dictate how I look at the rest of my life, or the learned lesson I can take from it is: I'm the lucky one, and I owe it to everybody else who's not as lucky to be a champion for these issues with my entire soul."

**Luke Hoffman's early years:** Experiencing poverty, finding a calling

There are deep roots to the organizational acumen and



In what Iowa Bicycle Coalition director Luke Hoffman says is his favorite photo, he poses at age 6 with his father, preparing to throw away his no-longer-needed training wheels.

evangelical fervor Hoffman brings to the job that he took in October 2023. He was the oldest of four

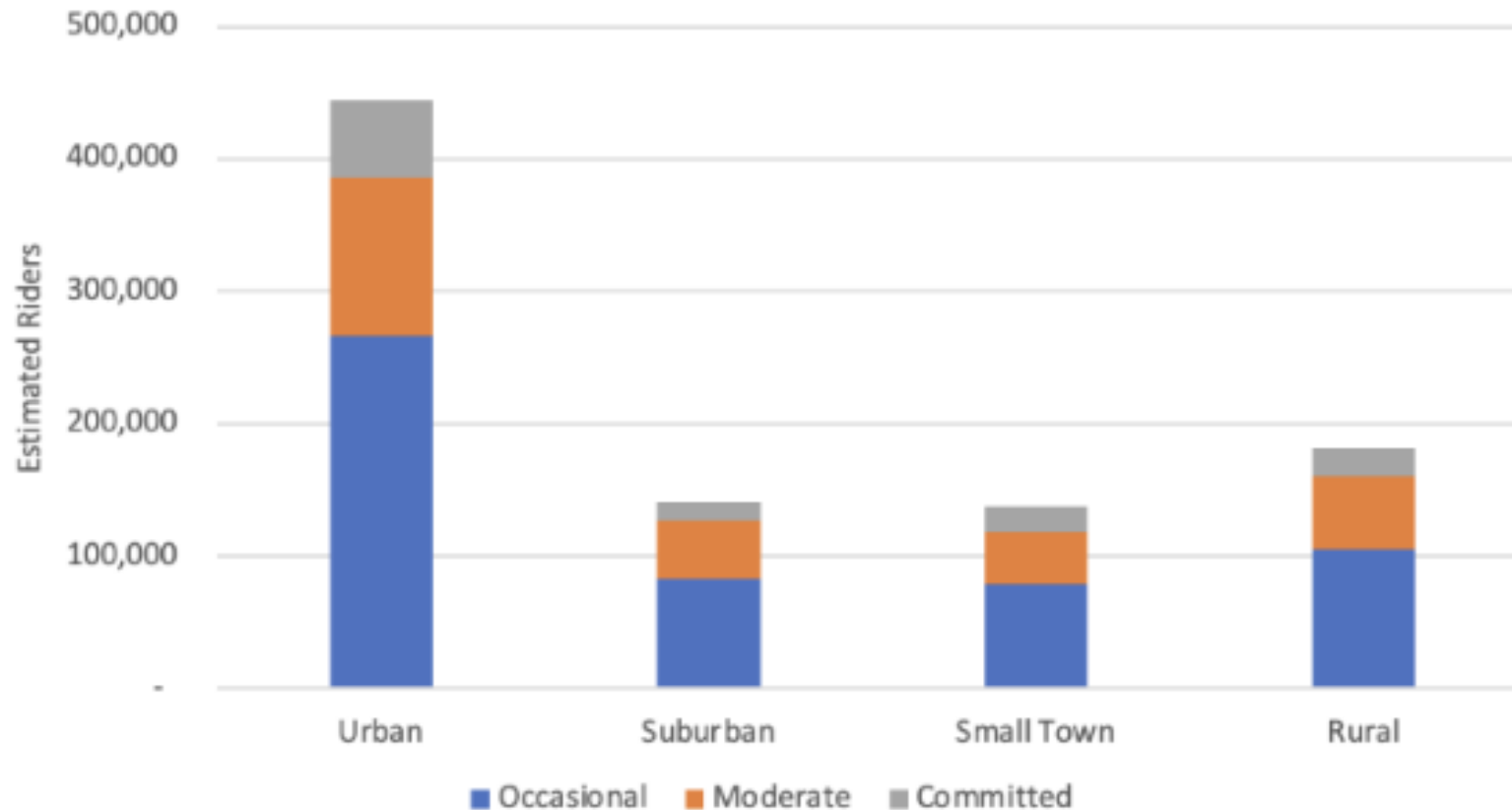
# World Capitol of Trails

*Iowa is home to 2,000 miles of multi-use trails*  
Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation





# 900,000 Iowans Ride a bicycle annually



**Figure 11:** Estimated recreational riders in Iowa

# 21,000 Iowa Jobs are supported by cycling

Iowa's riders generate \$690 million in wages, which lead to \$23 million per year in state income taxes and \$11 million per year in sales taxes.



# Economic Impact of Bicycle Tourism **\$13 Million**

- **\$7.6 million** in arts, entertainment, & recreation
- **\$870,00** in real estate, rental, & leasing
- **\$650,000** in finance & insurance in

The background features a repeating pattern of various geometric shapes, including circles, squares, and semi-circles, in a palette of soft pinks, blues, greens, and greys. The shapes are arranged in a way that creates a sense of movement and depth.

# HEALTH IMPACTS OF CYCLING





Cyclists are **49% less likely** to have poor mental health

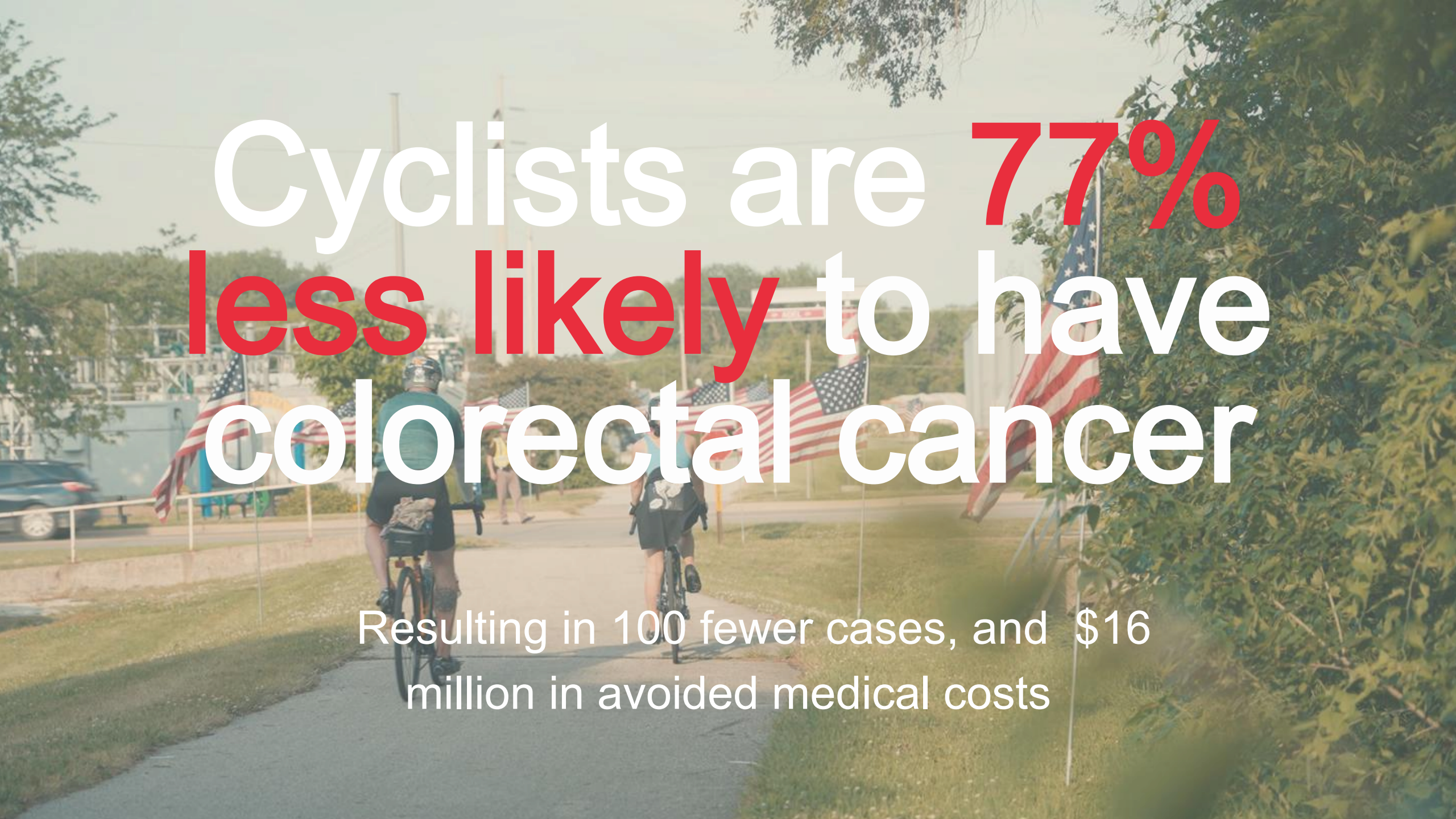
Active cycling results in 5,400 fewer lowans experiencing poor mental health annually.



# Cycling results in **9,000 fewer** lowans with obesity

- Active bikers are 19% less likely to be overweight or obese
- Prevents \$25 million in medical expenses
- Obesity associated expenses cost lowans \$4.5 billion annually



The background of the slide is a photograph of two cyclists riding away on a paved path. The path is lined with numerous American flags on poles. In the background, there are trees, a blue car, and some industrial structures under a clear sky.

# Cyclists are 77% less likely to have colorectal cancer

Resulting in 100 fewer cases, and \$16  
million in avoided medical costs



# Legislative wins

**2024 - CROSSWALK  
PROTECTIONS BILL**

**2025 - HANDS FREE DRIVING  
BILL**

**Looking forward...**





# PHASE II: 99 COUNTIES

## 99 COUNTY LEVEL RESULTS





40% of recreational cyclists ride  
at least twice per month +  
generating **consistent economic**  
**impact, job creation**, even in the  
most rural counties



# Cyclists contribute millions to county economies through spending

- even the smallest counties like Adams seeing over  
\$500,000 in annual impact  
In Polk County, that figure exceeds \$150 million.





# Retail & Restaurants benefit most from cycling spending.

THESE SECTORS CONSISTENTLY ACCOUNT FOR THE LARGEST  
SHARE OF VALUE ADDED BY CYCLING-RELATED ACTIVITY.





# TRAIL FUNDING DEFENSE

2025 IOWA LEGISLATIVE  
SESSION SUCESS STORY

# Trail Funding Offense

## Iowa's Water & Land Legacy Trust Fund (IWILL)

Iowa's Water & Land Legacy passed in 2010, but trust fund was never funded

## County Bond Referendums

- Johnston County, Iowa – \$30M
  - 78% voted to approve
- Story County, Iowa – \$20M
  - 78% voted to approve







# Senate Bill 131 and the Advancement of Parks/Trails

Overview of the New CEQA  
Exemption for Parks and Trails  
Funded by Proposition 4

**Lily Bostrom**  
Senior Environmental Planner

ASCENT





# Topics Covered

- Brief CEQA Overview
- Recent History of CEQA Streamlining for Trails
- Overview of Senate Bill 131 for Parks/Trails
- Legislative Context and Outlook



# California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) 101

- California law analogous to NEPA
- Applies to all discretionary actions by a public agency
- Disclosure of potential environmental impacts of projects



- Requires avoidance and/or minimization of significant environmental impacts
- Allows for public comment and input
- 9 – 18 months to prepare a CEQA document

# Past CEQA Streamlining for Trails



## California Assembly Bill 2091

- Signed September 22, 2024
- CEQA exemption for new, nonmotorized public access to existing roads, trails, parking areas
- Applies only to park districts and the Great Redwood Trail Agency
- Lead agencies required to:
  - Hold a public meeting
  - Consider effects on natural and tribal cultural resources



# California Senate Bill 131

- Created new statutory CEQA exemption for park and trail projects funded by Proposition 4. The bill simply states that:

*"[CEQA] does not apply to any activity or approval necessary for or incidental to planning, design, site acquisition, construction, operation, or maintenance of public park or nonmotorized recreational trail facilities funded in whole or in part by the Safe Drinking Water, Wildfire Prevention, Drought Preparedness, and Clean Air Bond Act of 2024"*



# SB 131 Continued

- What Makes this Unique:
  - No environmental eligibility requirements
  - No exceptions
  - Covers project acquisition/planning through maintenance
- Practical Use
  - File a Notice of Exemption with the State Clearinghouse
  - Best practice – memo to file



# Legislative Backdrop and SB 131 Outlook

- State support for streamlining of beneficial projects
- Budget trailer bills have been instrumental in CA
  - Quickly conceived
  - Passed on simple majority
  - Take effect immediately
- SB 131 as it stands – broad and useful exemption!





# Thank you!

**Lily Bostrom**  
Senior Environmental Planner

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# Additional Policy Models

- **Funding Specific Trails & Earmarks**
  - Empire State Trail (NY)
  - Great Redwood Trail (CA)
  - Mopac Trail (NE)
- **Facilitating Infrastructure & Funding**
  - Statewide trail plans
  - Consolidated AT funding sources (CA's Active Transportation Program, MN)
  - Tax credits for trail easements (SC)
- **Local Ballot Initiatives**
  - Multiple Iowa counties
  - Franklin County (Columbus), OH multimodal proposition



# **Audience Q&A**



# Contacts

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Circuit Trail, Tacony Creek | Photo courtesy Thom Carroll

# Resources and Upcoming Events



- Sign up for our newsletters
- Join the Trail Nation Collaborative
- RTC Advocacy Resources
  - Changemakers for Trails Initiative
- Upcoming Webinars
  - 12/4 “Active Transportation Freeze: Where do Federal Active Transportation Grants Stand?”
  - 12/10 “Leveraging Statewide Planning to Advance Trail Development.”
- *Reminder: AICP members **who view this event live** are eligible for 1 CM credit*



Virginia's Washington & Old Dominion Trail





**Thank you!**

