rails to trails
Spring/Summer.14
Inspiring Movement

Seattle's Heart Line: The Burke-Gilman Trail

Railway Heritage Tourism

America's Restored Rail Stations

Dream Team

How Rail-with-Trail Is Transforming America

rails-to-trails conservancy

I SUPPORT
Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

Name: Martin Bobcek

Where I live: My hometown is LaCrosse, Ind., but I go to school at Purdue in West Lafayette, Ind., and spend most of my time there.

Age: 23

An inspiring book I've read recently: *Into the Wild* by Jon Krakauer

Latest or greatest accomplishment: Scoring As and Bs on my report card

What I do: I attend Purdue University, where I study Civil Engineering and work in the Charles Pankow Concrete Materials Laboratory. When I'm not working, I play music with my roommates; I play guitar.

I'd rather be: Backpacking

A meaningful life story: I met a super rad girl at the Turkey Run State Park campground; I went with a group of buddies from school. That was seven years ago. Linnae and I are still dating today.

My dream: To live somewhere quiet and convince my family to turn the old railroad tracks into a functioning rail-trail.

A person I admire: Fred Rogers (better known as Mr. Rogers)

Inspirational quote: "I went into television because I hated it so."—Mr. Rogers

Recent rail-trail experience: This past summer, I took my first ride from Hammond to LaCrosse, Ind., using the Erie Lackawanna Trail.

Why I use TrailLink.com: I enjoy the scenic bike rides that TrailLink.com helps me find. I have just recently gotten involved with bicycling, but I will not be stopping anytime soon. Next summer, I plan to bike to St. Louis. Rail-trails provide a sustainable solution using infrastructure that is obsolete for its previous purpose. This is truly forward thinking.

A signature endeavor of RTC is TrailLink.com, which provides a searchable database of more than 25,000 miles of trails around the country. The website includes detailed trail descriptions, interactive maps, photographs, and first-hand ratings and reviews. The TrailLink iPhone app, available in the App Store, offers all the features of TrailLink.com in an easy-to-use iOS application, as well as the ability to download maps for offline use out on the trail.

TrailLink
By Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

CHRIS BUCHER

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JAY REILLY/NOVUS SELECT

departments

On the cover: San Clemente Beach Trail
Photo by Jay Reilly/Novus Select

features

Expanding Our Bag of Tricks

The last half of the 20th century was a time of seismic change for the U.S. railroad industry. Between 1950 and 2000, rail service was discontinued on almost 80,000 miles of track. Rails-to-Trails Conservancy was created in 1986 in response to the opportunities—and the threats—associated with this downsizing.

Without our help, many of these priceless corridors would have been lost forever. But today, more than 21,000 miles of unused corridor have been transformed into trails that are used by tens of millions of Americans every year. Amazingly, the rail-trail movement has now preserved almost one-quarter of the rail corridor that has fallen into disuse since 1950. We can all be proud of this major accomplishment.

But this is no time to rest on our laurels. Much remains to be done to achieve our goal of creating a national network of trails. The good news is that more than 7,000 miles of rail-trail projects are underway in communities across America. This will keep us busy for years to come.

CARL KNOCH

The other good news is that the U.S. railroad industry has stabilized, shedding only 6,000 miles of track between 2000 and 2011. While this is undoubtedly a welcome piece of information—because we all love railroads—it also means there are fewer miles of unused track available each year for rail-trail development.

That's why it's time to get creative. To expand our bag of tricks, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy is placing an increased emphasis on rail-*with*-trail projects. Rather than developing trails on former rail corridors, these projects create trails along active rail lines.

To catalyze this form of trail development, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy recently released a groundbreaking report titled *America's Rails-with-Trails*. Our analysis reveals that there are now 188 trails in 42 states that include mileage along active rail lines. This is a whopping 308 percent increase in such trails since 2000.

Our report demonstrates that not only are such trails now common and growing, but they are also safe. There have been tens of thousands of fatalities on rail corridors in recent decades, but our research only discovered one fatality that involved a rail-with-trail user and a train. It shouldn't be a surprise that an active rail corridor that includes a well-designed trail is probably safer than a rail line without a trail. There will always be people who use rail corridors as pedestrian pathways. It is simple common sense that it is safer to walk along a trail separated from a moving freight train than to walk on the tracks.

In this issue, our cover story explores the rails-with-trails approach close-up, placing an introspective eye on how they are impacting communities in terms of safety, access, destination tourism and overall livability. The evidence makes one thing crystal clear: rails-with-trails are increasingly being "built, used, loved and appreciated all across America."

Happy Trails!

Keith Laughlin, President
Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

rails to trails

The magazine of Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC), a nonprofit organization dedicated to creating a nationwide network of trails from former rail lines and connecting corridors to build healthier places for healthier people.

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Double Take

I was impressed to see another Double Vision tandem bike in the Winter 2014 *Rails to Trails* ("Trail Tales," page 5). Initially, I thought it was me, as I also often escort people around for a short spin, giving them the feel and flavor of tandem recumbent riding.

However, the greatest impact of my pedaling is going to be helping establish signed and safe bike routes throughout the region connecting Texas, New Mexico and Mexico. While El Paso continues to upgrade its bicycle-friendly status, I regularly pedal the roads and am constantly providing information regarding feasibility from an expert's bicycling viewpoint.

We don't have much in the way of rail-trails here (yet), but I often get inspired by articles in your publication. I am not much of a "joiner," but I am pleased to be a card-carrying member of RTC!

John Eyberg
EL PASO, TEXAS

Pathway to Paradise

Well done story on the Keys ("Connecting the Keys," Winter 2014). There is a different way to ride the trail, which I have done for the last six years. At age 80, I can't bike 50 miles a day, but since I've retired, I have time to enjoy the area. I stay in motels and bike 5 to 7 miles one way and back for a total of 10 to 15 miles, using my car for a shuttle. Most days, I do the same in the afternoon.

The total trip takes me about 11 days, but I also have time to bike some of the wonderful side trails on the islands, meet local people and visit local attractions. This approach means I totally avoid biking the narrow highway bridges. In five years I have never had a flat, but you do need to be careful about a low-spreading flower that has bad thorns. If you do a little research first, you will enjoy the trip more.

Bob Youker
ROCKVILLE, MD.

I had just gotten home from riding the entire length of the Florida Keys Overseas Heritage Trail when I found the Winter 2014 *Rails to Trails* in my mailbox. The cover feature was appropriately titled "Pathway to Paradise."

I found the article to be right on for accuracy. With the Atlantic Ocean on your left shoulder and the Gulf of Mexico on your right, it is impossible to find a more scenic ride in Florida. I would venture to say it is unique among trails in the United States.

Being a Florida resident, I was hesitant about mixing with the busy U.S. 1 highway traffic. But I was very pleased at how courteous the Monroe County drivers were to bicyclists and would highly recommend this ride to others. Be sure to bring your snorkel and mask for use at rest stops, and visit the National Key Deer Refuge at mile marker 30 on the gulf side of the trail.

Clint Oster
BOCA RATON, FLA.

I just returned from biking the Florida Keys Overseas Heritage Trail and read your story. While I understand the desire to promote cycling trails, the article painted an excessively rosy picture of the trip, while minimizing the hazards. Yes, the scenery is beautiful. But it's hard to enjoy it when you are biking on a narrow shoulder next to a four-lane highway with cars going by at 50 to 60 mph. Because the Keys are narrow and there is only one main road, you are always close to vehicle noise. The lack of signage is a major problem, and while some of the old railroad bridges can be crossed, others cannot. Crossing Route 1 is not easy, as there are few traffic lights or crosswalks. For safety reasons, I cannot recommend this trip.

Richard Bisk
PRINCETON, MASS.

Back Issues?

Is there a way to view back issues of *Rails to Trails* online? The article about the trail in the Florida Keys really caught my wife's attention. Now, she'd like to see some of the back issues that she never had the chance to read, and which I no longer have in the house.

Bob Abrams
WAPPINGERS FALLS, N.Y.

Yes, all that blue sky and sparkling water sure did look inviting! And, yes, you can read back issues of Rails to Trails *at our website. Just go to railstotrails.org/magazine and click on the "archive" link in the top left of the page. Happy reading!*

That's Us

My 13-year-old son and I were delighted to see ourselves in the 2013 Greenway Sojourn photo spread ("A View From," Winter 2014); that's us on page 21, middle left! We had just reached the Continental Divide on our last day of riding and stopped to memorialize our achievement.

As recreational riders, we were nervous about participating in a multi-day trip and concerned about the daily mileage requirement. While the first day was challenging, and not helped by the 95+ degree heat, we found that being able to go at our own pace and being on rail-trails made each day's goal very achievable. It was a perfect combination of testing our endurance while experiencing the natural beauty of an area that we would not have discovered on our own.

Emily Beezley
GLEN ROCK, N.J.

Reindeer Head Count

Twelve reindeer? (See "Greetings From: Wow at the Plows," Winter 2014). The poem says, "When what to my wondering eyes did appear but a miniature sleigh and *eight* tiny reindeer." Some 65 years ago, Gene Autry added Rudolph who, some wits say, gave us Olive, as in, "Olive the other reindeer used to laugh and call him names." That's still only 10. Who are the others: Grumpy and Sleepy? Athos and Porthos? Mutt and Jeff?

Love the magazine.

Mark Lander
OLD SAYBROOK, CONN.

We'd like to hear from you. Write to "Members Network," Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, 2121 Ward Ct., NW, 5th Floor, Washington, DC 20037. Or e-mail: magazine@railstotrails.org. Letters may be edited for publication.

EYE ON:

Kansas' Sunflower Santa Fe Trail

By Laura Stark

The vision for the Sunflower Santa Fe Trail is a grand one: 33 miles across a scattering of small cities on the wind-swept prairie of central Kansas. The heart of the trail lies in Galva, just an hour north of Wichita, the state's largest city.

With a population of fewer than 1,000, Galva is pure rural Kansas, largely residential with a quiet Main Street running through the center of town. It has one restaurant, a bank and a gas station, as well as a handful of small shops. There are few sidewalks, and over the past decade, the town's streets have acquired their first layer of pavement.

"Most of the walking here is done in city streets," says Wayne Ford, who has lived in Galva most of his life and has been the city's mayor since 1978. "The Sunflower Santa Fe Trail is the only trail in town. When the decision was made to do a mile west of town, I thought, 'What an opportunity to provide for the community.'"

Though only this mile on the west side of town is complete, and another mile is close to being finished on the east side, it's a beginning. Even in that short distance, the trail is a beauty. True to its name, sunflowers bloom brightly along the trail in the late summer on the heels of showy pink roses earlier in the season. The wispy pale green leaves of wild asparagus catch the slightest breeze in the spring, and a few weeks later, clusters of juicy plums, mulberries and black currants hang tantalizingly sweet.

Along with the twitter of birds in the thicket and the quiet crunch of crushed stone underfoot, trail users can hear the steady rumble of trains no more than 100 feet away. This is a rail-with-trail, and the Union Pacific rail line is quite active; more than a dozen freight trains roll by each day, just on the other side of the underbrush.

"Little kids love watching the trains as they go by," says Joye Walker, team leader for the Galva Friends of the Trail group. "My grandsons love it. [The engineers] will wave at us and toot their horn."

The trail is being built on the old corridor of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway corridor, which played a key role in the settlement of the state in the late 1800s. As a nod to this heritage, its trailhead, located just a few blocks from Main Street, features a gazebo made of old railroad timbers. The structure, containing a picnic bench, offers shade and respite from the Kansas sun.

More than a century after its Wild West heyday, the disused rail corridor between McPherson and Marion was preserved by the Central Kansas

Trail under construction: Sunflower Santa Fe Trail

Location: McPherson to Marion, Kansas

Used railroad corridor: Marion and McPherson Railroad, a branch of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway

Length: 2 miles; 33 miles proposed

Proposed surface: Crushed limestone

The trailhead on the aptly named Sunflower Santa Fe Trail (top); the Central Kansas Conservancy also helped develop the nearby Meadowlark Trail (middle); volunteers construct handrails on a trail bridge (bottom).

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY GALVA FRIENDS OF THE TRAIL

Conservancy (CKC) in 1997 for conversion to a rail-trail, via a process known as railbanking. A future connection to the much larger McPherson would be especially worthwhile, as that city is only a few miles west of Galva and already has the Meadowlark Trail, a developing rail-trail (also railbanked by the CKC) that stretches north more than a dozen miles through scenic countryside to Lindsborg, a tourist hot spot known as Little Sweden.

But though the prospect of building the two trails is bright, the journey has not always been easy. Owners of land along the routes were against trail development. "The opposition was strong and vocal," recalls Ronn Peters, CKC vice president. "But it's diminished now. … I'm proud of the tenacity of the core group to hang in there through thick and thin, knowing it would be a benefit for the community in the long run."

Ardie Streit, who co-manages the Meadowlark Trail, admits almost leaving the organization twice because of the strife. Now, however, she is hopeful. Recently, she says, "We were setting posts for one of the trail bridges, and our vehicle was blocking part of the trail. We apologized to a biker who was trying to pass, but he said, 'You're apologizing? I'm very grateful that you folks are doing this!'"

Walker is relatively new to the movement but already has a reputation for dedication and dependability. Inspired by her brother, who helps build rail-trails in eastern Kansas, she's been organizing volunteers to work on the Sunflower Santa Fe Trail for about three years. At least once a month they're out there, clearing trees and brush, spraying for weeds and maintaining the trail's footbridges to make it suitable for walkers, bicyclists and horseback riders. As a young adult, she backpacked all over the U.S., but now she enjoys her local trail "as a great place to get outside and enjoy nature right in my backyard."

For more information about this project, visit **centralkansastrails.org/sunflower**.

trail tales

It's always terrific to see what our members have been up to when they're not taking it easy reading Rails to Trails *magazine!*

Heritage Rail Trail Rolling Friendship

Sam Reimold is 75, but it's not age that's stopping him from riding his bike today. It's eight inches of snow. The retired truck driver has been biking the same rail-trail in southern Pennsylvania nearly every day for more than a decade.

In the morning, Sam gets on the Heritage Rail Trail County Park in Glen Rock and heads north. Along the route, other bicyclists—some with gray hair, some with white, but all with smiles—join him in a rolling parade of fellowship. Once they reach York, the men stop at a local café to shore up with hot coffee and watch the news before heading back home.

"This thing started 15 years ago," says Sam. "There were 10 of us then, but as time ran along, we lost a few. There are about six or eight of us now."

The group built up slowly over time, riding and talking and getting to know one another. Sometimes they meet for lunch, bringing their wives on double dates. Once, they planned a birthday party for a fellow rider turning 90. (At 97, he's still riding.)

"Along the trail, there are a few benches in memory of people that rode there," says Sam. "Some of us have passed away. When we ride by, it's nice to think about them."

When asked what he loves most about the Heritage Rail Trail, he says that he was raised on a farm, so he enjoys the rolling countryside. Also, he says, the trail provides "tons of nice people to meet."

The cycling group has become well-known in the communities along the way. "People will see us on the trail and ask, 'Can I come along?'" says Sam. "And the answer is always, 'Yes.'"

JOHN A. PAVONCELLO/YORK DISPATCH

More Ways to Connect with RTC

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Instagram.com/railstotrails
Pinterest.com/railstotrails
Twitter.com/railstotrails

PHOTO COURTESY VISIT TOPEKA, INC.

▶ GREAT ENTER*TRAIN*MENT IN KANSAS

Landon Nature Trail: For hardcore train fans—especially the under-12 set—the Topeka Railroad Festival (**topekarailroadriverfest.com**) is truly spec-*track*ular. On Aug. 16, rail aficionados can gather at the Great Overland Station in Topeka to check out model trains and a steam engine on display, take a spin on a handcar or trackless train, and search for a hidden rhinestone railroad spike to earn a cash prize. Built in 1927, the beautiful station-turned-museum and its grounds will host a bounty of other attractions, too: magicians, live music, western shows, pony rides, food vendors, face painting, carnival games and more. After the festival, don some ruby red slippers and make your way just two miles south to the Landon Nature Trail, a rail-trail that runs from downtown Topeka into pure Kansas country.

Length & surface: 12.1 miles; concrete on the northern 4.5 miles and crushed stone for the remainder ◆ **End points:** Southeast 15th St. (Topeka) to Southeast 89th St. (southeast of Berryton) ◆ **Website:** traillink.com/trail/landon-nature-trail.aspx

PHOTO COURTESY SCHUYKILL RIVER DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

◀ LIGHTS, CAMERA, TRACTION IN PENNSYLVANIA

Schuylkill River Trail: Philadelphians can watch movie stars under the real stars on select weeknights June through August during Schuylkill Banks Movie Nights (**schuylkillbanks.org**). The cost of admission is only a smile and a blanket to stake out a patch of grass between the Schuylkill River and the CSX train tracks that curve along its banks. Free snacks and a gift-card raffle add to the fun. Movies are shown at various locations and begin at dusk. Before the show, enjoy an evening stroll along the Schuylkill River Trail as it traces the waterway from downtown Philly to Valley Forge.

Length & surface (Valley Forge to Philadelphia section): 27 miles; asphalt ◆ **End points:** Philadelphia to Valley Forge ◆ **Website:** traillink.com/trail/schuylkill-river-trail---valley-forge-to-philadelphia.aspx

PHOTO COURTESY GOLDEN SPIKE NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

▶ A GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY IN UTAH

Golden Spike National Historic Site: The Railroader's Festival on the second Saturday in August is a jump back in time to 1869, when the final spike was driven in the tracks that joined the Central Pacific Railroad and the Union Pacific Railroad, creating the country's first Transcontinental Railroad. On that momentous day, a steam locomotive from each line—Union Pacific's *No. 119* and Central Pacific's *Jupiter*—met head-to-head on the tracks. Working replicas of each engine are in operation at Utah's Golden Spike National Historic Site (**nps.gov/gosp**) from May through October, and you can tour the cabs during the festival. Other activities include reenactments of the Last Spike ceremony, handcar rides, buffalo chip throwing and other games. Explore the old railroad grade on your own along gravel rail-trails that run through the park.

Length & surface: 12 miles; gravel ◆ **End points:** Golden Spike National Historic Site (located 32 miles west of Brigham City) ◆ **Website:** traillink.com/trail/golden-spike-national-historic-site.aspx

STEVE KEENAN/THE FAYETTE TRIBUNE

◀ A RAIL-Y GOOD TIME IN WEST VIRGINIA

White Oak Rail Trail: It might be a small city, but Oak Hill knows how to celebrate in a big way. The southern West Virginia town's 10-day Oak Leaf Festival (**facebook.com/oakleaffestival**), running from late August through Labor Day, is a highlight of the region. Events include a talent show, teen pageant, parade, live music, chili cook-off and more. For railroad lovers, the first weekend of the festival (Aug. 23–24) is designated Oak Leaf Depot Days, when revelers can explore the 1903 White Oak Depot, whiz down the tracks on a handcar and see model-train displays at the Lewis Community Center across the street. Running alongside the depot is the White Oak Rail Trail, which stretches 7.5 miles through town, connecting the communities of Summerlee and Carlisle.

Length & surface: 7.5 miles, including 5.5 miles paved with asphalt and 2 miles with packed gravel surface ◆ **End points:** Route 612 to Summerlee Road ◆ **Website:** traillink.com/trail/white-oak-rail-trail-(oak-hill-trail).aspx

*Do you have a perfect rail-trail "postcard" for **Greetings From...**? Send a photo and event information, along with how we can contact you, to: magazine@railstotrails.org or Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, Magazine/Greetings From, 2121 Ward Court, NW, 5th Floor, Washington, DC 20037.*

DREAM

How Rail-with-Trail is Transforming America

By Jake Lynch

Let's start with a "birth of a rail-trail" story: In 1993, officials in the growing city of Denton, Texas, struck a deal with Union Pacific railroad for the rights to an unused stretch of freight track. With the decline of rail business in the area, the eight-mile line running southeast from the city center had become a financial liability to the railroad company. However, the people of Denton were able to make good use of the corridor: In 1998 the Denton Branch Rail Trail opened, launching a sustained growth in biking and walking in the city that continues today.

But Denton officials had their eyes on an even bigger prize. Their city is just 38 miles as the crow flies from the center of Dallas, and the leaders of Denton looked into their crystal ball and predicted their city would do some growing in the decades to come. Their hunch was that this expansion would require capacity for mass transit, and that the eight miles of corridor they now controlled—heading

JAY REILLY/NOVUS SELECT

TEAM:

For many trail planners, advocates and users around the U.S., rails-with-trails represent the next great frontier.

directly from Denton toward downtown Dallas—would one day be worth much more than the $10,000 they paid for it.

"We always recognized we had to preserve this corridor for future transportation uses," says Bob Tickner, Denton's former superintendent of parks planning. "We knew it would one day become passenger rail; we just didn't know when."

Tickner's predictions about population growth and rail service were right on the money. When Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) began buying up sections of line for its burgeoning light rail system, Denton found itself in a strong position, owning rights to a corridor that had become a key piece of the transportation plan for the Dallas metropolitan region. And the federal railbanking legislation that enabled the disused corridor to be converted into a rail-trail in the first place now made possible the reactivation of train service on the same corridor.

Over the previous decade, the rail-trail had become such a popular amenity that simply erasing the trail in order to build the new rail line wasn't an option. Conscious of the need to get the most out of this valuable corridor in an increasingly built-out environment, the city's planners got »

creative. As the Champagne bottle was being smashed to christen Denton County Transportation Authority's (DCTA's) A-train in 2011, the people of Denton were celebrating the reopening of their new Denton Branch Rail Trail. A busy trail popular with bike riders, walkers and joggers now runs alongside the commuter train line, separated from it by nothing more than a broad ditch. Hello, rail-with-trail.

A Changing America

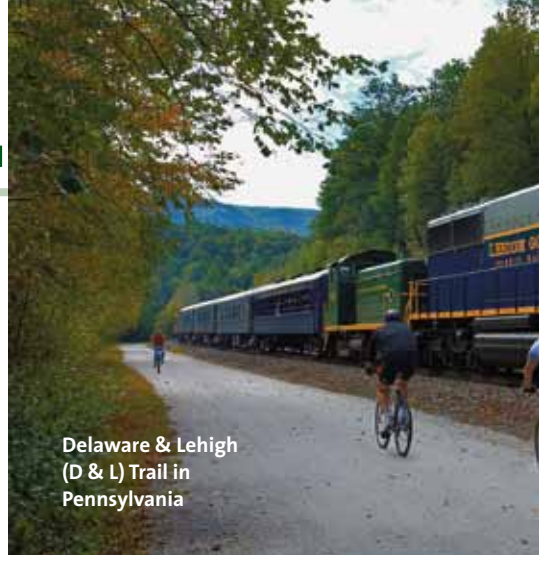
For those used to a more traditional definition of rail-trail, the reactivation of a rail line on a rail-trail corridor, or the presence of a regularly running train adjacent to a trail, is a jolting anomaly. However, rails-with-trails—trails alongside active freight, passenger or tourist train lines—account for 10 percent of America's more than 1,800 rail-trails. They are in the biggest cities and most isolated landscapes. They are long and they are short. They run alongside giant, chugging freight engines and beside quiet, sleek light rail cars. Like rail-trails everywhere, rails-with-trails defy pigeonholing.

And their numbers are increasing. In 2000, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC) recorded 61 rails-with-trails in 20 states. As of 2014, RTC has recorded 188 trails in 42 states, a growth of 308 percent. For many trail planners and advocates, rails-with-trails represent the next great frontier.

"Rails-with-trails aren't new," says Kelly Pack, RTC's director of trail development and lead author of the 2013 report, *America's Rails-with-Trails: A Resource for Planners, Agencies and Advocates on Trails Along Active Railroad Corridors*. "Part of the Illinois Prairie Path runs alongside an active line. But even rail-trail users and supporters are just now becoming aware of how common they are."

Pack says that, in the same way the rail-trail movement of the 1970s and 1980s was born from a shift in the nation's development away from rail transportation, the burgeoning popularity of rails-with-trails reflects the next phase in the evolution of transportation—a more built-out environment coupled with a resurgent interest in urban transit.

With fewer idle rail lines available for conversion, trail and transit developers are turning to active lines. And at the same time deactivations are decreasing, construction of new transit systems, particularly light rail, is increasing. So is the number of Americans biking and walking, as well as the demand for safe places to do so. These converging patterns have created a perfect storm for rails-with-trails.



Delaware & Lehigh (D & L) Trail in Pennsylvania

PHOTO COURTESY SCOTT J. BOLANGER

Historic Santa Fe Trail in New Mexico

"These are rail corridors around which there is a clear need to provide access for people walking or riding," Pack says. "They are in busy, populated environments where people must get from A to B. On top of that, the success of transit systems relies heavily on people being able to quickly and conveniently get to the stations. The combination of a trail with new rail systems is a match made in heaven in terms of urban connectivity, and that's why we're seeing the growth that we are."

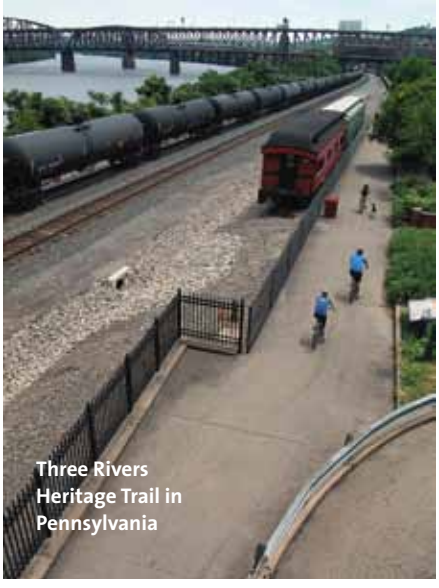
Heavy Load

While transit rail has been supportive of rails-with-trails, the story is often different when it comes to freight. The handful of railroad companies that control the bulk of America's freight traffic continues to express formal opposition to the concept of a trail alongside their lines.

Unlike public agencies providing transit systems, which have an interest in improving people's accessibility to their stations, companies whose business is carrying freight typically do not see anything to gain from encouraging human traffic along or near their tracks. Some of these major carriers, including CSX, Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) and Union Pacific, have policies that explicitly discourage rail-with-trail development. The sticking point is liability: the threat of expensive legal action should a person be killed or injured by a train while using a rail-with-trail.

"The liability issue is real, and it runs into the tens of millions of dollars," says Charles Marshall, a longtime RTC board member. Marshall well understands the

PETER TREIBER



Three Rivers Heritage Trail in Pennsylvania

JAKE LYNCH

viewpoints of both the rail and trail sides. He occupied key executive positions with Conrail and, later, Genesee & Wyoming Inc., which operates short-line and regional freight railroads in the U.S. and overseas. "Yes, it is becoming increasingly accepted that rails-with-trails are safe. But irrespective of how small the level of risk is, the liability issue is still there. For these freight railroads, there has to be an answer to the question, 'Why should I allow a trail?'"

Marshall believes one thing trails can offer freight carriers is a solution to the problem of trespassers. Providing a safe, convenient and intentional pathway has been shown to reduce the incentive of people to walk along the tracks illegally—itself a liability issue for the corridor owner.

"It is the challenge for the trail-building community over the next decades to give the major freight carriers a reason to be invested," Marshall says. "Trespasser prevention is certainly one opportunity. Another is working to change state liability protection laws. By providing greater protection for railroads from prosecution in the event of an accident, the quid pro quo could be that railroads have to allow trails alongside their rights-of-way."

Cost and Liability

Despite his patient optimism, Marshall is right about the liability issue. The Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) has proven itself to be incredibly supportive of repurposing its disused rail corridors, and has created 10 rail-trails throughout its region. But SEPTA Real Estate Director Gerald M. Maier makes no bones about the fact that, for his agency, trails alongside active lines are a whole other ballgame.

"We are in the business of providing transportation options, and that's why we've supported the trails that we have," Maier says. "We have looked at rails-with-trails, and we're concerned about the safety risks. SEPTA is sympathetic, but very averse [to the risk]. The issue really goes to safety and liability."

Maier references a proposal currently before SEPTA to extend the Pennypack Trail in Montgomery County across the regional rail system's West Trenton Line. "The extension will cost Montgomery County $900,000 over the next 30 years, mostly for at-grade crossing devices and maintenance costs," he says.

Elsewhere in southeastern Pennsylvania, local advocates for development of the Chester Creek Branch Rail Trail are seeing firsthand that if a rail corridor is under consideration for reactivation, it adds a layer of complexity to even the best laid rail-trail plans. Almost 12 years after the Chester Creek Rail Trail Feasibility Study proposed a trail along a corridor that SEPTA is considering for future reactivation, the plan still sits on the drawing board. "Railroads are very formal organizations and are subject to numerous laws, regulations and governing authorities," the study authors wrote. "It is important to realize that, [because we are working with] a bureaucratic organization, the process will not be quick."

"Not quick" is putting it delicately. In nearby Philadelphia, the story of how CSX came to allow the Schuylkill River Trail to cross its active line at grade is a 14-year epic, brought to a conclusion in favor of the trail planners only after a CSX lawsuit backfired and trail advocates created a groundswell of public pressure.

Worn in but not worn down by the CSX/Schuylkill River Trail experience, Sarah Clark Stuart, policy director for the Bicycle Coalition of Greater Philadelphia, says that rail-with-trail presents a far greater challenge than developing a trail along a disused corridor. "But all the easy-to-build corridors have already been built," she says. "Now, many of the major gaps in trail systems are where the only opportunity is rail-with-trail. It's a much harder next step."

Stuart's organization currently is working with SEPTA on the possible extension of the Radnor Trail northwest of Philadelphia. But SEPTA has put evaluation of the trail plan on hold as it eyes part of the corridor for possible activation of high-speed transit service. Stuart says the wisest course of action has been to proceed with great patience and try to appreciate the concerns of the rail agency.

"We scaled back the feasibility study for the time being. We're studying several shorter sections not next to the rail corridor," she says. "We'll move forward with these, and we'll just wait. Allowing a trail next to their high-speed rail line would be precedent-setting for them, so they're proceeding very cautiously. We appreciate their concerns. In the end, we just have to be patient."

The Keys to Success

Patience is a word that appears again and again in stories about how rail-with-trail projects get built. So is insurance. During her study of successful rails-with-trails across the country, RTC's Pack found one thing many of them had in common was the insurance support of the local municipality or governing agency.

The Lance Armstrong Bikeway in Austin, Texas

NANCY PIERCE

TRACY HADDEN LOH

Along the Charlotte Trolley Rail Trail in North Carolina

"More often than not, local governments that manage rails-with-trails include them within their existing umbrella policy for recreation facilities," she says. "Sometimes there is no additional cost. But in some instances, the railroad has insisted the trail manager increase or carry an additional policy."

In the single fatality involving a trail user on a rail-with-trail recorded during research for *America's Rails-with-Trails*, both the railroad and the trail manager were cleared of any liability because ample safety measures had been applied. In making its ruling in the case, the court found that the trail, in Bellingham, Wash., had in fact been effective in improving safety for pedestrians and cyclists.

For people who regularly ride, walk, jog or skate along rails-with-trails, the safety issue seems to be barely a thought. "I can't really imagine why the train would be a problem," says Ann Groninger. A personal injury lawyer based in Charlotte, N.C., she regularly rides the Charlotte Trolley Trail, a rail-with-trail through her city's downtown that runs alongside a busy commuter light rail line. "I take my 4-year-old son on the trail. He's learning how to ride a bike. I don't think anything of it."

Groninger was surprised to hear that concerns about safety continue to impede rail-with-trail projects. "It's the road that presents my only safety concerns, not the train," she says. She adds that the Charlotte Trolley Trail has had a transformative effect on the city. "If you could have seen what that corridor was like before the trail and train—there was nothing there," she recalls. "Now, there are 10 new residential developments, microbreweries and lots of people using the trail for getting around or just for exercise."

More than a thousand miles to the west, back in Denton, Texas, users of the Denton Branch Rail Trail describe a similar experience. "When I rode next to the commuter train, the experience as it passed was quite charming and pleasing, if anything," recalls Howard Draper, one of the founders of Denton's now vibrant bike advocacy culture. "There's a good-sized buffer, so I was never scared to ride next to the train."

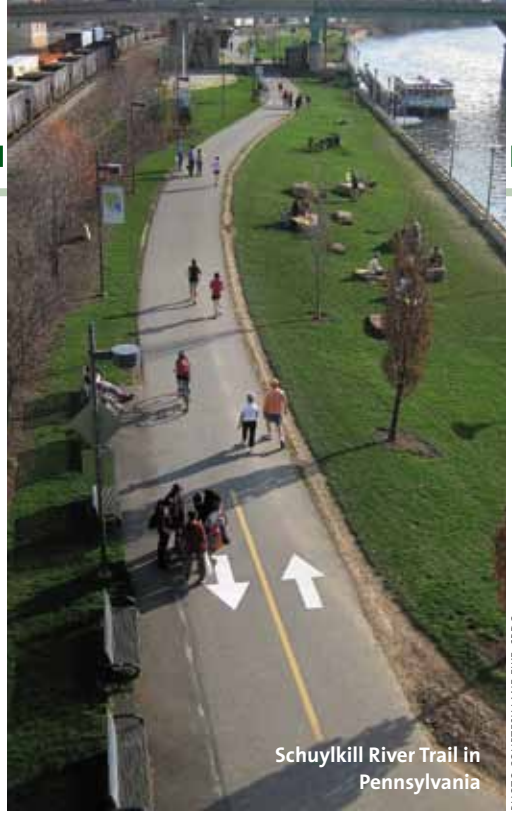
Similar to the Trolley Trail in Charlotte, the ability to co-locate multi-transportation modes in one corridor has had an outsized impact on the success of Denton's development. "I think accessibility to education and employment opportunities made a convincing argument to keep the trail when they were planning reactivation of the train line," Draper says.

Access and Connections

This idea of accessibility and mobility strikes at the core of the rail-with-trail debate. Many argue that, because rail corridors physically interrupt and divide existing neighborhoods and communities, disconnecting people from destinations that might be nearby but on the other side of the tracks, rail companies have a responsibility to address the resultant mobility problems for nearby residents.

"Saying that 'No, a trail has no place around a rail corridor,' is essentially a value statement that the mobility needs of the train passengers trump the mobility needs of all those people who live nearby," says Tracy Hadden Loh, RTC's director of research. "And when you consider the fact that oftentimes neighborhoods near train tracks are lower-income communities, the effort to build rails-with-trails to improve local mobility and safety becomes an issue of social justice."

In Washington, D.C., creating safe connections between neighborhoods on both sides of a busy rail line was a prime consideration in planning the Metropolitan Branch Trail. The initial 1.5-mile section of this urban trail-in-progress has seven access points. "It was important to consider not only the neighborhoods adjacent to the trail, but also those across the active tracks," says Heather Deutsch, trail planner for the District Department of Transportation (DDOT). To that end, DDOT is building a $9-million pedestrian-bicycle bridge where hundreds of pedestrians used to cross the active tracks, putting themselves in danger.



Schuylkill River Trail in Pennsylvania

PHOTO COURTESY LANE FIKE, SRDC

Designing for Safety

Although chain-link fencing is one of the most common barriers used, a number of design options have been shown to keep trail users off the tracks and trail managers out of court. In Denton, only a broad ditch separates the trail from the live line. In downtown Pittsburgh, a short fence and a wide buffer separate the Three Rivers Heritage Trail from the active freight line it parallels. Alongside many trains, including the Reading and Northern Railroad in eastern Pennsylvania, riders and walkers happily enjoy the trail separated from the trains by nothing except the fresh breeze.

Things get complicated when the trail has to cross the tracks, hence the cost of Gerald Maier's crossing lights and signage. Crossings are a flash-point issue in that bridges or tunnels are expensive, while at-grade crossings present challenging design issues. Even railroad companies that are supportive or tolerant of rails-with-trails can object to at-grade crossings, partly because they are concerned that they are where an accident is most likely to occur, despite their almost impeccable safety record.

Stuart believes that concerns about crossings are not reason enough to prevent construction of a rail-with-trail. "I do wish the railroad industry would work with communities to foster a culture of safely co-existing with their neighbors," she says. "Being willing to accommodate public access under some conditions is a step in that direction."

All Aboard

The Great Allegheny Passage (GAP) in western Maryland is an example of a symbiotic relationship, where a trail has benefited the train operation as much as the train has benefited the trail. Picture a recent October morning; the platform of the Western Maryland Railway Station in downtown Cumberland is packed with hundreds of sightseers awaiting the arrival of the restored 1916 Baldwin 2-8-0 diesel engine and carriages, a handsome old train that will carry them up into the Allegheny Mountains to enjoy the spectacular colors of the fall season.

Among them is the Foresman family, from Fredericksburg, Va. The parents and two children wait eagerly at the front of the long line with their bikes and helmets. The bikes will be loaded onto the *Mountain Thunder* for the 10-mile journey uphill to Frostburg, Md. There, the family will offload and enjoy a leisurely pedal back down the GAP to Cumberland. For many, it's the perfect introduction to trail riding. "This is new for us," says Piper Foresman, adding, however, that the adventure taps into a distant memory. "I remember going on a cross-country train trip when I was the children's age."

The Foresmans' visit to Cumberland for the train and trail ride includes a stay at a local hotel, a common visitor pattern that both trail and train supporters point to as evidence of the economic significance of rail-with-trail tourism.

Some 250 miles to the northeast, in Pennsylvania's beautiful Lehigh Gorge, the evolution of rail-with-trail partnerships continues. Paul Fogal, co-owner of Pocono Whitewater in Jim Thorpe, Pa., is finalizing an agreement with the Lehigh Gorge Scenic Railway for a limited run of bike-carrying trains in the spring and fall. The railway line, operated by the Reading Blue Mountain and Northern Railroad, parallels the spectacular Lehigh Gorge State Park Trail as it runs north along the Lehigh River.

"Unless you live in New York City or another big city where you catch the train every day, this would be a remarkable experience," Fogal says. "Many of the people that come up here have a strong interest in local history, and the railroad is a big part of that. The goal is to encourage people to visit the town and spend money with us and the railroad and the restaurants and all the other businesses in town."

A Way Forward

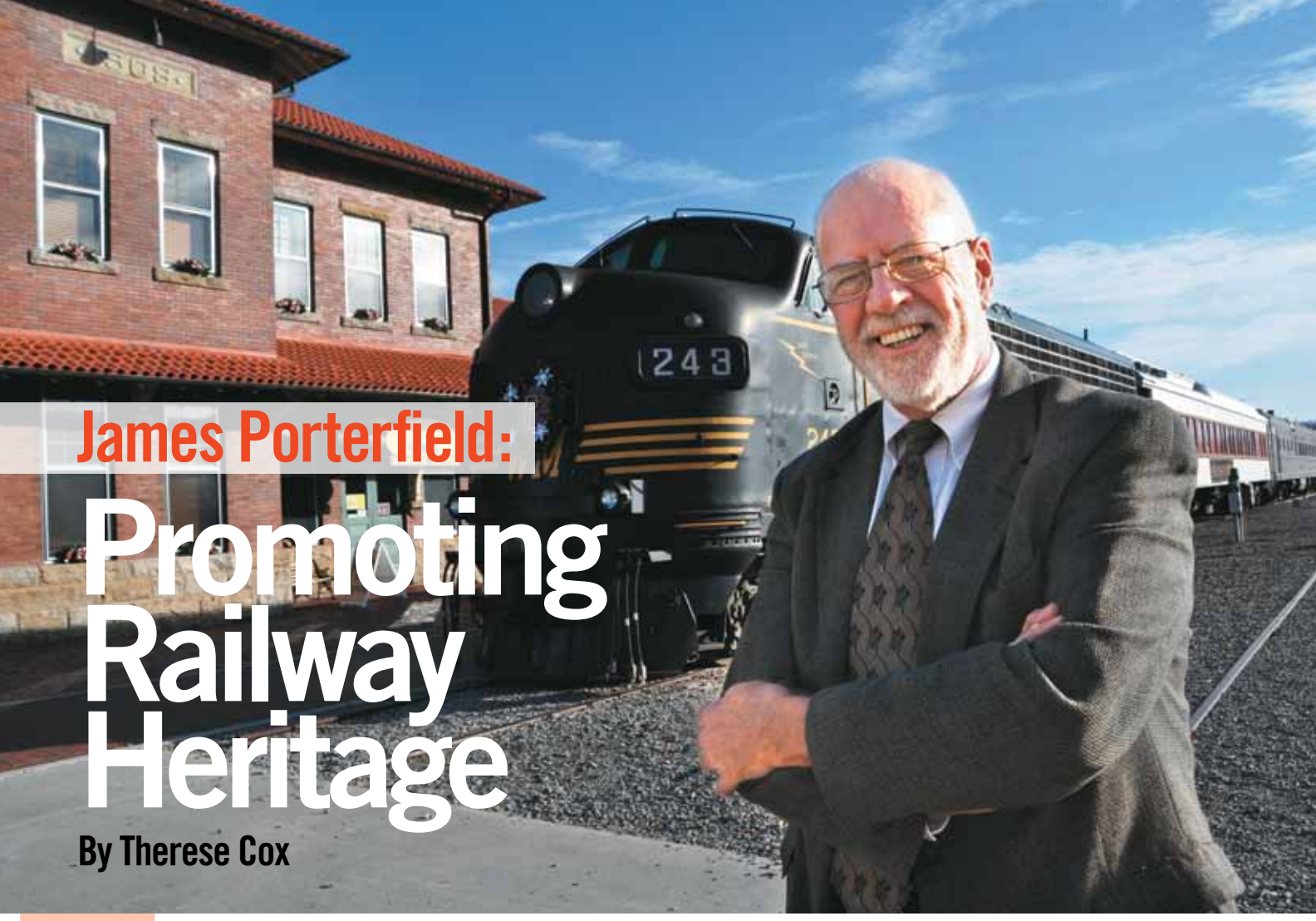
Marshall believes the strategy for the rail-with-trail movement should be to continue to develop trails in these more favorable environments in order to build, over time, a solid appreciation of the safety benefits. Eventually, that will help reassure major freight carriers and generate greater public support for such trails. "When the day comes, when rails-with-trails are commonly supported and built, that will represent a terrific victory for the people of America," he says.

A future encompassing rails-with-trails is one that many are working hard to realize. In September, RTC staff convened a historic meeting of trail and rail interests, bringing together for the first time around one table representatives of freight, transit and excursion rail industries with trail planners and advocates. The result, says Tom Sexton, director of RTC's Northeast Regional Office, was a step forward in acknowledging concerns and constraints and in seeing where opportunities for cooperation exist.

"To hear rail and transit representatives say that 'Yes, trails may serve as a safe and effective means of helping to manage people along railroad corridors' was a significant moment," Sexton says. "That statement represented an interesting shift in how the major freight movers are even prepared to think about rails-with-trails."

Maybe Marshall's America of the future isn't so far away.

Jake Lynch is the Editor-in-Chief of *Rails to Trails* magazine.



James Porterfield: Promoting Railway Heritage

By Therese Cox

In 2012, James Porterfield launched the Center for Railway Tourism, the nation's first educational program devoted to promoting America's railway heritage as a tourism and economic opportunity. The center is located at Davis & Elkins College, Elkins, W.Va., where it is a component of the Recreation Management and Tourism major in the Business and Entrepreneurship Department.

Elkins is the natural setting for the center and for Porterfield himself. Railway tourism is thriving in the former railroad town, which boasts a popular rail-trail—the Allegheny Highlands Trail—as well as the beautifully restored Western Maryland Depot, several excursion trains and the newly opened West Virginia Railroad Museum.

Porterfield is the author of *Dining by Rail: The History and Recipes of America's Golden Age of Railroad Cuisine* and contributing editor of *Railfan & Railroad* magazine. Recently, we met on the bucolic campus to discuss his love of both rail heritage and rail-trails.

How did you become interested in railways?

When I was a child, my dad was a model railroader and rail fan. He had Lionel trains. He would secretly build a train layout in the basement at Christmas. After my brother and I went to bed on Christmas Eve, he would put the layout in the living room and put the tree on it. We grew up believing Santa brought the trains.

Also, we used to vacation on Lake Erie, in Conneaut, Ohio. Those were busy railroad years. Instead of going to the lake to swim, we'd go to the nearby Nickel Plate Railroad yard and watch the trains.

Today, I represent the railway tourist's point of view. I have an interest in travel, history, preservation and railroading, and that's what led me to do something like this, to take this perspective.

What is the Center for Railway Tourism, and why is it important?

The railway travel and preservation industry is in sort of a crisis. It is dominated by older people who grew up around trains and have fond memories of what it was like to ride them, and these people are passing [away] now. There is no next generation that experienced trains as an integral part of their lives.

In a class I taught here last spring, I learned that the young students who grew up around here, where more than 700 people worked for the railroad until the 1970s, were not aware that this historically was a railroad town—not to mention the fact that they had never ridden a train.

So part of the purpose of the Center for Railway Tourism is to encourage young people to consider this as a career field and to make them aware of how extensive the railroad industry was, and is. The industry has a longer history than any other major industry except mining. At [its] peak in the 1920s, there were more than 40,000 train stations in America, and the railroads employed 2.2 million people.

NANCI BROSS-FREGONARA

What do you hope to accomplish through the Center for Railway Tourism?

Our first goal is to attract young people and prepare them for careers in railway heritage tourism. We are developing course materials that can be delivered by distance education for those who want to work in railway tourism elsewhere in the country. Consider this: Roughly 1,000 communities in America depend on railway heritage tourism for some part of their economic development. There are 500 to 700 excursion railways or museum operations, plus train-watching spots, model railroads and more. If you add the more than 1,800 rail-trails in the country, which I consider to be part of our railway heritage, you begin to understand how important the work of the center could be.

Our second goal is to develop materials and resources to help railway heritage tourism venues better explain and more effectively market their attractions.

The third goal is to educate the public on the importance of these things.

The Center for Railway Tourism brings us all together—people interested in railway preservation and interpretation, rail-trails, excursion railways, model railroading, railroad community history and museums. It's a natural.

In the railfan community, have you encountered opposition to supporters of rail-trails?

Some in the railroad heritage community think Rails-to-Trails Conservancy is the enemy. I'm told some developers are having a really rough time with local rail-trail advocates. Preservationists aim to maintain the rail lines for potential or continued operation of trains, either for commerce or excursions. On the other hand, those who support rail-trails hope to develop open paths for biking, hiking and other recreation. Some on both sides see this as an either/or question—either a trail or a rail line. But one of the things I'm working on with Rails-to-Trails Conservancy and the Association of Tourist Railroads and Railway Museums is the development of examples in which cooperation has benefited both parties. That may take several forms, from a trail radiating out from a museum or excursion railroad, which is the case here in Elkins, to excursion trains hauling bicycles to a trailhead, and trails running alongside excursion routes.

The railway heritage community needs to do market research so it can demonstrate how an excursion railroad will benefit the community. This is something Rails-to-Trails Conservancy does expertly, regarding trails.

I see partnerships as an important component of heritage tourism. Elkins is strengthened by having three, four, five or six connections to railroad history, all of which are marketed. People who come here to ride the Allegheny Highlands Trail also see the excursion railroad. They say, "How interesting." Then they visit the two mansions built by the fellows who started the rail line: Davis and Elkins. "Look," they say, "there's also an interesting museum here devoted to West Virginia's railroads." That partnership is what benefits the community.

There's a growing awareness among railway heritage preservation professionals of the benefit of working with nearby rail-trail organizations. The result may be building a rails-with-trails partnership, locating heritage displays in facilities that also serve as trailheads, or working to create signage along rail-trails that calls attention to the railroad history found there. The progressive members of both communities—railfans and trail advocates—see the need and desirability of working together for their community's benefit.

How can these advocates support both rail lines and trails?

I think about that a lot. My love is railroad history. The good rail-trails have historical markers or traces of the infrastructure that still exist. The trails are like the railroads that once ran on them. What you see can only be seen from the trail. You can't get there any other way than by getting on your bicycle or walking. That's why I find rail-trails fascinating. Plus, it's good low-impact exercise.

In the end, we have several things in common, particularly a desire to preserve a unique artifact: a railroad's right-of-way. We share a passion for retaining a sense of place, for restoring old structures, for something as basic as getting out and about. That's the focus I want the center to concentrate on.

How is the rail-trail effort critical to conserving corridors and restoring historic depots and other historic infrastructure?

The route of the railroad is what is valuable, as a trail and as the right-of-way if the rail line were ever to be reactivated. Rails-to-Trails Conservancy is the only organization fighting at a national level, and in the law courts, to protect those corridors. If that right-of-way is broken up and sold to individual landowners, or if the route is abandoned and nobody comes forward to protect it, it's gone.

Trail groups do a lot of work at the national level to restore old stations and other locales for use as trailheads. I applaud any effort to restore and protect what were: at one time, the very hearts of railroad communities.

In reality, neither Rails-to-Trails Conservancy nor a rail-history group can demand that a line be abandoned for an excursion operation or a trail. Yes, tension does appear to exist between some parts of the rail-heritage and trail-conservancy communities over the possible use of former rail lines. But I'm just a fan of railroad history in all its manifestations. Rail-trails. Restored equipment and excursions. Museums. Model railroads. Art, literature and music. Movies. You name it. I see cooperation on these common delights leading to good things on both sides.

Therese Cox is a retired newspaper reporter living in Charleston, W.Va. She enjoys riding her bike on West Virginia's Greenbrier River Trail, a recent inductee into Rails-to-Trails Conservancy's Rail-Trail Hall of Fame.

SEATTLE'S HEARTLINE

Community Engagement Along the Burke-Gilman Trail

By Karl Wirsing

A decades-old jewel in Seattle is on its way to becoming a next-generation trail for active transportation and recreation.

It's a sunny Saturday afternoon in August. Streams of purple-clad University of Washington fans and families hustle down the Burke-Gilman Trail to reach Husky Stadium in time for kick-off against Boise State University. Some tote coolers and camp chairs on their way to tailgates; others swap excited high fives and shoulder bumps, and woe to anyone trying to run or pedal against the boisterous current.

While today is a big day for Husky fans, they are far from the only people to take to the 17-mile rail-trail. The pathway pulses with activity year-round, and the volume rarely slows, even during the soggiest winter months.

TRACY HADDEN LOH

A pilot section of the Burke-Gilman redesign at the University of Washington

The trail was built in the 1970s along part of the original Seattle, Lake Shore and Eastern Railway corridor. It was named for Thomas Burke and Daniel Gilman, two of the founders of the railway in 1885. Beginning in Golden Gardens Park on Puget Sound, the path cuts east through the northern Seattle neighborhoods of Ballard, Fremont and Wallingford and then hooks directly through the University of Washington campus. From there, it edges northwest for several miles out along Lake Washington, where you'll be excused for swooning clear off the path at the sight of Mount Rainier glistening to the south on a clear day. (The volcano is a showstopper no matter how many times you've seen it.) Passing from neighborhood to neighborhood, the Burke-Gilman eventually curls around the northern tip of the lake toward the community of Bothell, where it merges seamlessly into the Sammamish River Trail.

With so many access points and destinations, thousands of people have a personal story and connection, a share of ownership, a reason to call it "my" path. Whether they're 30-year season-ticket holders who walk to the stadium every game, or they used the corridor to train for their first Seattle Marathon, trail users on the Burke-Gilman often have an unusually strong attachment to the pathway.

The emotional connection that makes the trail so popular also means it is important to design any changes to the Burke-Gilman with a great deal of care, sensitivity and community input. That's really what sets the trail apart: Rather than look at community engagement as an obstacle or a cumbersome process to be dreaded, Burke-Gilman trail managers view neighborhood involvement as vital to the trail's success.

For the Burke-Gilman, the result is a trail with supreme community integration—of partners, ideas and infrastructure—that attracts new fans every day.

School Is In

Just ask Josh Kavanagh, director of University of Washington Transportation Services, who moved to Seattle in 2007 after working in a similar role at the University of New Mexico. "The community's connection to this trail is incredibly deep," he says. "It means so much to so many different people."

From his office building across the street from the Burke-Gilman, Kavanagh gets a front-row seat to observe the 1.7-mile trail segment the university manages. (Other segments are managed by the city of Seattle and King County.) With the volume of trail users projected to nearly double by 2030, Kavanagh knows that one of his most pressing tasks is to figure out how to accommodate that traffic safely and efficiently.

Partly fueling the uptick in trail traffic is a recent boom in on- or near-campus student housing. The 2013 freshman class of 6,255 students is the university's largest to date, and since 2010, the share of students living within one mile of UW has grown from 29 to 39 percent. Several large new apartment complexes, such as the newly opened Mercer Court, sit directly alongside the Burke-Gilman.

The biggest driver of future growth, though, will be the arrival of a Central Link light rail stop on campus in 2016. Operated by Sound Transit (**soundtransit.org**), Link light rail currently runs 15.9 miles from Seattle-Tacoma International Airport to downtown Seattle. The next two stops to open will be in Capitol Hill and then at Husky Stadium across the street from the Burke-Gilman Trail. Every 7.5 to 15 minutes throughout the day, this new stop will deposit dozens of passengers—many of whom will cross directly onto the trail to reach campus and the UW Medical Center. "We knew introducing light rail adjacent to the trail was going to bring disruptive change," says Kavanagh. "Something needed to be done, or we'd have a crisis on our hands."

Ears to the Ground

For the past couple of years, UW has been working closely with a number of local partners—including Sound Transit, King County, Puget Sound Regional Council and Puget Sound Clean Air Agency—to prepare for this challenge. As Kavanagh's team started planning the trail redesign, called the Burke-Gilman Trail Multi-Modal Connector, they knew the success of any changes would hinge on maximum community buy-in and support. So they expanded their outreach to advocacy groups, neighborhoods, parks and advisory boards, requesting feedback and letting folks know about plans for the trail. Signs along the Burke-Gilman have advertised the approaching changes for months.

The response has been enormous. "We've been overwhelmed by the community's enthusiasm in making an investment in this resource they treasure," says Kavanagh.

Drawing from that wealth of feedback, the blueprint for the redesign incorporates a number of innovations, notably grade-separated lanes: asphalt for cyclists, concrete for pedestrians and a compressed gravel path for runners. Marking each lane will be four-inch, sloped mini-curbs—not disruptive enough to endanger users, but elevated enough to keep them alert to the different spaces.

Another big improvement will be streamlining access points. If you count all the "cow path" connections to the trail, says Kavanagh, there are about 80 access points on the campus section alone—often random, and mostly unmarked. The plan is to consolidate down to 19 "mixing zones" that make trail access and travel behavior safe and predictable, or "legible," to all users.

ERIK STUHAUG/SEATTLE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

Seattle Children's Hospital offers incentives to employees to bike or walk to work.

Trail Mapping 2.0

RTC is partnering with the City of Seattle to help research trail use on the Burke-Gilman Trail before and after upgrades are completed. This work is part of a national Trail Monitoring and Assessment Platform project, T-MAP, in which RTC will record and analyze trail use patterns in 12 urban areas across the country. RTC believes this will help better represent current traffic and forecast future urban trail use.

The Burke-Gilman is attractive as a study site because of its overwhelming popularity, as well as its strong partners and management structure. "It's truly a bicycle highway," says RTC's Tracy Hadden Loh. "And the age and diversity of people coming and going on the trail are incredible. It's clearly a facility for everyone."

One counter will be placed on the University of Washington campus where the Burke-Gilman crosses busy 15th Street—one of the next sections the university has targeted for improvements. It's a long-established crossing point where daily traffic is heavy and diverse, from cars and buses on the road, to cyclists, runners and students on the trail. The path is clearly marked, and the intersection has a traffic signal, making the spot a quintessential urban mixing zone. "That intersection is particularly exciting because this rail-trail is one of the oldest in the country," says Hadden Loh. "It will give us a really mature picture of what urban trail use looks like, especially when the light rail stop opens just up the trail."

Tracy Hadden Loh, research director for Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC), toured several of these future project sites last May, including the demonstration section. "When these projects are done, it's going to be a next-generation trail facility," she says. "There's nothing like it anywhere in the world right now, and it will be really impressive to see that vision come to life. It will have a huge impact on a huge number of people."

Footing the Bill

With a total estimated project cost of $26 million, Kavanagh's team has been working to secure as much funding up front as possible to prevent long gaps in construction and to minimize the detours and disruptions.

One of the earliest funding streams began several years ago when UW pledged to make campus operations carbon neutral by 2050. Kavanagh saw a cost-effective opportunity to help cut down on vehicle emissions from employees and students by investing in active transportation infrastructure—ranging from bike-repair stations and bike lockers to more bicycle parking on campus.

To fund these initiatives, the university pledged 100 percent of receipts from all parking fines around campus for the next 30 years to build more biking and walking infrastructure. These parking tickets provide more than $800,000 annually, and they will make up a big part of the university's commitment of $8 million toward improvements to the Burke-Gilman.

Shared Values

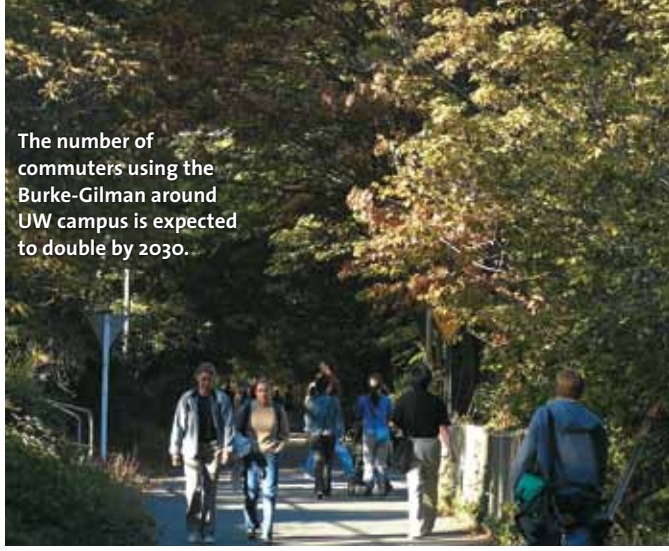
UW is not the only institution to embrace the Burke-Gilman as an essential community resource. A little farther up the trail from campus, Seattle Children's Hospital (**seattlechildrens.org**) is investing several million dollars in building improved access and connections to the Burke-Gilman Trail, and construction of a neighborhood greenway. The hospital doesn't own or manage any of the Burke-Gilman, but it has partnered with the city and surrounding neighborhoods to maximize the pathway's connectivity.

Paulo Nunes-Ueno, director of transportation and sustainability for Seattle Children's, joined the hospital five years ago. At the time, he saw the growth projections for Seattle Children's, and like Kavanagh at UW, he recognized that investing in active transportation and changing commuter behavior—including getting more employees cycling into work—were smart strategies to reduce congestion around the hospital.

Part of the impetus for this mode-share push came from the King County Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) Law, which requires major employers in the Seattle area to reduce the number and length of drive-alone commutes to the worksite. But the hospital isn't looking to clear the lowest hurdle possible. Nunes-Ueno, whose father was a transportation engineer in Brazil, wanted to exceed the CTR requirements, and he's on a mission to make the hospital a community mobility hub that benefits employees, patients and residents alike.

The hospital's Company Bike Program provides anyone who bikes to work at least twice a week with a free Jamis bicycle, helmet, lock and basic skills classes. The hospital also provides lockers and

ERIK STUHAUG/SEATTLE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL



The number of commuters using the Burke-Gilman around UW campus is expected to double by 2030.

VAL RICHEY

shower facilities. Each day biking to work earns an employee a $3.25 bonus; a loaner bike program is available for one-off errands or short, local trips; every employee gets a free transit pass; and the hospital runs its own free shuttle service to collect employees from several stops in the city.

Community Feeling

Rather than be a spectator to future developments, the hospital took the lead in reimagining the bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure in its surrounding neighborhoods. As part of Seattle Children's Major Institution Master Plan, which commits nearly $4 million to local transportation improvements, Nunes-Ueno organized community workshops, an open house and other forums, and also solicited letters, emails and public comments.

What he found right away was a happy intersection of interests. "We wanted the same things our neighbors wanted for the community," he says, citing better trail access, more sidewalks and safe road crossings as examples.

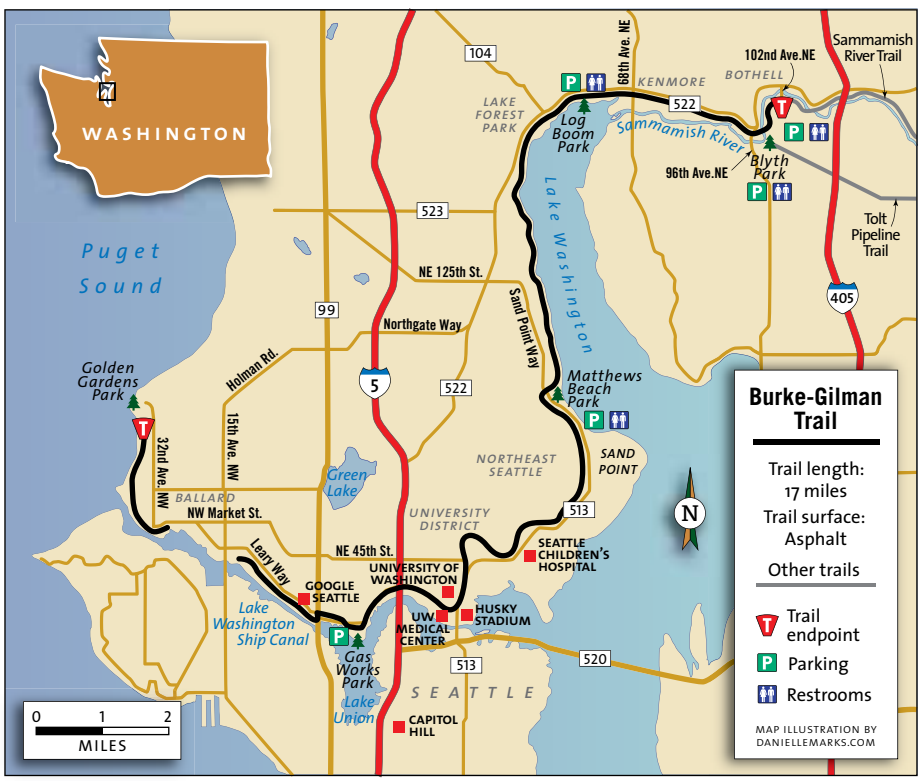
Working with the City of Seattle, the hospital used that feedback to start prioritizing projects in early 2011. One of the first projects addressed a major challenge to pedestrian mobility: Sand Point Way, a busy, four-lane arterial with limited signalized crossings that cuts a daunting diagonal across the main access points to Seattle Children's. To overcome this barrier, the hospital invested in a block-long, two-lane cycle track along the main frontage with Sand Point Way. At the northeast end, it connects to several neighborhoods adjacent to the hospital campus. At the southwest end, it spills out at the new signalized intersection, which features a separate "bike-cross" lane next to the pedestrian crosswalk—the first of its kind in Seattle.

Nunes-Ueno says the vocal support of hospital leaders has helped move these initiatives forward. Seattle Children's also has committed funds—beyond the $4 million—to develop nearby infrastructure through its campus development fund. Most recently, construction began on a connector from Sand Point Way to ramp up to the Burke-Gilman. The existing route from the hospital has no sidewalks or shoulders and zigzags through side streets; it's not a clear or inviting path. The new 8-foot-wide spur will be only 580 feet long, but this connector, built at an easier grade, will provide a direct path from the rail-trail to the main hospital entrance. "The Burke-Gilman is an amazing treasure for us," says Nunes-Ueno. "When we build this connector, it will be so much easier for people to go for a walk with their kids or go on a short bike ride to clear their minds."

The hospital isn't done yet, either. Ride around the neighborhood with Nunes-Ueno, and he'll point out a number of future projects on the calendar, from more signalized crossings to other greenways. His energy and enthusiasm, and his eagerness to draw in new partners and community input, is the sort of emotional stake that powers the Burke-Gilman.

From the university to the hospital and beyond, the payoff of these community partnerships is a growing circumference of bicycle and pedestrian facilities leading to and along the Burke-Gilman. With each new road crossing, greenway and access point, the trail reaches a new neighborhood, a new first-time user, a new fan, and—in many cases—a new engaged citizen and advocate. That, after all, is the real magic of the Burke-Gilman. It's not the city's trail, or the university's trail or King County's trail. It belongs to everyone, and everyone has a stake.

Karl Wirsing is the former editor-in-chief of *Rails to Trails*. He moved to Seattle a year ago and now works for the University of Washington, where he regularly runs and rides on the Burke-Gilman Trail.



A View From...

America's Restored Transportation Stations

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy's efforts to preserve and repurpose railroad corridors are well-known, but did you know that we work to protect America's railroad stations and other historic transportation buildings too? For many years, RTC has been one of the nation's strongest advocates for the Transportation Alternatives program (formerly called Transportation Enhancements), which is the only federal funding source for the restoration of rail and ferry depots. Thanks to this program, communities across the country have been able to turn run-down and neglected buildings into valuable local assets, spurring economic development and new transportation opportunities while keeping the nation's railroad heritage alive. Here are just a few examples.

▲New Freedom Railroad Station—Pennsylvania

Once an unsightly ruin, the historic train station in New Freedom, Pa., now is the center of a burgeoning trail-tourism economy. Built in 1885, the New Freedom Station served Northern Central Railway trains running from Washington, D.C., and Baltimore to Chicago, St. Louis and Buffalo until the early 1970s. Now transformed, this jewel of railroad history along the Heritage Rail Trail County Park houses the Whistle Stop Bike Shop and the Rail Trail Café, and services a popular excursion train operation, Steam Into History (see page 24 for more on the tourist train).

AFTER: CARL KNOCH; BEFORE: ED HUGHES

AFTER: GARY MORGRET;
BEFORE: COURTESY PAGE & TURNBULL/
SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC LIBRARY (2)

▲San Francisco Ferry Building—California

When first unveiled in 1898, the Ferry Building on the shores of San Francisco Bay was known as "a famous city's most famous landmark." With the decline of ferry traffic in the mid-20th century, however, the building was converted into office space and lost much of its architectural luster. After an extensive, four-year restoration, the Ferry Building reopened to the public in April 2003 as a world-class public food market. A star attraction of the building is "the Nave," a dramatic indoor pedestrian market street that runs its entire length.

▶King Street Station—Washington

In April 2013, Seattle celebrated the grand reopening of the historic King Street Station, one of the busiest rail hubs in the Northwest. The ornate interior of the turn-of-the 20th-century building had fallen into disrepair and was concealed behind "improvements" made over the decades. Supported by federal Transportation Alternatives funds, the King Street Station revitalization project not only restored the architectural and historical integrity of the building, but also allowed for the expansion of passenger rail service.

SEATTLE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

JOHN STAMETS

▶ Lafayette Train Station—Indiana

The people of Lafayette, Ind., were so keen on making the historic Lafayette "Big Four" Depot a central part of the community that they not only restored the building, but also moved it three blocks! Built in 1902, the Romanesque-style brick and limestone depot served the Lake Erie & Western, and the Cleveland, Cincinnati, Chicago and St. Louis railroads until trains stopped running there in about 1970. In 1994, A Transportation Enhancements grant helped fund the relocation and renovation of the depot, which now serves as an Amtrak station and local transportation center, as well as the headquarters for the Wabash River Enhancement Corporation.

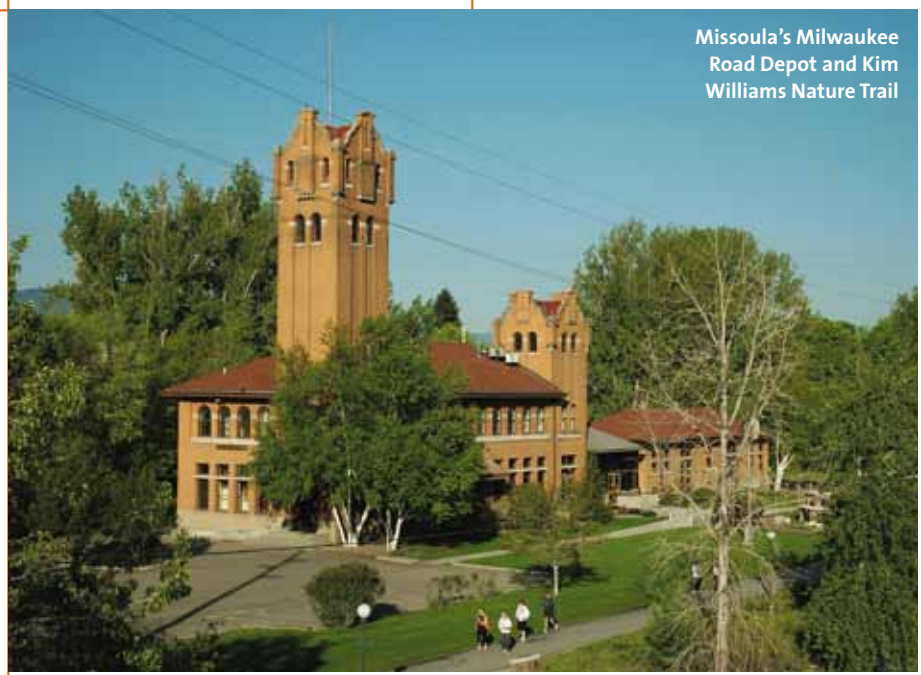
PHOTOS COURTESY CITY OF LAFAYETTE

◀ Tampa Union Station—Florida

Tampa Union Station's 1912 Italian Renaissance Revival-style building originally served passenger operations for the Atlantic Coast Line, the Seaboard Air Line and the Tampa Northern Railroad at a single site. Though it was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1974, the building was a wreck by the 1980s, with the roof leaking rainwater and plaster falling from the ceiling. It closed in 1984. But thanks to a Transportation Enhancements grant and the support of many, including Friends of Tampa Union Station, the station was restored. It reopened in 1998 and is a bustling hub of commercial rail service once again.

BEFORE

PHOTOS COURTESY FRIENDS OF TAMPA UNION STATION, INC.



Missoula's Milwaukee Road Depot and Kim Williams Nature Trail

KRISTI HAGER

MONTANA

Station-ary Tourism

The very word *Montana* stirs up images of craggy mountain peaks and wide golden plains beneath a vast blue sky. The state has long been a tourist hub for those who enjoy the outdoors and want a taste of the untamed West. A forthcoming book will add a new dimension to this well-loved destination: Old West railway depots.

Although a resident of the state for more than 30 years, Mark Hufstetler became a Montana tourist himself while working on his book, *Monuments to Travel: Montana's Historic Railway Stations*. His research was a road trip experience. "I've done thousands of miles of driving here. It's been fun because I've been able to explore parts of the state that I wouldn't have otherwise visited."

Montana's statehood came late—not until 1889. Railroads were booming in Montana by then and were central to its development and culture. Tangible glimpses of this past are scattered across the state in the form of railroad depots, most more than 100 years old. Hufstetler's research turned up more than 175 still standing.

"When this book comes out, I think it will create a huge buzz," says Ken Egan, executive director of Humanities Montana, a nonprofit organization that supported Hufstetler's research. "We're nostalgic about our home, and Montana's depots are so distinct. They rise up out of the prairie and are important icons."

The book, to be published by the Montana Historical Society Press (**mhs.mt.gov/pub**) in late 2014, will include photographs of the depots past and present, statewide maps of depot locations and an explanation of their historical importance.

"These were the days before automobiles," says Hufstetler. "Depots were the places that people entered and left town, shipped and received parcels, and sent and received messages because depots were also telegraph stations. They were very important buildings in the daily lives of people."

Hufstetler was impressed by the quality and variety of the buildings. "So many of the depots are just exceptional pieces of architecture," he says. Rail-trail fans can see one of his favorites, the Milwaukee Road Depot (pictured above), with its sunset-hued bricks and distinctive observation towers, standing tall over the Kim Williams Nature Trail in Missoula. "They all have their own story," says Hufstetler, and in his book, readers will have the chance to hear them.

PENNSYLVANIA

Steam Into History

The steam engine that lumbers down the old Northern Central Railway route is no ordinary train, and it offers no ordinary ride. The locomotive—with bright red wheels flashing and brass accents shining—is a Civil War-era replica built from scratch. And tourists experience history come alive as they ride the train through Pennsylvania's lush York County countryside.

"We were looking for a locomotive typical for the 1860s, but we couldn't find any," says G. Robert Gotwols, chief operating officer for Steam Into History, a new tourist train venture in New Freedom, Pa. "Most were scrapped or left to rot, so we went looking for someone who could build a new one."

They found their man in David Kloke, who—as a hobby—once built the 88,000-pound steam engine *Leviathan 63*, based on the original patterns of the historic *Jupiter* train that participated in the Golden Spike Ceremony marking the completion of the first Transcontinental Railroad in 1869.

Kloke completed *York 17* this past summer, and the Steam Into History train was on track for a June 2013 opening. Each round-trip journey between

PHOTO COURTESY LASSEN LAND AND TRAILS TRUST

Event at the Susanville Railroad Depot

New Freedom and Hanover Junction is different; riders may encounter narrators sharing the history of the area, reenactors in period costume (look for Old Abe on special occasions) or musicians playing 19th-century tunes. A stop at Hanover Junction allows time to explore the museum inside the refurbished train station, the very place where President Lincoln changed trains on his trip to give his famed "Gettysburg Address" in 1863.

For friends William H. Simpson and D. Reed Anderson, it was this rich history that sparked the train idea. They envisioned Steam Into History as a nonprofit organization that would benefit the community educationally and economically. "The idea came from a couple of York businessmen who were history buffs and rail buffs who wanted to leave something for the community," says Gotwols. "Nobody gets rich from this. The only folks to benefit are the communities along the line."

Indeed, according to Carl Knoch, trail development manager for RTC's Northeast Regional Office, "The local businesses in New Freedom are thrilled with the train. They've seen an uptick in business since the trains started running."

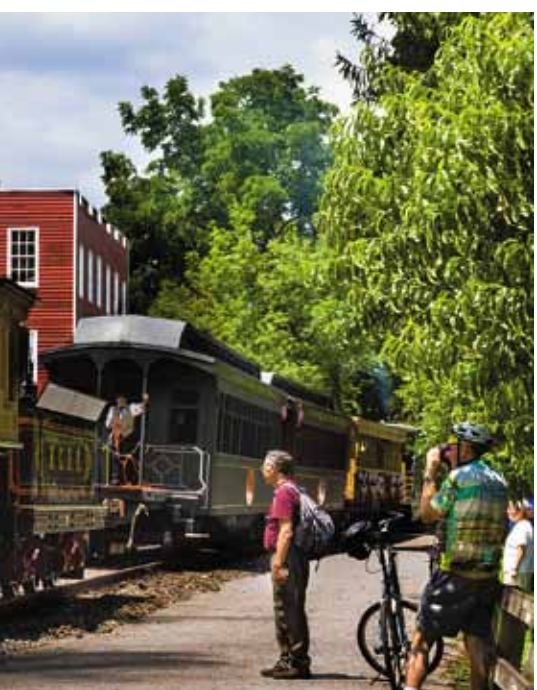
In its first six months of operation, Steam Into History had more than 20,000 riders. "We had a lot of ridership during the summer," explains Gotwols. "And, when the leaves started to change, we sold out every weekend."

Beginning mid-April 2014, the train will operate Tuesday through Sunday, with two to three runs a day. Basic tickets for adults are $22 (occasionally more for special events); children's tickets are $14.

Bicycle riders can enjoy the experience, too. Heritage Rail Trail County Park adjacent to the tracks winds for more than 22 miles from York to the Maryland state line. By spring 2014, Steam Into History plans to offer train cars that can accommodate bike storage, so riders can enjoy both a trail and train experience.

For more information, visit **steamintohistory.com**.

Visitors at Heritage Rail Trail County Park watch the Steam Into History train.



JOHN GENSOR

CALIFORNIA

Defending the Depot

From its modest appearance, one wouldn't guess that the Susanville Depot, nestled among the Sierra and Cascade mountain ranges of northeastern California, was once the subject of fierce debate.

In the early 1900s, the surrounding alpine forests spurred a burgeoning timber industry and development of the Fernley & Lassen branch of the Southern Pacific Railroad. Susanville's passenger and freight depot was built in 1927 to serve the line. It was a small stucco building with a ticket counter and waiting room in the front, and a station manager's office and small freight room in the back. An adjacent wooden freight shed had been built in 1913.

When the town's major mill closed in 1956, the railroad began using the depot for storage, but even that use ended in 1978 when the railroad prepared to abandon the line.

Nearly a decade later, the railroad was getting ready to sell the depot to the city and suggested that the building be burned down as practice for the local fire department. The community jumped into action to protect the depot. Only a quarter of a mile away, a new rail-trail, the Bizz Johnson National Recreation Trail, was forming on the old railroad bed. The depot seemed an obvious choice for a trailhead, and a "Save the Depot" coalition was formed to preserve it.

Not everyone supported the idea, though. "A highway bypass was under consideration at the time," says Stan Bales, an outdoor recreation planner for the Bureau of Land Management, which was spearheading the rail-trail conversion. "Some thought a highway bypass around town would make sense, and they had strong feelings about it. The depot was an impediment for the bypass because it was a historical structure that was in the way."

In 1987, the Lassen Land and Trails Trust, a new conservation organization, stepped in and became owner and manager of the building and two short sets of parallel railroad tracks remaining on the property. A suspicious fire in 1989 completely destroyed the shed and damaged the depot, but, eventually the effort to save the building prevailed.

"The project that gave the Trust its birth was saving the depot," says Louise Jensen, Trust executive director. "The depot is our flagship and makes us visible to the community."

Under trust leadership, the depot was restored. The work took seven years and could not have been completed without the stalwart help of the community's volunteers. In 1994, the building reopened as a museum and visitor center for the region's trails. Those short tracks are used, too; set side by side as they are, they're perfect for handcar races, a popular activity at the trust's Rails to Trails Festival each October.

For more information about the Susanville Depot, the Rails to Trails Festival and the Bizz Johnson National Recreation Trail, visit **lassenlandandtrailstrust.org**.

rails·to·trails conservancy

What We've Been Up To

■ In the Northeast Regional Office, trail development staff Pat Tomes and Carl Knoch completed their **eighth Trail User Survey and Economic Impact Analysis, this time for the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail** between Titusville and Parker, Pa. An analysis of data indicated that an estimated 131,786 annual user visits resulted in a direct local economic impact in 2013 of more than $5.7 million. Contact: pat@railstotrails.org.

■ Tomes is leading a new **research project on trail maintenance and operations**, supported by the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. The project will provide detailed information on maintaining trails to help trail builders and support groups across the country. At a November 2013 meeting of the Sussex County Trails Partnership, Knoch presented **data from trail-user surveys and economic impact analyses on the Paulinskill Valley Trail and the Sussex Branch Trail**. These studies quantified the trails' fiscal value to the region, providing a powerful advocacy tool for expansion of the trail network. Contact: carl@railstotrails.org.

■ Jim Brown, trail development manager for the National Office, partnered with local groups in Baltimore, Md., on an **earn-a-bike program for middle school students**. Students used the nearby Herring Run Trail to learn about safe bike riding and maintenance skills, while participating in community service projects focusing on watershed restoration and urban agriculture. They were rewarded for their efforts by earning brand new bikes, thanks to the support of the Coca-Cola Foundation through RTC's Metropolitan Grants Program. Contact: jim@railstotrails.org.

■ In California, Barry Bergman, manager of trail development for the Western Regional Office, was on hand in October 2013 for the opening of the **first Tot Lot in Los Angeles County**, this one in the Mary Van Dyke Park in South El Monte. RTC has been partnering with a local organization, Amigos de los Rios, on improving opportunities for physical activity in this underserved community. Bergman also runs physical activity clubs in two El Monte high schools to promote healthy lifestyles in young people. Contact: barry@railstotrails.org.

■ RTC's Western Regional Office also has been **helping the city of Fortuna, Calif., develop a plan for the proposed Strongs Creek Trail**. Last fall, trail development staff provided input during a master plan charrette, including case studies about successful trail projects to help inform the design process, and resources about leveraging project funding.

■ Rhonda Romano and Eric Oberg from the Midwest Regional Office helped host the **Mid America Trails and Greenways Conference in Illinois** in October 2013. At the conference, Oberg presented RTC's new report on trails alongside active rail lines and showcased his data collection work that made possible the first ever statewide economic impact study of trails in Illinois. Contact: eric@railstotrails.org.

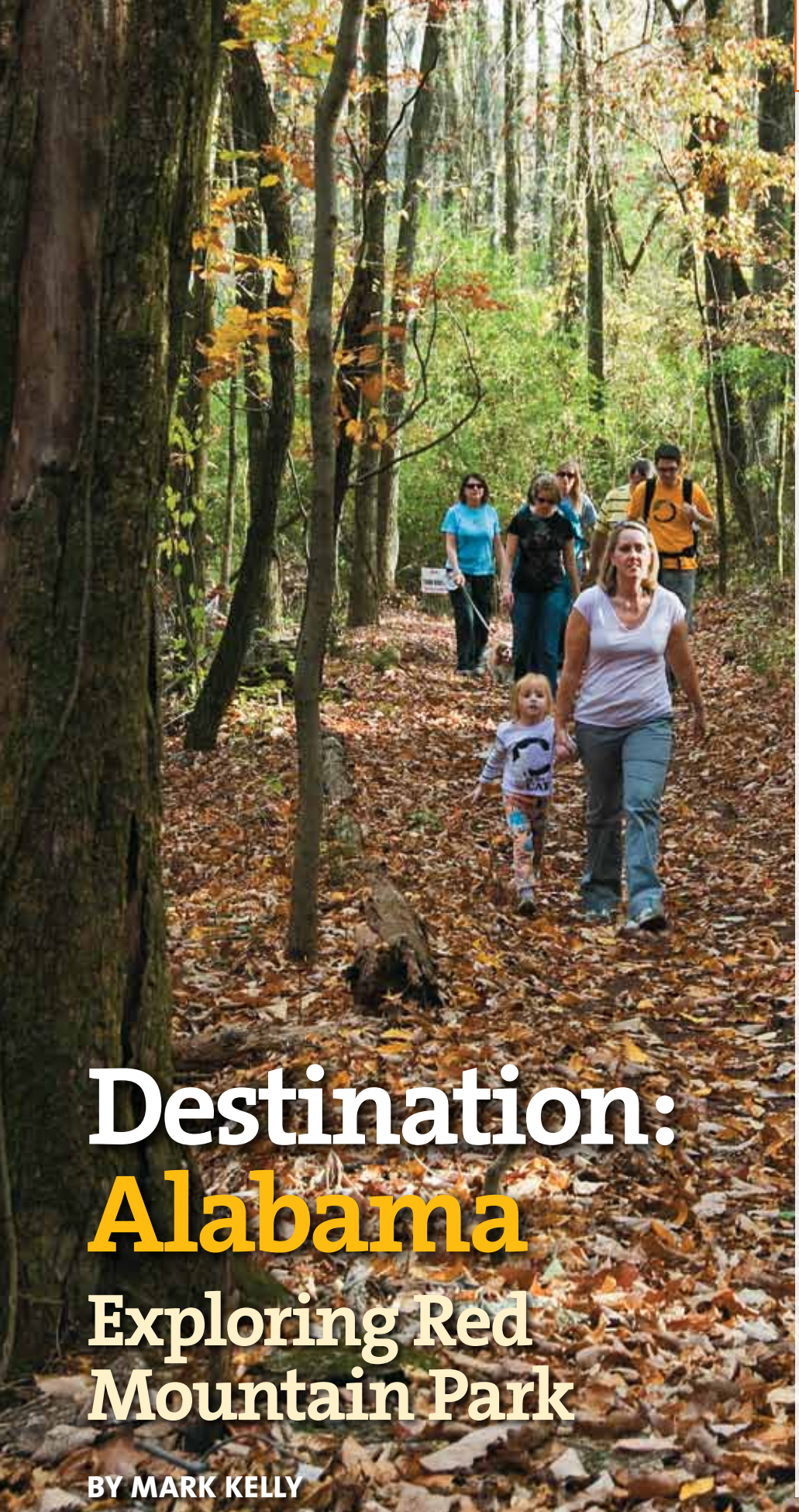
■ The Midwest Regional Office also co-hosted a **December 2013 gathering of 40 trail and greenway development stakeholders** across 12 counties in the central Ohio area, known as the Central Ohio Greenways initiative, and presented at a November meeting of the Ohio Trail Partnership. Contact: rhonda@railstotrails.org.

■ In February 2014, during a Capitol Hill presentation, **RTC and the Partnership for Active Transportation launched *Safe Routes to Everywhere***. Received before a packed room by Reps. Tom Petri (R-Wis.) and Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-D.C.), the federal policy platform seeks three policy innovations: increased federal investment dedicated to safe active transportation networks; innovative financing to leverage the private value of infrastructure; and the integration of health concerns into transportation decisions, and active transportation opportunities into health policies. More info: partnership4at.org.

■ **In December 2013, RTC filed an amicus brief with the Supreme Court** to defend the public ownership of a former rail corridor inside Wyoming's Medicine Bow National Forest. Despite the best efforts of RTC and our legal and trail building partners, the Supreme Court ruled that the United States does not retain an interest in the corridor after the cessation of rail service, blocking public use of the corridor as a rail-trail. The Supreme Court remanded the case back to the 10th Circuit Court, where RTC's legal team will work to narrow the ultimate impact of the Supreme Court's ruling. Contact: jake@railstotrails.org.

PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT

As part of RTC's work to facilitate the development of rails-with-trails, the organization convened a groundbreaking meeting of trails groups, railroad agencies and public authorities in Philadelphia in September 2013. The meeting was a historic opportunity to address some of the issues that can prevent the creation of successful rail-with-trail projects. A key accomplishment of the meeting was agreement by both the rail and trail sectors that trails may serve as a safe and effective means of helping to manage non-motorized transportation along railroad corridors, and that more research is needed on the safety record of rails-with-trails compared with active railroad corridors without adjacent trails. For more information on RTC's rails-with-trails work, visit **railstotrails.org/railwithtrail**.



Destination: Alabama

Exploring Red Mountain Park

BY MARK KELLY

"Whoa." It doesn't qualify as an exclamation, since it comes in a matter-of-fact tone that's just a notch above deadpan. It is an expression not of awe but of awareness—the sudden and immediate appreciation of one's place in the landscape, the world, the universe.

I turn to look at my 9-year-old son who is chewing a mouthful of peanut butter and jelly sandwich and gazing placidly at the woods around us. His little sister beats me to the question.

"What is it?" asks Hannah. Wilson is silent for longer than she cares to wait, and she's about to ask him again when he replies, with typical older-sibling vagueness, "I'm just looking."

The three of us are sitting on the trunk of a fallen sweetgum tree just off the Ike Maston Trail. This is part of a network of nearly 11 miles of hiking/biking trails that veins Alabama's 1,200-acre Red Mountain Park. Located mostly within the city limits of Birmingham, the mountain for which the park is named was the primary source of the rich iron ore deposits that prompted the founding of Birmingham as the first industrial center of the "New South" in 1871. It was the city's lifeblood for more than a century afterward.

The forested slopes we're traversing were honeycombed with ore mines for decades—the last of which was closed in 1962—and crisscrossed by railroads and tramways that transported Red Mountain ore from the mines to the furnaces that dotted the area in and around Birmingham. Among them was the Birmingham Mineral Railroad, 150 miles of track that encircled the city, with stops or spurs at most of the area's major mines and furnaces. Operated by the Louisville & Nashville Railroad, the Mineral Line—also known as the High Line—was ▶

JEFF NEWMAN

The scenic beauty of the Ike-Maston Trail makes it popular with families.

JEFF NEWMAN

in service from roughly 1884 until the early 1930s.

The old rail lines are a major part of the overall plan for trail development at Red Mountain Park. Currently, about 2.5 miles of the park's trails are converted railbeds and tramways. Within the next five years, rail-trails will account for about 8 miles of what by then will be a 21-mile trail network.

Writing early in the 20th century, Alabama historian Ethel Armes described Red Mountain in her book *The Story of Coal and Iron in Alabama* as "shorne of timber," its face a welter of "long, clear-cut, deep red lines, sharp against the sky." Armes observed, "The railroad track, ascending by a series of switch backs, runs along the slope near to the summit, then curves down in and out of the gaps. It is an interesting sight to watch an ore train heavily laden with its rich cargo wind its way slowly down the hillside and go on its journey to the huge furnaces."

I read that passage to the kids before we left home this morning. Now, from our lunchtime vantage point on the Maston Trail, it's clear that the scenes of which Armes wrote are long gone, largely replaced by forest. Named for a local man who was a longtime laborer on the Red Mountain "slope track," this dirt trail runs parallel to the old Mineral Line grade, parts of which remain visible about 100 feet down the slope. Ike Maston is featured prominently in an ongoing oral history project being conducted by park staff.

Sitting near the top of a steeply angled ridge on this cool autumn afternoon, I look through the trees, and into and across a deep, narrow hollow that knifes between here and the adjacent ridge. We are two-thirds of the way along our hike through these hills and hollows. The leaves are two or three weeks past their brilliant peak of fall color, but scattered patches of bright red, yellow and orange remain, arrayed against the browning landscape like vivid daubs of paint on a palette.

I am deeply into admiring the view when Hannah announces that it's time we get moving. The two of us begin to pack away our trash, but Wilson is still pondering the terrain. Hannah repeats her earlier question, this time with an added note of urgency: "What is it?"

"Just a minute," her brother answers. "I'm thinking about what it was like when all of those mines were here."

In many ways, Wilson's reverie encapsulates the broad mission of Red Mountain Park. Established in 2007 by an act of the Alabama Legislature, the park officially opened to the public in 2012 and continues to be developed in accordance with a 15-year master plan. Widely recognized as one of the most ambitious and historically significant urban park projects in the nation, Red Mountain Park is the single largest link in a park, greenway and trail system that makes Birmingham one of America's "greenest" communities in terms of dedicated green space per capita.

Even at this early stage of its availability to the public, the park is becoming a major destination for families on outings, school and community groups, history buffs and outdoor enthusiasts from throughout Birmingham and Alabama, as well as an increasingly attractive tourist stop. "We just seem to be getting busier and busier," says park staff member Mike Boody. "What's really impressive to me is that, so far, it has been very much a word-of-mouth thing. There hasn't been a great deal of marketing yet, so people are hearing about it from friends, and then coming out here and being blown away by it."

A 31-year-old Birmingham native, Boody has worked at the park since the spring of 2012, assisting with landscaping and development of the trail system, among other tasks. We encounter him at the small shed that serves as the entrance to two of the park's paid attractions, the Red Ore Zip Tour—which transports users through the treetops via a series of zip lines, sky bridges and tree houses—and the Hugh Kaul Beanstalk Forest, a treetop challenge course with more than 20 rope-course obstacles.

Walking up the trail to scope out the Beanstalk Forest for a future visit, we strike up a conversation with three generations of the Clark family, who are visiting the park from Birmingham and Nashville, Tenn. Geared in the requisite protective helmets and vests with clamps that secure safety lines, the Clarks—four adults and five children—are eager to get their adventure under way. According to 11-year-old William Clark III, the group "decided this would be the thing to do" today.

Birmingham lawyer Bill Clark explains, "My wife and I have been out here hiking quite often. But with the grandchildren here from Nashville, it seemed like a great time to come out and do this course. I've been impressed at the progress they've made here in such a short time—developing the trails and opening access to the old mining structures. It's a neat place and a great thing for Birmingham."

Boody says he takes pride in the park's role in building on Birmingham's growing regional and national reputation as a center for year-round outdoor recreation. That's part of an ongoing renaissance of the city as a whole, he adds, pointing to numerous awards and other recognition Birmingham has received for its innovative approaches to economic growth and the development of cultural amenities.

"There's a lot going on in Birmingham," Boody says. "It's not just outdoor activities, but Red Mountain and the other parks are a huge part of what's happening here. The whole atmosphere is invigorating, and I think that bodes well for the future—of the park and of the community as a whole."

Whoa, indeed.

Mark Kelly is a Birmingham-based writer and the publisher of *Weld*, a news and information website and weekly newspaper. Kelly has written about the history, politics and culture of Birmingham for more than 25 years.

WHAT TO SEE: The history of Birmingham—the Magic City—harks back to the Industrial Revolution. Visit Sloss Furnaces National Historic Landmark (**slossfurnances.com**; 205.324.1911) to see firsthand the magnitude of the industrial structures and machinery that were "state of the art" in their heyday. Birmingham's newest downtown attraction, Railroad Park (**railroadpark.org**; 205.521.9933), is a perfect place to picnic. Other "must sees" include the Birmingham Zoo (**birminghamzoo.com**; 205.879.0409) and the adjacent Birmingham Botanical Gardens (**bbgardens.org**; 205.414.3950), as well as Barber Vintage Motorsports Museum (**barbermuseum.org**; 205.699.7275) and the McWane Science Center (**mcwane.org**; 205.714.8300).

MORE INFORMATION: For driving directions, trail maps and more information about Red Mountain Park, visit the park's website (**redmountainpark.org**).

GETTING THERE: Birmingham is located 150 miles west of Atlanta and 190 miles south of Nashville. It's at the intersection of three interstate highways: I-65, I-20 and I-59. Birmingham-Shuttlesworth International Airport is served by American, Delta, Southwest and United airlines. Red Mountain Park is approximately 10 miles south of downtown, a 15-minute drive via I-65 and Lakeshore Parkway.

WHERE TO STAY: Down the road from Red Mountain Park is the luxurious Renaissance Birmingham Ross Bridge Golf Resort & Spa (**marriott.com**; 888.236.2427), which features beautiful woods, lakes and a world-class golf course. Other nearby hotels include Hilton Garden Inn Birmingham/Lakeshore Drive (**hiltongardeninn3.hilton.com**; 205.314.0274) and Aloft Birmingham Soho Square (**aloftbirminghamsohosquare.com**; 877.462.5638). To be a part of the burgeoning downtown scene, consider staying in one of Birmingham's historic hotels: The Tutwiler, now operated by Hampton Inn & Suites (**hamptoninn3.hilton.com**; 205.322.2100), and Hotel Highland Downtown (**ascendcollection.com**; 205.933.9555). The city's newest hotel, located in the downtown Entertainment District, is the eco-friendly Westin Birmingham (**westinbirmingham.com**; 205.307.3600).

WHERE TO EAT: Known for its Southern hospitality and vibrant culinary scene, Birmingham offers a great introduction to a culture of barbecue and nostalgic, down-home cooking with a twist. Be sure to stop at Saw's Soul Kitchen in Avondale (**sawsbbq.com**; 205.591.1409) to soak in the smells of slow-cooked meat and experience a true hole-in-the-wall gem. Birmingham's culinary icon, Chef Frank Stitt, will leave you satisfied at any one of his restaurants—Highlands Bar and Grill (**highlandsbarandgrill.com**), Bottega (**bottegarestaurant.com**) and Chez Fonfon (**fonfonbham.com**)—celebrating locally sourced ingredients. For a fresh take on Mexican, stop by El Barrio (**elbarriobirmingham.com**; 205.868.3737) on Birmingham's Second Avenue North—known for delicious grapefruit margaritas. If you're looking for local craft beer, be sure to visit Cahaba Brewing Company (**cahababrewing.com**; 205.578.2616) and sneak in a game of skee ball.

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy
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