

# rails to trails

Spring/Summer.15

*Inspiring Movement*

## Rolling on the River...

**A New Voice for  
Memphis Bike/Ped:  
The Shelby Farms  
Greenline**

High Hopes:  
Chicago's  
Bloomingdale +  
Cal-Sag Trails

Richmond Greenway  
Connections

Trailside Waterfalls



rails-to-trails  
conservancy



# I SUPPORT

## Rails-to-Trails Conservancy

**Name:** Chuck McMinn

**Where I live:** Saint Helena, Napa Valley, Calif.

**Birthplace:** Madison, N.J.

**Age:** 62

**What I do:** My wife Anne and I own Vineyard 29 in St. Helena, where we produce six wines from our estate vineyards and three wines from growers we work with. I am also on the board of St. Helena Hospital. I founded and am president of NapaLearns, an educational nonprofit, and the Napa Valley Vine Trail Coalition, a nonprofit that is designing, funding and helping to construct a Class 1 trail from the Vallejo Ferry Terminal through the heart of the Napa Valley to Calistoga.

**Latest accomplishment:** The Vine Trail Coalition secured \$7 million in funding, including \$1.3 million in philanthropy, to construct six miles of the Vine Trail linking the city of Napa with Yountville. Construction will occur in 2015.

**I'd rather be:** Drinking wine with friends, of course!

**A meaningful life story:** I have learned that you just need to raise your hand and say, "I will try to do that if you will help." The help is always there and waiting. Six years ago, I approached the Napa Valley Vintners, the Napa Valley Grapegrowers and the Land Trust of Napa County and offered to start the Napa Valley Vine Trail Coalition if they would support it. The aim of the coalition was to create a 47-mile walking and biking path through the Napa Valley. They agreed and seed-funded the coalition with its first \$15,000.

We then opened up our board to any organization in Napa County that believed in our goal. Now, more than 30 organizations are on our board, all focused on completing the Vine Trail. When we said we needed money and volunteers to help, we were able to raise more than \$9 million in local matching funds for state and federal grants and to recruit more than 80 volunteers who help in all aspects of our organization. All I had to do was offer to try and ask for help.

**An inspiring book I've read:** "How Will You Measure Your Life?" by Clayton Christensen et al.

**Someone I admire:** All teachers. They are the most important people outside of family in determining who our children become. We should honor them more than we do.

**Inspirational quote:** "Whether you think you can or you think you can't, you're right." —Henry Ford

**My vision for biking and walking in America:** I hope we as a nation come to realize that walking and biking are viable modes of transportation and more important for our health and enjoyment than any other mode.

**My favorite rail-trail experience:** Riding the proposed route of the Vine Trail with Keith Laughlin and the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy staff four years ago, when we were still trying to figure out how to get it built. We want them back to ride a contiguous 12.5 miles of the Vine Trail in 2015!

**Why I support Rails-to-Trails Conservancy:** We need Rails-to-Trails Conservancy's voice in Washington and at the state level to advocate for funding and policies that encourage active transportation. The health of our children and our communities depends on it.

Add your unique voice to the rail-trail movement by becoming a member of Rails-to-Trails Conservancy. Learn more at [railstotrails.org](http://railstotrails.org) or call 202.331.9696.



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PHILLIP PARKER/AP IMAGES  
DAWN SANDEES



THOMAS PHOTOGRAPHIC SERVICES

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GENE BISBEE

## A Time to Make Our Voices Heard

The year ahead will be eventful. In 2015, we will mark the 50th anniversary of America's first rail-trail, the Elroy-Sparta State Trail in Wisconsin. In the ensuing half-century, our movement has exploded, now boasting more than 21,000 miles of rail-trails used by tens of millions of Americans every year.

One action almost 25 years ago was crucial to this success. In 1991, the U.S. Congress created federal programs that, for the first time, directed transportation funding to trails, walking and biking. In the years that followed, this dedicated source of federal funding was critical to meet a growing demand for trails in local communities. Amazingly, the 21,000 miles of rail-trails we have today were built with about two cents out of every federal surface transportation dollar spent. Rarely has so little created so much for so many.

Unfortunately, these crucial federal programs were cut by 30 percent when the last federal transportation funding bill was passed in 2012—reducing funding to less than 1.5 cents of every transportation dollar. This law will come before Congress for renewal again in 2015, and we fully expect that some senators and representatives will seek to further cut, or even eliminate, this essential federal support for trails.

To prepare for this battle, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy recently commissioned a national poll to determine the opinions of American voters on this issue. Seventy-four percent of respondents supported maintaining or increasing trail funding. When asked how they would distribute a hypothetical \$100 among a variety of transportation modes, the American people responded that \$26.90 should be spent to “expand and improve walking and biking paths, and sidewalks.” That figure is 18 times higher than the current federal investment in trails, walking and biking. And what's even more telling is the fact that every demographic and political subgroup polled indicated their support for investment at least 10 times higher than current funding.

These numbers demonstrate beyond any doubt that federal investment to create safe places to walk and bike enjoys strong support across America—transcending age, gender, political party or region. There is simply no constituency anywhere for reducing or eliminating these programs, and any member of Congress who supports such cuts is seriously out of step with their constituents.

But having the American people on our side isn't enough. In the year ahead, we will be asking you to raise your voice so Congress is fully aware of the breadth and depth of America's support for increased investment in safe places to walk and bike. With your continued support, we are confident that we will achieve our mission of connecting America's people and places with a national network of trails.

Happy trails!



Keith Laughlin, President  
Rails-to-Trails Conservancy



COURTESY MARK STOSBERG

# 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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Keith Laughlin

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#### MAGAZINE STAFF

**Editor-in-Chief** Amy Kapp  
**Editorial Consultant** Wendy Jordan  
**Editorial Consultant** Sharon Congdon  
**Staff Writers** Laura Stark, Katie Harris  
**Design/Production** McMURRY/TMG, LLC  
**Art Director** Jeffrey Kibler

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#### RAILS-TO-TRAILS CONSERVANCY

##### Headquarters

2121 Ward Court, NW, 5th Floor  
Washington, DC 20037-1213  
**Phone** 202.331.9696  
**Email** info@railstotrails.org  
**Websites** railstotrails.org  
traillink.com

##### Field and Regional offices:

**Midwest** Canal Winchester, Ohio  
614.837.6782, midwest@railstotrails.org

**Northeast** Camp Hill, Pa.  
717.238.1717, northeast@railstotrails.org

**Western** Oakland, Calif.  
510.992.4662, western@railstotrails.org

**Florida** Tallahassee, Fla.  
850.942.2379, rtcflorida@railstotrails.org

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## Making the Case

Just wanted to send you and your team some kudos for the Winter 2015 issue. The Creeper and Indy articles in particular ["Appalachian Engine" and "Trails Mean Big Bucks for Indy"] are superb in their demonstration of the economic benefits of trails, and the former also in terms of its "how to" aspects.

This came at a particularly timely juncture, as a bunch of us are laying the groundwork for Mount Desert Island, Maine (home of Acadia National Park and Bar Harbor), to get serious about becoming a Northeast cycling mecca.

Great work!

**Kenneth A. Colburn**  
MEREDITH, N.H.

## Don't Miss the Connection – Part 1

That is a great article about the Virginia Creeper Trail, with one omission: no mention that the Appalachian Trail is crossed by the Creeper at Damascus, Va. From experience, day hiking and day biking in between the two trails in and out of Damascus are complementary for many, including my wife and myself.

**Paul S. Frommer**  
ALEXANDRIA, VA.

*For space, we were only able to mention the connection to the Appalachian Trail in the caption on the first page of the article. But we agree that we should talk about trail connections as much as possible, as they are the bread and butter of walkable, bikeable communities!*

## Don't Miss the Connection – Part 2

I was pleased to read your account of New Jersey's Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park and trail in the Winter 2015 issue. This year marks the 40th anniversary of the New Jersey Legislature's establishment of the linear park, and it is indeed a cyclist's treasure.

The map accompanying the article

misleadingly suggests that the trail is severed at its midpoint in Trenton, but that missing link was filled in four years ago. The trail now runs uninterruptedly from the canal's entry into the Raritan River at New Brunswick southwest past Princeton to Trenton, and then northwest past Washington Crossing to Frenchtown—67 continuous miles.

Unfortunately, the article showed no awareness of the five miles of the trail through New Jersey's historically rich capital, tacitly perpetuating an aversion to the one urban segment of the trail. Yet this too is part of the diversity of landscapes that unfold along the path.

**Jeffrey Laurenti**  
TRENTON, N.J.

*Thanks for the update! We have corrected our map of the trail on TrailLink.com. As we're based out of Washington, D.C., we rely on local feedback just like this to keep our nationwide trail database current. New trail information can be shared with us via TrailLinkSupport@railstotrails.org.*

## A New Hope

I read my Winter 2015 issue cover to cover, and a couple articles really touched a chord in me. The articles on the Virginia Creeper Trail and the trails in Indianapolis both reminded me of something I experienced in the early 1980s.

I was living in Bath Township in Michigan, a little north of Lansing, where I live now. A rail-trail was being discussed for the abandoned rail corridor between Lansing and Owosso. A meeting was held at the township hall to explain the proposed trail, and several speakers were invited from the west side of the state, where the Hart-Montague Trail was already an active trail. The speakers couldn't say enough good [things] about the trail. Two men spoke about how each of their businesses had grown as a result...

[But of the proposed trail], almost every person in the crowd spoke up saying it was a bad idea, and "It'll bring crime." Of course, it was voted down. To this day,

that rail corridor sits unused.

I'm sure that this sort of incident is nothing new to your organization. Your articles give me hope that more cities and states will get on board.

**Jean Gillespie**  
LANSING, MICH.

*Thank you for writing in, Jean. These types of situations serve to demonstrate how important it is for people to speak out for trails in their local areas. RTC believes that as trails continue to demonstrate their inestimable value to neighborhoods across America, more and more communities will get on board.*

## Clarification, Please

[In the Winter 2015 magazine cover story on the Virginia Creeper Trail], the trail sounds great, but the cover photo is disturbing. There appear to be five-foot machetes buried on their sides, sticking out of the trail bed, lying in wait for a thin-tire cyclist to stray from center trail.

Is the intent that this steel will stabilize the ground or support the railroad ties that line the trail? Whatever the purpose, the scene is disturbing for anyone who likes to ride fast and/or in the twilight!

**Thomas R. Morris**  
FARMINGTON HILLS, MICH.

*According to Beth Merz, area ranger for the Forest Service, the things you see in the ground are strips of rubber recycled from conveyor belts. They are intended to serve as a "slow down" safety measure that funnels riders into a single file before they approach a busy highway intersection.*

*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:**

## Pennsylvania's Rail Park

By Laura Stark

"It's gigantic, bigger than the High Line," says Paul Levy, president and CEO of Center City District, comparing Philadelphia's developing Rail Park project to New York City's famed elevated walkway. "But what was so interesting to me was that although everyone was inspired by the High Line, the notion that emerged from the community was that residents wanted something authentically Philadelphia."



"There's no public park in the neighborhood," Hanes says. "And because residents are living in old factory buildings, they don't have backyards, front stoops or green space."

To create a park-like ambience, trail planners added social seating

areas with porch swings to the design as well as large-scale boxes filled with native trees and plants. With a design ready to implement, the trail now awaits final funding. Construction of this first section—on land owned by the public transit agency SEPTA—is anticipated to start in 2015 and finish within a year. The segment will begin near Callowhill and North Broad streets and continue east along Callowhill to 11th Street, where it will connect to the Reading Viaduct.

A relic of the now dormant Philadelphia and Reading Railroad, the viaduct will be the rail-trail's most dramatic element. Spanning nearly a mile in the heart of the city, the structure has long been eyed for public use;

The lead designers for the rail-trail's first phase have embraced this idea, integrating unique elements into the rail-trail's design to reflect its surroundings. When complete, the trail will total three miles, anchored on the west by Fairmount Park, which houses the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the city's renowned zoo, historic mansions, and other museums and cultural treasures.

Bryan Hanes, a principal landscape architect on the trail development team, says the trail's quarter-mile first phase, between 11th and 13th streets, "is in the Callowhill neighborhood, which is designated a National Historic District. There are old factories and warehouses that have been converted into residential, office and business units, and artist studios. We've incorporated the characteristics and industrial aesthetic that define that neighborhood into the design."

In keeping with the unrefined feeling of the neighborhood (sometimes referred

**Trail under construction:** Rail Park  
**Location:** 31st Street and Girard Avenue to 9th Street and Fairmount Avenue in Philadelphia  
**Used railroad corridor:** Philadelphia and Reading Railroad  
**Length:** 3 miles  
**Surface:** Gravel

to as the Loft District), Hanes says the team developed a simple palette of materials for the trail, such as the gravel surface and a series of chunky trailside seating platforms made of large timbers. Through the yearlong design process, involving significant input from the community, the architects also learned something else: The rail-trail would fill a notable void.

# trail tales

although overgrown and wild at present, it boasts spectacular views from the top. Local citizens, spearheaded by grassroots organizers Sarah McEaney and John Struble, have been advocating for its conversion to an elevated linear park for more than a decade. In 2010, the Center City District, which provides public safety, maintenance, promotion and planning services for Philadelphia's central business district, became involved with the project by partnering with the city to conduct an environmental and feasibility analysis of the viaduct.

"We needed to answer basic questions about what it would cost to either renovate or demolish the viaduct, and to determine if there were any environmental problems," Levy says. "In our primary analysis, we found that it was cheaper to renovate the viaduct than demolish it. The Reading Viaduct has a large section of stone retaining wall, so it would be more than just taking away train tracks. Huge amounts of fill would need to be removed as well and disposed of in a careful manner."

The finding gave the rail-trail project momentum to move forward, and the design process for phase one kicked off in 2011. "Our goal is to get this first piece done to build confidence that we can do the rest," Levy says.

Plans for the Rail Park's second phase, which would complete the elevated portion, and the third phase, which includes a below-grade section on what was once known as the railroad's City Branch line, are still only conceptual.

"The below-grade phase is pretty amazing," Hanes says. "For several blocks, it's an open trench with walls 20 to 25 feet on either side of you. Farther west, near the art museum, the city comes over the top of it, and it turns into a tunnel. It's an exciting and dynamic space."

The project is being advanced by a nonprofit called Friends of the Rail Park; for more information about the trail, visit the organization's website at [therailpark.org](http://therailpark.org).

## A Dream Realized: Bike Touring Across America

By Laura Stark



Jeff Pell at the start of his cross-country trip at Crissy Field on California's San Francisco Bay Trail

COURTESY JEFF PELL

"Seeing the country from the seat of a bicycle is unlike anything else," says Jeff Pell, an avid cyclist. "It's magic."

When Pell retired in early 2014, he decided he finally had time to pursue a lifelong dream: bicycling across America. After he announced his intentions, many of his friends and family were supportive, but some were fearful for him, even suggesting he bring a gun.

We caught up with Pell shortly after he finished his cross-country trip, and he said he never felt unsafe, even though he traveled most of the way solo.

"You do get lonesome out there," he says. "But, if you just take time to visit with people, you find that everyone has a story. That's the beauty of bicycle touring."

The generosity of strangers was a running theme during his experience. Pell recalls a father-and-son duo sharing their water with him under a hot Utah sun without hesitation. And one morning as he was breaking camp, another traveler at an adjacent campsite offered him hot

coffee and breakfast. "It reminds you that the country is full of good people," he says.

For the California native, the trip began in San Francisco in May 2014 with about 40 pounds of gear strapped to a solidly built Salsa Fargo off-road bike. Near the outset, Pell found a small American flag discarded along a highway and attached it to the bike, a fitting symbol for his journey.

As a former switchman with BNSF Railway, Pell is enthusiastic about the idea of converting former rail corridors to rail-trails; he likes that they incorporate rail history and artifacts, preserving historical depots, tunnels and bridges.

On his coast-to-coast adventure, Pell crossed 16 states, riding along roads and on more than 30 trails, including rail-trails whenever possible. His favorites include the Great Allegheny Passage, a Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC) Hall of Fame rail-trail in western Pennsylvania and Maryland, and Michigan's White Pine Trail, which he explored when a family reunion routed his venture northward. What set them apart, he says, was the easy accessibility they provided to grocery stores, campgrounds and other facilities.

In the early stirrings of autumn, Pell was joined by his wife, Mary, for the last leg of the journey. They rolled into Washington, D.C., and stopped for a visit at RTC's national office, an apt ending for a member who's supported the organization since its founding in 1986.

For those inspired to try bike touring, Pell recommends starting small. "Go somewhere close to home and experiment. Try one night out and then come back. No one gets it right the first time; it's a learning experience. It's not for everyone, but the rewards are huge."

## Share Your Trail Tales with RTC



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► **TREE-TAPPING GOOD TIMES IN VERMONT**

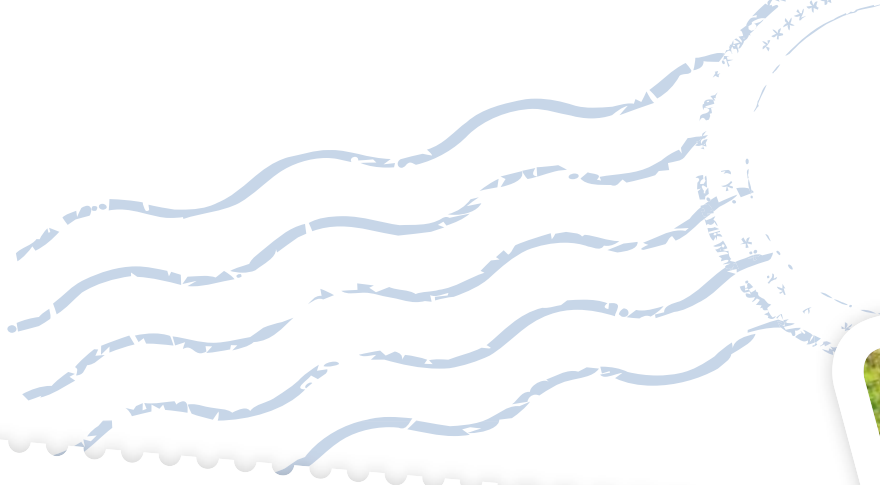
**Missisquoi Valley Rail-Trail:** The Vermont Maple Festival ([vtmaplefestival.org](http://vtmaplefestival.org)) is a sap-tacular three-day event in St. Albans, a charming community not far from the Canadian border. Those who want to enjoy the gooey goodness of maple syrup should plan to head there April 24–26. As one might expect, pancake breakfasts are a draw, but you can also try a plethora of other syrupy sweets, such as maple cotton candy, maple creemees (like a creamy cousin to ice cream) and maple sugar-on-snow. Lots of other events and activities round out the fun, including talent and variety shows, amusement park rides, cooking demonstrations, an antique show, an exhibit hall with displays about Vermont maple and maple products for sale, and a parade. After the festival, feast your eyes on the great views to be had from the Missisquoi Valley Rail-Trail, which begins on the north end of St. Albans and continues northeast through picturesque farmland and woodlands for 26 miles.

**Length & surface:** 26.1 miles; crushed stone ♦ **End points:** U.S. 7/Main Street at Rewes Drive (St. Albans) to Troy Street/State Route 105 (Richford) ♦ **Website:** [trailink.com/trail/missisquoi-valley-rail-trail.aspx](http://trailink.com/trail/missisquoi-valley-rail-trail.aspx)

► **SEW IT AGAIN, INDIANA**

**Pumpkinvine Nature Trail:** Crafters from around the country will flood the small northern Indiana town of Shipshewana for its annual quilt festival ([shipshewanaquiltfest.com](http://shipshewanaquiltfest.com)) June 24–27. The event will feature a patchwork of things to see and do, including quilting workshops and lectures, book signings, special exhibits and a vendor show. A “shop hop” offers the chance to explore participating local fabric and crafting stores, pick up free patterns and recipes at each stop, and be entered to win prizes. Afterward, festival-goers can unwind with a walk down the Pumpkinvine Nature Trail, which threads 17 miles through idyllic countryside, woodlands and Amish communities.

**Length & surface:** 17.6 miles; asphalt, crushed stone ♦ **End points:** North Fifth Street east of North Main Street (Goshen) to County Road 850 north of County Road 250 (Shipshewana) ♦ **Website:** [trailink.com/trail/pumpkinvine-nature-trail.aspx](http://trailink.com/trail/pumpkinvine-nature-trail.aspx)



To learn more about these and other trails, check out [TrailLink.com](http://TrailLink.com), a searchable database of more than 30,000 miles of trails nationwide. The website and TrailLink apps include detailed trail descriptions, interactive maps, photographs and first-hand ratings and reviews.







## ◀ A SHOWER OF FLOWERS IN OKLAHOMA

**Centennial Trail:** Each April, the fun gets sys-stem-ic in the Oklahoma community of Muskogee, about an hour from Tulsa. A bouquet of events in the Muskogee Azalea Festival ([visitmuskogee.com](http://visitmuskogee.com)) spans the entire month and includes a lively parade, a chili and barbecue cook-off, car and craft shows, and the Flower Power Bike Ride. Activities take place throughout the city, but the hub of the festival is Honor Heights Park, where spring will be in full glory with showy azaleas taking center stage among the park's landscaped gardens, butterfly house and arboretum. Just south of the park, Centennial Trail winds 7.5 miles through the city, offering access to museums, restaurants, shops, and other parks and open spaces. One of its trailheads is adjacent to the Oklahoma Music Hall of Fame, housed in a beautifully renovated historic depot, where live music is played on Thursday nights.

**Length & surface:** 7.5 miles; asphalt, ballast  
**◆ End points:** North Main Street to South Fourth Street **◆ Website:** [traillink.com/trail/centennial-trail-ok.aspx](http://traillink.com/trail/centennial-trail-ok.aspx)

## ◀ FARM-TASTIC FUN IN OREGON

**Riverfront Trail:** Cows, sheep, pigs, oh my! Llamas, horses, goats, what fun! The two-day Oregon Ag Fest ([oragfest.com](http://oragfest.com)), held every year at the Oregon State Fairgrounds in Salem, offers a terrific opportunity for city slickers of all ages to get a hands-on education in the workings and importance of farm life. April 25–26, attendees can meet farm animals, partake in lasso lessons, race miniature tractors, explore interactive exhibits on farming and enjoy pony and wagon rides. More fun can be had nearby at downtown's mile-long Riverfront Trail, which offers beautiful views from an historic railroad bridge over the Willamette River.

**Length & surface:** 1.1 miles; asphalt **◆ End points:** Wallace Road to Riverfront Park **◆ Website:** [traillink.com/trail/riverfront-trail-or.aspx](http://traillink.com/trail/riverfront-trail-or.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](mailto:magazine@railstotrails.org) or Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, Magazine/Greetings From, 2121 Ward Court, NW, 5th Floor, Washington, DC 20037.



By Amy French

# ROLLING ON THE RIVER



Big River Crossing: A cantilevered carriageway along an active rail line on the Harahan Bridge (above) is slated to become a new bike and pedestrian trail (rail-with-trail) connecting downtown Memphis, Tenn., and West Memphis, Ark.

# MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE—

land of blues, barbecue... and bicycling? Not long ago, such a suggestion among Memphians would have brought snickers. Then came the Shelby Farms Greenline, a long-shot rail-trail conversion that changed everything.

Top left: Leslie Sylus, Rosie Hunt and Leslie's son Samuel (in stroller) (Wolf River Bridge); top right: cyclist Andy Cates (Wolf River Bridge); bottom left: mother and daughter Fayre Crossley and Chelsey McKinney.



## Two measly bike lanes.

It was 2008, and they were proposed to be the first in Memphis, Tenn. Two lanes—a mile apiece. Not much for a sprawling city of almost 680,000 people. But something.

Anthony Siracusa rode his bike—in auto lanes, of course—through the rush hour of a July afternoon to a public meeting regarding the promised smidgen of progress.

Siracusa had been a fixture among local active-transportation advocates since 2002 when, at age 17, he'd founded the Revolutions Bicycle Co-op in the basement of First Congregational Church. The initial aim of the co-op was simply to teach bike repair and help people who wanted or needed affordable bicycles to build their own with donated parts and the help of volunteer teachers.

But the shop had become more than that: It was a magnet for bike lovers and active-transportation advocates of all

kinds, many of whom had grown impatient with official resistance to bike lanes. A few pedaled alongside Siracusa to the 2008 meeting. One was a guy who studied city planning at the University of Memphis. Another was a woman who braved a cross-town commute daily on her bicycle.

The feeling en route, Siracusa recalls, was grim determination.

"I think part of it was like, 'We're not even sure these folks are actually going to go through with this,'" says Siracusa. "So we wanted to show up and make sure that it was legit and, of course, to hold [the city's] feet to the fire and ask the harder questions."

Siracusa, who is now president of the nonprofit advocacy group Bike Walk Tennessee ([bikewalktn.org](http://bikewalktn.org)), considers himself an optimist—more of a relationship builder than an agitator. But if he was a touch cynical on his way to the meeting, it was understandable.





**Left: John Grisham, Hilary Quirk, Rebecca Dailey, Betsy Peterson and Chelsey McKinney on the Waring Road to Perkins Road section of the Shelby Farms Greenline**

advocates. For example, one reason cited was a desire to replace stormwater grates first; the grates in use had grooves that ran parallel to curbs—grooves that bike tires might get stuck in, causing wrecks and lawsuits, or so went the explanation.

“It was farcical, obstinance at its best,” Siracusa says. “So you have to understand that in 2008 we had nothing; we literally had nothing to lose.”

Then came the Shelby Farms Greenline.

### An Alternative Route

It may have appeared to some that people pushing for bike lanes were spinning their wheels—that they were a politically inconsequential fringe element.

But among that mobilizing fringe was a group drawing inspiration from successful rail-trail conversions across the country. Dubbed the Greater Memphis Greenline

([greatermemphisgreenline.com](http://greatermemphisgreenline.com)), the group took a keen interest in a disused CSX railway corridor that stretched from the inner city eastward under Interstate 240, over the Wolf River and into the 4,500-acre Shelby Farms Park.

Hmm. Maybe the local path to active transportation could start slightly off-road.

The idea was radical for the place and time, but the group latched on and didn’t let go. As Founding President Bob Schreiber puts it, “We just started jumping up and down and yelling and screaming.”

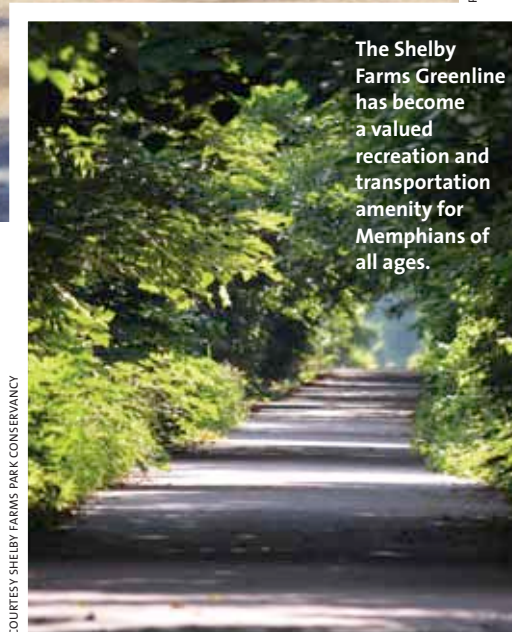
He chuckles as he says that.

Tactics were actually quite civilized. Group leaders held monthly meetings in Schreiber’s living room, booked themselves as presenters before any organization with ears,

and set up booths at community events to hand out research results, sell hats and T-shirts and start conversations.

Bit by bit, support grew. One very good day, it grew a lot.

A group of anonymous donors stepped up with most of the roughly \$5 million that would ultimately buy enough of the corridor for a 6.5-mile trail. One donor



**The Shelby Farms Greenline has become a valued recreation and transportation amenity for Memphians of all ages.**

Over the previous five or six years, he had optimistically participated in just about every significant collaboration organized to make Memphis and Shelby County bike friendly. In 2003, for example, he joined a bicycle/pedestrian advisory committee convened by the city’s metropolitan planning organization. In 2007, he was part of a community-rallying effort named Greening Greater Memphis. And earlier in 2008, Siracusa had joined a range of environmentally minded individuals in an ongoing effort to hammer out what became the Sustainable Shelby Plan.

Each round generated smart ideas, encouraged valuable alliances and stirred enthusiasm, he recalls. But when 2008 rolled around, Memphis still had no bike lanes. And *Bicycling* magazine had just named the city one of the nation’s worst for cycling, a nod to be repeated in mid-2010.

The two lanes under discussion were indeed painted in fall 2008 and heralded as the first of many. Still, Siracusa says there was little widespread faith that a truly navigable network would follow. City leadership at the time admitted Memphis was “behind the curve” on bike lanes, but gave reasons for the delay that rang hollow to active-transportation

in particular also helped tremendously in negotiations with CSX. Railroad companies are famously tough negotiators, and this case was no exception. But in early 2009, the sale went through. Another very good day.

In addition, the greenline project won a \$1.5 million federal grant, leaving only about \$375,000 in matching funds for Shelby County to pay. Under the terms of the deal, the county would assume ownership of the trail, and the Shelby Farms Park Conservancy ([shelbyfarmspark.org](http://shelbyfarmspark.org)) would operate it.

Laura Morris, executive director of the conservancy, recalls adding this responsibility on to the oversight of what was already the largest urban park in the United States. “It was definitely something to think about because we were taking on management of six-and-a-half additional miles with no additional funding... but it was an easy ‘yes’ for us. Managing the greenline as part of Shelby Farms meant that we could have a direct connection back to the core of the city, which totally fit our mission.”

Not everyone was so eager to get on board.

### Critics and Converts

With most funding coming from private donations and a federal grant, the greenline cost relatively little in local tax dollars. Still, local support was hugely important. And one key to securing it was advocacy by A C Wharton, who was mayor of Shelby County when the deal found traction, and became mayor of Memphis in October 2009, during implementation.

The greatest resistance, Wharton remembers, came from people who saw the

greenline as an inappropriate priority—a luxury for the affluent at the expense of potential programs for the poor. Poverty rates in Memphis and Shelby County at the time were estimated at 20 to 25 percent.

“Keep in mind that this is Memphis, Tennessee, where Dr. [Martin Luther] King was assassinated, and race is an ever-present consideration in most of our major decisions here,” notes Wharton,

who is black. “There were a number of arguments made to me, particularly from the urban commissioners, that the trail would not serve the core city, black people specifically.”

Wharton’s answers hit several points.

First, he noted that the west end of the greenline would go through the low-income neighborhood of Binghampton, giving its residents prime access to what promised to become a coveted amenity. Second, he vowed to support a network of future trails and bike lanes that would connect to the greenline, easing access and heightening benefits in other parts of town. Third, he



Hal Nelson and his dog “Varmint” are daily walkers on the Shelby Farms Greenline.

PHILIP PARKER/AP IMAGES



The greenline has helped to create a more physically active Memphis.

COURTESY SHELBY FARMS PARK CONSERVANCY



**Left: Angela Arnold-Ross, Jonathan Ross and their son Leo out on the greenline for a day of biking**

**Erin Ward and Sheilah Lansky on the greenline**



cited statistics on obesity and related health problems that don't discriminate on the basis of race or income. With an obesity rate of more than 30 percent, Memphis consistently ranks among the country's most overweight cities.

"We kept hearing this notion that black people won't ride bikes, black people won't walk on trails, black people won't jog," notes Wharton. "But as a big physical-fitness person, I just refused to surrender to that. So what we were doing was constituency building and cementing our commitment so people would know...this movement is here to stay. Environmentalism is here to stay."

A survey by the Shelby Farms Park Conservancy found that about 70 percent

became an active-transportation evangelist. "With its being paved, I thought, 'Golly, people can ride bikes at night, they can jump your fence, they can steal stuff, and they can get away.' But that just hasn't been the case at all."

Hedgepeth, whose home backs up to the greenline in an area called High Point Terrace, says the constant, congenial bustle on the trail deters crime. With backup from security cameras and a police bike patrol, he adds, the neighborhood has never felt safer.

"I tell groups all the time that I've never been so wrong in my life," he says. "Now, it's something my family is out walking or riding on every day.... When you look at what that infrastructure costs and what it does for a community, it is a very, very cheap investment."

### **Building on Success**

In terms of distance and break-away boldness, the 6.5-mile greenline was an ambitious undertaking. After years of seeing active-transportation infrastructure stymied by obstacles as small as storm grates, proponents wanted to create something substantial that could truly be seen as a community connector.

In other respects, however, the greenline was a humble project without a lot of frills. The design included no lighting, water fountains, shelters or initially even benches, and the trail is only 10 feet wide. It came together on a tight budget and a belief that the basics would be enough to get people excited—and that excitement could fuel further, faster, flashier progress.

That's exactly what happened.

The Shelby Farms Park Conservancy counted up to 400 people per hour passing certain points on the greenline in the weeks after it opened. Users in a hurry started building their own stairways and bridges to raised sections of the trail as shortcuts to entry. Bike shops hustled to serve new

of residents within a quarter-mile of the greenline felt it would benefit their neighborhoods. But other homeowners near the trail feared it would funnel crime to their doorsteps. Proponents tried to reassure them with crime data from other rail-trail cities. Still, some were hard to convince.

Until the trail opened and began to speak for itself.

"I was sour on the idea," says Memphis City Councilman Reid Hedgepeth. But he quickly





cyclists with new services, such as bike rentals and beginner classes. And real estate agents began to trumpet the trail as a selling point for any home listed nearby.

“The success was just instant,” says Kyle Wagenschutz, who was a new face at City Hall and himself a sign of changing times. Wharton had named Wagenschutz the city’s first bicycle/pedestrian coordinator a month before the greenline opened.

“Any complaints,” Wagenschutz says, “changed pretty quickly from being about whether the trail was a good thing to use-oriented issues like, ‘Why doesn’t it connect to my neighborhood?’”

Officials embraced the question, as more connections were on the way. Remember those lonely two miles of bike lanes that Memphis had before the greenline opened in late 2010? Contrast that with the tally of bike lanes opened from January 2011 through December 2014: more than 80 miles.

That’s not to say those changes came without controversy. Public meetings on bike lanes in high-traffic commercial areas drew strong objections from business owners who worried that losing parking spaces for cars would cost them customers. But in the end, Wagenschutz says, each project brought outcomes good enough to win fans for the overall movement.

“I do see the greenline as a turning point for what we’ve been able to accomplish over the past four years,” he says. “It helps immensely to have local examples of suc-

cess. And it gets easier every day to talk to neighborhoods about why robust transportation systems that address people walking and bicycling are important.”

### Rolling on the River

The active-transportation turnaround in Memphis persuaded *Bicycling* magazine in 2012 to move Memphis off its worst-cities list and into a spotlight as “most improved.”

But the metamorphosis isn’t over.

Paul Morris is among a growing collection of real estate developers and dreamers who see a time in the not-too-distant future when a strong cycling culture will be as much a part of Memphis’ identity as barbecue, blues and the Mississippi River.

Morris is president of the Downtown Memphis Commission ([downtownmemphiscommission.com](http://downtownmemphiscommission.com)) and the city’s manager for a project known as the Big River Crossing. Funded in part by a \$15 million federal stimulus grant, the project will convert a cantilevered carriageway along the mile-long Harahan Bridge into a bike and pedestrian trail beside an active Union Pacific Railroad line.

Ultimately, the bridge trail will be the centerpiece of multiuse pathways connecting Main Street in downtown Memphis, Tenn., with Main Street in West Memphis,

Ark. It will invite people to take their time and enjoy the Memphis skyline as they cross the mighty Mississippi. Every hour or so, a slow-moving train will pass at a safe distance, adding to the magic.

“I like trains,” Morris says, a little giddy as he describes the plan. “Most boys, I guess, like trains. So it’s kind of cool to see the trains go by in that setting.”

The idea to build a trail across the bridge goes back decades, but the Shelby Farms Greenline, he says, is what finally made it achievable.

“In the past when people tried to pull this off, the effort would fall apart when they reached their first big obstacle,” he explains.

“Part of the reason for that is they didn’t have the evidence of why a bike trail could matter enough to Memphis to be

worth it. With the greenline, all of a sudden we turned cynicism about bikes and our ability to do good things into optimism and hope and belief. And it allowed the private sector to take notice and say, ‘Hey, I want to get behind stuff like this.’”

**Amy French is a freelance writer, editor and communications consultant based in Memphis, Tenn. Writing this article inspired her to borrow her sister’s bicycle and give the Shelby Farms Greenline a go.**



Dave Schenk on the Wolf River Bridge



By Amy Kapp

# TOODY MAHER:

## Parks to Trails—Building a Better Community

In 2007, Toody Maher, inventor, entrepreneur and former pro volleyball player, founded Pogo Park ([pogopark.org](http://pogopark.org)), a non-profit dedicated to transforming neglected parks into vibrant play spaces and community hubs in Richmond, Calif.

That year, Maher walked all 56 parks in the city and was “floored” by the playlots she found along the way—noting both their need for transformation and the powerful impact this transformation could have on children and families.

Using her knack for ingenuity (Maher had previously pioneered Swatch’s rise in the United States and invented the world’s first clear telephone with lights)—and inspired by her outdoor-filled childhood in Montreal and Los Angeles—she set out to make her lifelong ambition of “running a city park” a reality.

In 2008, the first Pogo Park project

got underway at Elm Playlot in the Iron Triangle, one of the San Francisco Bay Area’s most underserved neighborhoods. In 2011, Pogo Park began to transform a park along the Richmond Greenway, a three-mile rail-trail in the city’s urban core. Now, Maher is helping to lead the charge for expansion of the trail.

We recently chatted with Maher about her work as a park builder and trail advocate, and her vision for the future of the Richmond Greenway.

### What is the unique concept around Pogo Park?

First, the concept is to turn a lifeless and broken public space into a vibrant playground. We like to “turn the lights on” in these spaces by creating rich play environments for children. There’s tons of research that points to the fact that play is “the

mother’s breast milk” of healthy child development. Play is at the heart of Pogo Park.

Second, we want to make these parks community hubs for parents as well as children. If the parents are supported, the children will be supported.

We’re not going to just come in and build the parks. We are going to build them with community members, by hand—and they’ll get paid to staff them, too. Take the transformation of Elm Playlot. Residents staff it Monday through Saturday. Here’s a park that nobody would use for years. Now it’s a safe place; thousands of people have come into the park in the past three years.

You have to have stewards for these spaces—people to care for them and watch over them as a parent watches over a child. You can’t just leave them be; that’s when the negative elements start to move in. Our parks are pristine because we have people clean-





ing them and the surrounding streets each day. When a whole park is clean, people think twice about dropping a candy wrapper on the ground.

Safe, green and clean, with things to do—that's the model.

**In 2011, you launched the Unity Park project on the Richmond Greenway, followed by the adjacent Harbour-8 Project. What put the greenway on your radar?**

I was looking at parks, and I stumbled upon the Richmond Greenway. I walked the whole thing, and then I went home and literally cried because I realized its potential power. Very few cities have a linear park going through their most hardcore urban neighborhoods. But the greenway wasn't maintained well; there wasn't much money to maintain it. I asked some of the Latino families in the neighborhood, "What do you call this path?" They said, "El Baldio," which means, "the abandoned place."

I recognized the impact this space could have if it was transformed. It could transform the lives of tens of thousands of people living within a quarter mile of it. This was an opportunity of a lifetime. So I did what I always do: I started researching. I looked at greenways such as the High Line in New York City that have been vehicles to help launch the renaissance of cities.

Pogo Park and our friends at MIG, a Berkeley-based planning and design firm, wrote a grant proposal to the state of California for the city of Richmond and got \$5 million to develop two pieces of land adjacent to the trail into what is now the Unity Park project. Then we started mapping the whole greenway. For the first time, we took a look at all the community projects existing along the route to see potential connections.

We then wrote a second grant proposal

called *Greening the Last Mile of the Richmond Greenway* and got another \$727,000 from the state of California to develop the last part of the greenway. What we are trying to do now is to empower local residents and groups, those who know the neighborhood best, so they can plan, design, build and manage the [space] themselves.

**How has the Richmond Greenway supported your ongoing work and larger vision for the local community? Has it affected your outlook?**

The one thing that's really hit me is the natural longing of people from the community for places to gather. This concept is discussed in "The Death and Life of Great American Cities" by Jane Jacobs—one of the bibles of urban planning.

More than anything else, people want a place to go sit and gather and be comfortable and watch other people, and the Richmond Greenway is the perfect place for that.

The streets around it are hard streets. They are blighted. They are treeless. There is a high level of violence. But you've got this Garden of Eden in the middle; it has so much potential to be a vibrant space that can satisfy the needs of the community.

**In collaboration with Rails-to-Trails Conservancy and a team of others, you're leading an advocacy effort for the Richmond Greenway's expansion to close a trail gap. What motivated you to get involved at this level, and what will the end result be?**

I started to map the greenway and all the projects that were happening in and around it. Nobody had done this in an extensive way. I talked to every group that started a project there; I looked at the projects and looked at the gaps, and I asked myself, "Who can fill them?"

We brought a whole group together... Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, The Trust for Public Land, the city of Richmond... and all the folks who were working on trails

regionally. One of the big local groups is Friends of the Richmond Greenway, a constellation of all the local groups working on the greenway today.

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy has been incredibly resourceful, especially with the acquisition of the last piece of the greenway [in collaboration with The Trust for Public Land]. This involves working with the railroad that owns the corridor. They've also given us key knowledge about railroad lines and how to transform them—the nuts and bolts of rail-trail development.

**Have you come across any unexpected challenges in your advocacy efforts? How have you overcome them?**

This is happening so fast that some people from the community are reacting negatively. They are a small but vocal group. That's been a shock to me. Even though the transformation of the greenway will help them and the entire community in the long run, they're worried that some trail users will end up in their neighborhood, committing crimes.

There's also the money piece. In the private sector, if you have a good idea and a good team, you get venture capital money to fund your idea. In the public sector, it's difficult to raise money to keep up with the opportunities at hand. That's a frustrating and hard piece of the puzzle.

You just have to keep your eye on the prize and move ahead. There will always be some friction. You need to say to community members and funders, "Look how far we've come, and look at the transformational possibilities yet to come with further support and investment."

**What's the most important thing people can do to support parks and trails in the United States?**

Adopt a part of a trail and start to take care of it. You can't count on government or anyone else to come in and do it. Don't wait! Just do it yourself.

**Amy Kapp is editor-in-chief of *Rails to Trails* magazine.**

COURTESY POGO PARK (4)



COURTESY FRIENDS OF THE CAL-SAG TRAIL

New trails in Chicago are providing children with safe places to bike and get around.

Inspiration +  
Collaboration:

By John Greenfield

# Chicago's

## Bloomingtondale and Cal-Sag Trails

The Trust for Public Land's Beth White is a petite woman who speaks with a light Southern accent, despite the fact that she's lived much of her life here in Chicago. She hands me an oversized white hardhat and an orange safety vest, and we walk a couple of blocks from a construction office through the December gloom to the worksite for the Bloomingtondale Trail, also known as The 606 ([the606.org](http://the606.org)). This 2.7-mile elevated trail and linear park is slated to open in June 2015. When it does, it's certain to become one of the Windy City's signature public spaces.

Friends of the Cal-Sag Trail Board Member Rich Ferrin goes for a spin on the trail (near the Harlem Avenue Bridge in Palos Heights, Ill.).



The Bloomingdale, which is being built on the old rail embankment of the same name, will stretch across four economically and culturally diverse neighborhoods in Chicago's Northwest Side, providing a gorgeous space for strolling, running, biking and relaxing. Meanwhile, in the city's near south suburbs, the Cal-Sag Trail—a 26-mile multiuse path that will run almost entirely along the banks of the Cal-Sag (short for Calumet-Saganashkee) Channel and the Calumet River—is partly completed and should be finished by 2018.



DIANE BANTA

Both greenways are great examples of how grassroots advocacy, efforts by municipalities and national nonprofits, and federal funding can combine to create projects with big economic, environmental and health benefits.

### High Hopes for the Bloomingdale

White leads me up the embankment at a trailhead in Julia de Burgos Park, named after the late Puerto Rican nationalist and feminist poet who is a hero to many residents of Humboldt Park, the largely Latino community to the south. The railroad right-of-way runs about 16 feet above street level. It averages only about 30 feet wide, but it

THOMAS PHOTOGRAPHIC SERVICES

will soon be home to colorful plantings and art installations. There's already a 14-foot-wide ribbon of concrete that will become the multiuse path. "The story of The 606 is a unique combination of passion and perseverance," White says. "Those things don't often go together."

Completed in 1913, the rail line served a number of small Chicago manufacturers during the 20th century, including the makers of bicycles, furniture, candy, Lincoln Logs, Ludwig drums, and Harmony guitars and ukuleles. As the surrounding areas transitioned from industrial to residential in recent decades, rail traffic slowed to a trickle. It ended completely by 2000.

Meanwhile, neighbors became interested in turning the right-of-way into a recreational path. Josh Deth, owner of Chicago's burgeoning craft beer company Revolution Brewing, was the founding president of Friends of the Bloomingdale Trail (FBT) ([facebook.com/groups/TheBloomingdale](https://www.facebook.com/groups/TheBloomingdale)), a grassroots group that formed in 2003 to push for building the greenway. "My first experience with the Bloomingdale was sneaking up there with buddies to ride bikes," he says. "We called them 'urban assault rides.'"

Ben Helphand, current head of FBT, also first experienced the rail line's charms as an unsanctioned user. "I crawled up there one day and fell in love with the views," he says. "The space was just crying out to become a path. It was overgrown with weeds, but people had already blazed a trail."

The same year FBT formed, the city of Chicago included the Bloomingdale Trail in its open space plan for Logan Square. Adjacent to the rail line, this neighborhood was found to have the second-worst parks-to-people ratio in the city. Mayor Richard M. Daley voiced support for the trail, and the project moved forward at a slow but steady pace during his administration.

Occasionally, FBT members staged guerrilla interventions to try to speed things up. They ambushed the mayor one year with a giant thank-you card at the Bike to Work rally, thanking him for "elevating the trail." Helphand says, "He had already

endorsed the trail, but that added a little more pressure; you can't really say no to a thank-you card."

Momentum to build the greenway increased dramatically in 2011 after mayor-elect Rahm Emanuel vowed to open the path by the end of his first term, as one of several bold transportation goals. It soon became clear that Emanuel intended to make the Bloomingdale not just a simple trail but one of the hallmarks of his administration, along the lines of Daley's Millennium Park, the \$475 million downtown arts space.

"There's no chance the Bloomingdale would be happening in 2015 if Emanuel had not made it a marquee project," Helphand says. "There are a lot of great plans out there, and many of them sit on the shelf for decades. Emanuel fast-tracked the project and showered it with attention."

The city enlisted The Trust for Public Land ([tpl.org](http://tpl.org)), a national nonprofit that preserves land for open space, as project manager, responsible for coordinating several city departments and contractors as well as the community input process. Of the \$95 million projected as the total cost for the trail, \$50 million is coming from federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) grants, which are bankrolling the design and construction of the basic trail. The trust is working on raising an additional \$45 million in private donations to fund the construction of access parks, trail landscaping and public art, as well as maintenance, security and programming.

### Engaging the Neighborhood

Lucy Gomez-Feliciano, director of early learning and health programs for the Logan Square Neighborhood Association ([lsna.net](http://lsna.net)), was one of the early members of FBT, along with Deth and Helphand. She has been active in efforts to inform members of the Latino community about the trail and involve them in the public input process. Initiatives have included a youth mural project and an oral history project in which teens photographed and interviewed local residents about their experiences with the Bloomingdale.

A number of new, market-rate housing developments are planned for land next to the embankment in anticipation of the trail opening. Gomez-Feliciano says many longtime residents are worried that, as property values rise, higher property taxes and rents may force them out of their homes. She thinks Chicago should address the gentrification and displacement issue head-on. One possible strategy, she says, is to have new homeowners pay into a fund to build affordable housing. "I'd like to see the city create a space at the table where creative, concerned people could come together to figure out some solutions," she adds. "It's about maintaining economic diversity in the neighborhoods."

White and I make our way to the western end of the trail, where a mound of dirt is being transformed into the site for an observatory, which will be accessed via a spiral path. From the top of the mound—10 feet above the rest of the trail—visitors will be able to watch train movements on an adjacent, live, north-south rail line and view the heavens through telescopes.

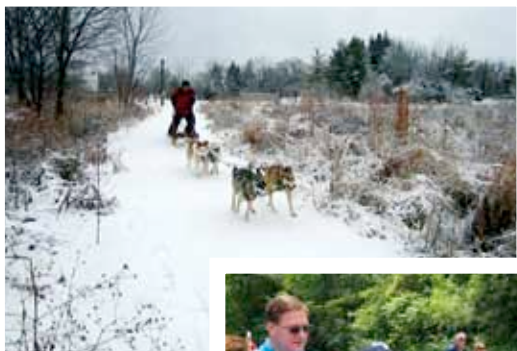
We head back east to Julia de Burgos Park and then continue a few more blocks until the new Milwaukee Avenue bridge comes into view. Two weeks earlier, workers had installed a 35-foot-tall, 55,000-pound steel arch on the bridge. I'm impressed by how much progress has been made on the trail over the past few months, and I know I'm not the only one who can't wait for the grand opening.

### Rolling Out the Cal-Sag

A month later, on a snowy, windy Sunday in early January, I haul my bicycle aboard a Metra commuter train for the south suburbs to check out the mostly completed western portion of the Cal-Sag Trail ([calsagtrail.org/FOCST](http://calsagtrail.org/FOCST)). The path is covered with a couple inches of snow, so it's tricky going on my skinny-tired three-speed. But it's silent and serene as I roll past the canal on my left, with its many imposing steel bridges.

The Cal-Sag Trail is not a new idea; planning maps go back as far as the 1970s, when local urban planners proposed build-

Right: Cal-Sag Trail groundbreaking, June 2014; below: Vincent Juarez and his team of huskies on the Cal-Sag; bottom: Cal-Sag groundbreaking.



JOHN GREENFIELD (3)



ing a multiuse path along the waterway. The recent greenway campaign began in 2004, according to Steve Buchtel, executive director of the nonprofit Trails for Illinois ([trailsforillinois.org](http://trailsforillinois.org)), which has spearheaded the effort.

Buchtel is a compact, wiry man with a shaved head and a disarming grin. In 2004, he was working as the south suburban coordinator for the Chicago-based Active Transportation Alliance ([activetrans.org](http://activetrans.org)). Mike Leonard, parks and recreation director for Palos Heights, a town on the western end of the Cal-Sag, contacted him about creating a safe way for pedestrians and cyclists to access a new Metra station on the south side of the canal.

"We looked at some maps, and it seemed like it would be very tough to get people across the water to the station," Buchtel recalls. "Then it occurred to us that we could build a trail along the canal." That was when Leonard did something "remarkable," Buchtel says. He began inviting people to discuss the trail idea at monthly, city-funded pizza lunches held at Lake Katherine Nature Center in Palos Heights.

The luncheons drew staff from city agencies, Cook County commissioners, state and federal legislators, and the general public, with more than 30 people showing up every month. They discussed potential funding for the \$21 million trail as well as ways that towns could use the trail for economic development.

"That led to [U.S. Senator] Dick Durbin securing a \$300,000 federal Transportation, Community and System Preservation Program grant," Buchtel says. Durbin has

been an outspoken supporter of active transportation, and his office had asked the Active

Transportation Alliance if any trail projects could use funding. "That seed money was our incentive to apply for traditional funding like CMAQ grants and Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program grants," Buchtel says. The result: The trail is now almost completely funded.

### Bridging Cultural Divides

Buchtel says one of the challenges involved in building a trail across the southland is bridging the region's cultural divides. "The eastern portion, with towns like Dolton, Riverdale and Blue Island, was dominated by steel manufacturing, which has dramatically declined in recent decades, leaving behind low-income communities and ruined landscapes," explains Buchtel. "To the west are more affluent bedroom communities like Palos Heights and Palos Hills, that had less industry and have fewer minorities. These towns, moving east to west, are as different as can be, but having funding to build the trail unites people."

Peter Taylor lives in Chicago's Roseland Heights neighborhood and helps lead the Major Taylor Cycling Club of Chicago and Friends of the Major Taylor Trail, a seven-mile path on the city's Southwest Side that eventually will intersect with the Cal-Sag in Riverdale. Taylor hopes his predominantly African-American bike club can help drum up more support for completing the eastern portion of the trail—especially in Dolton, a mostly black suburb; less local political sup-

port and more physical barriers, such as factories, have made trail construction slower on the eastern end of the corridor than on the western end.

"We want to make sure people understand the benefits of the trail," he explains. "I don't know if it's as much of a problem with the residents themselves as with the politicians and the bureaucrats. Our club would have a comfort level in Dolton that some other clubs might not, so we would be some of the first people to step up to the plate and lead rides there."

Eli Rodriguez owns Tenochtitlan Mexican restaurant in Blue Island. "The Cal-Sag Trail is going to be an advantage for the community," he says. "The more foot and bike traffic the city gets from the trail, the more customers there will be for businesses, including mine. The trail will also give people an opportunity for exercise, and it will give families something to do together."

I continue west until I reach Lake Katherine, a lovely little body of water filled with ducks. There, I come across Vincent Juarez, hitching his four huskies, Honey, Hannah, Shiloh and Arctic, to an old-fashioned wooden dogsled. "This trail is awesome," he says. "You can already go for miles without stopping. The dogs love it." He yells "Mush!" and the huskies take off at what seems like 20 miles an hour.

Juarez and his team are moving just like the people of Chicago as they strive to make their new trails a reality: full speed ahead.

**John Greenfield edits the transportation news website *Streetsblog Chicago* and writes the "Checkerboard City" transportation column for Chicago's *Newcity* magazine.**

**Ruby Falls, Guild-Hardy Trail,  
Tennessee ▶**

Deep within the caverns of Lookout Mountain, near Chattanooga, Tenn., is a true gem: an underground waterfall cascading 145 feet down, contained fully within the heart of the mountain itself. The cascade, discovered in 1928, is named Ruby Falls after the wife of Leo Lambert, one of the explorers who first discovered the site. Above ground, the five-mile Guild-Hardy Trail is used by walkers, cyclists and nature enthusiasts wanting to soak in the natural wonders of Lookout Mountain from another perspective.

The partnership established between Ruby Falls management and Lookout Mountain Conservancy, which maintains the trail, serves both organizations, and their camaraderie is worth noting. Ruby Falls has put conservation at the top of its list of priorities, making its relationship with the conservancy a natural fit. The Guild-Hardy Trail also runs right through the parking lot of Ruby Falls—an advantage for both groups. “We bring each other users,” says Robyn Carlton, president of the conservancy. “We help each other, and we give each other recognition.”

**B**abbling brooks pour gently off of rocky cliffs, creating misty, mystical scenes. Secret falls hide in green river canyons. Grand cascades announce their dominance with roars heard from far off. No matter the size or location, waterfalls capture our attention and our imagination. Stand back and let these trailside waterfalls take your breath away.



# TRAILSIDE

By Katie Harris



MICHAEL SPEED/MICHAEL SPEED.COM

# WATERFALLS



## Devil's Bathtub, Devil's Fork Loop Trail, Virginia ▲◀

Amazing rock formations, waterfalls and swimming holes offer plenty to see and do along the Devil's Fork Loop Trail in southwest Virginia. A crisp stream drops from one ledge to the next, tumbling over shelves of shale and beneath moss-covered banks. While minor waterfalls dot the length of the stream, the main attraction is Devil's Bathtub, located 1.5 miles from the trailhead. The emerald pool beckons as green-blue water swings down the sandstone slide and fills the tub. Jump in!

Note: The Devil's Fork Loop Trail is a far cry from your "typical" rail-trail, and it's not for the faint of heart. In fact, with 18 stream crossings, 1,200 feet of elevation change, and a fair amount of exposure and scrambling, this seven-mile trail should be tackled only by those up for a challenge and prepared—mentally and physically—for wet feet and a taxing experience.

DAWN SANDERS

### Minnehaha Falls, Minnehaha Trail, Minnesota ▼

At the northern terminus of the five-mile Minnehaha Trail in Minneapolis, less than a mile before the pathway reaches the Mississippi River, Minnehaha Creek takes a major tumble—53 feet, to be exact—as it becomes Minnehaha Falls. The trail offers an excellent viewpoint from above. There are also side paths that descend from the bluff to the base of the falls.

Laura Domyancich, project and land technician for the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District, says that Minnehaha is a “flashy” creek; it peaks after major precipitation events and then drops a few days later. In spring 2014, the creek pushed the discharge gauge to the tippy-top; 900 cubic feet per second of water shot off the top of the falls!

Limestone rock frame the waterfall, adding to the impressive scene. And while poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow never visited Minnesota, that didn't keep him from being inspired by the falls. In fact, the waterfall in Longfellow's 1855 poem “The Song of Hiawatha” was based on this Minnesota beauty. Today, a sculpture of Minnehaha and Hiawatha, two of the poem's characters, stands near the waterfall.

KEITH THOMAS

HENRY TSAY







Luke's Falls

Buttermilk Falls

**Buttermilk and Luke's Falls, D&L Trail—Lehigh Gorge State Park Trail, Pennsylvania ▲**

A duo of waterfalls adorns the D&L Trail—Lehigh Gorge State Park Trail in eastern Pennsylvania. Buttermilk Falls, the larger of the two, is just a quarter mile north of the Rockport access point. Luke's Falls, equally as gorgeous, is the same distance south of Rockport.

In winter, the flow of both falls declines significantly, so if you're looking to see the falls at their peak, a springtime visit is best. Usually the waterfalls don't interfere with the trail, even during peak flow. But according to Park Manager Dave Madl, a significant rain event resulted in a bit of flooding a few years ago and relocated an unlikely guest—a rogue brook trout—to the middle of the trail!

The tributaries flow beneath the trail to the Lehigh River, which the trail parallels for its 26 miles. Numerous smaller falls make the rock face glisten on one side of the trail, while the other side offers river views.

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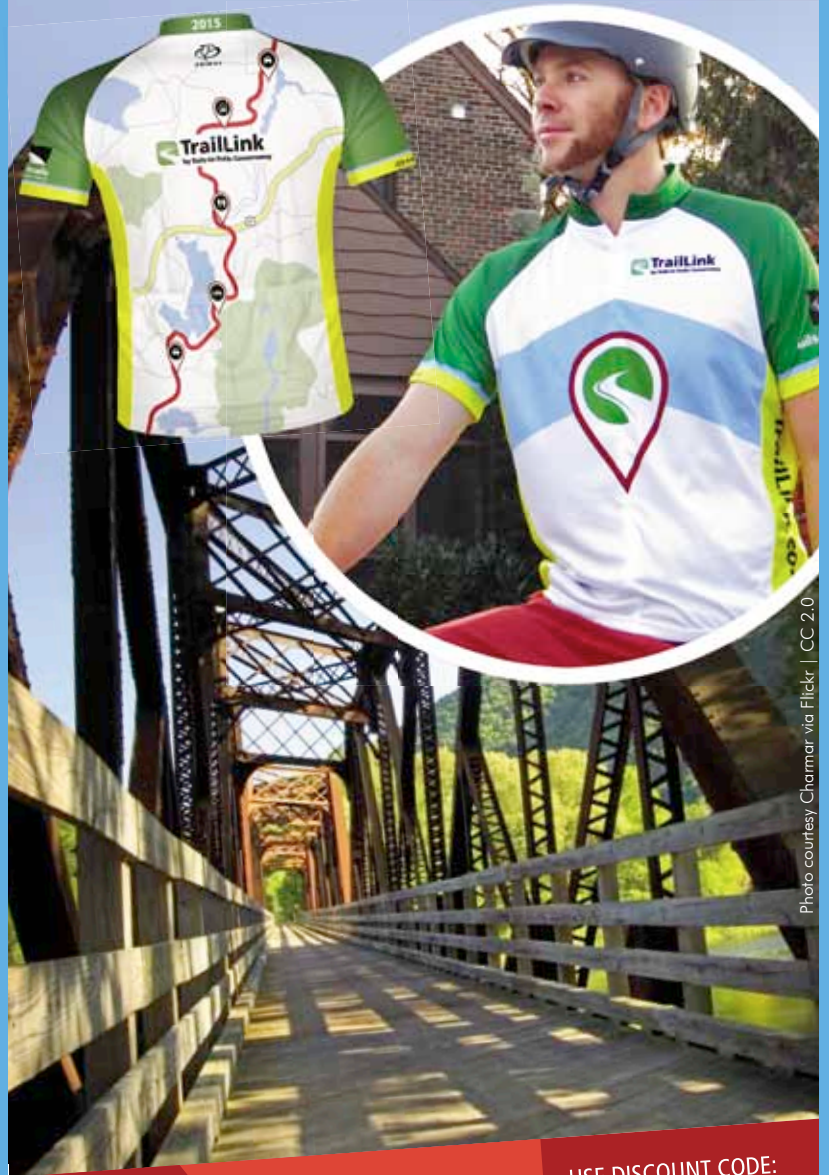


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WISCONSIN

## Ride, Women, Ride

When Carmen Berte met The Bella Donnas ([thebelladonnas.org](http://thebelladonnas.org)), Milwaukee's self-described "premier all-girl, noncompetitive, mentoring and motivational cycling group," in 2008, she wasn't sure it was the right place for her. Berte wanted to train with a group for her first triathlon, but at 56, she thought she was too old for The Bella Donnas.

Her hesitation didn't last long. Bella Donna Founder Jillian Imilkowski greeted her with enthusiasm and warmth, and Berte knew she had made an important connection. "It turns out, it was *exactly* where I needed to be," she says. "I found a new home. And the rest is history."

Imilkowski created The Bella Donnas in 2007 in response to the relative lack of recreational and educational women's cycling groups in Milwaukee. What started as a group of five friends morphed into a community of more than 300 female riders with varying levels of skill and expertise. Imilkowski set an inclusive tone, and "The Bellas" have maintained that attitude of acceptance and support as the group has blossomed. They host introductory sessions at vari-

ous locations around the city—an organizational "open house," of sorts—and regularly invite newcomers on rides. Currently, the youngest member is less than 10 years old, and the oldest is more than 60.

"There is a 'leave no woman behind' philosophy," says Berte. "No matter who you are, there is something for you within The Bellas."

In addition to holding regular rides and events, the group provides a mentoring component in which members reach out to their friends and families and encourage the women in their lives to pick up their bikes once more. Rides are held around Milwaukee, from trails to city streets and beyond.

Of course, the group rides help motivate The Bella Donnas to spend more miles in the saddle, but the benefits go beyond mere distance. Learning *how* to ride with others is an important skill for cyclists, and members teach newcomers about proper technique and etiquette when riding in a group.

Imilkowski says the group has evolved far beyond just biking. Bella Donnas have developed close personal bonds; they are bridesmaids at each other's weddings and godmothers for each other's children. "The connections made from The Bella Donnas truly permeate into all parts of our lives," she adds.

And it's both the social and educational aspects that have sealed the deal for Berte, who's made some incredible personal achievements during her time with the group. In the past six years, she's lost weight, learned how to ride with clipless pedals, completed triathlons and met her target of 70 miles ridden in a single day.

She states, "Sometimes, it felt like I bit off more than I could chew, but The Bellas were there, saying, 'If you want to go for something, I'll be here, and I'll do it with you.' What an incredible gift that is."

OHIO

## Getting Girls in Gear

A formidable group of young women travels the streets of Columbus. Helmet clad, they roll through town on their bikes, searching for sidewalks and bike lanes and assessing street lighting. They know the names of the city council members who represent them, and you may find them behind a microphone at a town hall meeting advocating for the local bicycling movement. They also help cyclists themselves; they can fix a flat bike tire without giving it a second thought.

They are an impressive group. Oh, and they're in middle school!

These young women are graduates of Girls in Gear, an eight-week bicycle training and empowerment program for females ages 9 to 15. Since the program began two years ago, it has had a major impact; so far, 21 girls have completed the course and earned a bike upon graduation.

The crew's leader is Jessica Mathews, Safe Routes to School program manager for the Columbus-based bike advocacy organization Consider Biking ([considerbiking.org](http://considerbiking.org)). According to Mathews, the idea for Girls in Gear came to her several years ago while she was performing walking audits for middle schools throughout Columbus. On those outings, she noticed how the students reacted, or didn't react, to the surrounding marginalized neighborhoods, characterized by vacant houses, trash-lined streets and landscapes dominated by blight.

"What I sensed from the kids was that they were immune to that environment," Mathews says. "They felt like it was OK to be surrounded by those things—that that's just the way it was going to be."

This inspired Mathews to take action, and Girls in Gear was born. The goal: to build confidence, self-esteem and self-reliance in participants, while showing them that they could have a voice in how their streets and neighborhoods were designed and cared for. "I wanted to expand their



An outing of "The Bellas"

COURTESY JILLIAN IMILKOWSKI



Girls in Gear bike mechanics class

COURTESY GIRLS IN GEAR

## WASHINGTON, D.C.

### Yes, Black Women Bike!

It was a simple exclamation from a young girl that set Veronica Davis' wheels in motion to found one of the District of Columbia's most vibrant female bike clubs. As she rode through her southeast Washington, D.C., neighborhood on a summer afternoon in 2011, she watched this girl tug her mother's sleeve and yell, "Look, mommy! Look at that black lady on a bike!"

Davis tweeted about the experience and, on a whim, created the hashtag #blackwomenbike. The somewhat joking hashtag opened up a dialogue—first on social media channels, then in real life—with other black women in the D.C. region. Davis found that many of them were having similar experiences.

It was time and they were ready, she says, to bust the myth that black women don't bike.

In 2011, Davis and two other women with whom she'd been dialoguing, Nse Ufot and Najeema Washington, founded Black Women Bike DC (**blackwomenbike.blogspot.com**). In 2013, the organization became a sponsored project of the Washington Area Bicyclist Association. Davis says the group immediately filled a niche in the city. With a vision of encouraging bike riding for fun, health and wellness, and transportation, the group is different from most other biking groups, which focus largely on recreation. "We give women the tools they need to use a bike in any way they want," Davis explains.

The project's reach and impact are multifaceted. In addition to leading monthly rides, the group hosts workshops covering a range of topics, from how to pick out a bike that works for one's needs to how to continue riding in the winter.

Nichole Noel, a member of the organization's leadership council, says one of her favorite parts of Black Women Bike DC is having an accepting community of welcoming friends who serve as "incredible"

resources. "There is always someone to answer questions for you," she says. "We can share our experiences and expertise in different ways. 'What do I do with my hair? What if I have dreadlocks? Where can I find an extra-large helmet?' We're constantly learning from each other."

As Black Women Bike DC seeks to reach out to women across all parts of the city, members are exploring several new strategies. They intend to hold more events at locations where people aren't yet comfortable riding, but which are close to Capital Bikeshare stations—so owning a bike isn't a prerequisite for getting in the saddle. At the same time, the group will be shifting its focus to some of D.C.'s predominantly black neighborhoods in wards 7 and 8, east of the Anacostia River.

When it comes to developing sufficient bike infrastructure in those neighborhoods, transforming citizens into advocates is paramount in Noel's mind. "If we want infrastructure in wards 7 and 8, then we have to get more people riding *and* more people insisting on infrastructure."

As Black Women Bike DC pumps up its presence and reaches more people in the Southeast quadrant of the city, Noel expects the increased visibility will help generate even more support for the project's mission. And with that increased support comes the opportunity to shift the dominant narrative of who bikes in the nation's capital.



Black Women Bike DC/  
Kidical Cupcake Ride

RANDALL MYERS

thinking about their role in the community and give them tools to change it for the better," Mathews says.

She initially focused on three topics: bike safety, bike mechanics and urban design. But as Girls in Gear evolved, she added two more sections, nutrition education and public speaking, to incorporate personal development into the curriculum.

The female focus of the program was motivated by Mathews' own experiences working in a male-dominated field in the U.S. She points out that when it comes to bicycling, the gender gap goes much further than the bike shop—to engineering and regional planning and many other professions that impact the streetscape. "I want to show these girls that *they* can be the ones to redesign the streets," she states.

Mathews says most of the course concepts are new to the girls, and she loves "watching the light bulbs go off" as they discover new skills. Some girls thrive with the hands-on, bike mechanics segment. Others find their niche in urban design or public speaking. "I watch their confidence grow through the program. The hesitation that they bring with them on day one dissipates week by week."

The transformation is powerful, and Girls in Gear has generated quite a few success stories. Last summer, for example, three program alumni showed up at a neighborhood meeting after Mathews told them that street design was on the agenda. That small prompt was all they needed to take action and share their voices in a public platform.

"I just let them know about it," Mathews says. "They showed up on their own accord. I'd call that a pretty major success."



## What We've Been Up To

■ In Spring 2014, RTC launched “**The Florida Campaign**,” a nine-month initiative designed to push the needle toward support for trails, biking and walking in the Sunshine State. The campaign focused on seven key actions, including the passing of the **Florida Water, Land and Legacy Conservation Amendment (Amendment 1)** in the state legislature—with the amendment slated to provide as much as \$16 billion for conservation projects over the next 20 years, including trails.

In a November 2014 vote, the ballot passed overwhelmingly, with an impressive 75 percent of voters supporting the initiative. RTC gives special thanks to the Health Foundation of South Florida for the particularly strong support generated in their region.

Amendment 1 presents a great opportunity to connect Florida’s springs to its beaches and its open spaces to its urban areas, from Pensacola to Key West. The fight is not over, however, and Floridians’ continued involvement is critical to ensuring that trails receive the necessary resources to create a statewide trail system. Stay tuned for future updates on how to get involved. Contact: Ken Bryan, ken@railstotrails.org.

■ In July, RTC mobilized trail supporters in a campaign to railbank the **145-mile Rock Island Line in Missouri**, culminating in more than 12,500 individuals making their voices heard. The massive groundswell of public support was a success, and the owner, Ameren, formally began the railbanking process in November. **A Notice of Interim Trail Use has been filed with the Surface Transportation Board in Washington, D.C.** RTC continues to work with local trail groups as well as monitor the railbanking process to ensure this corridor is preserved. Further RTC efforts to strengthen local support and create a statewide coalition for development of the trail are on the horizon. Contact: Eric Oberg, eric@railstotrails.org.

■ RTC is assisting the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission in developing an implementation plan for the **Monterey Bay Sanctuary Scenic Trail Network**, a prominent regional trail network featuring a 32-mile rail-with-trail along a stretch of the Pacific coast. The trail will ultimately link to another trail further south in Monterey and promises to be a major transportation route and attraction for the area. RTC is supporting the effort by identifying options for multi-agency partnerships, strategies for utilizing privately generated revenues to support the trail, and best practices for utilizing the trail corridor for multiple uses, such as utility rights of way. Contact: Barry Bergman, barry@railstotrails.org.

■ RTC’s Northeast Regional Office recently wrapped up the data collection phase for its in-progress **Three Rivers Heritage Trail User Survey and Economic Impact Analysis**, the

12th such report conducted by the Northeast Regional Office. Ten passive infrared counters were placed along segments of the 24-mile trail network, which spans the banks of the Allegheny, Monongahela and Ohio Rivers. To collect data, paper survey forms were made available at trailheads; additionally, an online version of the survey was available via a QR code or a “take one” card containing the survey URL. A total of 535 survey forms were completed during the course of the study. Contact: Carl Knoch, carl@railstotrails.org.

■ RTC is working with the Chattanooga Department of Transportation as well as local trail advocates in Tennessee to complete a **comprehensive assessment of rail-trail and rail-with-trail opportunities in Hamilton County**. A final report will be provided to the city to supplement a bicycle and pedestrian connectivity plan released in 2014. Contact: Kelly Pack, kellyp@railstotrails.org.

### PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT

#### Poll Reveals Support for Federal Trail Role

In 2014, in a nationwide transportation poll, RTC engaged leading Republican and Democratic pollsters to find out what likely 2016 voters thought about the federal role in building and maintaining trails. On Dec. 8, the results of the poll, which reached a representative sampling of Republican and Democratic voters, were presented on Capitol Hill by Republican pollster Christine Matthews and Democratic pollster Celinda Lake.

**Results:** The poll found that four times as many voters favor increasing or maintaining current levels of federal investment in walking and biking paths as decreasing them (74 percent to 19 percent) and that strong majorities support this funding regardless of political affiliation. Twice as many people indicated they would be less likely (43 percent) than more likely (21 percent) to vote for a candidate who wanted to fund only highways and roads and eliminate funding for walking and biking infrastructure. When asked how they would apportion \$100 of transportation funding, respondents on average allocated \$26.90 to improve walking and biking paths and sidewalks, which is 18 times the actual current allocation.

“There is no significant constituency for decreasing federal investment in biking and walking,” states Kevin Mills, RTC’s senior vice president of policy and trail development. “It is clear that across the political spectrum, American voters expect robust investment in walking and biking as part of a balanced transportation system.” Contact: Kevin Mills, kevin@railstotrails.org.

branch to the coalfields at the base of Mount Rainier. Another loopy segment of paved rail-trail less than two miles long, in an area known as Cascade Junction, crosses creeks and ravines on four bridges. (Unfortunately, this segment—normally accessible only by a frequently flooded path that starts at a “Proceed at Your Own Risk” sign—was just made more difficult to access due to bridge damage on the segment’s northern end.)

On the main 12-foot asphalt trail, you’ll find cyclists on training rides, walkers stretching their legs, moms and dads pushing strollers, and dog owners exercising their pets. They use words such as *clean*, *safe*, *scenic* and *friendly* to describe the trail and its vibe.

Thirty-some years ago, the late Douglas Tait, a Buckley physician, was looking for a way to keep his clientele active and healthy when he witnessed Burlington Northern Railroad crews pulling up the abandoned tracks of the old Northern



BY GENE BISBEE

# Destination: Washington

## Following the Foothills Trail

GENE BISBEE (2)

**T**here’s a spot on the Foothills Trail in western Washington where I always slow down. It’s not a sudden steep climb or dicey patch of gravel that causes me to feather my bike brakes on the outskirts of Orting. It’s the imposing and ever-changing view of glacier-capped Mount Rainier seemingly emerging at the end of the trail. One time the sun may be striking the craggy face of the 14,410-foot-elevation volcano in a way I’ve never seen previously; another time a flying-saucer-shaped lenticular cloud may be floating above the summit.

A short distance ahead, the Carbon River rushes past the trail in a wide channel choked with rocks and sediment scoured away by the mountain’s lowest glacier. More often than not, I’ll stop, lean my bike against the back of a bench and have a seat.

This paved segment of the Foothills Trail is a good trail for exercise, as it runs uninterrupted for 15 miles with an imperceptible 400 feet of elevation gain. In places like this, where the forest closes in and the river runs wild, the trail also offers day-trippers quiet spots to pause for reflection.

The entire trail rolls for 30 miles, with

some gaps, along river valleys at the base of the Cascade Range. It passes through farmland and forest along the abandoned corridor of the Northern Pacific Railway that began serving the port of Tacoma in the early 1870s.

Other unattached paved sections—each two to four miles long—are located to the north in Enumclaw and Buckley and trace the old train route toward St. Paul, Minn.

Adventurous hikers and mountain bikers may want to follow the dirt single-track segment that runs about four miles, connecting the historic towns of Wilkeson and Carbonado on the railroad’s southern

Pacific. Doc Tait thought the rail corridor would make a great trail for Pierce and southern King counties.

When I asked Foothills Rails-to-Trails Coalition ([piercescountytrails.org](http://piercescountytrails.org)) President Buzz Grant about the trail’s origins, he called Doc Tait the “father of the trail.” It was Tait who came up with the idea, helped form the coalition and hosted the first meetings in his office with like-minded residents to move the trail concept forward. “He thought the trail would be a healthy thing for his patients and everyone around here,” said Grant. “He could see the good it would do for people’s health.”

The longest section of completed trail runs from the East Puyallup Trailhead, where I start this bike ride, eastward toward South Prairie. A small blue sign just down the trail catches my eye. It reads, “If you hear the lahar sirens, move quickly to high ground (at least 50 feet off the valley floor).” Lahars are mudflows from volcanos, and geologists say the broad, flat valley here was formed by a series of flows that swept down from Mount Rainier. The most recent buried this valley under 20 feet of mud some 600 years ago.

Those ancient mudflows made rich topsoil, which early settlers used for farming. Eventually they focused on the cut flower and bulb trades, carpeting the entire valley in yellow daffodils by the 1920s. The new industry sparked an annual daffodil festival and parade that continues today. Housing, commercial development and the dairy industry have now covered those daffodil fields, although a sculpture honoring the daffodil still stands at a crossroads in Orting.

About four miles down the trail, near McMillin, a gravel driveway leads through a trailside field of rhubarb to Scholz Farm. There’s a produce market as well as shaded picnic tables. I grab a bottled juice from the refrigerator and talk to Allen Scholz, the fourth generation of his family to work the land here.

Allen admits he wasn’t thrilled to hear in the 1990s that a trail would replace the railroad. He was concerned about trespassers. After the trail opened in 2005, he changed his tune. His produce market business picked up as trail users stopped for nourishment. He began selling juice, dried fruit and other snacks to this health-conscious crowd. Many returned in their cars for larger purchases and became regular customers. “I’d say the trail’s a good neighbor,” he tells me.

Back on the trail, I arrive at the McMillin Trailhead in about a mile and cross a trestle spanning the Puyallup River, which runs chalky white as it carries glacier melt from Mount Rainier. Just down the trail, housing subdivisions, schools and commercial development spring up as I

head into Orting. First settled in 1854, today the town of 6,700 is considered a bedroom community for the sprawling Tacoma-Seattle area.

Although I’m barely seven miles down the trail, the aromas from burger joints and cafés tickle my taste buds. Craving carbs, I choose the Orting Bakery, located across State Route 162 from the city park. Munching on a giant peanut butter cookie, I scan photos depicting the area’s coal-mining, logging and agricultural heritage, and the role played by the Northern Pacific Railway in getting those goods to market.

Pedaling out of town past a bike skills park, I come to the spot that rewards trail users with awe-inspiring views of Rainier—weather permitting. This section can be crowded with people, including fishermen in the fall. The anglers walk from parking lots in town to fish for salmon, which are returning from the ocean to spawn in their native creeks and rivers.

Another trestle crosses the Carbon River near the ghost town of Crocker about three miles past Orting, and the trail follows the tamer South Prairie Creek. I pass a fenced pasture nearby that sometimes holds bison, though only a solitary emu patrols the land today.

Passing through a low railroad cut, the trail emerges into farmland and arrives at the small, aptly named town of South Prairie. A trailhead and barrier mark the current end of the trail, as the railroad corridor enters an area that’s been contested by private property owners. Pierce County Parks and Recreation Planner Joseph Coppo says some former railroad property beyond the “Do Not Enter” sign has been acquired for the trail, while remaining tracts face condemnation. Meanwhile, the county is seeking a state parks grant to develop paved trail connections east and north to completed segments in Buckley

GENE BISBEE (2)



and Cascade Junction. The trail coalition’s Buzz Grant says a long-range goal calls for improving rail-trail connections south almost to the Carbon River entrance at Mount Rainier National Park.

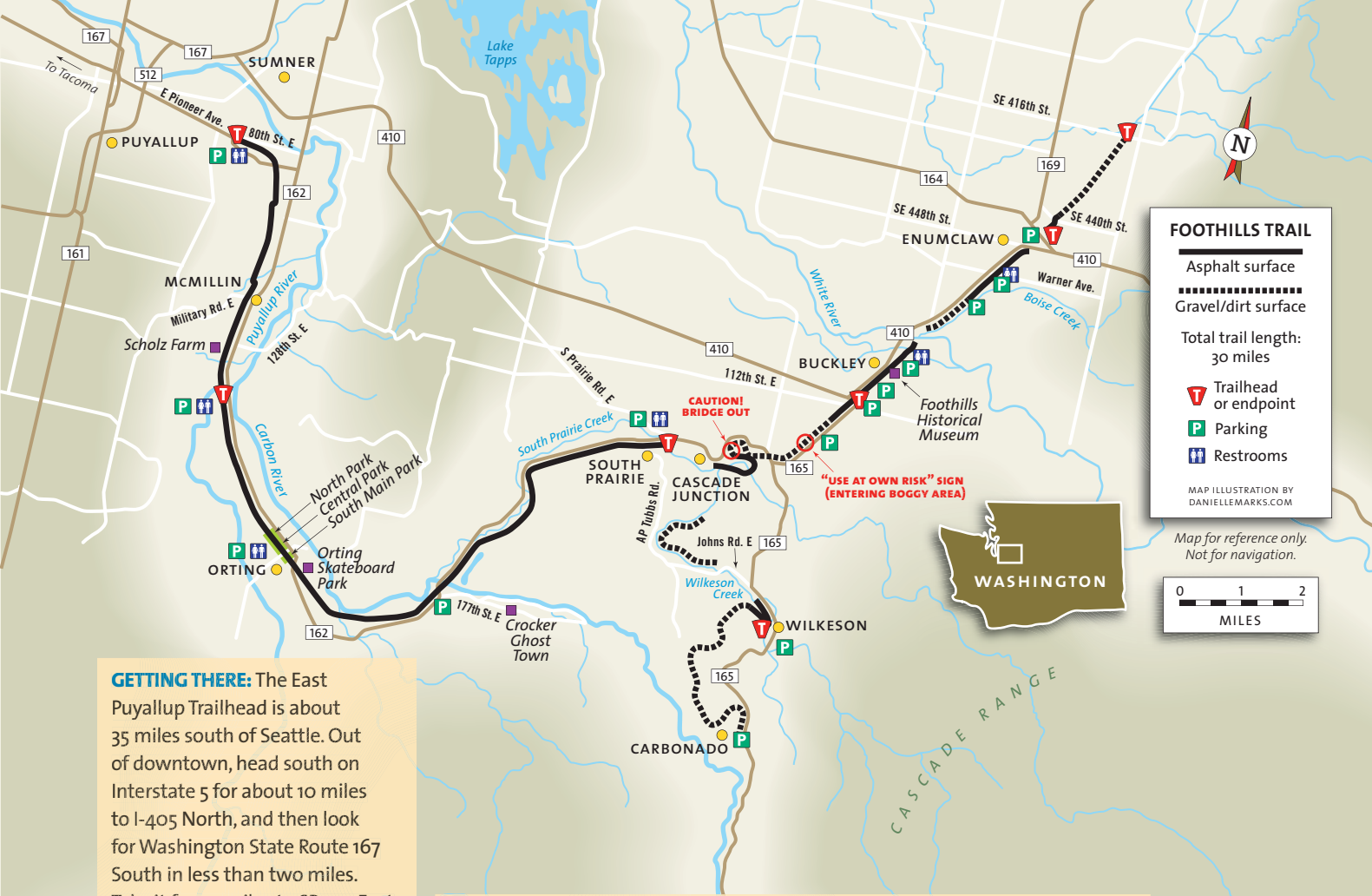
Everyone who travels the trail to South Prairie recommends Trailside Connections Espresso. The drive-through coffee kiosk sits on the main road, but the owners cleared out a blackberry thicket at the trail’s edge, built two shelters with picnic tables and added a walkway and walk-up window for trail-users. While I sip an iced Americano here, the barista tells me that she gets more business from cyclists than motorists in the summertime and on many weekends.

Fortified by caffeine for my return trip, I stop for a scenic photo along the Carbon River. Five-year-old twins Marissa and Colby are chucking some pebbles into the river, their bikes lying nearby. Parents Nick and Jessica from Puyallup say they used to visit the trail for walks when their kids rode on training wheels. Once the twins graduated to two wheels, Mom and Dad couldn’t keep up anymore and bought their own bicycles. “They got us going,” Jessica says.

If Doc Tait were around today, he’d probably like to hear how new generations continue discovering the Foothills Trail.

**Freelance writer Gene Bisbee lives in the Seattle area. He has explored most rail-trails in western Washington and regularly writes about bicycling issues on his blog, BikingBis.com. He is also the author of the tour guide “Best Bike Rides Seattle: Great Recreational Rides in the Metro Area.”**

DANIELLE MARKS



**FOOTHILLS TRAIL**

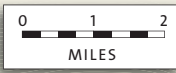
Asphalt surface  
 Gravel/dirt surface

Total trail length:  
 30 miles

Trailhead or endpoint  
 Parking  
 Restrooms

MAP ILLUSTRATION BY DANIELLEMARCS.COM

Map for reference only. Not for navigation.



**GETTING THERE:** The East Puyallup Trailhead is about 35 miles south of Seattle. Out of downtown, head south on Interstate 5 for about 10 miles to I-405 North, and then look for Washington State Route 167 South in less than two miles. Take it for 20 miles to SR 410 East toward Yakima, and then exit in two miles at SR 162 East/Valley Avenue Orting. Turn right onto SR 162 and right again at 80th Street East in a mile. The trailhead is at the end of the road. (Continuing seven miles takes you right into Orting.) From Seattle-Tacoma International Airport (portseattle.org/Sea-Tac/), take SR 518 East to I-405 north, and then follow the directions above.

**WHERE TO STAY:** Lodging is nonexistent along the trail, although there are motel chains on major roads in Puyallup and Sumner. The trail comes within four miles of A View With a Room bed and breakfast ([aviewwitharoom.net](http://aviewwitharoom.net); 360.893.8649), which overlooks Orting from its scenic perch on South Hill. Closer to the entrance to Mount Rainier National Park, you'll find Carbon Countrys Shady Rest Bed and Breakfast ([carboncountrysshadyrest.com](http://carboncountrysshadyrest.com); 360.829.1827) in Carbonado.

**WHERE TO EAT:** While there's no shortage of eating establishments in Orting, trail users tend to gravitate to the Orting Bakery (360.893.2288) for yummy baked goods and sandwiches, or Tim's Kitchen (360.893.8003) for robust country cooking. Both are located on Highway 162 across the road from the City Park. At the end of the trail in South Prairie, Trailside Connections Espresso (360.897.2022) serves thirst-quenching smoothies along with hot and cold coffee drinks.

**WHAT TO DO AND SEE:** In addition to watching the seasons change along the trail, there are plenty of activities throughout the year. The Daffodil Classic bike ride ([twbc.org](http://twbc.org)) leaves from Orting and coincides with the annual Daffodil Festival and Parade ([thedaffodilfestival.org/events/daffodil-parade](http://thedaffodilfestival.org/events/daffodil-parade)) every April. In June, runners take to the trail for the annual Rainier to Ruston Rail-Trail Relay and Ultra ([rainiertoruston.com](http://rainiertoruston.com)). The Friday afternoon Orting Valley Farmers Market ([ortingvalleyfarmersmarket.com](http://ortingvalleyfarmersmarket.com)) runs from June through August at North Park. Scholz Farm (253.848.7604) is open spring through fall and offers tours, pumpkin picking and a corn maze in the fall. The outdoor Foothills Historical Museum ([willhiteweb.com/washington/buckley/foothills\\_museum\\_146.htm](http://willhiteweb.com/washington/buckley/foothills_museum_146.htm); 360.829.1291) on a segment of the Foothills Trail in Buckley displays artifacts from local logging, mining, rock-cutting and farming economies.

**RENTALS:** Trailside Cyclery (360.893.7333) offers bicycles for rent by the hour or the day. Located steps from the trail in Orting between Train and Bridge streets at 207 Van Scoyoc Ave. SW., the cyclery also offers bike sales and repair.

**MORE INFORMATION:**

- Foothills Rails-to-Trails Coalition (maps, histories, contacts): [piercecountytrails.org](http://piercecountytrails.org)
- Pierce County Parks and Recreation, Foothills Trail information: [co.pierce.wa.us/index.aspx?nid=1384](http://co.pierce.wa.us/index.aspx?nid=1384)

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