

MARYLAND STATE OFFICE OF TRAILS

*Support for The Great
Maryland Trails Act
(HB530 / SB645)
to establish an
Advisory Committee
and State Office of
Trails for active
transportation and
outdoor recreation*



L-R: Jones Falls Trail, St. Michael's Nature Trail, Baltimore Greenway Network, B&A Trail

RESIDENTS SUPPORT TRAILS

A 2023 MDOT survey regarding walking, biking, and using micromobility devices found:

- 93%** walk or bike for exercise or recreation..
- 81%** want to see more shared use paths and wider sidewalks.
- 73%** want to see more shared use paths and protected bike lanes.

A statewide 2018 DNR survey found:

- +2/3** indicated that existing parks, trails, outdoor recreation facilities, and outdoor recreation programs are not completely meeting the needs of their households.
- 1/3** viewed improvements to trails as the key priority for enhancement.

STATE VISION

The Maryland Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan update calls for a vision to provide safe and convenient active transportation that supports equitable access for all.

SECURE FUNDING

A trails office can bring in tens of millions in federal funds, such as active transportation grants, especially into our smaller jurisdictions.

COORDINATION

A Maryland Trails Office will support coordination across multiple stakeholders within MDOT, MDDNR, MPOs, municipalities, and more.

TRAIL IMPACT

Multi-use trails produce a myriad of beneficial impacts that improve our economy, environment, public health, transportation equity, and quality of life.

Trails are a critical part of
Maryland's low-stress
**BIKE & PEDESTRIAN
NETWORK.**

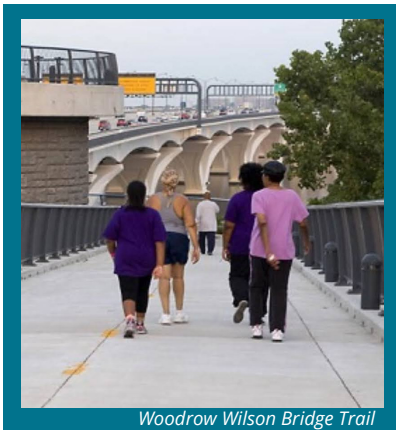


Maryland has the potential to be a top-tier state in the nation with multi-use trails that support activities that contribute to our economy, environment, and quality of life.

Maryland needs coordination, strategic oversight, and increased investment in trails.

Maryland needs a State Trails Office:

- Although Maryland has many exceptional and diverse trails, communities and advocates have identified **a large backlog of maintenance projects and new trail projects that need attention.**
- Current levels of local, state, federal, and private funding is insufficient to make Maryland a nationally recognized destination for trails. **A trails office can facilitate increased funding,** including through federal grants such as federal active transportation opportunities.
- **Other states, including neighboring Virginia, have established state trails offices** such as Florida, Massachusetts, and Connecticut.
- **New trails and connected networks support active transportation and recreation,** leveraging economic impacts, reducing dependence on fossil fuels, and meeting increasing demand from residents: For example in a 2021 Baltimore City Survey, *64% of respondents report walking more and 30% report biking more during COVID-19, while personal motor vehicle and transit use declined.*
- **Trails create connections locally, regionally (e.g., National Capital Trails Network) and even nationally (e.g., East Coast Greenway).** Coordination across jurisdictional lines would benefit from additional support, coordination, and prioritization at the state level.
- Across rural, suburban, and urban America, **there are opportunities to shift short trips from driving to walking and biking by creating safe active-transportation networks.** More than half of all trips in the United States are within a 20-minute bike ride and more than one in four trips are within a 20-minute walk (2017 National Household Travel Survey), though the majority of these short trips are taken by automobile.



Economic impacts:

- **Maryland's outdoor recreation generates \$14 billion in consumer spending,** supports 109,000 jobs, \$4.4 billion in wages and salaries, and \$951 million in state and local tax revenue. Increased access and options for outdoor recreation and active transportation will increase participation and returns..
- The long-term economic benefit of investing in bicycling infrastructure projects, such as trail systems and other infrastructure investments, have significant returns on investment. On the Outer Banks of North Carolina a \$6.7 million investment reaps \$60 million a year, while in Vermont walking and bicycling events, businesses, and infrastructure investments supported 1,400 jobs and generated \$83 million in economic activity while costing \$9.8 million in 2009.
- According to the National Association of Realtors, **nearby trails and greenways raise property values** by an average of 3-5% -- and sometimes upwards of 15%.
- Even when governments must make funding cuts, **support for bicycling is not just another expenditure; it is a wise investment.** According to a study from the University of Massachusetts, an average 11.4 jobs per million dollars spent are created with bicycle projects, compared to 7.8 jobs for road-only projects.

Environmental impacts:

Trails promote natural resource management strategies that can simultaneously encourage public interest in habitat and natural landscapes, including by increasing the value of open space to the public by providing access, enhancing property values of communities, providing alternative modes of transportation that decrease air pollution from automobiles, support communities and businesses through eco-tourism, and more.

For example, a study of the Capital Trails Network found that a completed trail network of 990 miles would result in:

- **19,580 metric tons of Co2 emissions prevented every year,**
- **\$433 million in lifetime carbon storage value,** including \$62 million from an improved water supply, \$17.7 million from carbon sequestration, 12.4 million in flood control, \$4.6 million in air pollution removal,
- **49 million in reduced vehicle miles** traveled each year,
- **\$170 million in annual auto costs savings** and \$4.9 million saved on gas expenses, and
- An estimated **\$74,000 acres of tree cover protected.**



Health impacts:

- The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, reports that **25% of Americans are inactive and that increasing our physical activity is one of the best things we can do for our health.** Making active transportation safer and more convenient creates a practical solution that integrates physical activity into daily routines.
- Heart disease and stroke are two leading causes of death in the United States. Getting at least 150 minutes a week of **moderate physical activity can lower risk for these diseases.**
- Businesses that support active transportation see benefits. **Employees who commute by bicycle take fewer sick days.**
- A study of the Capital Trails Network across the Washington, DC metropolitan area found that a completed trail network would result in **\$517 million in public health savings every year.**