

CHANGEMAKERS FOR TRAILS SERIES



# The Who and How Behind Local and State Decision-Making

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# Technical Support

**In the event you run into technical difficulties, here's how to troubleshoot:**

- Log out and back into the webinar
- Listen by phone: +1 312 626 6799; meeting ID: 810 1613 9847
- Browse Zoom Customer Support topics & contact Customer Support:  
<https://support.zoom.us>

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# What is advocacy?

- Taking a position on an issue (big or small)
- Supporting a cause
- Growing community support
- Working with local, regional, state and federal decision makers to support your cause



RTC Staff biking in DC

# **Planning, funding, building and maintaining trails is hard work!**

- Community engagement
- Local/regional/state political support
- Support and funds from state, federal government and your Members of Congress

# RTC's Advocacy Role

- Federal, state, regional, and local: Funding and policy changes
- Advocating for connectivity, access for everyone, safety, sustainability
- Celebrating leaders prioritizing trails as essential infrastructure nationwide
- Elevating policies, programs and impact to make the case for trail networks
- More than rail-trails—we advocate for all active transportation with an emphasis on connectivity



RTC's Board in DC



# RTC's Advocacy Impact

- Bipartisan trail caucuses
- Legislation, budget and ballot measures
- Federal Advocacy: Bipartisan Infrastructure Law
- Increased funding and support for communities applying for grants
- Elevate importance of connectivity (federal grants, earmarks, state funds, etc.)



# Your Role in Advocacy

Advocacy can vary from small, everyday actions to larger scale efforts. For example:

- 1) **Everyday advocacy:** Introducing your network of contacts to trails, sharing on social media, telling your story about why trails matter, letters to the editor, becoming a member of RTC and other local/state organizations, supporting candidates that support trails
- 2) **Community advocacy:** Events and activities where you live, attending community meetings, and joining with local advocacy organizations, educating officials (local, state and federal);
- 3) **Direct advocacy:** Lobbying elected officials (city council, county meetings, agency discussions), mobilizing support for legislation/budgetary allocations/ballot initiatives

# What advocacy actions have you taken?

1. Responded to "action alert" sent by an advocacy organization
2. Posted advocacy messages on social media
3. Provided public comment to an elected body/advisory board
4. Contacted staff in a public agency to advocate for an issue
5. Volunteered with an advocacy organization
6. Served on a public commission or elected body



# Who are key decision makers?

**Local:** Elected officials (e.g. village, city, county), appointed officials (e.g. agencies and planning commissions), administrative staff (e.g. city and county administrators, parks directors)

**Regional:** Metropolitan planning organizations

**State:** Governors, legislators, state boards and commissions, administrative staff (e.g. Departments of Natural Resources and Departments of Transportation)

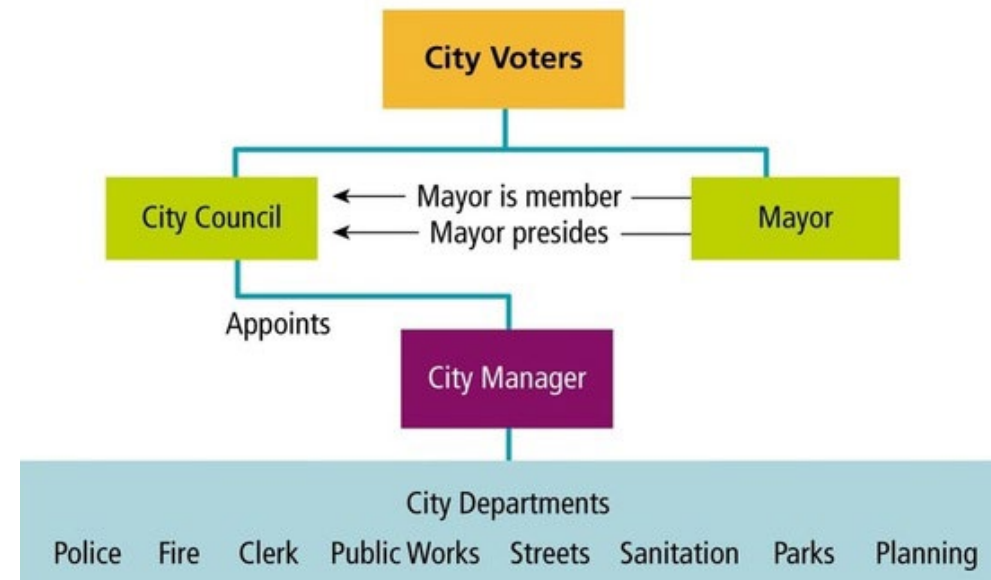


Pictured: Governor Holcomb, with RTC President Ryan Chao, at Next Level Trails Ribbon Cutting in Indiana

# Local Engagement

- **Advocates:**
  - Nonprofit staff or volunteers
  - Engaged community members
  
- **Administrative/Professional Staff:**
  - City Administrator and Staff (Parks/Transportation/Public Works Staff)
  - Nonprofits (Bike/Ped Advocacy, Land Conservancies, Environmental Organizations)
  
- **Elected officials:**
  - Mayor, City/Village Council Members, County Commissioner
    - City Advisory Boards and Commissions (e.g. parks, transportation, planning)

## Council-Manager Form of Government



# Local: Advocacy Example

 MLive.com

## Ann Arborites protest MDOT plan to fence off large stretch of riverfront

ANN ARBOR, MI – Plans for permanent barriers along a lengthy stretch of railroad separating West Huron River Drive and the riverfront have...

Aug 4, 2023



 MLive.com

## Washtenaw County leaders take stance against building 'giant fence' along Huron River

"It will ruin a beautiful thing," said one county commissioner about the proposed railroad safety fence that has sparked a wave of...

Nov 17, 2023



 The Michigan Daily

## Ann Arbor City Council votes against MDOT fence

Ann Arbor City Council met Monday evening to discuss the Michigan Department of Transportation's plans to build a fence along a city...

Oct 17, 2023



# Regional Engagement

- Metropolitan Planning Organizations
- Rural Transportation Planning Organizations
- Other Regional Actors:
  - Metroparks
  - Regional Agency Offices
  - State Elected Officials (often serve multiple jurisdictions)



*Image: SEMCOG Board*

# State Engagement

State legislature

Governor

State agencies

- Dept of Transportation (DOT)
- Dept. of Natural Resources (DNR)
- Parks and Rec
- Public Health




# State Legislature

- Work with district office
- Attend events with your Legislators – town halls, special events
- Build relationship with staff

# State Agencies

- Many state agencies touch on trail work:
  - Parks, Environment, Natural Resources  
Transportation, Public Health
- Join citizen advisory boards (e.g., bicycle or trail advisory committees)
- Engage in implementation of key programs (e.g., major trail or bike/ped grant programs)

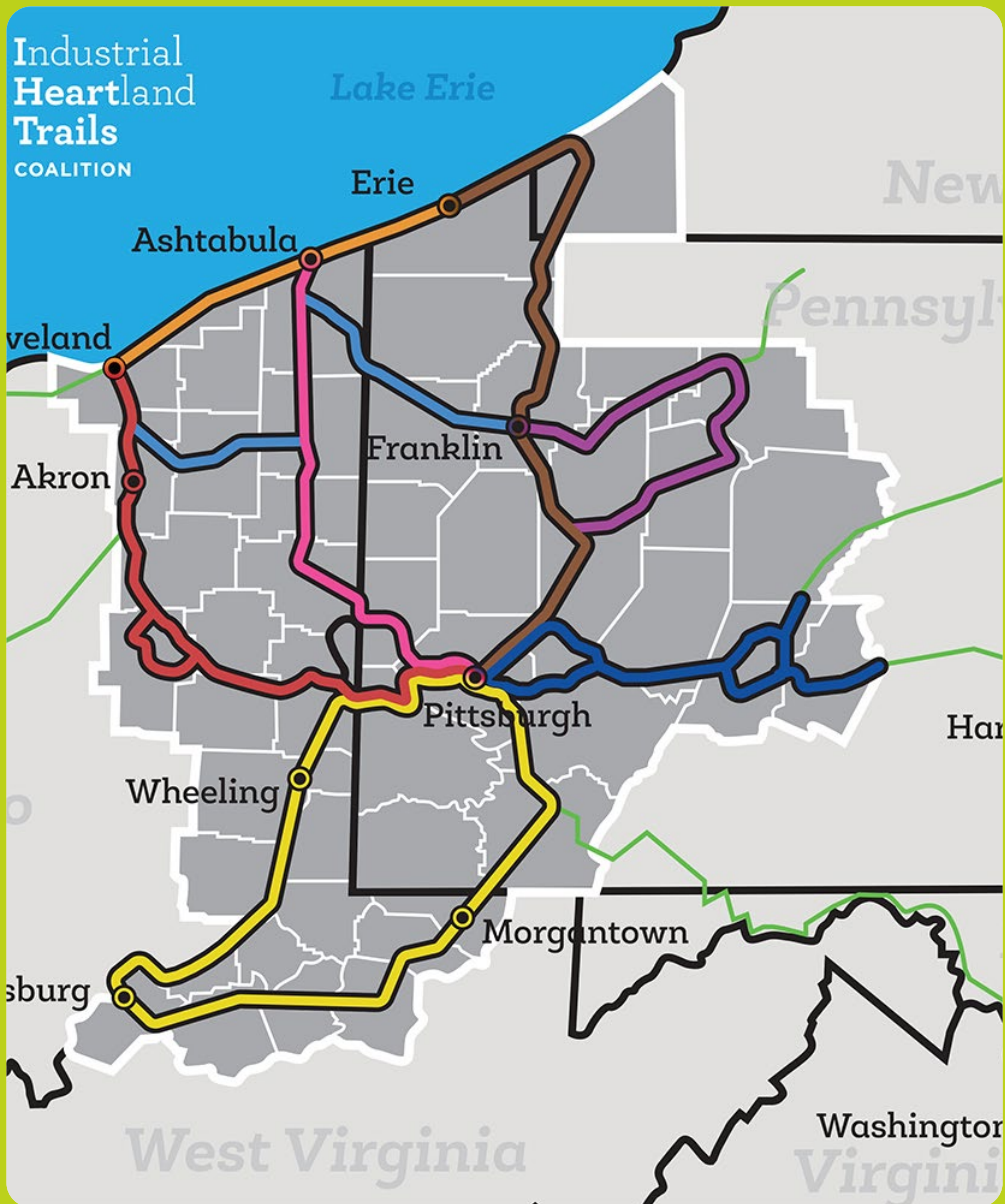




# Statewide Advocacy Groups And Coalitions

- Register for Action Alerts from non-profits that advocate for trails
- Participate in legislative lobby days at the state capitol





# The Power of Coalitions

- 1) Increase your leverage with more voices
- 2) RTC's TrailNation™ model
  - Industrial Heartland Trail Coalition (IHTC)
  - Bay Area Trails Collaborative
- 3) Environmental and social justice coalitions

# What's Next?

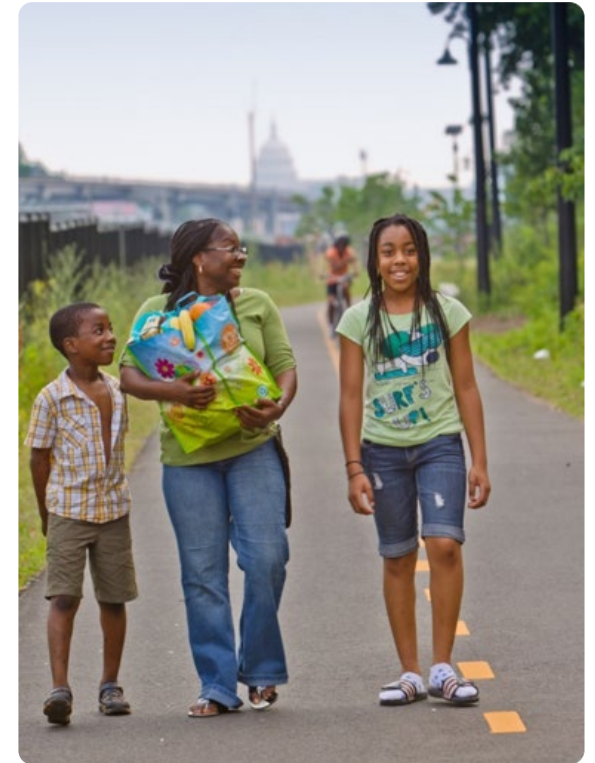
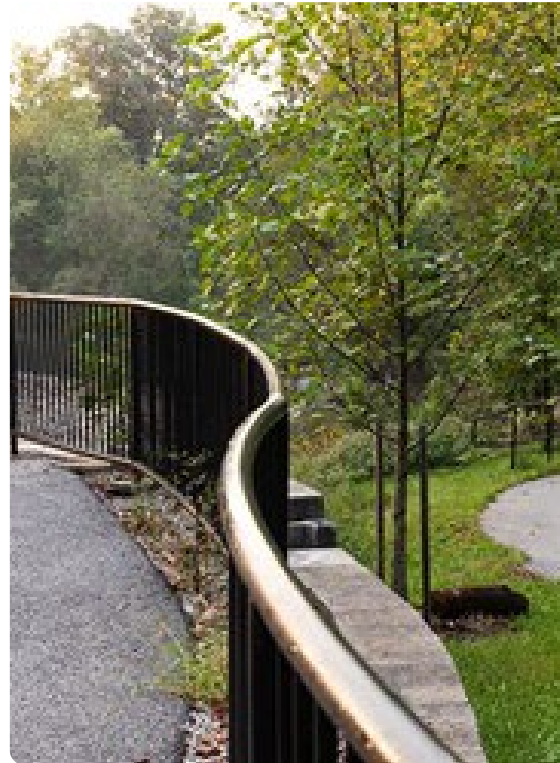
## Take Action Today:

Using social media (tag @railstotrails)

Attend community meetings

Organize events on the trail

Meeting with elected officials and leaders



# Continuing Series and Resources

## Changemakers for Trails:

- Advocacy Spotlight
- Additional webinars this fall
- Case studies of success

## Resources:

- Webinars
- Blogs
- Advocating for Trails Site
- New Advocacy How To Guide

Explore more @ [RailsToTrails.org/Advocate](https://RailsToTrails.org/Advocate)



Let's hear your  
questions!

# **Thank you for coming!**

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