

CHANGEMAKERS FOR TRAILS SERIES



Sending The Message That Trails Matter

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Why We're Here

1. **Understanding** what activities are considered advocacy (hint ... most of what you do!)
2. **Learning** how to leverage your story to win hearts and minds
3. **Balancing** your story with the evidence
4. **Getting comfortable** in the uncomfortable

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
- Telling your story





Your Role in Advocacy

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

- 1) **Everyday advocacy:** introducing your network to trails, sharing on social media, telling your story about why trails matter
- 2) **Community advocacy:** events and activities where you live, organizing supporters (petitions, meetings, etc.), attending community meetings
- 3) **Direct advocacy:** attending meetings with elected officials (city council, county meetings, agency discussions); engaging elected officials (local, state and federal); letters to the editor and press

The Power of a Good Story

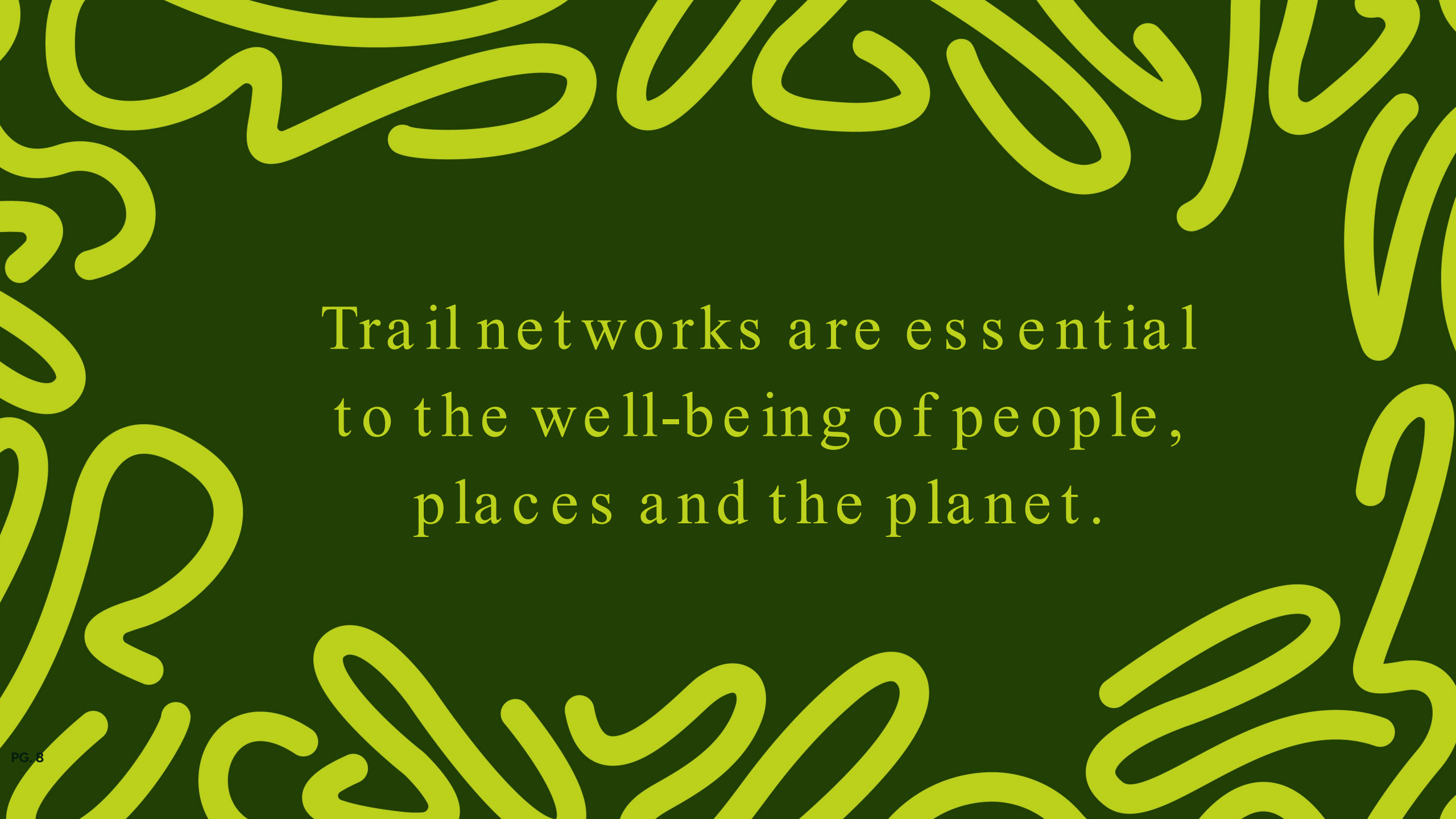
- Relationships are built on vulnerability and authenticity
- Our experiences make an issue—and the facts driving it—more real
- Stories make data more memorable
- When we tell stories, we build trust



Advocating All The Time

- When you plan for it, formally at planned meetings and events
- When you don't plan for it ... During everyday life
- When you're chatting with friends and neighbors





Trail networks are essential
to the well-being of people,
places and the planet.

Getting Your Message Across

- Find the balance between “ethos,” “pathos,” and “logos”
- Acknowledge concern when appropriate
- Never be afraid to pivot
- Consider the message—and the messenger



Messages That Matter

Trails are essential to the well-being of people, places and the planet.

Connectivity is key. When we connect trails with other active transportation infrastructure, like sidewalks and protected bike lanes, we create networks that can get people where they're going whether or not they drive.

Trails make our communities healthier, safer and more prosperous. Everyone in every neighborhood in America deserves close-to-home access to trails.



Health & Wellness

- Active transportation has been shown to have a direct relationship to meeting physical activity guidelines within the United States. (CDC)
- Studies have linked active transportation to a more than 40% decrease in mortality rates. (CDC)
- People universally report the mental health benefits of time spent being active on the trail—97% of people agree that trails make a difference for their mental health and well-being. (RTC)



Transportation

- Safe Routes to School are associated with reduced bike/ped injuries and fatalities for school-age children. (ATTA)
- Nearly one-third of people (29%) say that trail networks would make it easier to walk and bike where they need to go instead of drive. (RTC)
- When trail connections are made usage increases 40-80%. (RTC)



Economic Development

- By creating jobs and connections to destinations, investing in trail networks has the potential to generate an economic return nationally of \$138 billion+ each year. (ATTA)
- Community development IS economic development.
- Trail network and recreation projects are **OPPORTUNITIES** for leveraging larger economic development initiatives, rather than separate projects.



Climate and Environment

- The majority of trips in the U.S. are within in a 20-minute walk or bike ride. Americans could cut about 2 million metric tons of carbon emissions each year if we chose to replace half of car trips under a mile with walking. (EPA)
- Trails help preserve important natural landscapes, provide needed links between fragmented habitats, and offer tremendous opportunities for protecting plant and animal species.



Quality of Life

- Improving quality of life—not just business—is the best path to Midwestern rejuvenation (Brookings, January 2022)
- Successful 21st century communities center their development strategy on quality of life.
- The vast majority of people (90%) say that it is important that everyone have access to trails. (RTC)



www.brookings.edu/articles/improving-quality-of-life-not-just-business-is-the-best-path-to-midwestern-rejuvenation/

Scenarios

- Funding sources/prioritizing trails as a community solution
- Why trails should be a priority [nice to have vs. need to have]
- How trails are drivers of healthy, thriving people, places and planet – winning strategies for communities of all sizes

THIS IS IMPORTANT ALL THE TIME, NOT JUST DURING ELECTION SEASON.



Why this matters now.

Your local, state and federal representatives need to hear from you about how important trail connectivity is to your community.

Officials hear about so many issues and are often balancing the needs of many communities and projects.

We need to keep trails, walking and biking top of mind for officials so it is relevant during decision making.

It's important to use language that reinforces trail networks are essential to communities and require consistent and dedicated resources.

What's Next?

Take Action Today:

- Using social media (tag @railstotrails)
- Letters to the editor
- Attend community meetings
- Organize events on the trail
- Meeting with elected officials and leaders

Changemakers for Trails:

- Additional trainings and action touch points this year
- Case studies of success

Resources:

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



Let's hear your
questions!