

From: Bike Walk Montana <doug@bikewalkmontana.org>
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To: Ravalli County Commissioners Office
Subject: Celebrating Trails and Are You Shovel-Ready??



May 20, 2020

Celebrating Trails and Are You Shovel-Ready??

Bike Walk Montana's focus is on complete streets, shared use paths and encouraging daily walking, bicycling and rolling in communities. We also have a strong interest in trails, particularly when they can be used for commuting. We love our recreational and loop trails as well and it's all part of our transportation system regardless of use.

The Rails to Trails Conservancy is the lead national advocacy organization for conversion and connection to abandoned railways across the United States. Their signature project is the Great American Rail Trail (GART) which will reach from Washington DC to Washington State. The GART was announced one year ago, and the RTC celebrated that anniversary, and the progress that is being made, this last May 8. **The video from that celebration is on their website.** Montana features prominently in the video with Adventure Cycling's Ginny Sullivan on at the 16:00 minute mark and even more exciting, Andy Fischer from the Powell County Parks Board, announces the opening of 7 miles of trail between Deer Lodge and Garrison Junction at minute 26:35. **The complete description of what is called the Old Yellowstone Trail is on the RTC website.** Go Powell County, we are building it!!!

And if that wasn't enough, **Butte's Thompson Park was featured as RTC's "Trail of the Month" for May.** The article quotes BWMT board member Gina Evans, long time trail advocate and operator of Linked Adventures and Jocelyn Dodge, retired Forest Service recreation forester and another of Butte's trail heroes. I am frequently asked about the Great American Trail and other opportunities such as the rarely used rail line between Helena

and Great Falls. The Headwaters Trail System in Three Forks and the Trail of the Hiawatha on our border with Idaho are also connected to the GART but we actually have over 15 segments of the GART ALREADY DONE in Montana! AND being heavily used during this time of social distancing. This [interactive map](#) shows the trail, completed and planned, and we do have several major sections that need local support to get done.

Help Let Washington Know You Have a Trail Ready to Build!!

The other top question I am asked is about funding for a local trail effort. Our partners at American Trails, one of the other top national trail advocacy organizations, has partnered with researchers at Penn State University to gather together a database of "shovel-ready" maintenance and construction projects, to show how trails projects should be included in any upcoming Federal economic response to COVID-19, including infrastructure packages, and mobilized to put projects on the ground that build our country's workforce and sustain rural and urban economies through transportation and recreation infrastructure investments. They plan to share the results widely and quantify the depth and breadth of shovel-ready projects that the trails, outdoor recreation, and greenway communities can provide.

Would you be able to provide this type of information and complete this survey? Individual project costs and contacts will be used by Penn State for the purpose of aggregation by State and Congressional District alone. All responses will be held in complete confidence. Here is more information.

American Trails has asked for this information by **today, Wednesday, May 20th** but you can be included if you get it in by Friday. **If you have the information, please complete the survey ASAP!!!**

HERE IS THE SURVEY LINK

Here is additional information and a message from American Trails. The trails community is working to **quantify the amount, diversity, and location of "shovel-ready" trail projects across the country**. We need this information to effectively advocate for inclusion of trails in the federal economic response to COVID-19. The information you provide will help to mobilize trail projects, put trail workers on the ground, and sustain rural and urban economies through transportation and recreation infrastructure investments.

Who should complete the survey?

Managers, either professional or volunteer, of "shovel-ready" trail projects. **"Shovel-ready" trail projects are projects that, if funding is available and working conditions are safe, could be providing jobs by the summer of 2021.** A project can be "shovel-ready" in any phase of development (e.g., planning, design, construction, maintenance), as long as jobs would be created before summer 2021 if the project were funded now. Prior to completing the survey, it may be helpful to take a moment now and gather the information you will need to respond to the following questions about your "shovel-ready" trail projects. This information includes:

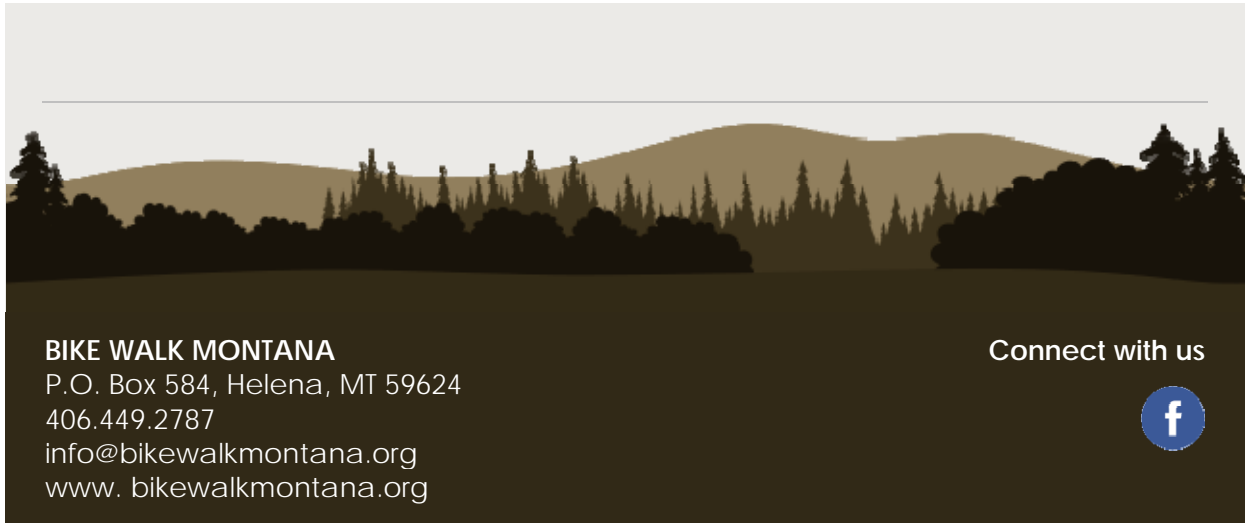
- Project names and locations
- Approximate total project budgets and timelines
- Approximate numbers of project jobs or workers
- Project characteristics and features (e.g., land type, mileage, types of project work, user types, accessibility, etc.)

We have partnered with American Trails and the **Recreation, Park, and Tourism Management Department at Penn State** to ensure that **all responses are anonymous and confidential. Results of this survey will be reported only at the aggregate level** according to key geographic areas and project characteristics that are relevant to decision-makers and funders at the national and state levels.

If you are a trail project manager of one or more "shovel-ready" projects, we strongly encourage you to provide information on your project(s). Without it, we will not be able to demonstrate the full power of trails to put people back to work and help America recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our hope is to gather as much data as possible in the next week and a half, aggregate that data on the national, state, and key congressional district level, and share that data widely. We can/should also look down the road at ways to combine our data with other efforts that are happening around the country (IMBA, Outdoor Alliance, RTC, PTBA, etc.) in the hopes of getting high quality numbers for the entire country. We will plan to share the results periodically throughout the next 3 weeks. Thanks!

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