

# Rails-to-Trails Conservancy: New federal grants deliver momentum for southeast Wisconsin's 700-mile trail network

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## ***More than \$6.3 million awarded to projects that will help to complete the Route of the Badger trail network***

**Milwaukee**—More than \$6.3 million have been awarded to projects within the footprint of Southeast Wisconsin's landmark trail network, the Route of the Badger, organizers at Rails-to-Trails Conservancy (RTC) announced today. Grants made possible by the Transportation Alternatives (TA) Program, the nation's largest funding source for trails, walking and biking, and the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) Program will provide necessary resources for planning and development of significant trail connections across the region.

The list of projects includes:

- Lincoln Creek and Northwest Side Trail Connectivity Plan—\$49,600 TA grant awarded to Milwaukee County Parks
- 20th Street and Beerline Trail—\$784,911 TA grant awarded to the City of Milwaukee
- Powerline Trail Phase 1—\$1,228,808 CMAQ grant awarded to the City of Greenfield
- Oak Leaf Trail Extension - Kohl Park Connection—\$1,972,800 CMAQ grant awarded to Milwaukee County
- Oak Leaf Trail Extension - Bender Park Connection—\$1,306,400 CMAQ grant awarded to Milwaukee County

- KK River Trail Extensions—\$959,824 CMAQ grant awarded to the City of Milwaukee

“This investment in Southeast Wisconsin’s trails has the potential to unlock incredible opportunities for hundreds of thousands of people living in the region,” said Willie Karidis, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy’s project manager for the Route of the Badger. “The momentum that this funding delivers extends beyond the trail network to the neighborhoods throughout our region, and the people who live there.”

These federal grant awards come on the heels of a significant development for the trail network in Racine County, where County Executive Jonathan Delagrave and Assembly Speaker Robin Vos announced the county’s proposal to include \$500,000 in its budget to acquire the 11-mile Canadian Pacific Railway between Kansasville and Sturtevant. The acquisition of the 11-mile section represents a significant step forward in the Route of the Badger trail network’s completion. When it is completed as a trail, the CP corridor will extend the White River State Trail and nearly connect east to west across Racine County, providing 56 miles of uninterrupted trail within the Route of the Badger network.

Route of the Badger, Southeast Wisconsin’s developing 700-mile regional trail network and an RTC TrailNation™ project, will connect Racine and Milwaukee counties, as well as Kenosha, Walworth, Waukesha, Washington and Ozaukee, unlocking new economic, health and recreation and tourism opportunities for the region. The Route of the Badger trail network is also an important mechanism for garnering support among cities and counties to create a well-connected regional trail network, as recommended by Vision 2050, the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission’s (SEWRPC) long-range land-use and transportation plan for the southeastern part of the state.

A recent RTC study found that the net economic impact of trails and active transportation annually in Wisconsin is as much as \$1.5 billion, including direct trail user spending of \$686 million and health costs avoided of \$833 million—economic benefits that increase exponentially as the connectivity between trails, people and places improves.

In addition to the economic benefits that the trail network can provide, trails across the region are proving essential as the state continues to manage the impact of COVID-19. The pandemic has resulted in a significant increase in trail use across the

state, with usage two to three times higher in March 2020 compared to March 2019. Nationwide, RTC reports that trail use has risen 60% on average this year compared to last year.

“The pandemic has brought into sharp focus how essential it is that we all have access to safe outside places where we can be active—whether for health, fun or for necessary transportation,” said Karidis. “The energy behind the Route of the Badger right now is a bright spot as we come together to support our community in ways that provide an equitable, healthy, resilient future.”

*Rails-to-Trails Conservancy is the nation's largest trails organization—with a grassroots community more than 1 million strong—dedicated to connecting people and communities by creating a nationwide network of public trails, many from former rail lines. Route of the Badger is a TrailNation™ project, part of RTC's initiative to prove what is possible nationwide when trails are connected into seamless networks. Connect with RTC at [railstotrails.org](https://railstotrails.org) and @railstotrails on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).*