PLACES FOR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Facilitating Development of a Community Trail and Promoting Its Use to Increase Physical Activity Among Youth and Adults

AN ACTION GUIDE

Partnership for Prevention®

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PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

This publication and the other titles in *The Community Health Promotion Handbook* are available on the Internet to download or order at http://www.prevent.org/actionguides.

Diabetes Management
- *Diabetes Self-Management Education (DSME): Establishing a Community-Based DSME Program for Adults with Type 2 Diabetes to Improve Glycemic Control—An Action Guide*

Physical Activity
- *Places for Physical Activity: Facilitating Development of a Community Trail and Promoting Its Use to Increase Physical Activity Among Youth and Adults—An Action Guide*

- *School-Based Physical Education: Working with Schools to Increase Physical Activity Among Children and Adolescents in Physical Education Classes—An Action Guide*

- *Social Support for Physical Activity: Establishing a Community-Based Walking Group Program to Increase Physical Activity Among Youth and Adults—An Action Guide*

Tobacco-Use Treatment
- *Healthcare Provider Reminder Systems, Provider Education, and Patient Education: Working with Healthcare Delivery Systems to Improve the Delivery of Tobacco-Use Treatment to Patients— An Action Guide*

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Partnership for Prevention® is a nonprofit organization dedicated to preventing illness and injury and promoting health. Partnership's programs reach policy makers, a wide range of public health and healthcare professionals, businesses, and others who can emphasize prevention.

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Table of Contents

The Community Health Promotion Handbook: Action Guides to Improve Community Health is an important tool, composed of five Action Guides, that translates evidence-based recommendations into the necessary "how to" guidance for implementation of effective community-level health promotion strategies. Although *The Community Health Promotion Handbook* is designed primarily to assist public health practitioners in implementing evidence-based practices, additional audiences who may benefit from using this resource include local planners, advocates, policy makers, community and business leaders, community-based organizations, educators, healthcare providers, and others interested in improving health in their communities.

The Community Health Promotion Handbook was developed through a collaborative effort between Partnership for Prevention®—a national membership organization dedicated to building evidence of sound disease prevention and health promotion policies and practices and advocating their adoption by public and private sectors—and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). These implementation guidelines have emerged from the experiences of the 40 communities supported by CDC's Steps Program, which is creating models for how local communities can act to address chronic diseases. The Steps Program's current focus areas are obesity, diabetes, and asthma, as well as the related risk factors of physical inactivity, poor nutrition, and tobacco use.

All five Action Guides are based on specific health promotion recommendations from *The Guide to Community Preventive Services (Community Guide)*, which is published by the Task Force on Community Preventive Services. This independent decision-making body makes recommendations for the use of various public health interventions on the basis of the evidence of effectiveness gathered in the rigorous and systematic scientific reviews of published studies. Although these recommendations advise on "what to do," they do not provide the guidance needed to successfully take the interventions "from the page to the field." Partnership for Prevention and CDC have worked together to bridge this gap between research and practice by developing *The Community Health Promotion Handbook.*

This Action Guide focuses on a specific approach for implementation of its related *Community Guide* recommendation. When selecting among effective interventions to improve health outcomes, you should first assess your resources and health priorities. After this up-front analysis is completed and this approach is deemed appropriate and viable for your community's needs, this Action Guide can be used to facilitate your activities.

The information within this Action Guide is intended to be generalizable to a range of communities, but you will need to determine what modifications may be necessary to meet your local health objectives. Rather than a prescriptive list of required actions, general steps and suggestions are provided in this guide to accommodate the unique aspects of communities and their resources. This Action Guide should be used along with technical assistance offered by experienced organizations, local or state health experts, public health program managers, researchers, or others with relevant expertise.

Introduction

Information in this Action Guide is organized under the following sections and appendixes:

■ **Section 1: Overview of the Approach**
This section provides information on the *Community Guide*'s recommendation and the supporting evidence, presents the specific approach used in this Action Guide, describes expected outcomes from implementing the approach, and suggests a role for the reader that both is feasible and maximizes the ability to effect change.

■ **Section 2: Implementing the Approach**
This section of the Action Guide provides the bulk of implementation guidance by addressing the "who," "what," "when," "where," and "how" of the activities. Key stakeholders you may want to engage are listed within this section, as well as their related interests and potential roles as partners. Action steps are laid out to follow a general progression, from *Getting Started* to *Moving Forward* to *Looking Beyond*. Although the action steps are numbered to suggest an order of activity you might consider, in practice, many steps will likely occur simultaneously or may occur in a sequence different from what appears in this Action Guide.

■ **Appendix A: Determining Your Resource Needs**
Personnel, material, and financial resources that may be needed to successfully plan, implement, and sustain the approach are suggested here. You must determine what resources are necessary, ways to obtain those resources, and their costs. In the personnel resources subsection, a table presents a summary of tasks to allocate or assign among the main individuals and groups involved. The material and financial resources subsections each contain a list of items to consider based on the activities described in this Action Guide.

■ **Appendix B: Evaluating Your Activities**
Evaluation is a crucial component of public health practice and should begin to be addressed during the planning stage. Although it is outside the scope of this Action Guide to provide specific guidance on how to conduct an evaluation, this appendix does provide questions to help you collect data for process and outcome evaluations. Potential sources of data relevant to the approach are also included.

■ **Appendix C: References and Resources**
Here you will find a list—by topic—of references used in the development of this Action Guide and resources that provide information on similar approaches; tools for planning, implementation, and evaluation; and general guidance.

■ **Appendix D: Glossary of Selected Terms**
Words that are listed in this appendix are *italicized* in the guide's text whenever they are used in order to alert you that a definition is provided.

The Evidence

Research has shown that modifying the living and working environment by creating or enhancing access to places where people can be physically active, along with providing related informational outreach activities, is an effective intervention to help people incorporate healthier behaviors into their daily lives. Interventions of this type affect entire populations by targeting physical structures in the community. Public health coalitions; businesses; departments of parks, recreation, transportation, and planning; community agencies and organizations; and legislators can facilitate implementation of such environmental changes to increase opportunities for physical activity.

The Task Force on Community Preventive Services (TFCPS) recommends that interventions that create or enhance access to places where people can be physically active and provide related informational outreach activities be implemented in community settings to increase physical activity. This recommendation is based on strong evidence of effectiveness found through a systematic review of published studies conducted by a team of experts on behalf of the TFCPS. Information on their recommendation, published in *The Guide to Community Preventive Services: What Works to Promote Health? (Community Guide)*, is presented in Table 1 on Page 5. Related publications by the TFCPS and reviews by other organizations are listed under "Evidence-Based Reviews of Creating or Enhancing Places for Physical Activity" in Appendix C: References and Resources. The three components of the TFCPS's recommendation are

- **Creating places**—Building new places (e.g., trails, sidewalks, bike lanes, fitness centers, parks, tennis courts, swimming pools) to provide new opportunities for people who might not otherwise have access to places for physical activity. Additionally, creating new places for physical activity may address issues that frequently deter people from using such places, such as lack of convenience (e.g., due to distance), safety concerns (e.g., high crime rates), and poor aesthetics.

- **Enhancing access**—Modifying existing places or providing people with the means necessary to use these places. Existing places may be modified for the same reasons that new ones are created: to improve the usability of these places.

- **Informational outreach**—Promoting use of places for physical activity by raising awareness of their existence or providing guidance on usage, thus resulting in behavior change (i.e., increased frequency of physical activity) over time. Examples of informational outreach include educating people about opportunities for exercise at places such as community trails, creating programs and support systems to encourage physical activity at designated places, and teaching people how to use fitness equipment at a gym.

The Approach

This Action Guide focuses on assisting local public health practitioners in creating physical activity opportunities for residents through the following approach: **facilitating community trail development and promoting its use among youth and adults.** Although there are many options for modifying the environment to allow for increased physical activity, community trails provide unique opportunities to accommodate various forms of physical activity. On the basis of an assessment of their resources and community's needs, public health practitioners committed to increasing communitywide opportunities for physical activity may find this approach to be appropriate and viable.

This Action Guide refers to examples of physical activities that are commonly associated with a multi-use trail: walking, bicycling, running, and inline skating. However, some communities may find that activities often associated with single-use trails—such as hiking, horseback riding, cross-country skiing, and mountain biking—best suit their interests, climate, and geography. Accordingly, suitable physical activities for a proposed trail will have to be determined by each community.

Section 1—Overview of the Approach

This Action Guide provides information on resources and key steps that will help facilitate the trail development and promotion process; however, technical guidance pertaining to the construction of the trail is outside the scope of this guide. In addition, it is very important to note that, although certain legal-related issues may be identified in the action steps of this guide, the information contained herein should not be construed as legal advice and cannot substitute for consultation with a knowledgeable attorney or other competent advisor.

There are several funding sources available to support the process of building community trails, each of which dictates the necessary steps to follow. Certain details in this guide's action steps are specifically geared toward obtaining financial support from two federal programs that provide funds in every state for community trail development—*Transportation Enhancements (TE)* and *Recreational Trails Program (RTP)*. Ultimately, you must determine the financing options that best suit the needs of your community. Even if you do not pursue *TE* and *RTP* funds, this Action Guide can still be helpful in identifying key steps for the development and promotion of your trail.

Expected Outcomes

Communities that successfully develop one or more community trails and provide related informational outreach can expect to see the following results:

- The environmental improvements achieved by the community trail will reduce existing barriers to physical activity.
- Informational outreach activities will promote community usage of the trail.
- Among both male and female trail users, frequency of physical activity and general physical fitness will increase.

Implementing this approach can be useful in addressing physical activity and fitness objectives of the national Healthy People 2010 initiative, such as 1) increasing the proportion of people engaged in moderate or vigorous physical activity and 2) increasing the proportion of trips made by walking or bicycling.

Your Role

As a public health practitioner, your role in facilitating trail development and informational outreach activities will depend on the needs of your community and the resources and capacity you have to facilitate developing a trail and promoting its use. Success requires thorough planning and organization; therefore, one option for you to consider is to coordinate trail development activities and informational outreach to the community with the working group that will be formed early in the process and the *project sponsor* that will be identified later. **The role of project coordinator is the focus of this Action Guide.**

Table 1: Highlights of *Community Guide*'s Recommendation

Recommendation

Creation of or Enhanced Access to Places for Physical Activity Combined with Informational Outreach Activities—Strong Evidence of Effectiveness

Findings

These multicomponent interventions involve the efforts of businesses, coalitions, agencies, and communities to create or provide access to places where people can be physically active. Creating walking trails or providing access to fitness equipment in nearby fitness or community centers can increase the opportunities for people to be more active. In addition to promoting access, many of the studies in the TFCPS's review included training people to use weight and aerobic fitness equipment; teaching about healthy behaviors; creating health and fitness programs and support or buddy systems; and providing seminars, counseling, risk screening, health forums and workshops, and referrals to physicians or additional services.

Effectiveness

- These programs are effective in getting people to exercise more.
- Participants usually report loss of weight or body fat.
- Frequency of physical activity increased by approximately 48% among participants.
- Aerobic capacity increased by approximately 5% and energy expenditure by approximately 8%.

Applicability

These programs should be applicable to both men and women in various settings if appropriately adapted to participants.

Additional Considerations

The amount of time and money required to build or enhance facilities promoting physical activity may present barriers to implementation. Getting the community to support such projects, and finding the expertise to plan and coordinate them, may also be difficult.

Source

Excerpts taken from Task Force on Community Preventive Services. *The Guide to Community Preventive Services: What Works to Promote Health?* New York, NY: Oxford University Press; 2005:100–102. Available at: http://www.thecommunityguide.org/library/book (Chapter 2: Physical Activity).

Section 2
Implementing the Approach

Table 2 summarizes the action steps that are recommended for successfully facilitating trail development and promotional activities in your community. The numbering of action steps is meant only to suggest an order of activity you might consider; in practice, there is no exact order to the steps—many steps will likely occur simultaneously or may occur in a sequence different from what appears in this Action Guide. In addition, the timeline for completing each step is highly dependent on a community's particular circumstances. Use this Action Guide to inform and direct your activities, making sure to seek additional technical assistance with your efforts and realizing that you will need to determine how these steps best fit your community.

Table 2: Action Steps for Facilitating Development of a Community Trail and Promoting Its Use to Increase Physical Activity Among Youth and Adults

Getting Started

- Action Step 1— Collect information and identify available resources that will help facilitate community trail development and promotion.
- Action Step 2— Begin organizing the human, material, and financial resources that you will need for trail development and promotional activities.
- Action Step 3— Engage existing partners and key stakeholders by informing them about your plans to develop a community trail and educating them about its benefits.
- Action Step 4— Bring together committed partners and stakeholders in the form of a working group to facilitate trail development and promotional activities, and begin planning for the evaluation component.
- Action Step 5— Promote your project to build community support.
- Action Step 6— Ensure that working group members understand the application and funding processes for your state's Transportation Enhancements (TE) and Recreational Trails Program (RTP) opportunities.
- Action Step 7— Identify specific trail locations that the working group will consider and establish criteria by which to make the final selection.
- Action Step 8— Approach public agencies in your community to determine which agency is interested in sponsoring your project.
- Action Step 9— After identifying a project sponsor, find out which of its staff members will serve as your points of contact for the remainder of the project and then begin to discuss key issues with them.
- Action Step 10— Reach out to landowners of each trail location that you are interested in to educate them about your project and to help narrow down your list to those locations showing potential for trail development.
- Action Step 11— Identify all permits needed for each potential trail location.
- Action Step 12— Estimate the costs of trail development for each potential trail location.
- Action Step 13— Analyze your trail location and funding options to select the best location and to determine which funding source(s) you will apply to.

Moving Forward

- Action Step 14— Apply for trail funding, continue to build community support, and wait for funding approval before proceeding with further trail development.
- Action Step 15— Collaborate with the working group to review and refine your project evaluation activities.
- Action Step 16— Once funding is approved and land use easements have been secured or properties have been acquired, ensure that all preparations for groundbreaking are complete before construction begins.

Looking Beyond

- Action Step 17— Stay connected with those responsible for trail construction throughout the construction process.
- Action Step 18— Conduct promotional activities within your community during trail construction to keep residents engaged and to encourage future trail use.
- Action Step 19— Once construction is complete, organize a kick-off event and ongoing promotional activities to further encourage trail use.

Boxes marked with this lightbulb icon present tips, ideas, and additional information on implementing an action step and may also provide Web site links to helpful resources.

Boxes marked with this hurdler icon describe possible obstacles that may occur during implementation and offer suggestions for successfully overcoming those hurdles.

Getting Started

As you progress through the steps in this Action Guide, you may wish to consult experienced organizations—such as the ones noted here—for additional information about developing and promoting a community trail.

- Active Living by Design is a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation program that provides funding and support for development of innovative approaches to increase physical activity through community design, public policies, and communications strategies. Its Web site provides information on promoting physical activity at the community level, as well as case studies of communities that have successfully increased physical activity levels. Information is available at http://www.activelivingbydesign.org.

- American Trails is a national nonprofit organization that supports partnerships among trail organizations to promote the creation, conservation, and broad enjoyment of quality trails and greenways that offer places of solace, health, fitness, recreation and transportation. Access its extensive resources on trail planning, building, and management at http://www.americantrails.org.

- National Center for Bicycling and Walking is a nonprofit organization that is dedicated to helping communities become more walkable and bicycle friendly. Visit http://www.bikewalk.org to learn more about its activities and to look through the online library of resources, including *Increasing Physical Activity Through Community Design: A Guide for Public Health Practitioners*.

- National Trails Training Partnership (NTTP) is an alliance of federal agencies, nonprofit outdoor recreation groups, training providers, and other organizations. NTTP promotes opportunities for trails advocates to learn up-to-date techniques in trail planning, design, development, maintenance, and volunteer management through its Web site at http://www.nttp.net.

- Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center is a national clearinghouse for information about health and safety, engineering, advocacy, education, enforcement, access, and mobility for pedestrians and bicyclists. Visit http://www.pedbikeinfo.org for resources such as case studies, planning tools, design guidelines, and research and safety studies.

Section 2—Implementing the Approach

> ■ Rails-to-Trails Conservancy is a national organization that facilitates the conversion of old railroad *corridors* to trails and is dedicated to creating healthier places for physical activity. This organization provides technical assistance to local communities on trail development. A large variety of resources are available at http://www.railstotrails.org/whatwedo/railtrailinfo/resources/index.html, including *Secrets of Successful Rail-Trails: An Acquisition and Organizing Manual for Converting Rails into Trails.*
>
> ■ Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) Program is the community assistance arm of the National Park Service. RTCA staff members provide technical assistance on developing trails and greenways, conserving rivers, and preserving open space to community groups and government agencies. RTCA provides assistance in conceptual planning, organizational development, and capacity building for single- and multiple-use community trails. To learn more, visit http://www.nps.gov/ncrc/programs/rtca.

■ **Action Step 1**—**Collect information and identify available resources that will help facilitate community trail development and promotion.** Because trail development can be both complex and lengthy, depending on your project's scope, be sure that you have a solid understanding of the overall process before you begin. Refer to Table 3 for a checklist of useful information to collect and resources to identify. These information sources will help you identify opportunities for collaboration with other groups, find out about potential trail locations, understand funding opportunities, and learn about past trail development experiences.

	Table 3: Checklist of Information to Collect and Resources to Identify for Facilitating Trail Development and Promotion
☑	Local experts and organizations (e.g., bicycling, running, and outdoor clubs) working to enhance the community's physical environment or to incorporate trails within the community
☑	The number and locations of existing trails in your community (for a partial list, go to http://www.americantrails.org/resources/statetrails)
☑	A list of potential trail locations (your *Metropolitan Planning Organization, Bikeped Coordinator,* or *local planning agency* may have such a list, informed by community feedback)
☑	Experts who can describe or point to documentation on previous trail development efforts within your community and state (be mindful of common funding sources and how success was achieved)
☑	A list of possible public agencies that could serve as *project sponsor*
☑	State-specific information on *Transportation Enhancements (TE)* funding—refer to http://www.enhancements.org/Stateprofile.asp
☑	State-specific information on *Recreational Trails Program (RTP)* funding—refer to http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/rectrails/rtpstate.htm
☑	Other available national, state, and local sources of funding (consult local governing bodies, trail experts, and organizations; to start, search the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy's database of trail funding programs at both the national and state levels, available at http://www.railstotrails.org/whatwedo/railtrailinfo/resources/funding.html)
☑	Case studies and other information on popular or award-winning trails (local, state, or national)

Additional federal funds to consider for your trail are available through the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ) and the Safe Routes to Schools Program (SRTS). CMAQ-funded trails must demonstrate the ability to improve air quality by reducing motor vehicle use and air pollution. SRTS also funds trails, provided that the trail will ensure safer opportunities for children to walk and bike to school. To identify your state's CMAQ contact, check with your state's department of transportation. To identify your state's SRTS contact, refer to http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/contacts/index.cfm.

■ **Action Step 2—Begin organizing the human, material, and financial resources that you will need for trail development and promotional activities.**

➤ Refer to Appendix A: Determining Your Resource Needs for information on personnel, material, and financial resources that may be needed to successfully plan, implement, and sustain the project. Make these determinations during the upcoming action steps as you establish the scope of your activities.

■ **Action Step 3—Engage existing partners and key stakeholders by informing them about your plans to develop a community trail and educating them about its benefits.**

➤ Success in implementing this approach will depend on forming good relationships with various stakeholders who are invested in improving the community's physical environment or in facilitating trail development and promotional activities. Certain partners and stakeholders may be key decision makers whose influence within and understanding of the community are essential throughout project planning, implementation, and evaluation. Types of stakeholders that you may choose to partner with are listed in Table 4. Some communities may have many stakeholders and others may have only a few. When deciding how to engage different types of stakeholders, consider the potential role that each can and will want to play on the basis of their interests relating to community trails and physical activity.

Table 4: Stakeholders' Related Interests and Their Possible Roles as Partners

Stakeholders	Related Interests	Roles as a Partner
Community residents	■ Increased opportunities for physical activity ■ Safety of trail users	■ Assist with fundraising activities ■ Assist with outreach activities ■ Use trail
Community organizations and citizen groups (e.g., walking groups; bicycling, running, and outdoor clubs)	■ Increased opportunities for physical activity ■ Increased opportunities for positive engagement of community residents ■ Safety of trail users	■ Build support for trail through fundraising and informational outreach activities
Pedestrian and other advocacy groups	■ Increased opportunities for physical activity ■ Creation and preservation of safe walking environments	■ Build support for trail through fundraising and informational outreach activities

Table 4: Stakeholders' Related Interests and Their Possible Roles as Partners, cont'd

Stakeholders	Related Interests	Roles as a Partner
Public and private landowners	■ Protection from injury liability ■ Property value ■ Land maintenance	■ Grant permission for land use or acquisition
Community leaders	■ Community health promotion ■ Recognition for role in supporting project	■ Provide material resources to support trail ■ Help to promote trail
Local businesses (e.g., restaurants, sporting goods stores, gift shops)	■ Good community relations ■ Promotion of products and services	■ Promote trail use through product marketing ■ Organize and host events involving trail use ■ Donate supplies or promotional products
Local media (television, radio, newspaper, Internet)	■ News coverage of local issues ■ Public service announcements	■ Inform public about trail progress and promote its use
Healthcare providers	■ Improved patient health	■ Provide support and leadership, especially with informational outreach activities ■ Encourage trail use among their patients as healthy activity
Local and state health departments	■ Improved public health	■ Provide resources and leadership ■ Serve as *project sponsor*
Local and state parks and recreation agencies and other state resource agencies	■ Protection and maintenance of local environmental resources ■ Allocation of federal and state funds (e.g., *RTP*) toward outdoor recreation projects	■ Assist with trail funding ■ Identify potential trail *corridors* ■ Develop plans for building trails ■ Facilitate trail maintenance ■ Serve as *project sponsor*
State department of transportation	■ Advancement of state transportation opportunities ■ Allocation of federal and state funds (e.g., *TE*) toward projects affecting transportation	■ Assist with trail funding ■ Identify potential trail *corridors* ■ Serve as *project sponsor*
Regional or local government agencies	■ Land use and community planning ■ Transportation policy, planning, safety, and accessibility	■ Assist with trail funding or recommend project to the state ■ Identify potential trail *corridors* ■ Serve as *project sponsor*
Trail planning, design, and construction experts (e.g., *local planning agency*)	■ Land use and community planning ■ Design and construction of places for physical activity	■ Identify suitable trail locations ■ Develop trail plans and designs ■ Construct trail ■ Serve as *project sponsor* if a public agency
Local and state policy makers	■ Increased opportunities for physical activity in community ■ Meeting community transportation needs	■ Provide support through attendance at trail-related events and letters of support to potential funding sources
Law enforcement agencies	■ Safety and protection of community residents	■ Offer guidance on safety issues relating to trail use ■ Ensure safety of trail

➤ Engage partners and stakeholders by discussing relevant benefits that may be expected to result from the creation of a trail in your community (refer to Table 5 for an overview.) Continue to communicate the relevant benefits throughout your ongoing activities. For a variety of materials detailing the benefits of trails, visit http://www.americantrails.org/resources/benefits and http://www.railtrails.org/whatwedo/railtrailinfo/benefits.html.

Table 5: Benefits of a Community Trail

- **Improved community health**—Trails provide many opportunities for individuals to be physically active; examples of activities include biking, walking, running, and inline skating (as well as hiking, horseback riding, cross-country skiing, and mountain biking in some locales). Convenient locations and aesthetically pleasing features may especially motivate community members to use trails.
- **Improved transportation opportunities**—Trails with high *connectivity* potential may provide community members with alternative routes to travel to and from specific destinations. Increased opportunities for nonmotorized transportation may also help preserve the environment.
- **Environmental conservation**—Trails may improve the physical appearance of the community through revitalization and preservation of the environment. Air quality may be improved through the development of trails. Increases in nonmotorized transportation may reduce emission of vehicle exhaust fumes. Additionally, vegetation around trails is typically protected, and plants are crucial to creating oxygen and filtering out many air pollutants (e.g., ozone, sulfur dioxide, carbon monoxide). Such improvements to the environment may enhance livability.
- **Economic advancement**—Trails may improve a community's economy by expanding the local tourism market (e.g., new restaurants, gift shops, and other local specialty stores built alongside trails). Trails may also enhance the natural beauty of communities, thus increasing property values. Finally, trail development may also bring job growth through construction and maintenance needs.
- **Historic and cultural preservation**—Preserved landmarks tell a story of the past. Trails that pass through or near historic landmark areas may help to define the local culture and promote trail use and tourism.

■ **Action Step 4—Bring together committed partners and stakeholders in the form of a working group to facilitate trail development and promotional activities, and begin planning for the evaluation component.**

➤ Determine whether there is an established community group that is already working to incorporate trails within the community or to otherwise enhance the community's physical environment. If so, investigate whether your goals and objectives are high on their agenda and whether it would be appropriate for you to work within that group as they spearhead the project.

➤ If the best course of action is to form your own working group, select members who are knowledgeable about trail design, engineering, construction, maintenance, marketing, fund acquisition, law, and other areas needed for successful trail development and promotion. Working group members may include community residents and community organization members; representatives from government agencies and businesses such as *local planning agencies*, law firms, construction firms, and public health departments; and many of the other types of stakeholders listed in Table 4 (Action Step 3).

Section 2—Implementing the Approach

➤ Ensure that working group members reach consensus on the overall goals for the project. The working group should have a strong vision of your trail's purpose and how it will benefit your community. In Action Step 7—identify specific trail locations to consider and establish criteria by which to make the final selection—the working group will determine in detail which possible trail locations and physical characteristics would best support the project's goals.

➤ Develop a meeting schedule, establish a strategic plan on how to move forward, and assign roles and responsibilities to individuals within the working group. Identify people with experience in project planning, implementation, and evaluation who may be able to serve in leadership roles. Appendix A: Determining Your Resource Needs provides you with a basic list of working group tasks that are identified in the action steps of this guide. Also identify the responsibilities that you may need to assign to stakeholders outside of the working group.

Many national trail organizations provide assistance and training to help you better understand the process involved with building and promoting a trail. Visit the Web sites of the trail organizations listed in the "Getting Started" box on pages 7–8 for information on a variety of training and consulting services pertaining to the trail development process and beyond. Working group members may be interested in attending one of these workshops in preparation for carrying out key activities in your project.

➤ Start to draft an evaluation plan with the working group for assessing your project and the outcomes of using this approach to increase physical activity among community residents. Action Step 15 addresses the need to review and refine your evaluation activities during the "moving forward" stage. Although specific guidance on conducting an evaluation is outside the scope of this Action Guide, you will find information within this guide to help you prepare for and develop an evaluation plan. Review Appendix B: Evaluating Your Activities for the types of questions to ask to guide you in gathering process and outcome data for program evaluation needs. Refer also to "Resources for Developing an Evaluation Plan" in Appendix C: References and Resources.

■ **Action Step 5**—**Promote your project to build community support.**

➤ When the working group has determined it is ready, create written materials and deliver presentations in your community that introduce the group and its goals and plans for developing a community trail. Explain how this trail will provide additional opportunities for physical activity and describe the range of possible activities. Also emphasize that trail development improves the physical appearance of the community through revitalization and preservation of the environment. If your proposed trail will serve as a route for transportation, emphasize this functionality as well. Other potential trail benefits should also be discussed (refer back to Table 5 in Action Step 3). The presentations can provide an opportunity for residents in your community to show their support and to communicate questions and concerns relating to potential trail locations or other issues. Community buy-in is of the utmost importance because this trail will be built for the use of the community's residents. Be sure to invite local media representatives to cover the presentations.

Community concerns may prevent you from moving forward with trail development. Understand and be prepared to discuss common community issues relating to trails. Generally, these involve the same concerns that landowners have regarding liability, safety, privacy, trespassing, litter, and vandalism and can be addressed similarly (refer to Table 8 in Action Step 10). Additionally, some of the case studies you have collected on successful trail projects can be cited as examples of how other communities addressed similar concerns.

➤ In all of your written materials and oral presentations, highlight the importance of physical activity in preventing various chronic health conditions (e.g., heart disease, diabetes). Refer to "Chronic Diseases, Risk Factors, and Related Data" in Appendix C: References and Resources for helpful information. Also include data on local chronic disease rates, if available from local and state health departments.

Whenever possible, involve healthcare professionals (e.g., physicians, nurses, dieticians, therapists) in your project promotion and informational outreach activities to help reinforce the importance of physical activity through the use of this trail. Their involvement can be influential in fostering community support and encouraging trail use.

➤ Use mailings, flyers, and newsletters to educate stakeholders about your plans for a community trail. Also, set up a trail Web site (or Web page) that will introduce your goals and keep visitors updated on trail development progress. As the project develops, the Web site can also be used to promote the trail by providing printable trail maps and listings of trail-related events, as well as electronic newsletters and e-mail communications. You can also use the Web site to provide a means for visitors to post questions, concerns, or feedback about the trail. For ideas on developing a Web site, visit http://www.americantrails.org/webcon.html for links to award-winning trail Web sites.

■ **Action Step 6—Ensure that working group members understand the application and funding processes for your state's Transportation Enhancements (TE) and Recreational Trails Program (RTP) opportunities.** Every year, the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration distributes funds to the states for *TE* and *RTP* projects. You will need to investigate whether your trail development project meets the federal and state eligibility requirements for each of these potential funding sources. Although the Federal Highway Administration provides guidance and ensures compliance, the application process for funding is conducted at the state level and each state is responsible for selecting its projects. In addition, a public agency, serving as *project sponsor*, is usually the applicant for *TE* and *RTP* funding (although some states may allow nongovernmental organizations to sponsor projects). Finding a *project sponsor* is addressed in Action Step 8.

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When speaking with local experts and public agencies, you may discover other national, state, or local opportunities for financing your trail. You may also find that it is possible for your project to be financed through a combination of funding sources. Work with these experts and agencies to help determine the financing options that best suit the needs of your community. Even if you do not pursue *TE* and *RTP* funds, this Action Guide can still be helpful in identifying key steps for the development and promotion of your trail.

➤ Research information about the *TE* program and *RTP* at the federal level. Your proposed trail's function(s) will affect eligibility for *TE* and *RTP* funds.

Be aware that to qualify for *TE* funding, several basic requirements must be met, including that your project will

- Be a *TE*-eligible activity.
- Relate to surface transportation.
- Not be used solely for recreational purposes.
- Display *connectivity* potential.
- Be available to the general public.

Of the 12 *TE*-eligible activities, your trail development project is most likely to qualify under one or more of the following four categories:

- "**Pedestrian and bicycle facilities**—Sidewalks, walkways or curb ramps; bike lane striping, wide paved shoulders, bike parking and bus racks; off-road trails; bike and pedestrian bridges and underpasses."
- "**Pedestrian and bicycle safety and educational activities**—Campaigns promoting safety awareness; safety training activities and classes; training materials."
- "**Landscaping and scenic beautification**—Improvements such as street furniture, lighting, public art and landscaping along travel *corridors*."
- "**Conversion of abandoned railway *corridors* to trails**—Acquisition of railroad rights-of-way; planning, design and construction of multi-use trails and rail-with-trail projects."

However, do assess your project's eligibility under all of the twelve eligible activities and note that many states may give extra credit in their selection criteria to projects that benefit two or more of the eligible activities. Access information on *TE* funding (a part of the federal Surface Transportation Program) at http://www.enhancements.org/TE_basics.asp.

Be aware that to qualify for *RTP* funding, your project must develop or maintain recreational trails and trail-related facilities. *RTP* funds may be used for

- Maintenance and restoration of existing trails.
- Development and rehabilitation of trailside and trailhead facilities and trail linkages.
- Purchase and lease of trail construction and maintenance equipment.
- Construction of new trails (with restrictions for new trails on federal lands).
- Acquisition of *easements* or property for trails.
- Assessment of trail conditions for accessibility and maintenance.
- Development and dissemination of publications and operation of educational programs to promote safety and environmental protection relating to trails (including supporting non-law enforcement trail safety and trail use monitoring patrol programs, and providing trail-related training).
- State administrative costs relating to *RTP*.

RTP funds both nonmotorized and motorized recreational trail uses; examples include running, bicycling, inline skating, hiking, horseback riding, cross-country skiing, and off-road motorized vehicle use. Note that many states may give extra credit in their selection criteria to projects that benefit multiple trail uses. Access information on the federal *Recreational Trails Program* at http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/rectrails/index.htm.

➤ Refer to the checklist in Table 6 to further guide you in gathering specific information about your state's eligibility, application, and funding process. In some cases, states may impose eligibility restrictions more stringent than those of the federal eligibility guidelines. State-specific information on *TE* policies, eligibility requirements, and program contacts can be accessed at http://www.enhancements.org/Stateprofile.asp. For state-specific information on *RTP* policies, eligibility requirements, and program contacts, refer to http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/rectrails/rtpstate.htm.

Table 6: Checklist of What to Know about TE and RTP Funding in Your State	
☑	Eligibility requirements
☑	Total amounts of *TE* and *RTP* funds provided to your state
☑	Maximum funding awarded per funding cycle
☑	Information on timing of fund availability and method of payment
☑	*Matching* requirements
☑	Required documentation to be submitted in the application
☑	Application deadlines
☑	Acceptability of applying to both *TE* and *RTP* for the same project
☑	Information on the pre-application process, if applicable

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➤ After reviewing your state-specific information, make initial contact with your state's *TE* manager and *RTP* administrator to notify them of your plans, discuss eligibility, and address any up-front questions that you or they may have. Also, ask for guidance on which experts and local agencies may be able to assist you during the funding application process (as well as the trail development process). Later, as part of Action Step 14, the working group and *project sponsor* will determine with your state's *TE* manager and *RTP* administrator whether you are ready to submit an application.

Review summaries of trail development projects that have been successfully funded through *TE* and *RTP* to gain additional insight into the application and funding process. To start,

- Refer to *TE* project examples at http://www.enhancements.org/projectlist.asp.
- Refer to *RTP* project examples at http://www.americantrails.org/awards/CRTawards.html.

➤ Determine whether documentation showing proof of community support for the trail is a requirement of your state's application process or, if not required, whether community support documentation will be accepted. Some programs accept supporting documentation that is not requested, while others do not. If proof of community support will be requested or allowed, begin to identify the best methods for acquiring letters or signatures, and carry out the plan when ready. Endorsements by community members might include signed petitions from residents and letters of support from prominent community leaders and state and local policy makers. Although policy makers do not determine who receives *TE* and *RTP* funds, their support can provide more visibility for your project. Personal letters, e-mails, phone calls, and faxes with short, clear, and personalized messages can all be effective ways to reach local and state policy makers. If possible, you might also set up in-person meetings with them. It is important to note that public health practitioners employed by government agencies may or may not be allowed to approach policy makers to build support for a trail; therefore, it will be necessary that they check their department policies and identify any constraints before making any contacts.

■ **Action Step 7**—**Identify specific trail locations that the working group will consider and establish criteria by which to make the final selection.**

➤ While working group members become familiar with the *TE* and *RTP* application processes, investigate and discuss possible trail locations with them. Begin with the list collected from your area's *Metropolitan Planning Organization, Bikeped Coordinator,* or *local planning agency* (refer back to Table 3 in Action Step 1). Working group members may be able to suggest additional trail locations. If specific demographic groups—identified on the basis of community health objectives—will be encouraged to use this trail, determine which trail locations and characteristics could help to especially draw these residents. Additionally, the working group must take into account the importance of trail accessibility for community members when selecting both its location and its design; questions to address will include "Can community members easily get to the trail?" and "Does the trail's design enable people with disabilities to enjoy using the trail?"

When it is time to design the trail, http://americantrails.org/resources/accessible/index.html can serve as a resource for information on the accessibility of outdoor developed areas, including federal guidelines and legislative acts pertaining to this subject. This Web page also links to a variety of published materials such as *Designing Sidewalks and Trails for Access: Best Practices Design Guide* (at http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/sidewalk2), as well as accessibility training workshops around the United States.

➤ As the working group considers options for trail locations, think about how the trail could be enjoyed by various age groups and accommodate multiple activities such as bicycling, walking, running, and inline skating. Some communities may find that activities often associated with single-use trails—such as hiking, horseback riding, cross-country skiing, and mountain biking—best suit their interests, climate, and geography. Suitable physical activities for your proposed trail will have to be determined.

➤ Be mindful of how the trail's location and physical characteristics will affect the intended function of your trail; for example, trails placed in certain *corridors* may not be able to provide a *connectivity* function for transportation needs. Have the working group create a list of ideal physical characteristics to work from, even though it will be subject to change as the project develops. Refer to Table 7 to assist you in developing your list. Additional research may be required to finalize the physical characteristics of the designated trail location (e.g., trail measurements, *connectivity* potential).

Table 7: Physical Characteristics of a Trail

■ Trail location and length, with reference to endpoints and destinations
■ *Connectivity* potential
■ Trail surface material(s) (e.g., asphalt, concrete, crushed stone, lumber)
■ Slope and steepness of route
■ Width
■ Transitions (e.g., wide or sharp turns)
■ Safety (e.g., signage, lights, marked and divided lanes)
■ Aesthetics (e.g., benches, trees, landscape design)
■ Additional structures (e.g., bridges)
■ Amenities (e.g., rest areas, parking)
■ Accessibility features for those with disabilities (e.g., firmness and stability of trail surface materials)

➤ If looking at several trail locations in your community as possible options, request that the working group develop criteria for prioritizing the locations by considering all pertinent factors—such as each trail's features, convenience of location (e.g., proximity to targeted populations, public transportation availability to reach location), ability to serve as a route for transportation, and community support—and their relative importance. In Action Step 13, the working group and the *project sponsor* will analyze trail selection criteria, cost estimates, funding options, and their ability to secure land use or acquisition agreements at the appropriate time in order to determine the best trail location for funding consideration.

➤ Work through your list of trail locations and, for each trail, identify the landowner for each parcel of land in the trail's *corridor*. Information on private landowners may be obtained from your local tax collector's office. Information on public landowners (government entities) may be obtained

through your city hall, county courthouse, or other government agency responsible for land records. Be aware that this task can be quite time consuming and that one particular stretch of land for any potential trail could be owned by a combination of public and private landowners. Each of these landowners (and sometimes adjacent landowners) will eventually have to be approached—with guidance from legal counsel—for their permission to acquire or use their land for a trail (refer to Action Step 10 for further discussion).

■ **Action Step 8—Approach public agencies in your community to determine which agency is interested in sponsoring your project.** A public agency, serving as *project sponsor*, is usually the applicant for *TE* and *RTP* funding (although some states may allow nongovernmental organizations to sponsor projects).

➤ Use the information gained from conversations with stakeholders and in working group meetings to help identify potential *project sponsors*. When contacting public agencies, the working group should always aim for generating a strong endorsement of your project, regardless of an agency's ability to serve as the *project sponsor*. In addition, your *local planning agency* will know of public agencies currently building or planning to build community trails and should also be able to provide you with names of other agencies to approach for sponsorship. Another possibility is that multiple public agencies will work on your project. In this case, one agency would still be identified as the lead agency, the *project sponsor*, on the application.

➤ Securing a public agency to be the *project sponsor* of your trail project may require multiple contacts with agencies to identify the one that is both interested and able to take on this critical role. You must find a *project sponsor* that will be able to demonstrate to funders that it can carry your project through its entirety—which includes being responsible for overseeing the engineering, constructing, and maintaining of the trail—and that it can meet *matching* requirements if funds are awarded. In return, a potential *project sponsor* may want the working group to assure them of the group's ability to raise funds to meet the *matching* requirement and to identify individuals within and outside of the working group who are willing to lend their expertise for the development of the trail.

➤ Most *project sponsors* welcome public involvement in the trail development process. The public agency may not have all the necessary resources to carry out the various tasks for trail development; if this is the case, the working group should be prepared to take charge of the process if requested. Participate in any preliminary conversations between the working group and the public agency to identify specific task assignments and to determine how extensively the working group is to be involved.

■ **Action Step 9—After identifying a project sponsor, find out which of its staff members will serve as your points of contact for the remainder of the project and then begin to discuss key issues with them.** Engage designated members of the *project sponsor's* staff in important discussions with the working group that pertain to overall plans; trail location; trail design, construction, and maintenance; *matching* responsibilities and fundraising; land ownership; and liability.

➤ Bring the working group and *project sponsor* together to update the project plan and timeline. Follow up on the preliminary conversations that occurred in Action Step 8 about task assignments and the resources needed to move forward with trail development. Depending on available resources (e.g., money, staff size, time) of both parties, determine the involvement of each in remaining activities.

➤ Discuss potential trail locations and the critical issue of land ownership. The working group and *project sponsor* should consult legal counsel regarding the use, purchase, or donation of land from owners. Not only is there a variety of legal instruments that can be used to transfer ownership of property or interest in property along the selected trail, but also funding sources such as *TE* or *RTP* may have their own state-specific rules and requirements on the subject. Accordingly, it is outside the scope of this guide to describe the types of real estate agreements that may be undertaken. For this information, as well as numerous other land considerations that will arise as your project progresses, the working group will need to engage legal counsel experienced in real estate law.

➤ Identify individuals or agencies (public or private) that can help you design, construct, and maintain your trail, particularly those willing to donate labor. If your state *TE* and *RTP* programs have a pre-approved list of eligible firms, start there. Although proper design and construction are crucial for creating a successful trail, proper trail maintenance is equally important for encouraging and sustaining trail use. In addition to regular inspections, maintenance of the trail and its accessories (e.g., drinking fountains, benches, signs, lights) involves a variety of activities such as mowing, pruning, repairing, painting, cleaning, removing trash, and controlling drainage. Although some *TE* and *RTP* programs may not cover maintenance, both applications usually require documentation of some form of maintenance plan.

> For a checklist of activities that should be regularly or periodically performed to properly maintain community trails, refer to http://www.americantrails.org/resources/ ManageMaintain/MaintCheck.html. Additional maintenance information is provided by American Trails at http://www.americantrails.org/resources/ManageMaintain.

➤ Discuss the *matching* requirements of possible funding sources with the *project sponsor*. The working group should be prepared to help the *project sponsor* raise funds to cover the *matching* requirements. Fundraising can be time consuming so it is important to start this process early if it needs to occur. Ideas for fundraising include collecting donations from businesses, other public agencies, organizations, and neighborhoods with significant financial resources; conducting bake sales, silent auctions, or other community fundraisers; and writing grant proposals. Consult your state's *TE* manager and *RTP* administrator to determine whether soft *matching* of donated funds, materials, services, land, and right-of-way is allowed. If it is allowed, work with the project's legal counsel to make sure that the funding source's soft *matching* guidelines (such as proper timing of land donations) are followed correctly, and discuss with the *project sponsor* whom to approach for donated labor, materials, and land.

➤ Be sure to discuss trail liability issues with the *project sponsor* and project's legal counsel. The extent to which liability will be covered under the *project sponsor's* liability insurance may depend on the type of land use agreement that is completed between the *project sponsor* and each landowner. Information on liability protection for private landowners who provide free public recreational access may be found in your state's Recreational Use Statute. Public landowner information on this issue may be found in your state's Tort Claims Act or Governmental Immunity Act and, in some cases, in your state's Recreational Use Statute. [Note: The specific protections offered to landowners may vary greatly from state to state.] In addition, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy's *Rail-Trails and Liability: A Primer on Trail-Related Liability Issues & Risk Management Techniques* provides an overview of this issue (refer to http://www.railtrails.org/ resources/documents/resource_docs/tgc_liability.pdf).

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■ **Action Step 10**—**Reach out to landowners of each trail location that you are interested in to educate them about your project and to help narrow down your list to those locations showing potential for trail development.** By taking into account possible funding source requirements and other important considerations specific to development of your trail, the project's legal counsel will advise the working group and *project sponsor* about the appropriate timing for entering into any agreements with the landowners regarding land use or acquisition. Keep in mind that the project is in the early stages of development and funding has not been secured; therefore, it would likely be considered premature to request a donation of land or an *easement* or to enter into any kind of negotiation.

➤ Having identified landowners of trail locations under consideration in Action Step 7, schedule meetings with these landowners to inform them of the working group's plans to develop a trail. Consult with legal counsel on who will attend these meetings as representatives of the project and on how to best prepare for and address landowners' questions about the types of land use or acquisition agreements that can be undertaken, as well as other common landowner concerns identified in Table 8.

Table 8: Common Landowner Concerns About Trails and How to Address Them

■ **Liability**—Landowners may want to know who will be held liable if someone is injured while using the trail. Have your project's legal counsel discuss various land use agreements and how each may protect landowners from liability.

■ **Safety**—Landowners may want to know whether a trail will be safe to use and whether it will draw criminal activity. Describe the various physical characteristics (e.g., signage, lighting) that will be incorporated to enhance trail safety.

■ **Privacy and trespassing**—Landowners may be concerned that trails near residential properties will draw strangers to these properties. Discuss the physical trail characteristics (e.g., signage) that will help users differentiate between public trail property and private "off limits" property.

■ **Litter and vandalism**—Landowners may be concerned that trail use will increase litter and vandalism. Explain that promotional activities will emphasize trail etiquette. In addition, maintenance plans will be in place to ensure trail upkeep; these plans include cleaning up litter, mowing, and touching up or repairing the trail and trail accessories (e.g., benches, lights) that typically experience wear-and-tear.

Multiple concerns, including those outlined above in Table 8, may make landowners reluctant to ultimately grant permission. In addition to discussing these concerns with landowners, be prepared to provide information about how these concerns were addressed in previous trail development projects in order to gain support from landowners. Additionally, earning their trust requires attention to detail. Be patient, encourage landowners to ask a lot of questions, and always obtain permission to enter their property.

➤ Narrow down your initial list of potential trail locations to a smaller working list of sites for further consideration, based on a realistic assessment of your future ability to secure a written agreement for land use or acquisition with each landowner in a given *corridor*. Collecting information on permits and cost estimates (the topics of the next two action steps) can be time- and labor-intensive tasks; for this reason, you will most likely want only those trails showing serious potential to undergo this rigorous review. [Note: In your particular community, you may not need to select among trails; only one trail location may have been under consideration from the beginning or only one location may still remain for consideration.]

■ **Action Step 11—Identify all permits needed for each potential trail location.**

➤ Application requirements for permit approvals differ from state to state; usually the working group and *project sponsor* must either provide documentation of the approved permits or describe in the application how the permit requirements will be met. Refer to Table 9 for a list of permits that typically must be addressed in the application. Review this list with your state's *TE* manager and *RTP* administrator to identify any additional permits (e.g., state-specific) that must be addressed before groundbreaking can begin. Be prepared to file permit requests when the appropriate time comes, and be mindful that the *project sponsor* is responsible for contacting the individuals or agencies that are certified to sign off on all required permits.

Table 9: Common Permits Needed for Groundbreaking on a Trail

■ **Rights-of-way clearance**—Approval from all appropriate public and private landowners to use or obtain land for a trail.

■ **Construction certificate**—Approval from a designated construction inspector to move forward with groundbreaking or the next phase of construction. The *project sponsor* may recommend a construction inspector, or state *TE* and *RTP* contacts may have a list of locally qualified construction firms that are eligible for construction and inspection of federally funded projects.

■ **Environmental clearance**—Approval from a state natural resources agency (e.g., fish and wildlife divisions) to ensure that the physical environment will not be harmed by your trail, such as by risking endangered species or impacting wetlands or geologic formations.

■ **Historic preservation**—Approval from the state historic preservation office to ensure that cultural landmarks (e.g., American Indian sacred sites) will not be harmed by your trail.

■ **Utility clearance**—Approval from a designated construction inspector to ensure that various utility lines (e.g., electric, cable, fiber optic, sewer, water) will not be damaged during the construction of your trail.

■ **Action Step 12—Estimate the costs of trail development for each potential trail location,** now that you have made some decisions on potential trail locations and ideal physical characteristics and have identified a *project sponsor.*

➤ Work with the *project sponsor* to base cost estimates on your trail's ideal physical characteristics, which you developed using categories listed in Table 7 (Action Step 7). Also include costs associated with engineering, construction labor, and appropriate trail maintenance. An engineer from the working group, the *project sponsor's* organization, or a *local planning agency* may be able to help with these estimates. Check with your state's *TE* manager and *RTP* administrator for guidelines to follow when estimating costs, and also consult with your project's legal counsel for pertinent advice.

■ **Action Step 13—Analyze your trail location and funding options to select the best location and to determine which funding source(s) you will apply to.** When making these decisions, the working group's collaboration with the *project sponsor* is essential.

➤ From your list of potential trail locations, determine the best location by analyzing the selection criteria set by the working group during Action Step 7, the cost estimates that you have collected, your funding options, and your ability—at the appropriate time—to secure a written agreement for land use or acquisition with each landowner of a given *corridor.* As noted in Action Step 10,

you may not need to select among trails in your particular community; only one trail location may have been under consideration from the beginning or only one location may still remain for consideration.

➤ Determine whether you will apply to *TE*, *RTP*, or both funding programs on the basis of eligibility requirements and other pertinent factors (refer back to Action Step 6).

➤ In addition, determine whether you will apply to other national, state, and local funding sources. In Action Step 1, accessing the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy's database of trail funding programs (http://www.railstotrails.org/whatwedo/railtrailinfo/resources/funding.html) at both the national and state levels was suggested as a starting point, and two examples of other potential federal funding sources—the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ) and the Safe Routes to Schools Program (SRTS)—were also provided.

Moving Forward

Now that you have engaged stakeholders, created a working group, identified a *project sponsor*, determined a trail location, and selected an appropriate funding source(s) to apply to, what's next? Look at the activities outlined below to gain insight into how to move forward.

■ **Action Step 14—Apply for trail funding, continue to build community support, and wait for funding approval before proceeding with further trail development.**

➤ For the application(s), organize all of your research on the designated trail location (e.g., all updated costs; permit information; finalized physical characteristics and features; individuals or groups charged with planning, engineering, constructing, and maintaining your trail).

➤ Your state's *TE* and *RTP* programs may have alternative or additional application requirements, so be sure to determine with your state's *TE* manager and *RTP* administrator that these requirements are met before submitting the application(s). Follow the application guidelines for your state, which may include identifying the resources that will cover costs dictated by *matching* requirements, providing verification of all obtained permits, and describing how you plan to get approval for those permits still pending. In addition, attach any signed petitions or letters of support from policy makers and community residents if requested or allowed (as discussed at the end of Action Step 6).

➤ Be aware that an application may require a detailed trail map illustrating its location and physical characteristics. An engineer or landscape architect accessed through the working group or *project sponsor* should be able to help develop this map.

➤ Closely review the application(s). Only request funding for activities that are eligible under the funding program. If you request funds for ineligible items or activities, the reviewers may reject the application. Have the *project sponsor* submit the complete application(s) only after any outstanding issues are resolved. Because the application process for each funding program is very competitive, an incomplete application may result in automatic disqualification.

Despite your efforts, your trail may not receive approval for funding. In such cases, discuss with your state's *TE* manager or *RTP* administrator how to improve the application(s). Consider reapplying with the suggested changes in the next funding cycle, or reevaluate whether you need to consider other funding sources.

■ **Action Step 15—Collaborate with the working group to review and refine your project evaluation activities.**

➤ Complete the development of your evaluation plan that was begun in Action Step 4, even though you may need to continue to refine certain aspects as the project progresses. As discussed earlier in Action Step 4, review Appendix B: Evaluating Your Activities for the types of questions to ask to guide you in gathering process and outcome data for project evaluation needs. Refer also to "Resources for Developing an Evaluation Plan" in Appendix C: References and Resources.

■ **Action Step 16—Once funding is approved and land use easements have been secured or properties have been acquired, ensure that all preparations for groundbreaking are complete before construction begins.**

➤ In collaboration with the *project sponsor*, instruct your project's legal counsel to secure agreements, as appropriate, with landowners for land purchase, donation, or use.

➤ Working with the *project sponsor*, finalize the list of various individuals and groups that will lend their expertise to the design, construction, and maintenance of the trail. Obtain any remaining permits needed for groundbreaking to occur, as discussed in Action Step 11.

➤ Verify that the *project sponsor* has a legally authorized representative who will document and submit the necessary paperwork to receive funds. The particular paperwork and submission schedule is dictated by the funding source's rules and payment methods. Proper financial records should be maintained. In addition, a certified independent audit may be required by your state.

➤ Maintain frequent contact with your state's *TE* manager or *RTP* administrator to communicate project updates and to ensure that all tasks are carried out appropriately. Because state *TE* and *RTP* offices are monitoring many projects at once, recipients of project funds must be proactive about providing updates.

Looking Beyond

> You, the working group, and the *project sponsor* worked hard to plan trail logistics and apply for funding. Your trail received funding approval and groundbreaking has begun. Congratulations! But your work does not end here. What steps should you take to ensure that the trail is constructed as planned and to motivate community members to use the trail after construction is complete? Look at key strategies in the action steps below for suggestions.

■ **Action Step 17—Stay connected with those responsible for trail construction throughout the construction process.**

➤ Keep in contact with the construction manager and other designated individuals by conducting site visits on a regular basis. Work closely with these individuals on key design components needing special attention. During construction, field workers may make decisions that are inconsistent with the original intentions for the trail and the working group's goals. For this reason, it is important for selected working group members to be visible and available to the construction manager when issues arise. Technical guidance pertaining to the construction of your trail is outside the scope of this guide; consult with working group members, the *project sponsor*, and other stakeholders, on the

basis of their areas of expertise, for guidance on what to expect during the construction process. In addition, reach out to trail organizations mentioned in this Action Guide for additional assistance during this critical phase and visit their Web sites for a variety of related resources.

■ **Action Step 18**—**Conduct promotional activities within your community during trail construction to keep residents engaged and to encourage future trail use.**

➤ Produce a pamphlet about the trail with an easy-to-use map guiding users through the route. Identify all of the trail's access points on the map so that users can safely reach the trail when coming from various locations. Be sure to educate users about restricted areas alongside a trail (e.g., backyards adjacent to trails that are private property) and how and where to dispose of waste. Copies of pamphlets can be posted at local chambers of commerce, visitor centers, motels, restaurants, commercial establishments, recreation clubs, etc.

➤ Provide regular updates on trail construction progress to the community through newsletters, flyers, and your trail's Web site, and at community events. As part of your informational outreach activities, publicize event details, interesting trail facts, the date the trail will open to the public, and helpful tips pertaining to physical activity. Use this time during trail construction to promote the physical activity opportunities—such as walking, running, bicycling, and inline skating—that will be provided by the new trail.

> If you have not yet given the trail an official name, consider keeping your community engaged during construction through a "Name that Trail" contest. Also, encourage your community to participate in an "Adopt-a-Trail" program, where businesses, organizations, or families adopt a segment of the trail *corridor* to assist with maintenance activities or to monitor and report maintenance needs for that segment.

➤ Engage local media (i.e., television, newspaper, radio, and Internet sources) to cover stories on trail construction progress. Produce and disseminate press releases, particularly as the trail approaches completion, to generate increased interest.

> For suggestions on how to generate publicity for your trail development project, you can review the *Media Access Guide: A Resource for Community Health Promotion*, published by CDC's Steps Program, at http://www.cdc.gov/steps/resources/pdf/StepsMAG.pdf. Topic sections include instructions, tips, and templates for writing press releases, media advisories, and other media-related materials; methods for monitoring media coverage; and strategies for placing public service announcements (PSAs) and hosting press conferences.

■ **Action Step 19—Once construction is complete, organize a kick-off event and ongoing promotional activities to further encourage trail use.**

➤ Host a kick-off event to celebrate the opening of the trail to the public and to highlight its multiple uses. Promote the event through flyers and media announcements. To encourage attendance among multiple user groups (bikers, walkers, runners, inline skaters, etc.), consider hosting individual types of races (e.g., bike race, running race) and a "trail-athalon" race to entice a variety of trail users. Also, consider hosting clinics that demonstrate the latest equipment and exercise tips for the types of physical activity that are associated with your community trail.

➤ In addition, contact established walking groups, bicycling and running clubs, and other outdoor organizations to inform them of the trail's features and to encourage its use as a primary or alternate route.

> It may be difficult to encourage trail use among people who are normally sedentary, but significant public health benefits can be produced by getting sedentary people to be active. Consider establishing walking groups or other kinds of social support groups to increase trail use by sedentary members of the community, as well as by more active individuals who are looking for companionship and encouragement during trail activities. For information on creating walking groups, refer to another Action Guide in *The Community Health Promotion Handbook*, entitled *Social Support for Physical Activity: Establishing a Community-Based Walking Group Program to Increase Physical Activity Among Youth and Adults* (http://www.prevent.org/actionguides).

➤ Continue to pursue media coverage of trail events and the benefits of physical activity. Encourage media coverage of individuals and groups enjoying the community trail in a variety of ways to appeal to the widest audience. At health promotion events, hosting a booth or conducting more formal presentations are other ways to perform informational outreach about your community's trail.

> Consider participating in National Trails Day®, which is held the first Saturday of every June in the United States. Promote the health benefits of trails, along with public awareness of and appreciation for trails and the people who build and maintain them. On the American Hiking Society's Web site, at http://www.americanhiking.org, you can register your event and download the *Event Organizer's Manual.*

> Sustainability Tip: Some communities have found success with a "Friends-of-the-Trail" group composed of community residents and organizations that use the trail. This type of group might also involve people who do not use the trail for physical activity, but would like to support the trail for the overall benefits it provides. "Friends-of-the-Trail" members can survey and report problems or concerns requiring immediate solutions or for use in future planning; assist with maintenance or fundraising for maintenance; raise funds to cover amenities and features such as drinking fountains and additional rest areas; and advance informational outreach through newsletters, educational materials, and events. Giving your community a sense of trail ownership is crucial to sustaining interest in the trail.

Appendix A
Determining Your Resource Needs

Use the following lists of personnel, material, and financial resource needs to guide your planning activities for facilitating trail development and promotional activities in your community. Remember, the resources needed by the group you represent will depend on the scope of project activities and the depth of your group's involvement. Available funding will determine what personnel and material resources you are able to secure to supplement your existing resources.

■ Personnel Resource Needs

The personnel you will need to facilitate trail development and promotional activities may include the following full-time or part-time staff and volunteers:

- Project coordinator to manage the activities of the working group, lead the working group's interactions with the *project sponsor,* and provide assistance wherever necessary.

- Administrative staff to provide support to the project coordinator and working group.

- Working group members composed of committed partners and stakeholders to support the goals of the project.

You will also need a public agency to act as *project sponsor*. Refer to Table 10 for a summary of the tasks that various personnel typically perform. An important function is determining who will be responsible for each activity. Some of these tasks may be interchanged between different people or groups when appropriate.

Table 10: Personnel and Their Typical Responsibilities
Project coordinator
■ Collects initial information and identifies resources to facilitate trail development ■ Helps assemble working group, establish its goals, and manage its tasks ■ Oversees evaluation of project ■ Develops and maintains Web page or Web site, including related e-mail communications ■ Researches eligibility and application requirements for various funding sources ■ Coordinates all meetings ■ Maintains contact information on all groups involved with planning, engineering, building, maintaining, and promoting the trail ■ Communicates regularly with construction manager ■ Provides both *project sponsor* and funder with project updates
Working group
■ Obtains and communicates with project's legal counsel as needed ■ Meets regularly to facilitate trail development ■ Selects *project sponsor* for *TE* or *RTP* funding opportunities ■ Develops educational and promotional materials and actively promotes trail use ■ Educates community about trail benefits and builds support among residents and landowners ■ Decides on trail location and physical characteristics ■ Compiles trail construction cost estimates ■ Assists with writing funding application ■ Ensures that all appropriate permits are obtained for groundbreaking to begin ■ Assists with project evaluation

Project sponsor
- Collaborates with working group as *TE* or *RTP* applicant and applies for funding
- Assists working group by providing internal expertise or finding appropriate groups or individuals to carry out various tasks related to trail development (e.g., planning, design, construction, maintenance)
- Provides funders with financial updates pertaining to trail funding
- Assists with promotional activities whenever possible

■ Material Resource Needs

The material resources you need to facilitate development and promotion of your trail will depend on the nature of your trail development and informational outreach activities. As you move forward with your activities, keep in mind ways you might help to acquire or develop some of these materials, using existing resources whenever possible. Basic material resource needs are detailed in the following list:

- Office space for staff

- Office equipment for conducting outreach and research (e.g., computers, printers, fax machine, copier, telephones)

- Meeting space, audiovisual equipment, and materials for working group and community workshops

- Hard-copy and electronic educational and promotional materials (e.g., flyers about the trail, fact sheets about the benefits of physical activity)

- Materials for interviews, surveys, and other modes of evaluation

■ Financial Resource Needs

General, administrative, and personnel costs are the primary expenses for which you will need funds to facilitate the development and use of a community trail. Be sure to budget for all components of your activities, such as the following items:

- Personnel salaries and benefits

- Office overhead

- Office and audiovisual equipment and materials

- Development, printing, and distribution of materials for trail promotion and fundraising

- Research

- Project evaluation

- Telephone and Internet access for outreach and research

- Web page or Web site development and maintenance

- Miscellaneous items such as refreshments during meetings and informational presentations

Appendix B
Evaluating Your Activities

Evaluation is a key component of your project and should be conducted before, during, and after project implementation. You can use evaluation data to plan community-specific projects, to assess the effectiveness of the implemented project in achieving its objectives, and to modify current activities where necessary for project improvement.

Evaluation data can also be used to keep stakeholders updated on the project's progress; show participants the benefits of their active involvement in facilitating trail development and promotion; describe the project when applying for or securing additional support through partner funding, grant opportunities, and other methods; and provide other community groups with information as they consider developing a community trail of their own.

Although specific guidance on conducting an evaluation is outside the scope of this Action Guide, you will find suggested questions below to guide you in collecting data for process and outcome evaluations; the specific questions you ultimately develop will depend on the objectives you have set and will be unique to your project. Potential sources of data are also listed to help you answer these questions. In addition, refer to "Resources for Developing an Evaluation Plan" in Appendix C: References and Resources.

Questions to Guide Data Collection

■ Process Evaluation

To assess whether the project was implemented as intended, you will need to collect data on the quality and effectiveness of your activities. Questions helpful in this assessment of both trail development and trail promotion activities include the following:

Assessing Trail Development Activities

- Did the working group include members with the necessary expertise?

- Were the criteria that the working group used to select a particular *corridor* helpful in identifying an optimal trail location? Were there other criteria that could have been considered?

- What factors hindered selection of your trail location (e.g., costs, permission from landowners)?

- Which public agencies were approached before one agreed to be *project sponsor*? What reasons did public agencies cite for not sponsoring your trail?

- Did the *project sponsor* adequately assist with the trail development process? Were there parts of the process that the *project sponsor* did not assist with? Did the *project sponsor* direct you to appropriate engineers, architects, construction experts, and other experts when asked?

- Was the working group able to contact and approach all landowners for each trail location? Were landowners' concerns addressed?

- How many local policy makers were approached to support your project? Of those approached, how many wrote supportive letters?

- Was *TE* or *RTP* funding obtained? If funding was denied, what reasons were given by the *TE* or *RTP* programs?

- Were there funding sources other than *TE* and *RTP* (e.g., local organizations) that were applied to? If so, what made each an appropriate choice?

- Were there appropriate funding sources other than *TE* and *RTP* that were not applied to? Why not?

- Based on the working group's objectives for the trail, did the funding source appropriately finance the intended function of the trail?

- Did the overall trail development process run according to schedule? If not, what problems caused delays? How were these problems resolved?

Assessing Informational Outreach Activities

- Did your informational and educational activities increase community support for your trail?

- Were community concerns encountered? How did you deal with these concerns?

- What informational and educational presentations about the trail were given in the community? How many community members attended each of these presentations? Was attendance representative of the entire community?

- What types of informational and educational materials (e.g., flyers, pamphlets, newsletters) were distributed? What distribution channels were used? Which distribution channels were most effective?

- How many visitors were recorded on the trail's Web site?

- What trail-related promotional events were held (e.g., kick-off event, jogging clinic)? How many community members attended each of these events? Was attendance representative of the entire community?

- How were the media involved in promotional activities?

■ Outcome Evaluation

Wait until your trail has been open for several months before evaluating its impact. When it is first opened, the trail may attract a large number of users who are curious about this new place for physical activity and recreation in their community. However, you will get a more accurate measure of regular users if you wait until the trail is past its "new phase" and the novelty has diminished.

To assess the program's influence and make recommendations for future project direction and improvement, you will need to collect data on the expected outcomes of using this approach to increase physical activity among community residents. Although long-term health outcomes—such as reduced incidence of obesity—are hard to attribute to any one project, asking the following questions may help you determine whether this approach was successful:

- Based on observational surveys, how many people use the trail regularly?

- Has frequency of physical activity increased among community members as a result of the new trail?

- Have there been other community benefits since developing the trail (e.g., reduction of traffic congestion, cleaner environment)?

- Is the trail being used by a range of people? Does it accommodate multiple forms of physical activity?

- Did community knowledge increase regarding physical activity benefits of the trail, proper trail etiquette, and so forth following informational or educational outreach activities?

Appendix B—Evaluating Your Activities

Potential Sources of Data

There are many ways to collect data on process and outcome evaluation indicators. The data you use should address and answer the questions outlined in your evaluation plan. You may need to develop data sources, or you may adapt data sources already in existence. The following partial list of data sources may help you get started:

- Observational accounts and surveys of trail users

- Surveys, interviews, and opinion polls of various groups and organizations, including local policy makers, business leaders, health department officials, urban planners, and other stakeholders

- Media coverage of the trail

- Documentation of positive and negative feedback pertaining to trail use (e.g., issues relating to safety, accessibility, or aesthetics); trail users sometimes relay this type of information to their local parks and recreation department or newspapers through phone calls, letters, stories, and pictures

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Appendix D
Glossary of Selected Terms

This glossary defines several key terms and concepts used within the guide. Throughout the text, words that are listed in this appendix have been *italicized* whenever they are used to alert you that a definition is provided.

Bikeped Coordinators—Federally funded positions in every state that are designated to improve opportunities for and the safety of nonmotorized transportation; also referred to as Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinators (see http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bikeped).

Connectivity—The extent to which trails, sidewalks, and paths are interconnected. High connectivity increases opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to travel to and from various locations (e.g., parks, lakes, schools, stores).

Corridor—A tract of land forming a path between two points. Corridors can be created using trails, paths, railroads, open spaces, or other natural and man-made features.

Easement—An interest in land owned by another that entitles its holder to a specific limited use or enjoyment; also, an area of land covered by an easement.

Local planning agency—A government agency responsible for regulating the development of the built environment within a given region (e.g., city, state). Local planning agencies coordinate planning and development activities relating to transportation, housing, and buildings.

Matching—The proportion of costs a project applicant is expected to contribute toward an overall project. In the case of *TE* and *RTP* programs, each state determines the match amount. State *TE* and *RTP* programs may also allow applicants to soft match by contributing to their expected proportion of costs through donated funds, materials, services, land, and right-of-way.

Metropolitan Planning Organization—An association of local (e.g., county-level) agencies that help coordinate planning and development activities for transportation, housing, and buildings within a metropolitan region.

Project sponsor—The public agency that serves as the applicant when applying for *TE* or *RTP* funds. (Note: Some states may allow nongovernmental organizations to sponsor projects.) Public agencies can be U.S. government agencies at the federal, state, or municipal level or agencies of tribal governments. Examples include public health departments, parks and recreation departments, *local planning agencies*, and departments of transportation.

Recreational Trails Program (RTP)—A federal program of the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration that funds eligible projects relating to recreational trails for motorized and nonmotorized use.

Transportation Enhancements (TE)—Often referred to as its own program, TE is actually a set-aside of the federal Surface Transportation Program of the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration. TE funds 12 eligible activities relating to surface transportation that involve bicycle and pedestrian facilities, historic preservation, and environmental mitigation.

Places for Physical Activity:
Facilitating Development of a Community Trail and Promoting Its Use to Increase Physical Activity Among Youth and Adults—An Action Guide

Partnership for Prevention® would like to hear from you about this Action Guide. Please help us improve this tool by filling out this form and faxing it back to us at (202) 833-0113, or by providing your feedback online at http://www.prevent.org/actionguides.

User Feedback Form

1. **Please rate how much you agree with the following statements:**

   a) Information within this Action Guide is easy to understand ❑ Yes ❑ Somewhat ❑ No

   b) Information within this Action Guide is easy to find ❑ Yes ❑ Somewhat ❑ No

   c) Boxes marked with hurdler and light bulb icons provide practical and useful additional information ❑ Yes ❑ Somewhat ❑ No

   d) I will use this Action Guide to help improve my community's health ❑ Yes ❑ Maybe ❑ No

   e) I would recommend this Action Guide to others ❑ Yes ❑ Maybe ❑ No

   Comments (continue on back if necessary):

   _____

   _____

   _____

2. **Is there any other information that you would like to have seen included in this Action Guide to assist with implementation?** ❑ Yes (please describe below; continue on back if necessary) ❑ No

   _____

   _____

   _____

3. **Which best describes your work setting?** [❑ Nonprofit ❑ For profit]

   ❑ Federal/State/Local Government Agency ❑ Healthcare Setting ❑ Community Organization

   ❑ Academic ❑ Other (please specify) _____

4. **What is your position?** _____

5. **How did you hear about this Action Guide? (check all that apply)**

   ❑ Word of mouth ❑ Newsletter ❑ Web site ❑ Conference ❑ Direct Mailing ❑ Other

   (please specify for all checked items) _____

   _____

6. **May we contact you for additional feedback? If yes, please provide information below.**

   Name: _____ Daytime Phone Number: _____