

Benefits of Trails, Walking & Biking

- **Health & Safety:** Increase physical activity, reduced crashes, reduced respiratory disease
- **Economy:** Low or no cost, supports businesses and local economy
- **Environment:** Reduces air pollution
- **Equity & Inclusion:** Not everyone owns or can afford or drive a car!
- **Creates community & improves quality of life!**



Health Benefits

*Trails promote positive changes in public health by **promoting physical activity** and making it easier for people of all abilities to get moving.*

Why this matters?

- Childhood obesity has tripled in the U.S. over the last 30 years. Illinois ranked 9th in the country in obese adolescents.
- In Lake County 23% of adults are obese and 34% are overweight.
- Unhealthy weight gain increases one's risk for diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and some types of cancer.



Trails help neighborhoods get moving

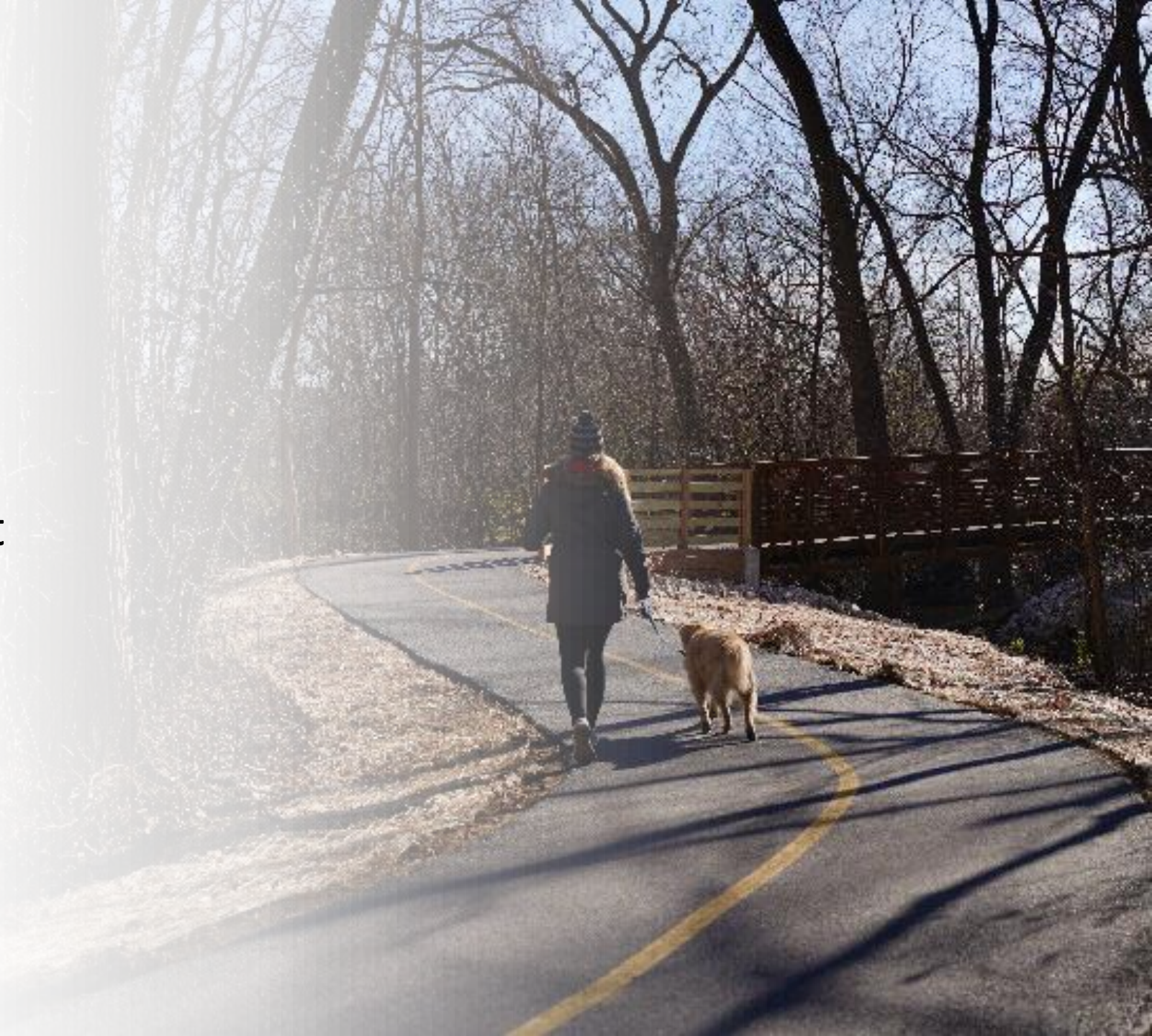
The Indiana Trails Study, which looked at six towns statewide that added trail systems found that over **70% of community members reported getting more exercise** because of their trails.

- Rails to Trails Conservancy

Trails are good for community health

A cost/benefit analysis of a trail building program in Lincoln, Nebraska found that **for every dollar invested in trails, the community saved \$2.94 in reduced medical costs**, a nearly 300% return on investment!

- American Heart Association



A person is riding a bicycle on a paved path that winds through a dense, sun-dappled forest. The path is shaded by the overhanging branches of tall trees, and the ground is covered in fallen leaves and shadows. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and natural.

Other health benefits

- A 30-minute round-trip bicycle commute is associated with **better mental health** in men.
- Women who walk or bike 30 minutes a day have a **lower risk of breast cancer**.
- **Teenagers** who bike or walk to school watch less TV and are less likely to smoke than their peers who are driven.
- 120 minutes a week in nature is associated with **good health, well-being, and lower levels of illness and stress**.

Economic Benefits

*Trails make communities more attractive places to live, shop, and visit, **boosting local economies and helping small business.***



Economic Benefits

Trails create jobs

- Bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure projects create up to **double the jobs** of road infrastructure projects per \$1 million spent.

Trails reduce car dependence

- The **cost of owning a car** is over \$9,000 by year, compared to the annual cost of \$300 to own a bike. Better infrastructure makes it easier for people to use alternative transit and reduce their dependence on a car.

Economic Benefits

Trails impact home values

- When communities build trails, the improved walkability has been shown to **positively affect neighborhood home values**.
 - CEOs for Cities, “Walking the Walk: How Walkability Raises Home Values in US Cities”

Trails direct money into the community

- Recreational hiking is a booming industry. Annual **direct spending by trail users** increased from \$7.62 billion in 2002 to \$40.8 billion in 2008, with growth expected to continue in the future.
 - American Trails, “Economic Benefits of Trails”

Economic Benefits

Local businesses benefit from trails

- A survey of **small business owners** located near a trail in Pennsylvania found that 25% of their revenue came from people visiting the trail.
 - American Trails, “Economic Benefits of Trails”

Communities need trails to attract development

- According to the National Association of Homebuilders, “**trails consistently remain the number one community amenity sought by prospective homeowners.**” New homeowners mean new businesses, growth for the community, and a stronger tax base.

Environmental Benefits

Trails help the environment by giving people more choices in how they get around for transportation or recreation.

This results in:

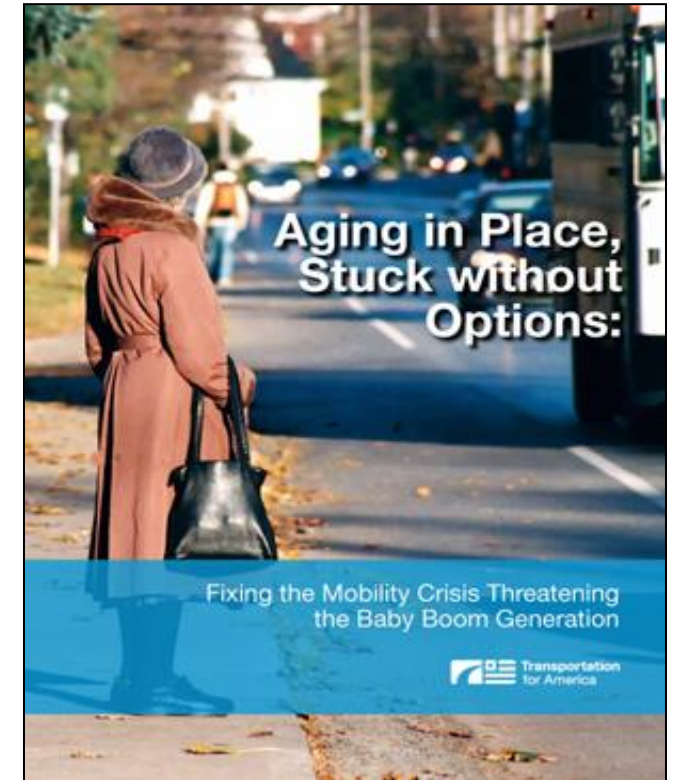
- **Reduced greenhouse gas emissions** from reduced motor vehicles traveled, gas use, and emission exhaust
- **Cleaner air**
- More **sustainable urban and natural environments**
- An overall **healthier ecosystem**



Equity & Inclusion

Not everyone can afford or drive a car!

- About **1/3 of the state population does not drive**, including people with disabilities, seniors, and youth.
- 1/3 of **poor minorities lack access to a car** (12% for poor whites)
- 560,000 **people with disabilities** never leave their homes due to transportation difficulties
- **Older adults** who no longer drive make fewer trips for health care, shopping, visiting family
- Connectivity means: **freedom, social interaction, and staying healthy for all.**



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