

VELO MONDIAL 2000 - WORLD BICYCLING CONFERENCE

Paper: "Millennium Trails - Honor the Past, Imagine the Future"



MILLENNIUM
TRAILS

Track: Transport
Theme: World-Wide Experience

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INTRODUCTION:

Velo Mondial 2000 is a significant global event for the same reasons that the bicycle is a metaphor for the new millennium. The time has come to solve the problems of urban congestion, suburban sprawl and environmental pollution. The bicycle is a key part of the solution, and as a result it serves as a positive symbol of hope for a better world. The connection between the bicycle (and trails in general) as an icon for the future and the opportunity presented by the arrival of the new millennium creates significant opportunities. Millennium Trails was created from this connection.*

Millennium Trails is a national initiative led by the White House Millennium Council, the U.S. Department of Transportation, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy and other partners including the American Express Company, the National Endowment for the Arts, American Hiking Society, the National Park Service and others. It involves cultural, heritage and trail organizations in a cooperative effort to establish a nation-wide network of trails throughout the United States. Many of the organizations involved in this initiative are working together for the first time, creating new synergies and possibilities as the program develops. With leadership from First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton and Secretary of Transportation Rodney Slater, Millennium Trails has brought the trails movement in the United States to new levels.

The story behind this initiative and how it has achieved this level of success is important for other programs which wish to amplify the message of bicycling as part of a sustainable future. The Euro-Velo program, the Sustrans National Cycle Route System, La Route Verte and other visionary programs are models from which the entire bicycling movement can learn to move forward. This is consistent with the Velo Mondial 2000 conference theme of "A world-wide experience: comparison and co-operation."

**Note: Trails, are defined by the Millennium Trails initiative as "paths connecting places." These include both physical and thematic routes such as urban bikeways, wilderness hiking paths, historic routes, and cultural tourism itineraries. It has been a goal of Millennium Trails to advance the idea of a national network of trails which connects America's culture, heritage and communities.*

DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROGRAM

A timeline of the Millennium Trails initiative is useful in understanding the rapid growth the initiative experienced between 1997 and the year 2000. The following is a partial list of major events which took place in the development of Millennium Trails:

Fall, 1997: President and Mrs. Clinton establish the White House Millennium Council. Harriet Fulbright, Director of the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities convenes a meeting of heritage and

cultural organizations to discuss a Millennium project creating thematic trails connecting important themes, such as the Jazz Trail, the Trail of Knowledge, etc. USDOT Deputy Assistant Secretary John Horsley is included in this group.

January, 1998: New York State Bike/Pedestrian coordinator Jeff Olson hears about the Millennium trails concept through Andy Clarke and Hal Hiemstra, both former Vice Presidents at Rails-to-Trails Conservancy. Olson contacted John Horsley at USDOT, (they had met at the 1996 National Transportation Enhancements Conference), to talk about how the growing trails movement could become the core of America's legacy for the new millennium program. The two met in Washington the next week during the 1998 TRB annual meeting. Following the meeting, Horsley asked Olson to draft a proposal of the Millennium Trails Initiative. The proposal was subsequently used in a briefing with Secretary Slater and the First Lady. At the end of the month, Horsley and national leaders of the trails movement met to discuss Millennium Trails at the International Trails and Greenways Conference in San Diego, California.

July 6th, 1998: Jeff Olson is hired by USDOT as Director of Millennium Trails and the program formally begins. Initial tasks included developing the program for announcement within six months, establishing a "Green Ribbon Panel" of leaders from heritage, cultural and trail organizations, and securing funding to establish the project partnership.

October 5th, 1998: public announcement of the program on the Baltimore-Annapolis trail in Maryland, featuring the First Lady, Secretary Slater, National Park Service Director Robert Stanton, Maryland Governor Glendenning, Rails-to-Trails President David Burwell and more than 1,000 people. Secretary Slater announces that USDOT will commit \$5 million to Millennium Trails, including \$1 million to manage the program, and \$4 million in project funding.

November 13th, 1998: announcement by USDOT at the National Trails Symposium in Tucson, Arizona of nearly \$4 million dollars in Millennium Trails grants to nine projects.

February 1, 2000: Rails-to-Trails Conservancy enters contractual agreement with USDOT as the lead non-profit partner of Millennium Trails.

April 19, 2000: First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton and Transportation Secretary Rodney Slater speak at a Millennium Trails partnership event in New York City's Central Park Boathouse. Wendy Judge Paulsen is announced as chairperson of the Millennium Trails Celebration Committee, with the First Lady serving as honorary co-chair.

May 19th, 1999: the First Lady and USDOT Assistant Secretary Gene Conti participate in the groundbreaking for the Grand Canyon Greenway, one of the projects awarded Millennium Trails funding in November, 1998. It is believed to be the first time a First Lady has participated in the groundbreaking of a trail project in the U.S. Volunteers contributed more than \$200,000 in professional services to design the project in partnership with the National Park Service.

June 26th, 1999: Transportation Secretary Slater announces 16 National Millennium Trails at the International Trails and Greenways Conference in Pittsburgh. These projects include the East Coast Greenway, a 2,000 mile path linking the cities from Maine to Florida, the Mississippi River Trail, a new bike route along the river from New Orleans to Minneapolis, and the American Discovery Trail, a new trail across the nation from coast to coast. As part of the ceremony, the American Express Company announced a \$500,000 contribution to Millennium Trails, with \$20,000 grants to be provided to each of the 16 National Millennium Trails.

October 21, 2000: In a ceremony held at the White House, First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton and Transportation Secretary Slater announce 50 Millennium Legacy Trails representing submissions from the governors and officials of 47 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. This ceremony includes more than 125 representatives from throughout the United States, many of whom visit the White House for the first time. At this event the National Endowment for the Arts announces that it is making a \$520,000 contribution, with \$10,000 grants to be provided to each of the 50 Millennium Legacy Trails.

January 1, 2000: New Year's Eve. Fireworks and celebrations take place in the public centers of the world's great cities, including Washington D.C. (The National Mall), Paris (The Eiffel Tower), and Sydney (The Harbor). The "Y2K Bug" is fixed, and it turns out that the real "Y2K problem" is that, as the Washington Post reported, not enough attention is being paid to creating significant projects of lasting value. On January 3rd, USDOT Secretary Rodney Slater announces another \$3.6 million in funding for Millennium Trail projects. In February, the new www.millenniumtrails.org website comes online, and grows to more than 100,000 hits per month.

Spring 2000: Millennium Trails events take place throughout the United States as the 16 National Millennium Trails and 50 Millennium Legacy Trails celebrate their designations. Events include the dedication in Kansas City of a new \$1 million sculpture marking the bicentennial of Lewis and Clark's expedition, a gala performance of the story of freedom hosted by the Freedom Trail in Boston to commemorate the 225th anniversary of the American Revolution and a bicycle relay carrying water from Key West, Florida to Maine along the East Coast Greenway.

On National Trails Day in June, hundreds of Community Millennium Trails are designated by the White House Millennium Council in a nationwide celebration of trails.

LESSONS LEARNED: POSITIVE

In many respects, it is too early to determine the ultimate outcome of Millennium Trails. However, for a program which was initiated in 1998, it clearly has created some important achievements in a very short time. These include:

Website: By using technology to expand the program within a limited budget, Millennium Trails has reached a wide audience with minimal staff. The www.millenniumtrails.org website registered more than 100,000 hits per month in Spring 2000. This level of contact could not have been possible without the internet, and staff could not have handled this volume of phone calls, letters or printed materials.

Beyond Bicycle Advocacy: The involvement of cultural and heritage organizations brought new levels of support to trails - including organizations and constituencies which had not been involved in "bicycle" advocacy. While many organizations do not see walking, bicycling or transportation as their focus, the interest in historical and arts-oriented aspects of the growing national trails system created a common opportunity for previously unrelated interests.

New Major Partners: The American Express Company and the National Endowment for the Arts combined to contribute more than \$1 million to Millennium Trails. Altrec.com created website content with support from National Geographic and Timberland. The American Association of Leisure and Recreation joined to support National Trails Day with the American Hiking Society and is publishing a book about Millennium Trails. All of these partnerships broaden the long-term base of support for trails.

National Recognition: It is rare for a new initiative to receive such high levels of support. The work of countless volunteers and leaders over the past century led to the moment that Millennium Trails was able to build upon. The First Lady and Transportation Secretary Slater brought national recognition to trails for the first time. The opportunity created by a long-term grassroots movement and the desire to use the Millennium year as a moment to create significant legacy projects combined for a positive outcome.

Media Exposure: It would be hard to imagine another program with similar resources which would be featured in *Ebony*, *Self Magazine*, *Walking*, *USA Today*, *ABC online* and hundreds of media outlets across the country. The diversity of the trails movement created a story which could be told both nationally and locally, and this resulted in significant media coverage for Millennium Trails, which in turn created additional interest and support.

LESSONS LEARNED: NEGATIVE

It would be easy to only portray the successful public view of Millennium Trails. But no success is gained without certain difficulties, and it is instructive to honestly assess the program's challenges, including:

"Herding Cats": The trails movement, like many other grassroots efforts, involves powerful egos and special interest organizations. Many people get involved in advocacy because of their beliefs and therefore do not possess advanced professional skills. High level corporate and government officials have their own demands and expectations. Millennium Trails was faced with ongoing internal issues related to individual and organizational personalities, and the constant challenge of maintaining a common vision amongst a growing partnership involving multiple interests. Fortunately, these issues were kept internal to the project and were not extended into the public view of the program.

Fundraising: While the major contributions of numerous partners were certainly significant, Millennium Trails did not raise the levels of funding originally hoped for. The program's target was to raise more than \$10 million in private funds, and fell far short of this goal. Trails are not widely accepted in the philanthropic and corporate worlds at this time, and the self-interest of certain partners made it difficult to raise funds from donors who did not perceive a unified, organized structure within which to make more significant contributions.

No Long Term Institutional Change: In spite of the successes of the past two years, there is still no delivery system in place for developing and managing a new national system of trails and green infrastructure. Leadership which supported the initiative will change with the upcoming elections in the United States, and it is unclear how much organizational change will take place within government and non-profit programs to continue the mission of Millennium Trails.

The Reality of Involving Political Leaders: There were many missed opportunities which were caused by partisan politics surrounding national political leaders in the past two years. Bear in mind that the White House Millennium Council had to contend with the effects of the impeachment of the President during 1999. Changes within national and state level governments as well as frequent staff changes in non-profit and partner organizations presented both challenges and opportunities for developing long-term programs.

Being Something for Everyone: One of the most difficult challenges facing the future of the trails movement is the need in the U.S. to involve multiple constituencies towards a common goal. Millennium Trails was always open to trails of all kinds, including motorized trails and automobile touring routes as well as facilities for non-motorized transport. While this creates a broad base of support, it also risks

trying to be too many things at the same time and losing the focus created by the Sustrans project in the U.K., which simply calls itself the National Bike Route System and provides works of art as milemarkers to commemorate local heritage.

CONCLUSION: NOW WHAT?

The fireworks of New Years Eve 2000 are over. The Y2K Bug is dead. The real "Y2K Problem" is: "What legacy do we leave behind for future generations." All of the challenges we face, all of the successes and failures we encounter will be meaningless unless we learn from the past and move forward into the future. As other initiatives move forward around the world, the humble bicycle will continue to be a metaphor for a better world. Whether we call a facility a route, path, trail or lane, our nations all face common issues. We all want a better quality of life for our children. With this in mind, a few closing points are worth noting:

Make No Small Plans: The ideas we share require enormous vision and the ability to think at multiple scales: national, global, and local. Creating national systems of sustainable transportation and green infrastructure is a vision worthy of a new millennium.

If It Were Easy, Somebody Else Would Do It: Change is a difficult process, and we often face what may seem to be insurmountable odds. But every challenge is also an opportunity, and adversity is part of the territory we work in.

Everybody Wins if we all Share: There is no need to create enemies, because in fact every adversary is a potential partner. The 'highway lobby' wants to build better roads - the same facilities which are needed for bicyclists, pedestrians and trails. We must be altruistic within our movement, and we must ensure that we treat the world as our partner.

One hundred years from now, a millennium from now, people will ask what we did in this historic moment. But who are we to predict the future? For all we know, the interstate highways may become bike paths in our lifetime. What we do know is that walking and bicycling are sustainable forms of transportation and recreation, and the human desire to create a lasting heritage and culture can support our efforts to make the bicycle the vehicle for our small planet.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:

Millennium Trails has been the work of many hands and there are too many partners involved to recognize them all individually. However, there are at least three people who have worked far beyond what was asked of them and they should be mentioned here as representatives of all who have participated. Thank you to Stephanie Madden of the White House Millennium Council, Walter Finch of the U.S. Department of Transportation, and Mark Hurley of the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy. Your efforts deserve recognition and symbolize the collaborative spirit and altruism which the trails movement is based upon. -JSO



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First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, U.S. Transportation Secretary Slater Announce 16 National Millennium Trails

Celebrating America's rich history, as well as its bright future in the 21st century, First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton and U.S. Secretary of Transportation Rodney E. Slater today designated 16 National Millennium Trails. The designations were announced in Pittsburgh at the International Trails and Greenways Conference organized by the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy. The Millennium Trails initiative is a part of the White House Millennium Council's efforts to stimulate national and local activities to "honor the past and imagine the future." This public/private partnership is led by the Department of Transportation, the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy and a collaborative of other agencies and organizations. The purpose of Millennium Trails is to spark the creation and enhancement of more than 2,000 trails as part of America's legacy for the future.

First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton said, "Through the Millennium Trails project, we are building and maintaining trails that tell the story of our nation's past and will help to create a positive vision for our future. The 16 National Millennium Trails that Secretary Slater designated today are all visionary projects that define us as Americans."

"Transportation is about more than asphalt, concrete and steel, it's about people," said Secretary Slater. "The National Millennium Trails connect our nation's landscape, heritage and culture and demonstrate our national commitment to improving the quality of life for all Americans. The designated National Millennium Trails symbolize America's legacy for the Millennium."

David Burwell, President of the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, said, "All of the more than 50 applicants for National Millennium Trails designation deserve recognition. The National Millennium Trails announced today represent a cross section of the growing trails movement in America."

American Express is the lead corporate partner for Millennium Trails. Beth Salerno, president of American Express Foundation, said, "We are making a \$500,000 grant to Millennium Trails in recognition of this great legacy for our nation. It builds on our long term support for historic and cultural trails worldwide. The trail and greenway movement is changing the American landscape and we are proud of our active involvement with Millennium Trails."

The 16 National Millennium Trails designated today are:

The Unicoi Turnpike -- A 68-mile trail dating from the first millennium that carried the Cherokee people from the flatlands east to the **Smokies** through the mountains to the hills of **East Tennessee**. It provided similar passage for European settlers in Colonial and post-revolutionary times. In our day, the Unicoi spirits contemporary Americans into remote trailside communities still reflective of Cherokee and Appalachian cultures.

The Cascadia Marine Trail -- A water trail in the Pacific northwest currently enjoyed by canoeists, kayakers and other watercraft as they explore the beauty of **Puget Sound** and witness the grandeur of **Mount Rainier**. It follows the wake of inlets and coves that originally marked a Native American water trade system.

The Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail -- Stretches 1,200 miles from the **Mexican** border to **San Francisco**, marking the route of exploration and settlement followed by the Spanish as they claimed the Pacific coast for the Iberian Crown.

The Freedom Trail -- Connects 15 sites in old **Boston** that capture America's revolutionary history, including Faneuil Hall, where plans were laid for an infamous tea party, and Old North Church, watched closely one night by Paul Revere as he rowed with muffled oar to the Charlestown shore.

The Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail -- Commemorates the Lewis and Clark expedition of 1804-06, which covered 3,700 miles of American frontier from **St. Louis, Missouri**, to the mouth of the **Columbia River** in current-day **Oregon**. It opened the continent of North America to European settlement.

The Underground Railroad -- Follows multiple secret routes that originated in the South, intertwined throughout the North, and eventually led to Canada, the western territories, Mexico, the Caribbean, and freedom for those people held in bondage below the Mason-Dixon line. Loss of life or severest punishment was risked by fleeing slaves determined to find their destiny as free men and women.

Civil War Discovery Trail -- Identifies and thematically connects the battlefields, military routes and sites of historic significance from the nation's most serious breakdown in domestic tranquility. It provides a lens through which contemporary Americans can view the war which tore the nation so dramatically asunder and offers lessons for its continued binding without malice and redeemed by charity.

The International Express -- The Number Seven Train through **Queens, New York**, connects a series of immigrant neighborhoods and is a metaphor for the migration of all the world's people to America's shores. Pakistani, Irish, Romanian, African-American, Italian, Korean, Hispanic, Indian, Argentinean and other ethnic neighborhoods are connected and available for exploration and cultural discovery on this route from **Sunnyside** to **Flushing**.

Iditarod National Historic Trail -- Surveyed in 1908 by the U.S. Government, the Iditarod is America's only remaining frontier trail. Its 938 miles connect remote settlements to each other, mark the way of the Klondike Gold Rush, and the path of the dogsled mission-of-mercy that brought life-saving serum to diphtheria-ridden **Nome, Alaska**. Winter travelers go by sled, snowshoe, snowmobile or cross country ski. Warm weather natives and visitors explore the trail via all modes of conveyance, including watercraft where the trailway has melted.

Appalachian National Scenic Trail -- Reaffirms America's love and respect for the great beauty of our land and is the nation's first major *consciously*-created trail. Not a route of exploration, settlement or trade, it is rather a 20th century recognition that we will have no trails in modern times unless we purposefully build and protect them. Stretching over two thousand miles from **Georgia** to **Maine**, the Appalachian Trail is a narrow footpath traversing the Appalachian Mountains' ridge-crests and major valleys. The need to protect the Appalachian Trail from encroaching development led to the passage of the National Trails System Act in 1968.

The Great Western Trail -- Follows the spine of the Rocky Mountains and stretches across America on a north/south axis from the **Canadian** to the **Mexican border**. It traverses lands managed by the federal government, five states and the Navajo Indian Nation. Its unique design of parallel routes accommodating different trail users allows a wide range of Americans access to the grandeur of our West.

The North Country National Scenic Trail -- Provides a narrow route through the unique northern rim topography of the continental United States and binds together over 160 state parks, forests and wildlife areas from **New York** to **North Dakota**. It is a traceable footpath providing hiking opportunities through seven states, potentially covering 4,600 miles.

Hatfield-McCoy Trail System -- Employs an entirely new approach to trail building by forging a partnership with the corporate giants who own the coal fields of southwest **West Virginia** and surrounding states. Old railbeds, abandoned logging roads and other unused routes that once transported the region's wealth to fuel industrial America, will be recycled as a 2,000-mile trail system accommodating off-highway motorcycle and all-terrain vehicle riders, equestrians, mountain bikers, hikers and other trail users.

The East Coast Greenway -- Sweeps the Atlantic Coast from **Maine** to **Florida** connecting 15 of America's most populous states and virtually every major city of the eastern seaboard. It will incorporate scores of currently disconnected local trails and traverse a remarkable range of urban, suburban, village and rural landscapes, providing recreation, transportation and historic assets to literally millions of east coast Americans.

The Mississippi River Trail -- Combines bicycling and blues by following the nation's mightiest river from Minneapolis to New Orleans. Envisioned as a bicycling route that will touch upon the cultural, historic and natural and habitat richness of the **Mississippi River Valley**, this trail will allow Americans to experience first-hand what Mark Twain has described as the "body of the nation."

American Discovery Trail -- *From Sea-to-Shining Sea* becomes a trail reality as the American Discovery Trail crosses the nation on a continuous line of existing trails, rail-trails, canal towpaths, forest lanes and country roads. When complete, the trail will cover over 6,500 miles, connecting America to America, our dreams to our realities, and the past which we honor to the future of our imaginations.

For additional information about Millennium Trails, please visit www.millenniumtrails.org

