

trail tales

TE and Pedestrian Safety

Though the majority of Transportation Enhancement (TE) funds are used to build infrastructure such as rail-trails and streetscapes, bicycle and pedestrian safety programs also are eligible for TE support. In fact, TE is one of the few sources of federal funding for educational programs that help children and adults ride and walk safely outdoors.

The WalkSafe program of Miami-Dade County, Fla., is one of the most successful of these projects. Dr. Gillian Hotz of the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine founded the program in 2001 after noting that a startling number of children were being hit by cars. As director of the university's Pediatric Brain and Spinal Injury program, Hotz worked with many of these children. She realized the need for injury-prevention education to address these mostly avoidable injuries. So Hotz organized WalkSafe and its three-day, child-friendly curriculum.

On the first day, students watch a video on pedestrian safety. On the second day, their physical education teachers help them practice safe pedestrian behavior. The third day involves students creating posters in art class that are then entered into a county-wide contest each year.

By 2007 the program had reached more than 70,000 students across the Miami-Dade public school system. After receiving its first TE grant of \$350,000 over three years (2007-2009), WalkSafe doubled in size, reaching more than 140,000 students by late 2009. In part because of WalkSafe, the number of trauma alerts at Miami Children's Hospital and Jackson Memorial Hospital for children hit by cars declined by more than 50 percent between 2002 and 2007.

Today, WalkSafe is more than an injury-prevention program. Its staff members train teachers, encourage parents to get involved, and engage with other community initiatives relating to bicycle and pedestrian safety. To learn more about WalkSafe, visit www.walksafe.us or call 305.243.8115.

Which rail-trail offers the best urban experience?

By Michael Brady, Milwaukee, Wis.

It's 7:30 on a sunny, 32-degree weekday morning and I'm off on my daily commute to downtown Milwaukee along the 5.5-mile Hank Aaron State Trail. From my home in the picturesque Story Hill neighborhood, it is a quick 30-minute trip on the trail. Named for the legendary home-run king and former Milwaukee Brave and Brewer, the pathway runs alongside the Menomonee River, adjacent to the main railroad lines south and west of Milwaukee's city center. As I ride I can see the skyline of downtown Milwaukee, including Miller Park Stadium and City Hall, where I work.

Riding past the former Milwaukee Road smokestacks, I head east as freight trains are going west and Amtrak carries passengers to Chicago and points south. I pass the Marquette University fields, the Potawatomi Bingo Casino and the Harley Davidson Museum. From there the trail extends east through the Third Ward to Lakeshore State Park and the Calatrava wing of the Milwaukee Art Museum on Lake Michigan. But I leave the pathway for the last stretch to City Hall.

The Hank Aaron State Trail is a showcase for Milwaukee's attractions. It provides visitors and residents an opportunity to experience the best museums, sporting sites, medical centers, universities and neighborhoods in the heart of the city. And it is getting even better. A trail extension to be opened in 2010 along an unused rail corridor to the west will pass the Veterans Administration and Hospital, State Fair Park and the Milwaukee County Zoo. Also, a link along the Oak Leaf Trail will go to the Milwaukee County Medical Center. When these additions are completed, the Hank Aaron will be within a 15-minute bike ride of more than 415,000 residents.



Mike Baker, in his recumbent, riding with Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett during Bike to Work Week.

NEXT ISSUE:

What does your trail or bicycle gear say about you? How does what you wear, ride or carry on a rail-trail trip express something about who you are?

Deadline:
April 30, 2010.

We want to hear from you!

Essays should be no more than 250 words in length and may be edited for publication. If your essay is chosen, we'll ask you to provide a picture of yourself to accompany the essay. Send your essay and contact information to magazine@railstotrails.org or Railsto-Trails Conservancy, Magazine/Trail Tales, 2121 Ward Court, NW, 5th Floor, Washington, DC 20037.

Space is limited; additional essays not included in the magazine can be found at www.railstotrails.org/magazine.

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